The FAMILY'S Baby

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BABY culture in our modern world has become much safer as well as more complex. Through scientific study we have learned how to safeguard the baby's health and how to help him grow up into a happy, capable person who can live successfully in a world of people. The information presented in these pages is intended to stimulate group discussion. If we pool our experiences and observations with research findings we can develop a practical and workable plan for the best care for our babies.

A BABY COMING?

Babies are fun, but they do change the family's plan of living. They need space, time, and equipment. The whole family should plan together for the many necessary adjustments in their home. From the very first the baby should be considered a member of the family who must, as far as he can, share in the give and take of family life. Because he is at first helpless, his family will have to make some concessions for his benefit.

A. Space

1. Where shall the baby sleep? At best he should have a room of his own. At least his crib should be in a quiet corner that is airy but not drafty and where he can sleep peacefully while the rest of the usual family life goes on.

2. Where will his clothing and other equipment be kept? Much time and energy used in the baby's care can be saved if the family plans carefully for convenience.

3. Where will he be bathed? This should be a room that is easily heated. The family can plan for convenient and easily handled bath equipment.

B. Time

1. What will be his schedule? The doctor or nurse will help determine the feeding rhythm. This will be the basis for the baby's daily living program of eating, sleeping, bathing, and playing. It will have to be fitted into the family schedule and some adjustments will need to be made. By planning it together the entire family will help in the changes. Each member will carry a share.

2. Who will be responsible for his care? He will need one person consistently to care for him. Others may help but usually mother takes this responsibility. The family can plan with her so that she has the needed time released from other household duties. It is better for the baby to have one person to do most of his "chores"

because it makes life less confusing for him and helps him make the shift from his natural self-interest to interest in another person. This is one of the first very important things he must learn.

C. Equipment

1. What shall he have for a bed? He must have his own bed. It would be too dangerous for him to sleep with anyone. The family can make or buy a crib. Perhaps an old one can be fixed up and repainted. Who will do it?

2. What will be used for his bath? Perhaps the family already has a basin, pitcher, etc., that can be used.

If the family will plan together for the baby’s care and comfort before he comes they will all enjoy him more and help him become a participating member of the family. This will make a happy baby.

BABY’S SPECIAL NEEDS

If baby is to be happy there are some things he must have.

1. He needs frequent sucking periods, unlimited and uninterrupted in time—preferably at his mother’s breast. If bottle feeding is necessary he should be cuddled as fed.

2. He needs to be held securely and gently, cuddled often.

3. For many months he should have one person to give him most of his care. This will make it easier for him to learn to love someone besides himself.

4. He needs to get the feel of his father holding him and doing for him. He will find comfort in the strength of his father’s hands and learn to turn to him for help.

5. He needs a father and a mother who have a harmonious relationship and who set a good pattern for the love development.

6. In the members of his family he needs truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity.

7. In all learning he needs to be allowed to use his own inborn rhythms.

8. He should be accorded the dignity of a separate individual, with his own rights and feelings.

HELPING THE BABY GROW UP

Baby comes into the world knowing nothing and unable to do anything for himself. His only method of communication is crying; later he will learn to smile and chuckle. He has so much to learn about this world, so many skills and habits to master, that he will need the patient cooperation of the entire family. He will learn more easily if his family plan together how they will help him, and how all persons who care for him can handle him in the same way.

1. To help the baby grow they must be patient. Learning is
hard. Each child has his own learning speed. It is best not to push him faster than he can go.

2. The family should appreciate his individuality. He is a person like themselves, not a toy to be manipulated to suit others. Naturally, then, he is different from every other baby. He will not learn anything until he is ready. Learning involves the whole body, brain, nerves, muscles, and senses. They must all work together.

The new baby can maintain life, if his environment permits. This means that he has controls that work without his direction. They take care of digestion, circulation, respiration and the control of body heat. He has, in addition, some defenses. He protests against restraints, and he demands comfort and food. And, equally important, he has ready within him forces that will urge him to talk, to walk, to play, to learn, and to behave like a human being. Every aspect of human activity will unfold according to an orderly plan that is his alone. All of his learning will depend upon this plan.

