

9-MONTH

PROMOTING FIRST RELATIONSHIPS Connecting Strategies

Way of Being

Before the Visit, Reflect and Wonder

“What might the baby be experiencing at this age?”

“What might the parent be experiencing?”

Observations

Notice and Describe for Families

- Baby cues of hunger, satiety, sleepiness, engagement and disengagement. This help parents see these cues more readily at home and to learn and respond to their baby’s needs.
- Parent responds sensitively to cues and follows their baby’s lead
- Parent soothes and comforts their baby (alleviation of distress)
- Baby’s response to being laid down on the exam table (e.g. scared, stressed) and then how the baby checks their parents face to make sure they are safe and becomes comforted
- Baby visually explores the room or engages with you from the comfort and safety of the parent’s arms
- Baby tolerates exam better in the safety of the parent’s arms or lap
- Reciprocal babbling
- Shared delight
- Joint attention skills such as following the parent’s gaze, following a point and showing objects (all of which unfold from the relationship)

PFR Strategies—Examples

Based on your observations and following the family’s lead, use the below strategies during your visits.

Joining Questions

- What new things is your baby doing?
- What are you enjoying most about this age?
- How is it going, now that your baby thinks he’s “so big?”
- What is it like for you as your baby grows older and has such big ideas and emotions?

Strengths-Based Positive Feedback

- I’ve noticed how she checks in with you when she sees something she likes or doesn’t like.
- He is so social and interactive. I can see your family must be doing a lot of talking back and forth with him.
- I can see how much you delight in her! Both of you just light up when you’re together.
- That was really nice how you instantly read her subtle cue for needing a little snack after our visit.

Positive Instructive Feedback

- It really helped to examine her in your lap, instead of on the exam table. She was so much happier and calmer being closer to you. When babies have their parent close by during times of stress, it helps them feel safe, secure, and less stressed.
- You did such a nice job talking to your baby when he was upset after I had to take the stethoscope away from him. He really recovered very quickly with your help. When babies feel supported in their distress through connections with their parents (touch, words), it helps them learn how to soothe themselves and make things right when they are upset.
- It’s really great how you and your baby check in by looking at each other while I’m examining her. This reciprocal back and forth communication helps her learn you are there for her and paying close attention to what she needs. This helps her feel safe and secure.
- Your baby is so easily comforted by you, even after so many shots! You are helping him learn to manage his emotions which will be an important skill throughout his whole life.

Supporting Reflective Capacity

- How are you feeling about how fast your baby is growing and changing?
- What is it like for you now that your baby is starting to protest more?
- What has it been like for you as your baby gets more worried about strangers and fusses when you leave the room?
- How is it for you to handle all the big feelings and help your baby calm down after she is upset or distressed?