



Especially for New Parents

What's Going On Here?

The first few months of life with a new baby are filled with multiple emotions for parents. Most parents experience joy, anxiety, frustration, exhilaration and fatigue; often all at the same time. What parent has not gazed lovingly at that small bundle and wondered "What is going on in there and how can I be the best possible care-taker?" The answer to these questions lies in a basic understanding of the physical and emotional development of the early months of life.

Why Do They Cry So Much?

A young baby's focus is inward, responding to internal cues having to do with comfort versus discomfort. Your baby is a bundle of reflexes responding to an array of sensations. When an infant is hungry, in pain, wet or soiled, too cold or too warm, or placed in an uncomfortable position, their immature nervous system can become overwhelmed and baby begins to fuss or cry. Once this mechanism is triggered it can be difficult to shut off. As any parent knows, there are few emotions worse than the feeling of helplessness that parents experience when trying to calm an unhappy baby who just can't seem to settle down! Those of us who have raised a family can think back to all the techniques we tried in desperation: long car rides round and round the block, running the washing machine to provide "white noise" even though every last towel and shirt in the house were already clean. Those of us who were lucky stumbled upon something that worked, while others suffered through months of sleepless nights (and exhaustingly long days) feeling as though somehow we had failed as parents. We were often told to just "muscle" through the first three months as baby's digestive and nervous system developed and matured.

What Can I Do?

Luckily, parents today have some new and developmentally sound alternatives to calming a fussy baby. Commonwealth Parenting has certified family educators who can teach the "**Happiest Baby on the Block**" program developed by Dr. Harvey Karp, M.D., a pediatrician and child development specialist at U.C.L.A. The program takes parents through four easy steps which when used together have been incredibly effective in calming the majority of babies whose parents have been through the training. The technique is taught during one session and involves little more tools than a square blanket and what Dr. Karp refers to as the "Cuddle Cure."

In addition to the Happiest Baby on the Block, Commonwealth Parenting offers **Infant Massage**, one of our most popular classes. Infant massage, practiced by many cultures for centuries, has increasingly grown in popularity since its introduction to the United States in the 1970's. A certified family educator helps parents learn hands-on techniques for soothing young babies while building a close and loving bond. Infant massage is relaxing for both parent and baby. The benefits of infant massage for babies include a sounder and longer sleep, relief from fussiness, an aid to digestion, and improved circulation.

We hope all parents can experience those first few days and months with their newborn as a joyful and fulfilling time. Armed with a few good tricks in your diaper bag, a peaceful, cooing little one should be a reality for most families!