The new baby cannot control his head. It takes 3 or 4 months before his nerve and muscle hook-up is ready to hold it steady. Then he is ready to learn some control of his arms and legs. After 3 or 4 months more he may be able to sit alone. We can tell when he is ready, for if he is placed in a sitting position, instead of flopping forward in a frog position, he will tend to push over backward. His next activity may be crawling. He himself will start when his body is ready. When sitting and crawling have developed his back and leg muscles sufficiently, he will stand and then gradually learn to balance himself and walk. No one can predict when he will be ready for any of these activities. He will show his family when he is ready. Until then it is best not to hurry him. Remember he has an inborn plan for growth and he has to follow it.

HELPING THE BABY TO LEARN

His physical accomplishments tell his family that he is becoming ready to learn. Really he has been learning all along. His physical acts are dependent upon mental control as well as on muscle and bone. Every act is greatly influenced by his emotions. When he is born, the baby’s senses do not function at par. Even if they did, their impressions would be meaningless to him until he had had some experiences as a background for understanding them.

The feelings of the baby change rapidly as his eyes, ears, nose, palate, and skin complete their development and teach him what to expect from his world. He finds that he is constantly having to adjust himself to the life in the home. He has to begin learning the rules of living. This is hard because he must follow his own devel-
opment plan at the same time. When this plan is not crossed he responds quickly and sweetly. If our demands oppose his inborn plan we must expect him to resist us.

His growth in understanding then takes place, first, by his increasing ability to receive impulses through his sense organs; second, through the gradual growth of his brain in its ability to interpret his sensations and hook up the nerve centers needed; and third, his increasing power to respond purposefully with motor activity. All of this orderly progress is necessary for the growth of a human being but for each baby it must happen at the proper time according to his own plan.

He will gain control over behavior gradually as his brain completes its connections with the rest of his nervous system. This means that many of the things we want to teach him, he would learn in time anyway. Our efforts make it easier for him if we adjust our teaching to his indications of readiness.

**LEARNING TO EAT**

Eating habits are important in growth and development. Unfortunately many families make it difficult for the baby to learn good eating habits. They forget that appetite is natural and needs only reasonable direction. It depends upon a cycle: the pain of an empty stomach plus food equals relief or pleasure.

He seems to know when he has had enough, and he usually lets his mother know. The baby cries when hungry. During the first few days any liquid seems to satisfy the hunger pains but he soon learns to discriminate and warm water will not satisfy him. If he is to learn good eating habits the family should understand how baby learns and plan the teaching together. There are some methods suggested.

**A. Establishing pleasure in eating**

1. Respond to his hunger cry. Note when the baby cries and try to adjust his feeding schedule accordingly. He will be happier if his rhythm is followed. It may mean occasionally feeding him ahead of schedule.

2. Make his meal time comfortable and pleasant, never hurried. While nursing he needs to be held gently and lovingly.

3. Let him stop eating when he has "had enough."

4. Respect his evident dislikes. Do not force him to eat the disliked food at the time. Serve it again at the beginning of hunger, and serve it smilingly.

5. In his second year he will not need as much food as before for the rapid growing period is over. Be willing for him to eat less.

**B. When introducing new foods**

1. Remember he is conservative.
2. He notices the different feel of new foods more than the taste. He may push it out of his mouth because it feels different.

3. If new foods are given in very small amounts and offered with a smile he will respond more readily. If he pushes it out, give him a bit more.

4. When he is learning to drink from a cup use two cups, one for him to hold while he is fed from the other. When he begins to put his cup to his mouth he is ready for a bit of milk in his cup. In time he will manage for himself.

5. Use two spoons in the same way.

6. If he has difficulty in learning to swallow foods with new texture, gently stroking his throat may encourage swallowing.

**C. Feeding problems have causes**

1. Feeding problems frequently are due to parents’ eating patterns or to the parents’ fear that the baby may not like “what he should have.”

2. Whoever feeds the baby should be in good humor and certainly not determined.

3. Being forced to eat stirs up rebellion.

4. Food that is unpleasant looking or tasting or too highly seasoned is hard for him to take.

5. Illness may cause him to refuse to eat.

**D. When ready he will learn to feed himself**

At first it is best not to let him get tired when feeding himself. When he has helped himself to a few mouthfuls, then feed him the remainder.

**BABY'S SLEEPING HABITS**

Sleeping habits are closely tied to feeding habits.

**A. They change as his food needs change**

1. Some babies before they are six weeks old forget to waken for the 2 a.m. feeding.

2. During the second month the baby may waken a little before his 6 p.m. feeding. This is a time for play with the family—his social hour. Gradually he wakens earlier and earlier and the afternoon play time becomes longer.

