

Embracing the Joy & Fostering Resilience, One Milestone at a Time

Prenatal-18 Months

| Age | Joyful Milestone | What ALSO to Expect | One Connection Activity | One Stress Lowering Strategy for Parents | One Strategy for you, Child or their Siblings |
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| Prenatal | You're almost ready to deliver! | You can't sleep, your body aches and baby's feet are kicking your liver. | Try toes-to-nose and check in with your whole body, noticing the sensations that are yours and the ones you share. | When you notice something that hurts or aches or doesn't feel good, use relaxation breathing. | Babies can hear you around the seventh month of gestation. Talk to baby, play soothing music, or sing them your favorite lullaby. |
| | You (and maybe your partner) have developed an elaborate birth plan. | The doctor tells you you have to have a c-section and you feel like nothing is going to go as planned. | Reframe your parenting journey right out of the gate with the emphasis on connection not control. Whatever happens, we're in this together, baby! | Fill out a Stress Reduction Plan. Draw on evidence based stress busters to help you through the end of pregnancy. | Singing to baby can help you lower your stress level and begins the process of auditory connection which you can rely on later when things are challenging. |
| | You are excited to grow your family. | Baby's older siblings feel worried and start acting out more. | Spend time as a family doing activities. If you're on bedrest for the end of the pregnancy, read books and watch movies together in bed. | Feeling overwhelmed is normal. Try pausing for 5 big deep breaths. Talk about feelings with your kids. Normalize how hard this may seem and reassure them you're there for them. | Teach baby's siblings how to do glitter jar meditation and box breathing. Explain how when baby's here, you may sometimes be busy and they'll need to use these tools until you're done. |
| Birth | Congrats! Baby arrives and you can't believe how much you love them! | You suddenly notice your emotions go haywire, you feel anxious and worried and cry more easily. | Spend time doing nothing but letting your baby sleep on you with skin-to-skin contact. This practice is very grounding. | If your mind is yelling at you to get up and do something, this is normal! Notice that and try toes-to-nose while doing skin-to-skin time with baby. | It may seem like baby doesn't "want" to snuggle. Most likely, baby's having a hard time regulating. Try white noise or singing songs. |
| | You're taking baby home for the first time! | In the car, baby is crying despite everything you try! You feel helpless. | You aren't doing anything wrong. You've both been through many changes. Try singing the same songs you sang while pregnant. | Don't worry if baby doesn't stop crying. They can hear you and know you are there. Singing helps to lower your stress level too! | Your voice helps baby, but they may keep crying. Try white noise, raising the volume as loud as baby's cry and lowering it as they quiet. |
| | You are excited to breastfeed. | You notice you're letting down anytime you hear baby cry. | This is normal, use a milk collection cup. When nursing, put your phone down and drink water. | If you are having a hard time letting down, it may be stress. Try a sensory mindfulness technique. | Try singing to baby if your milk lets down before you can get ready for baby to latch. |
| | Your baby is taking a bottle well! | You feel grief about not breastfeeding. | You are feeding baby nutrients they need and there is nothing wrong with bottle feeding! | If your mind tells you you're doing it wrong, try relaxation breathing and remember, you've got this! | Feedings are connection time. Stay engaged with eye contact and facial expressions. |
| 2 Weeks | Baby is suddenly growing out of all their clothes! | The growth spurt means baby may seem like they want to eat all the time. | Think of feedings as a time to connect with baby. Make eye contact and you can sing softly while they are feeding if this helps you connect. | Practice self-validation (eg "Yes, this is hard. Anyone would feel tired feeding baby every hour.") and take care of yourself: naps when possible, water and food. | Once you know baby's hunger cues and breastfeeding is established, ask your doctor if you can use a pacifier to help them fall asleep when full. |
| | Baby's big/older sibling loves the new baby. | Baby's big/older sibling starts to acts out more to get your attention. | Spend alone time with big sibling when baby sleeps. Talk to big sibling about this during the day, asking them what they want to do with you this evening and share excitement. | Keep a journal on your kitchen counter. Try writing a few sentences about one feeling that overwhelmed you during the day. Review NICER Parenting and use it when you can with the sibling(s). | Talk to the siblings about how you're also going through this change, but you still love them. Teach healthy coping skills, and encourage them to use these when they have to wait. |
| 1 Month | Baby's ability to see clearly is increasing! | You notice baby gets woken easily from naps and becomes fussy when you least expect it. | Overstimulation is easy at this age. Keep baby's room dark and play white noise. Return to the room frequently during the day and hold baby to your chest. | A crying baby can stress your nervous system and make it hard to focus. Try taking deep breaths or ask someone to watch baby so you can go for a walk alone. | Play baby in utero white noise (a cross between a jet engine and a vacuum cleaner) as this recreates familiar, soothing sounds and helps baby regulate. |
