



Baby Language

Seasoned parents will tell you that they can sense what their baby needs, merely from listening to the sounds that it makes. It can take a bit of time, however, for parents to learn to interpret these sounds, and the learning process can be exasperating. Priscilla Dunstan, a mother herself, observed that her infant son made different sounds at different times, depending on what he needed. She found that he consistently used five assorted sounds, each with its own meaning. Intrigued, she noted that other babies used the exact same five sounds. While many parents find that they independently learn to recognise their baby's needs through sounds and facial expressions, others have been delighted to refer to the Dunstan's Baby Language DVD's, taking a shortcut to understanding their baby's emotions.

Facial Expressions and Body Language

Well before they can express themselves in the language spoken by their parents, babies show their emotions using both facial expressions and body language. Silvan Tomkins theorised that there are nine "affects" that make emotions clear through exhibiting specific facial expressions and/or body language, applying to babies, as well as to those older. They are as follows:

- Positive:
Enjoyment/Joy - lips wide and out, smiling
- Interest/Excitement - eyebrows down, eyes tracking, eyes looking, closer listening
- Neutral:
Surprise/Startle - eyebrows up, eyes blinking
- Negative:
Anger/Rage - a clenched jaw, frowning, a red face
- Disgust - head forward and down, the lower lip raised and protruded
- Dissmell (reaction to bad smell) - upper lip raised, head pulled back
- Distress/Anguish - crying, sobbing, mouth lowered, arched eyebrows
- Fear/Terror - frozen stare, pale face, sweat, coldness, erect hair
- Shame/Humiliation - the head down and averted, blushing, eyes lowered



General Age Guidelines

6 to 12 Months

Stranger anxiety and separation anxiety both appear during the second half of a baby's first year. Babies will cry, often intensely, when they are feeling fearful. Fortunately, this time frame is also marked by a baby's increasing enjoyment of social interaction with familiar loved ones, and often, first words and delighted squeals accompany their joyful expressions.



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12 to 18 Months

As babies become toddlers, they tend to show a side of themselves that mum and dad may not enjoy quite as much as their bubbly-baby side. Frustration and anger are commonplace as toddlers learn to assert their desires. Parents can take comfort in knowing that not only are displays of temper perfectly natural at this age, but the tendency to lash out will subside a bit as toddlers expand both their physical and verbal skills.



At about 18 months, parents will notice that their babies are beginning to express emotions that relate to the feelings that others are experiencing. For example, when a sibling cries or seems sad, an 18 month old may show signs of empathy. This is heartening for parents to witness, as it is a certain sign that their baby's emotional quotient is increasing.



Book Review *The Gift of Nothing*

"The Gift of Nothing" is a wonderful and sweet story about two friends: Mooch the cat and Earl the dog. Mooch decided to offer his friend a gift. But this task seems not so effortless as Earl has everything he needs.

Mooch starts his searches for perfect gift but "What do you get someone who has everything?" he wonders. The answer, of course, is nothing! Mooch would give his best friend Earl the gift of nothing. But where should one find nothing?

It is a funny but simple and sensible story of friendship with a phenomenal ending. The way Mooch solves his problem is heartening and reminds the reader that the greatest gift we can offer is our friendship. Mooch proves that nothing can be everything and that everything has nothing to do with the 'things'. We do not need to go far to find perfect gift for someone we love. We can always find the gift of nothing deep in our hearts.

The Gift of Nothing



• PATRICK McDONNELL •





Fostering Pluralism During the Early Years

According to Webster's dictionary, pluralism means a situation in which people of different social classes, religions, races, etc. are together in a society but continue to have their different traditions and interests. It is the belief that everyone should live together embracing each other's differences.

Fostering pluralism among communities, but also specifically among children in early childhood and school age settings is critical for promoting a prosperous, peaceful, and harmonious global society

Recommendations

Create Early Childhood Education classrooms that are composed of children from diverse backgrounds –

- Not only diversity in race/ethnicity,
- But also in religious/spiritual beliefs, gender, and socioeconomic status



Invite honest, "non sanitized" conversations about diversity and global society

- Allow children to ask questions freely
- Discuss experiences (positive and negative) with individuals from other cultural backgrounds and those with different belief systems

Foster peer-to-peer interaction between and among children from different backgrounds

- Join a play group
- Take children to the community library for story hour/activities
- Allow children to interact with other children freely and ask questions about other cultures
- Seek out other community activities (e.g. Young Men's Christian Association)

Foster teacher-child interactions between and among adults and children from different backgrounds

- Intentionally pair children and adults from different cultures (e.g., consider diversity when selecting a caregiver or babysitter)
- Consider Early Childhood Education programs/schools with a diverse teaching staff



The Early Childhood Chronicle An Aga Khan Education Board Initiative

Dear Parents and Carers,

Please take a few minutes to share your feedback on the Early childhood Chronicle and any topics you would like included via eced@iuk.org

A very big thank you to all our writers and contributors for all their hard work, creativity and insights. We are truly very grateful.

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