



Listen, Listen, Listen

LISTEN UNIT

This unit is about listening. Listening is a key part of communication. It is a skill that is hard for all of us, but it is one of the secret ingredients in parenting. Parents who learn how to listen to their babies are happier with parenting and have easier, more modulated babies. Babies can seem to be a puzzle. This unit is designed to help put the puzzle together. By learning to listen to their baby, parents will be able to interpret what the baby is saying and needing. It is the baby who can help solve the puzzle.

This volume will explain how we communicate with our feelings. It examines how the feelings of both baby and parent or caregiver must inform and regulate one another. Emotional signals are the language of infancy. When we listen to a baby's feelings, we respond with our hearts.

By considering how a baby is feeling when he or she is asleep, alert, or fussy, parents practice proactive empathy. They begin to understand their baby's needs and share an emotional connection.

By considering their own feelings when their baby is asleep, alert, or fussy, parents will understand themselves better. They will want to learn to set limits on their behavior and to quietly guide and regulate their baby.

Conversely, very young babies can read the face, touch, and excitement level of their parents and are influenced by them. Even the smallest infant needs social interaction as much as food and sleep. Babies need parents to talk quietly to them, to stroke their bodies, to wrap them snugly and hold them close. This kind of interpersonal communication enhances human development.

Babies learn about relationships, language, and cooperation from the way parents listen and respond to them. It starts with a pattern of listening first — then problem solving together. This establishes the baby as a separate individual with separate feelings. Babies are born ready to help us take care of them. If parents know how to listen to their baby, their time together will be easier and more satisfying.