

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.

Introducing the Unit

Overview:

In this unit we are using an expanded definition of “listening.” This skill includes not only listening and hearing, but also watching, empathizing, and responding to what babies are trying to tell us. Sometimes babies can be a puzzle — they tune in and tune out of the world around them and give us signals with their faces and bodies about how they are feeling and what they need. When a caregiver learns how to listen and respond to these signals and to think about the feelings a baby is communicating, the mystifying task of caring for an infant becomes fun. Step by step, this unit will help parents recognize these signals and learn how to “read their baby.”

Read:

LISTEN TO YOUR BABY

Listen, Listen, Listen
What do babies say?

Listen, Listen, Listen
They'll show you the way.

Listen, Listen, Listen
Babies signal what they need.

Hey, Mama, ... It's so easy
When you let your baby lead.

Discuss:

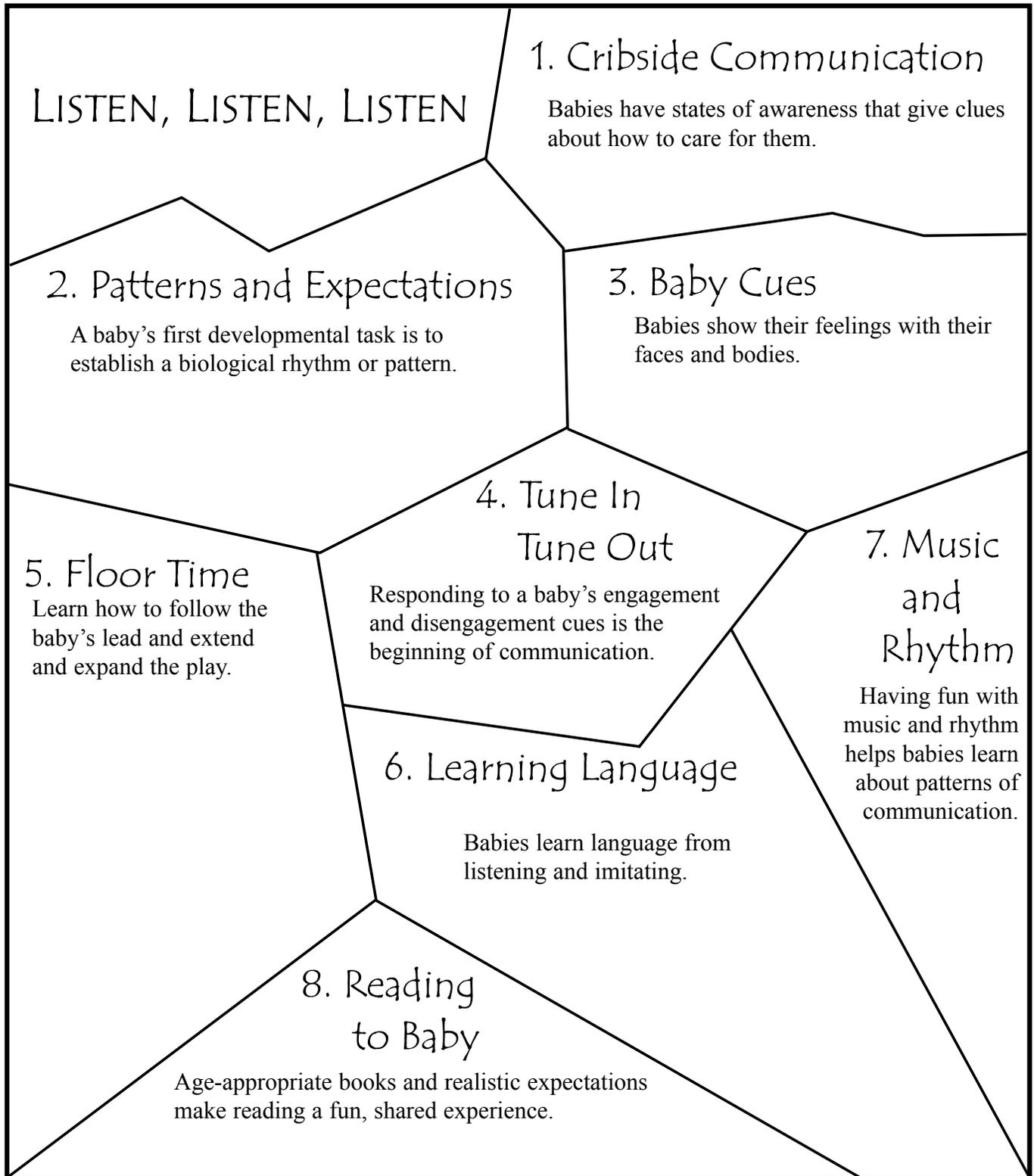
Mention ways babies tell us what they need. Explain puzzle poster: “Unit Topics: Listen, Listen, Listen” [see pg. 21]. Place each piece in a frame as you summarize each topic to be covered in the unit.

Note:

This poster can be made into a large display or used as a handout for parents to decorate each topic's puzzle piece as they master each concept.

