



When I'm Upset I Need Your Help

Speaking for the Baby Campaign

Containing Distress: How to help your baby even if you can't stop the crying

Parents often express concern that there is nothing they can do to assist their crying baby. Although it might not be possible to completely stop their crying, there are actions you can take to help your baby feel safe and reassured.

What You Can Do

- Offer comfort and reassurance to your baby
- Focus on helping your baby feel secure, even during difficult moments
- Remember that your presence and soothing efforts make a difference, even if their crying continues

Understanding Your Baby's Emotions

Sometimes, babies feel frightened, overwhelmed, and out of control. Experiencing such strong emotions can be distressing for them, especially as they are only beginning to understand the world around them. Witnessing your baby's distress can also be very tough for you as a parent—it's natural to be affected by their feelings.

In these moments, you can help your baby regain a sense of meaning and contain their distress by identifying and reflecting on their emotional state. For instance, you might gently hold your baby, speak softly to reassure them, or describe what they are feeling by saying, "I see you're upset; it's okay, I'm here with you." This acknowledgment can provide comfort and reassure your baby that they are not alone with their big emotions.

By tolerating both your baby's distress and your own, you help them learn to manage difficult emotions. When you consistently empathise and support their discomfort, they discover that distress is manageable and temporary. Responding gently and empathically gives your baby a sense of being understood and soothed, fostering their ability to self-soothe over time.

When I'm Upset...

Urrgh! What now...!? I'm so tired - but I know she can't help it.

I'm not trying to annoy you, or trick you - I just need something, and I need your help



What is it little one? What do you need? Not hungry... Not wet... Let me lift you for a cuddle and see if we can work this out together.

Initial Emotional Reactions

Parents may find themselves feeling annoyed when their baby expresses a need, especially if they are already overwhelmed, exhausted, or lacking in support. This initial reaction is a common experience, as in this illustration.

Although parents may feel annoyed at first, they are often able to set aside these emotions and see things from their baby's point of view.

Sometimes, particularly when parents are feeling depleted, they might perceive their baby's needs as manipulative or as an attempt to trick them. Despite these feelings, it is important to remember that babies are not intentionally causing annoyance or trying to deceive. They simply require assistance and look to their parents for help.



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