| | Those long awaited snuggles are here! | Colic happens. No matter what you do, baby cries and you can't console them. You may feel like you're doing it wrong. | You're not doing it wrong. An infant's nervous system is immature for months after they're born.. Try walking and singing while holding baby. | When you are walking, try walking meditation. Don't hesitate to take a break and asking another trusted adult to care for baby. | Check with your pediatrician and make sure baby is not in pain from something else. Ask about pacifiers in addition to swaddling and white noise. Bring baby into a dark, low stimulation room. |
| 2 Months | Baby is smiling at you! | Baby's increased awareness can lead to more fussiness and overstimulation. | If baby has a clean diaper and isn't tired or hungry but still fussy, try infant massage in a dark room. No screens! | Having trouble figuring out what baby needs? Try loving kindness meditation or 5 deep breaths. | Try laying baby in their crib with the lights off, and white noise. Offer a pacifier if the pediatrician say it's okay. |
| | Baby is feeding and growing well. | You had hoped for a routine but there is nothing consistent day to day. | Embrace the messiness of not having any recognizable routine. This won't last forever. | Too tired to find humor in the chaos? Ask for help from a friend or family member so you can take a nap. | Have a process to respond to baby's needs. See if baby is tired, gassy, or hungry. Watch for sleepiness signs. |
| | Baby is starting to settle into a routine (finally!). | You thought you would be sleeping for longer, but baby wants to eat every 2-3 hours at night. | If there are two parents, have one parent do the 2am feeding so the other can have more uninterrupted sleep. | Ask a family member or friend to sleep over so you can get a 4-6 hour stretch of sleep. You'll feel like new! | Offer baby in utero background noise at night so little noises won't startle them awake before they would wake for a feeding. |
| 4 Months | Your baby starts to "talk" to you. | Baby may seem more fussy and harder to console. | Baby may be bored! Try walking around the house with baby, telling them what you see. | When feeling overwhelmed, take 5 big deep breaths and then return to parenting. Do this frequently. | Give baby something to look at if you need to do chores such as a mobile, a mirror or the fish tank. |
| | Baby starts to giggle. | Baby gets bored | Reciprocal interactions are fun at this age and help with boredom. Pretend you are having a conversation with baby and coo back. | Go easy on yourself if you feel tired and don't enjoy parenting. Ask someone to watch baby and try a self-care strategy you used before you had baby. | Baby's need for interaction will lead them to try to get your attention. As much as you can - give it to them! You won't spoil them, this is connection. |
| 6 Months | Baby is teething and soon will have their first tooth! | Baby may not be sleeping well and you think it is a sleep regression | Imagine what it is like to be baby and feel teeth coming through your gums. This is confusing and it hurts. | Make sure you are taking time to eat. When walking to check on crying baby, try walking meditation. | Use a wet washcloth that has been frozen and rub baby's gums with it while reassuring them that this is okay. |
| | Baby can finally start eating solids! | You think that baby hates vegetables | Model eating the foods you are offering. The first time baby tries a new food, they'll think you are feeding them non-food. They look to you to know it's okay! | Puree the veggies you prepare and eat them with baby. Use mindfulness to notice the texture, flavor and feel as you share this exciting moment. | Try to give baby your full attention when you are feeding them. |
| 9 Months | Baby loves playing peek-a-boo. | Baby's separation anxiety means they cry when you drop them off at daycare. | Undistracted (no phone!) one on one time supports connection and fortifies baby for the separation. | Relaxation breathing and loving kindness meditation. | Have baby take a transitional item (like a blanket) with them to daycare. Make sure this doesn't stay with them in bed. |
| | Baby is starting to sleep through the night. | Baby is also pulling to stand and pulls up on the side of the crib at and cries with arms up until you pick them up. | Reassure baby that you are there; you can try singing through a monitor or rub their back. You won't ruin them by picking them up! | If baby wakes up early, try to align your sleep schedule with theirs so you go to bed earlier. Pre-midnight sleep is more restful! | A mobile with projection lights can act as an easy baby "meditation" strategy when they gaze at the moving spots of light. |
| | Baby can pick things up with a pincer grasp. | Baby picks up pieces of fluff or debris from the floor and puts it in their mouth. | Sit with baby when they're eating and make a game out of eating and try the puffs with them. | Take a night off and hire a babysitter so you can do something that feels like "old you" before parenthood. | Teach baby sign language or simple words like "bye-bye." Communication helps baby understand what is happening. |