Listen Unit Topics

LISTEN
UNIT



Listen: Conceptual Plan

Session/Topic	Key Concepts	Demonstration	Interactive Session
1. CRIBSIDE COMMUNICATION	<p>Babies are able to help direct their care, signaling what they need through emotional expression. Babies communicate through states of awareness. Babies and parents experience and express different feelings in each state.</p> <p>Parents who listen to their baby's feelings will respond more appropriately to their baby's state of awareness.</p> <p>Quiet discipline begins by gently regulating a baby's state.</p>	<p>Identifying the baby's states of awareness and appropriate responses during the home visit or by touring the infant nursery.</p>	<p>Use <i>PIPE Activity Cards</i> to engage parent's empathy for the baby in different states and to help develop techniques for gently regulating the baby's states.</p>
2. PATTERNS AND EXPECTATIONS	<p>A baby's first developmental step is to develop a pattern or biorhythm.</p> <p>By 3 months of age, most babies develop a predictable pattern of eating and sleeping on their own.</p> <p>A baby should enjoy a complete cycle in each state of awareness. Interrupting a particular state destabilizes the baby.</p> <p>Establishing a daily routine where parent and baby have adapted to one another will make parenting easier.</p>	<p>Using the "Ready, Set, Go" technique to show a pattern or routine for interactive play.</p>	<p>Practice the "Ready, Set, Go" technique as a way to establish a pattern for interactive play.</p>
3. BABY CUES	<p>Emotion is the language of infancy. Babies communicate by using facial expression, body language and voice sounds. Babies are able to read the emotional expressions of their parents.</p> <p>Emotional expressions are related to development.</p> <p>Babies develop skills to cope with their emotions. Learning to listen to a baby's cues is a key parenting skill.</p>	<p>Responding appropriately to a baby's emotional signals during a care routine or playtime.</p>	<p>Practice recognizing and responding to the baby's "small talk cues" during interactive play.</p>
4. TUNE IN/ TUNE OUT	<p>Babies are able to tune in and tune out of their surroundings.</p> <p>Recognizing how to engage a baby and when to disengage is sometimes called the <i>Dance of Love</i>.</p> <p>Nonresponse can be useful or devastating. One can structure for success to make engagement go well.</p>	<p>Structuring a successful engagement experience and appropriate engagement/disengagement responses.</p>	<p>Use <i>PIPE Activity Cards</i> to practice "structuring for success" and responding appropriately to the baby's engagement and disengagement cues.</p>

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5. FLOOR TIME	<p>Playing with a baby/toddler helps the child learn. Floortime allows opportunities to engage and show respect for the baby or toddler.</p> <p>Floortime is a process for playing with a child. Children will engage in play for a longer time when parents teach by scaffolding rather than trying to direct their child's play.</p>	Using the steps of the Floortime process for playing with a baby or toddler.	Use <i>PIPE Activity Cards</i> to practice the steps of Floortime and to aid in scaffolding the baby's or toddler's play.
6. LEARNING LANGUAGE	<p>Learning language begins at birth. Language development will vary from child to child but will follow a basic sequential pattern. Babies learn language by listening and imitating. Parents are the model and mentor for babies to learn language.</p> <p>Turn-taking games teach a baby the rhythms and patterns of conversation.</p>	Using rhymes or turn-taking games to enhance a baby's language skills.	Use <i>PIPE Activity Cards</i> to practice age-appropriate activities to promote the baby's language development.
7. MUSIC AND RHYTHM	<p>Babies and toddlers are naturally attracted to music and rhythms.</p> <p>Parent and child can share positive emotions during music and rhythm activities.</p> <p>Sharing music and rhythm games strengthens brain pathways.</p> <p>Music can soothe or excite a baby or toddler. Not all music is good for a baby or a toddler.</p> <p>Music and rhythm can be used to help regulate a baby or toddler.</p>	Using a rhythm game or music and movement activity, show how to wait for the child's response and develop a turn-taking pattern.	Using a rhythm game or music and movement activity, practice waiting for the child to respond so that a turn-taking pattern develops.
8. READING TO BABY	<p>Reading is fun for babies and toddlers. Interest in books and pictures begins in the first six months.</p> <p>Hearing parents read aloud is soothing as well as interesting for babies.</p> <p>Reading helps babies learn language.</p> <p>Books and the reading experience should be age-appropriate.</p> <p>Books open doors to words, rhymes, ideas, and emotions.</p> <p>Sharing a story, making a book together, or taking a trip to the library can be a shared positive experience for a parent and his or her baby.</p> <p>Reading can be used as a tool to regulate a baby or toddler.</p>	Using the steps of Floortime and voice tones when reading a book to a baby or toddler.	The parent selects an age-appropriate book and reads to his or her baby or toddler following the steps of Floortime and using voice tones to make the story exciting.
LISTENING REVIEW/CLOSURE	Listening is a skill that must be developed but is a key ingredient in effective parenting. Learning how to listen and respond appropriately forms a foundation for the relationship between parent and child.		

