

PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

for the adventure of family life



06_Mindful baby care

The baby is here! What a joy! And for many parents a new challenge too. How to deal with the little human being? What needs to be considered? Am I doing everything right?

Hungarian paediatrician Emmi Pikler (1902-1984) recognised it as early as the 1930s: We can communicate with an infant from birth, and it will respond and feel understood. Empathetic and successful interplay conveys trust and security to the infant and helps it develop a good basic feeling for life. At the same time, it gives parents a sense of security and competence in dealing with their child.

Be there with all your heart

Caring for your baby in particular offers an excellent opportunity to get to know each other and build a trusting relationship. How the infant is cared for shapes its perception of itself and the world, sense of self and sense of self-worth.

While you are caring for the infant—diaper changing, bathing, feeding, dressing—you are with it. Use this time to give it your full attention. Be there with all your heart. For example, by turning off the phone while you feed or change the baby.

Talk to your baby

Include it in the care by talking to it. Always tell it what you are going to do next and pause to see the reaction. For sure, it won't understand what you're saying at first, but over time it'll be able to read the tone of your voice and associate the words with your actions. Think of your baby as an active participant, rather than a passive recipient of your nurturing actions.

Over time, it will stretch its arms out to you if you tell it you want to put on its jacket. In this way you get more and more into an interaction that will make both of you happy. This active sharing of what you're doing next makes the baby feel valued as a human being. Thus, it is not an object with which something is simply done, but takes part in what is happening. The child feels seen and senses that someone is genuinely interested in it. That strengthens its personality.

Time to refuel

"Make the care time something very special, as a time to recharge your batteries, as a time for intimate togetherness", writes Magda Gerber, author of the book: *Dein Baby zeigt dir den Weg* (Your Baby Shows You the Way). It is good for both adults and children if they allow themselves to calm down before caring for the child. This calm enables two things: On the one hand, you slow down and it is easier for the child to participate in the actions. On the other hand, inner peace enables one to feel joy. Joy on the care giver's face makes the child feel valued. Joy experienced by the adult while caring for the infant also nourishes it and makes it feel valuable.

Especially when it comes to care, the baby has a variety of experiences and feels itself and other people when it is touched. This is what Emmi Pikler talks about in the book: *Friedliche Babys – zufriedene Mütter* (Peaceful Babies - Happy Mothers). "The hands form the infant's first relationship with the world. Hands pick it up, lay it down, wash it, clothe it, feed it. It makes a difference: How different is the picture of the world that reveals itself to the baby when calm, patient, careful, but nevertheless sure and determined hands deal with it - and how completely different is the world when these hands are impatient, rough or hasty, restless and nervous. In the beginning, the hands mean everything to the baby, they are the person, the world."

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