3. After 6 months he may miss the 10 p.m. feeding—but that means he needs more food at the other feedings.

4. At 13 and 15 months some babies give up the two-nap schedule and sleep only in the afternoon. This leads to the three-meal-a-day schedule.

**B. Good sleeping conditions**

1. Sleeping time should be fairly regular.

2. Comfort and freedom from restrictions should be watched.
3. Baby should always sleep alone.
4. He may not go to sleep immediately when put in his bed. Most people don’t.
5. As he gets older, if he wants to talk when put to bed, let him, but do not question him or contribute much to the conversation.

**TRAINING IN TOILET HABITS**

Like eating, toileting should be a pleasant experience for the baby. The cycle, however, is reversed: unpleasant pressure of a full bowel or bladder plus elimination equals comfort. This inward pressure should be the stimulation to which the baby responds. No artificial external stimulus should be used, for, as the baby grows and the external stimulus is stopped, he is likely to have lost his ability to respond to his own inner pressure, and constipation may result.

Our greatest opportunity in helping him to learn cleanliness is his own natural rhythm. Training means that his brain takes over control and he takes on a definite behavior, when he feels that inward pressure. Often we undertake training too early. The baby should be able to sit alone before we start.

**A. Bowel control**

To gain bowel control the baby will have to fit together his own natural response to inward pressure and the set place and position he is to learn. To help him, the mother should first, for a period of 4 or 5 days, keep a chart of the times when bowel movement occurs. From this chart she can get his rhythm of natural response. This will tell her when to try training. She will find that, after his first few weeks, evacuations will be fewer in number, usually one or two occurring each day. For no two babies will this be the same, but for each a definite time trend is noticeable. When this exact moment is noted, the baby may be placed on a chamber or toilet-seat at just that time.

He is to learn a triple association—his evacuation, the toilet-seat, and his own satisfying effort. This is the mother’s part in his learning: (1) Be sure he can sit alone before starting. (2) Make an accurate record of his natural rhythm. (3) Time the training efforts with this record. (4) If after a few moments on the toilet he does not respond, remove him. (The mother may be pushing the baby too fast. She should wait a few days, recheck his time record, then try again.) (5) If he responds, smile and say, “That’s right, evacuate,” or some such words. Always say the same thing. Always keep the experience pleasant. In time the nerve and muscle hook-up will work properly.

Night-time control should not be expected until much later. For
many children it is not achieved until late in the second or the third year. To learn this control while he is sleeping is much harder for the baby. Training should start with his nap time. The mother may leave his diaper off telling him he is big enough to keep his bed dry during his nap. She should make it a positive suggestion. If he does not keep dry, he is not ready to learn, and the diaper should be used again for a few weeks. His plan of growth provides for his learning this control. Pushing him will not help. When he fails, he should be told that he is not old enough but he will learn. Punishment, scolding, shaming have no place in this training. Control will be achieved when the baby is ready, if he is given the proper opportunity.

When he has learned nap-time control and has practiced it a week or more, he may be ready for the longer period at night time. The same plan should be used, of suggesting to him that he can keep his bed dry at night as he does at nap time. If he fails, he should be given the assurance that he will learn.

All elimination is a natural process, and learning its control is equally natural. Patient waiting for the right time is important. A pleasant situation and kindly handling will help. "Accidents" will occur, but they too should be accepted as natural and not a cause for worry or unhappiness for either the baby or his mother. The learning is in his plan of growth, and he will learn.

B. Bladder control

Bladder control involves the inhibition of a natural impulse. The tiny baby "wets" frequently, since his diet is largely liquid. A small stomach needs to be filled often, and a small bladder emptied often. As he gets older, urination will be less frequent and more copious. The 2-year-old usually urinates only five to seven times daily.

The purpose in training is to get the baby to take on responsibility for his own comfort and cleanliness. For this he must learn to inhibit urination except when on the toilet. It requires definite development. First he must have the self-esteem that comes to him when he finds he can stand alone. He can then learn to associate his impulse to urinate with a definite place and position. Training pants can replace diapers in the daytime. For several days he should be taken to the toilet often. When he responds the mother should smile and say, "That's right, urinate." If the same words are always used, he will learn to associate them with place and action. In time he will tell for himself. If trial for a day or two shows no results, his mother should know that he is not yet ready to learn. It may be a month before he is ready for another trial.