| | Baby takes their first steps! | Baby seems to be falling all the time. | Talk about what baby is learning to do with them and make eye contact. Avoid always being on your phone when you're with baby. | Feeling overwhelmed with too much to do? When you notice a thought arise just let it pass like a cloud (unless it is safety related!) | Start talking about feelings. Help baby understand unpleasant feelings and that sometimes things feel hard and that's okay you're right there with them. |
| 1 Year | Baby's first tooth is here! | No matter what you try, baby hates having their teeth brushed. | Make brushing teeth fun by saying "my turn, your turn!" and use a fun toothbrush with characters or lights/music. | Sing baby's favorite song while you are brushing their teeth to help calm your own nervous system even if they're crying. | Let baby explore the toothbrush when you're not trying to brush their teeth so they can establish a sense of safety with it. |
| | Baby no longer needs formula or a bottle. | Baby refuses to drink from anything but a bottle. | Instead of fighting over the bottle, wean what is in the bottle very slowly by adding a little extra water each day. Make it less interesting and make the cup fun! Drink out of a similar cup to model. | Take at least 5 big deep breaths before offering the cup and use SUNBEAM: don't take it personally when your child doesn't want it. Break the problem into small manageable bites and transition slowly. | Use language to validate your child's experience ("I understand this is frustrating. You don't like this cup.") and then take a break and try again later when your little one is regulated. |
| 15 Months | Baby loves exploring and is walking well. | Baby is curious and pulls things off the counter in the kitchen or bathroom by the cord. | Baby proof the counters and make a safe play area for baby in each room where you don't have to keep saying "no." Sit in the area with them and play. | Do sensory mindfulness with your child. | Distract baby with sensory mindfulness games and point to the item: Can you hear the dishwasher? Can you smell the pie mommy is making? |
| | Baby enjoys playing with balls and other toys. | Baby is too excited playing doesn't want to go to sleep. | Space play and nap/bedtime apart. Baby may need to go from a high energy activity to a lower energy one, then to singing, then reading and snuggling. | Singing is a great way to calm your own nervous system and help baby transition. You can engage them with a fun song with motions and then transition them away from play. | Hearing a familiar song is soothing for your child and can help with transitions, especially those from high to low energy. |
| 18 Months | Baby may be able to speak in short phrases. | Starts to yell No! | Ask your child questions as though they can answer in full sentences. Pause and allow them to respond in their own "language." Nod and respond. | Baby's language is just emerging and the use of "no" can feel frustrating. Take a few deep breaths, remember SUNBEAM, and don't take it personally. | Model pausing for one big deep breath, breathing in all the way into their belly and then exhaling for as long as they can when they feel frustrated. |
| | Baby starts to help get themselves dressed! | Your child's sense of what they do or don't want is becoming stronger and they may object to certain outfits. | Increase sense of agency by giving your child a choice between items or outfits that are appropriate. | Breathe. Don't take your child's expression of self determination personally. Do a quick body scan and check in with yourself: perhaps your heart is racing and you're stressed? | Humor can help a child let go of frustration. Try giving the inanimate thing they wanted a personality: "Mr Shoes apparently has to stay home today. He's not feeling good and needs a rest..." |
| | Loves playful interactions with you and other familiar caregivers. | Doesn't like strangers and throws a "tantrum" at family gatherings. | Before a gathering where your child will be expected to interact with people they're not familiar with, show them photos and tell them stories of who they will meet. | Give yourself permission to break from the family and spend some time one on one. You're not coddling your child, you're simply reassuring them that you are right there with them through this. | When your child stays with a babysitter they don't know well, they may feel scared. A transitional item and talking to them about what you're going to do when you return can help. |
| | Your child begins to have preferences for certain activities like swinging outside. | When they can't have what they want, they may appear to "lose it" and have a "tantrum". | Instead of seeing your child as having a "fit" or a "tantrum," try to imagine how they're feeling. Are they frustrated? Disappointed? Do they need help with that big feeling? | Try relaxation breathing and remember, this is temporary, the goal is to stay connected with your child. If you misinterpreted what is going on, that's okay! Most parents get it wrong 70% of the time and that's okay. Focus on repair and reconnection. | Think about what consistently soothes your child. Maybe it is snuggling with the dog or cuddling a favorite stuffy. Validate how frustrating life can be sometimes, model the coping skill you have identified and say "I am right here with you. I know this is hard." |