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Mothering Matters

Parenting in Switzerland

LOVE AFFAIRS

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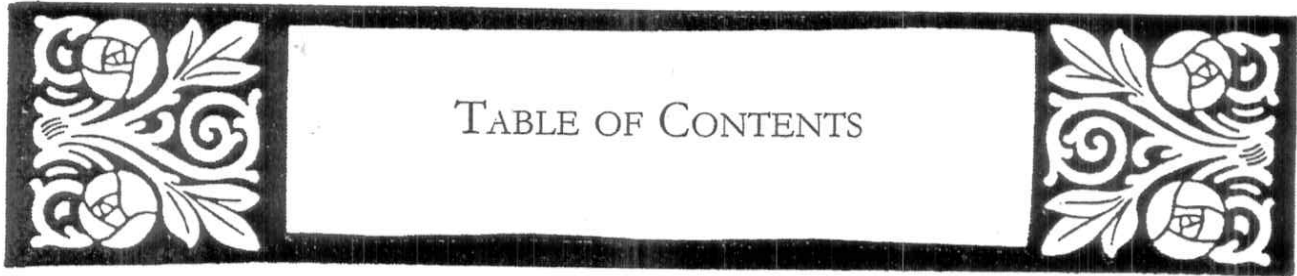


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LOVING PARENTS, HAPPY BABIES

Amalia Burca

Amalia is a Public Health Nurse/Educator currently pursuing her Masters in Science from King's College, London. She is also having two health-related books published as well as setting up her business related to Child/Parent Health.

All infants cry. They cry to communicate their needs, to express themselves, and to manage and organize stress, or “let off steam.” Parents can expect most babies under three months old to cry up to three hours per day. As most parents come to realize, caring for a baby can be difficult at times. Parents will have days when they feel overwhelmed, exhausted and frustrated.

Keep in mind that because healthy babies cry both to communicate and to express themselves, providing comfort to an infant doesn't necessarily mean stopping or preventing him from crying. It is okay (and important) for infants to have some opportunity to cry each day. You can hold, sing to, or talk to a crying infant and be assured that you are still providing comfort even if the crying doesn't stop immediately.

Each baby's needs and preferences for receiving comfort are different. Parents are encouraged to seek different comforting techniques at different times to see what works best for your baby. If a certain comforting technique doesn't succeed when you first use it, try it again at a later date and you may find that your baby responds. As long as you are providing safe comfort measures, do whatever works for your child. Babies often respond to calming techniques that involve soothing, rhythmic sounds, visual stimulation, rhythmic motions, or close physical contact and touching.

It can be helpful to plan your activities schedule around Baby's schedule. For example, don't plan to run an errand when you know your baby will probably be tired or hungry, or try to fit too many tasks into too short a time frame with him or her in tow. This will help reduce the stress your baby experiences during the day and may thereby decrease crying incidents.

One way to avoid becoming overwhelmed is taking steps to create the most peaceful environment possible at home for Baby. Of course, in order to provide quality care and comfort for your baby, you will first and foremost have to take care of yourself. If you make self-care a priority, you'll find that your baby as well as you and your family are more likely to be comfortable as well. Think of caring for *you* as part of your responsibility to your family! Here are some important things to consider:

- ❖ Slow down your lifestyle: limit your chores and responsibilities only to those that absolutely must be attended to for now; use as much of your time and energy as possible to focus on Baby, yourself, and your family.
- ❖ Alter your expectations. Parenthood and/or your child may not be as you had expected; re-examining and adjusting your perceptions and expectations can help.

- ❖ If you are experiencing stress within your family, consider what may need to change at home to create a calm, peaceful environment.
- ❖ Strengthen communications with your partner and express support and respect to your partner (even when sometimes you may not feel like it).
- ❖ Take better care of yourself by:
 - delegating tasks to friends and family
 - getting more rest
 - eating a healthy diet
 - allowing yourself regular breaks from your parenting responsibilities
 - seeking support and education through parenting support groups, Early Childhood Family Education classes, or family counselling
 - making time each day for you and baby to get some outdoor exercise if weather and climate permit. Physical movement and fresh air can help to renew your energy, encourage a positive attitude, and lift your mood.
- ❖ Learn about child development, child health, and effective and safe behavior management. This information can help you understand and deal with your baby's behavior and changing needs. Call your hospital for information about parenting education classes, or look for books in your local library.



- ❖ Talk with other parents about the ways they cope with the demands of childcare.
- ❖ Take short relaxation breaks when you can. For example, listen to your favorite music, take a relaxing bath, or do breathing exercises while your baby naps.
- ❖ Ask for help when you need time for yourself. Ask trusted friends or family members to take care of your baby, or trade a few hours of occasional babysitting with a friend who has a child. If you do not have this kind of support, contact your health professional or local hospital for community organizations that can help you.
- ❖ Understand that the average baby cries from one to five hours out of every 24 during his or her first few months of life. Sometimes a crying spell can last 15 minutes to an hour for no obvious reason. Crying peaks around six weeks, then gradually decreases.

Learn to recognize the signs of a dangerous situation developing. Create a list of available support people and keep it next to your phone. Include those who are able to come to your home to assist you as well as those who may simply provide support via telephone. These should be people on whom you know you can count, and who have a positive outlook on parenting and life in general. They should be understanding, good and empathetic listeners, and above all reliable.



Here are some further important points for parents who are feeling desperate:

- ❖ If you feel that you've reached the limit of your ability to cope and need a break but there is no one available to care for your child, find a safe place for your baby (either in his crib or, if Baby is within your sight and hearing, on a blanket, bouncy seat, car seat, or infant swing) and go into another room to calm down. Call a friend or family member to come over and relieve you for a while.
- ❖ Do not shake your baby under any circumstances. Even mild shaking can cause permanent damage or death. Set your baby down gently on a blanket or in his crib if you think you may be inclined to shake or cause harm.
- ❖ If you believe you are experiencing loss-of-control, you have a desire to harm your baby, or if you feel that you may hurt yourself or another family member, seek professional assistance from your family doctor, another medical professional, or any of the crisis organizations listed in your area. A wide range of professionals is available for you to contact, and they understand what you're experiencing. They won't judge or criticize you and are trained specifically to *support and assist you*.

Quite often, it is hard to reach out for support when you are feeling helpless and exhausted; however, it is during such times that you most need *and deserve* help. At times, society can give the impression to parents that they ought to be self-sufficient in managing the complexities of parenting without much help, when nothing could be further from the truth. This

is an important time to learn to rely on the love and support of friends and family and to use the many professional parenting resources available today. Established crisis, family, and parenting assistance organizations exist for the very purpose to ensure that parents receive the support and advice they need. More often than you think, help is as close as a quick phone call away. Parents find that friends, family, and others like them are happy to help; all you need do is to ask for assistance and to make your specific needs understood. Your baby depends on you to provide loving and nurturing care; it is okay to need help and it is important that you reach out and ask for it. ✦

SOS! HELP NEEDED!

The Mothering Matters team urgently needs training support for the InDesign desktop publishing tool as well as an extra copy editor. Otherwise this could be the last year for our wonderful magazine. Please contact Yvette at: merzbacheryvette@bluewin.ch.