

## Family Visit Infant Activities

### Infant Roll

After you have asked for the baby's permission, position the infant roll under the baby's arms and chest. (This position will probably be new to the baby and should not last more than 5 minutes). Ask the students to watch the baby's reaction.

- Is the baby surprised to be seeing the children from this position?
- Is the baby vocalizing to indicate if they are happy in this position or uncomfortable?

Try letting the baby push their feet against your hands so that the baby can push themselves forward. Watch for the feet to push with excitement or to try and move, depending on the baby's age.



Always ask the Roots of Empathy baby for permission to interact with them. Roots of Empathy is committed to reducing violence and preventing harm of all kinds to children. This is a message of respect for the baby and we hope that this subtle message will let children know that they also have the right to say no to unwanted touch.

### Reaching for a Toy

After asking for the baby's permission to lift them up from the roll, hold the baby facing the students and if the baby's fists are clenched, explain that babies in the first 3 months often have their fists clenched tight. If the baby in your program is older, ask the parent if they remember when the baby's fists were clenched tight.

Offer the baby a toy to see if their fingers will open and if they will try to reach for the toy. Ask questions like:

- Why might this toy be difficult for the baby to hold on to? If the baby's *first reaction* is more cautious, allow the parent to offer the toy to the baby. If the baby tries to reach for the toy when the parent offers it, ask: "Why was the baby's reaction different when I offered them the toy than when their parent offered it?"
- What do you think the baby is thinking?
- Is the baby's face telling us anything?
- Look at the baby's body, is the baby's body telling us anything?
- How is the baby feeling?

Coach the students to watch out for the baby's cues of overstimulation, tiredness, or lack of interest. During the activity, talk about how babies all react in their own way to things—that some babies might really like a certain activity and that other babies might not like it at all, depending on their temperament. Introduce the temperament trait of *activity level*.



Remember to highlight three temperament traits every Family Visit and bridge them to the students. For example, *activity level*. Say to the students: "Raise your hand if you feel that we are very active and find it hard to sit in class for a long time. Now, raise your hand if you can sit for a long time in class without feeling restless."



Also, talk about the importance of supporting the baby's head and the vulnerability of the baby's head and soft spot. Explain to the class that a baby cannot communicate through spoken language yet. Tell them to observe the baby closely because the only way for them to communicate with us is through body language and their voice.

### **Communicating**

If the parent feels comfortable, ask them to verbally communicate with the baby in an effort to have the baby communicate back. Have them make a sound or say a word to the baby that they know the baby likes to say back to them (e.g., *goo* and *gaa*). Leave time to observe this interaction between the parent and the baby.

Remember to always ask questions that are relevant to the baby's reactions and emotions that will allow students to relate what they are seeing to what you are asking (reading the baby's cues). Below are some questions you may want to ask the students:

- What is happening?
- How is the baby communicating with their parent?
- What do you think is happening in the baby's brain right now?
- What is the parent doing for the baby?

Ask for the baby's permission to engage them in this kind of communication. Prior to engaging with the baby ask the students:

- What do you think will happen if I say the same words/make the same sounds to the baby?

After making the sound to the baby, and leaving time for the students to observe, ask questions like:

- How is it different between the parent and myself?
- Why do you think this is?
- What do you think the baby is thinking?

### **Using the Foot Finder and Wrist Rattle**

Choose the Foot Finder or Wrist Rattle and ask for the baby's permission to put it on their foot or wrist. While you are putting the toy on the baby's foot or wrist, draw the students' attention to how the baby reacts.

Remember to always ask questions that are relevant to the baby's reactions and emotions that will allow students to relate what they are seeing to what you are asking (reading the baby's cues). Below are some questions you may want to ask the students:

- Did the baby notice the toy being placed on their foot or wrist? (*Sensitivity*)
- Was the baby sensitive to the toy? (Once the toy is on the baby's foot or wrist)
- Does the baby know it is there?
- Is the baby trying to take the toy off or are they leaving it where it is?
- What do you think the baby is thinking?

Explain to the students that a baby's awareness of their feet is limited because development takes place in a top-down direction with the upper part of the body developing dexterity before

the lower. We are going to do this again when the baby is older to see if the baby notices later on to see what their reaction is.

With the toy on the baby's wrist or foot, sing a song. Ask for the baby's permission to move their hands or feet with the song. Songs such as *Pat-a-Cake* or *If You're Happy and You Know It* work well with this activity or allow the students to pick a clapping song. After singing the song, ask the students questions about how the baby was feeling such as:

- What do you think the baby was thinking while we sang that song?
- How did the baby feel about it?
- What was the baby's face showing?
- What is the baby's body telling us?

### **Rolling Over**

Ask the parent if the baby has tried to roll over at home and if they have a preferred side to roll over on. Many babies start to roll around 4 months.

Ask for the baby's permission to put them on their back on the Green Blanket. While the baby is on their back, take a toy that they might be interested in and place it on either their left or right side. Shake the toy and see if you can get the baby's attention.

Remember to always ask questions that are relevant to the baby's reactions and emotions that will allow students to relate what they are seeing to what you are asking (reading the baby's cues). Below are some questions you may want to ask the students:

- Is the baby moving a lot? A little? Do you think our baby has a high *activity level* or a low *activity level*.
- Is the baby easily frustrated when trying to get the toy? Or does the baby keep trying? (*persistence*)
- If the baby cannot do this yet, do you think that the baby will be able to do this next time they visit?

Let the students know that if this is a “not yet” for the baby, you will continue to try this and see if the baby will be able to do it next time.