

## **Soothed not Shaken**

Shaking has its place when it comes to mixing martinis or getting dirt off your clothes – but not when it comes to handling babies. When an adult gets the urge to shake a baby it is usually because they have run out of skills to comfort the baby. Here are some suggestions for helping you comfort your baby and learn to enjoy your time together:

### **Become an observer of your baby and learn to read non-spoken “language”.**

Did you know that only 10% of our language is from actual spoken word? So, even though your baby doesn't have words to tell you what her needs are, you still have 90% of her “language” – body movement, eyes, cries and other sounds - you can understand. Take a little time to watch and observe. Your baby has her cycle of sleeping and being awake, and will give you cues to tell you when she is going from being awake to being ready for a nap. She can also communicate when she is hungry or has a dirty diaper.

Watch her movements, listen to her sounds, look closely at her face – you know your baby best and by observing will get to know what she is trying to tell you. When you learn your baby's cues and respond to them your baby will trust you and cry less. She will learn that you know her cue for being hungry or for being sleeping. In turn, when you respond to the cue, she will learn to communicate in other ways and cry less.

### **See the situation from your baby's perspective.**

What all did your baby do today? What noises, sights and sounds did he experience? Your baby is learning the environment and world around him. This is exciting, but also can be stressful for the baby. When your baby is older, he will learn how to let go of the stress, but now he needs you to help regulate stress levels.

Be calm and hold your baby close. If you have him close to you, he will be able to feel your calmness in new situations. Rather than put your baby in a car seat, swing or stroller, carry him next to you. This closeness helps you get to know each other. The more you respond to your baby appropriately, the less your baby will need to cry. Less crying is a great stress reliever for you and your baby.

### **Just relax!**

If you're tense, this will transfer to your baby. Take a few deep breathes, relax your shoulders and just be there with your baby. Once you are relaxed, help your baby to relax with nurturing touch. Take a few minutes to just be with your baby and stroke her. You may just want to hold her in your arms close to you and stroke down her back, maybe do some circles down on side and up the other.

You'll get to know your baby better through nurturing touch. Touch is one of the senses that helps your baby learn about the world. Stroking him lets him know you love him. Your one-on-one attention helps to build your relationship. When you stroke your baby you become aware of his body and what he likes and dislikes; this helps you know your baby and respond to better to his cues. You become more attuned to each other – and then you're both happier!

Your baby was born with skills and talents to draw you in to love them and to take care of them. Take some time to learn to read your baby's non-spoken cues and just enjoy your time together. The pay-offs are enormous for both you and your baby.