

PLAY GUIDE MONTHS 3-6

HELLO WORLD

purposeful play
monti
& me

The background is a solid yellow color. It features several white, hand-drawn, irregular shapes that resemble speech bubbles or abstract outlines. These shapes are scattered across the page, with some partially cut off by the edges. The central text is positioned in the middle of the page.

WELCOME!

We're so glad you're here!

From birth until around age 3, children are unconsciously absorbing everything in their environment. They *gather everything from their environment* **just simply by being in it. They can teach themselves how to move by watching, they can teach themselves how to talk by listening. Everything your baby** *sees and experiences* **is becoming part of him. Human Beings are incredibly amazing!**

A note from me to you

I'm a parent too, and like you, I want to do everything humanly possible to help my child become his best, most conscious self.

The fact you are reading these words, proves you're already killing it at parenthood.

You care deeply enough about your child's development and your relationship with them, to put in the time to research and take action.

And guess what, the science says it pays off.

How we play and parent has the ability to change the world.

Infants are unfathomably attuned to our feelings, vibes and their environment.

They learn through experiences. They absorb what we model.

From birth until age 3 humans unconsciously absorb every experience.

Everything your baby sees or hears forms part of him.

Parenthood is the steepest learning curve any adult has ever undertaken.

We're so honoured to be with you on the journey.



The child has a different relation to his environment from ours...the child absorbs it. The things he sees are not just remembered; they form part of his soul.

– Maria Montessori

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Contents

- How parents support development
- Parenting Mantras
- What's going on with baby's development?
- Unfolding and milestones
- Toys
- Activities



Knowledge is power and it changes everything as a parent. By discovering exactly what your baby needs at every stage and specific things you can do to help, you can go from feeling overwhelmed to confident in a heartbeat.

– Monti&Me

Why this stuff matters

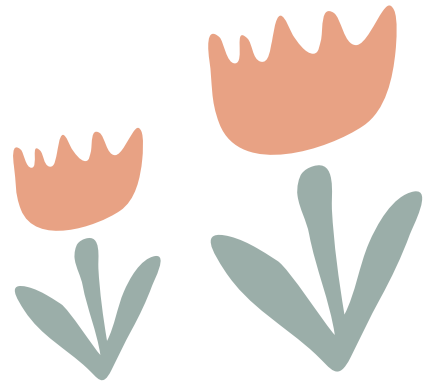
Being conscious of how we parent, the words we say, the impressions we give... they mean more in this stage of life than any other.

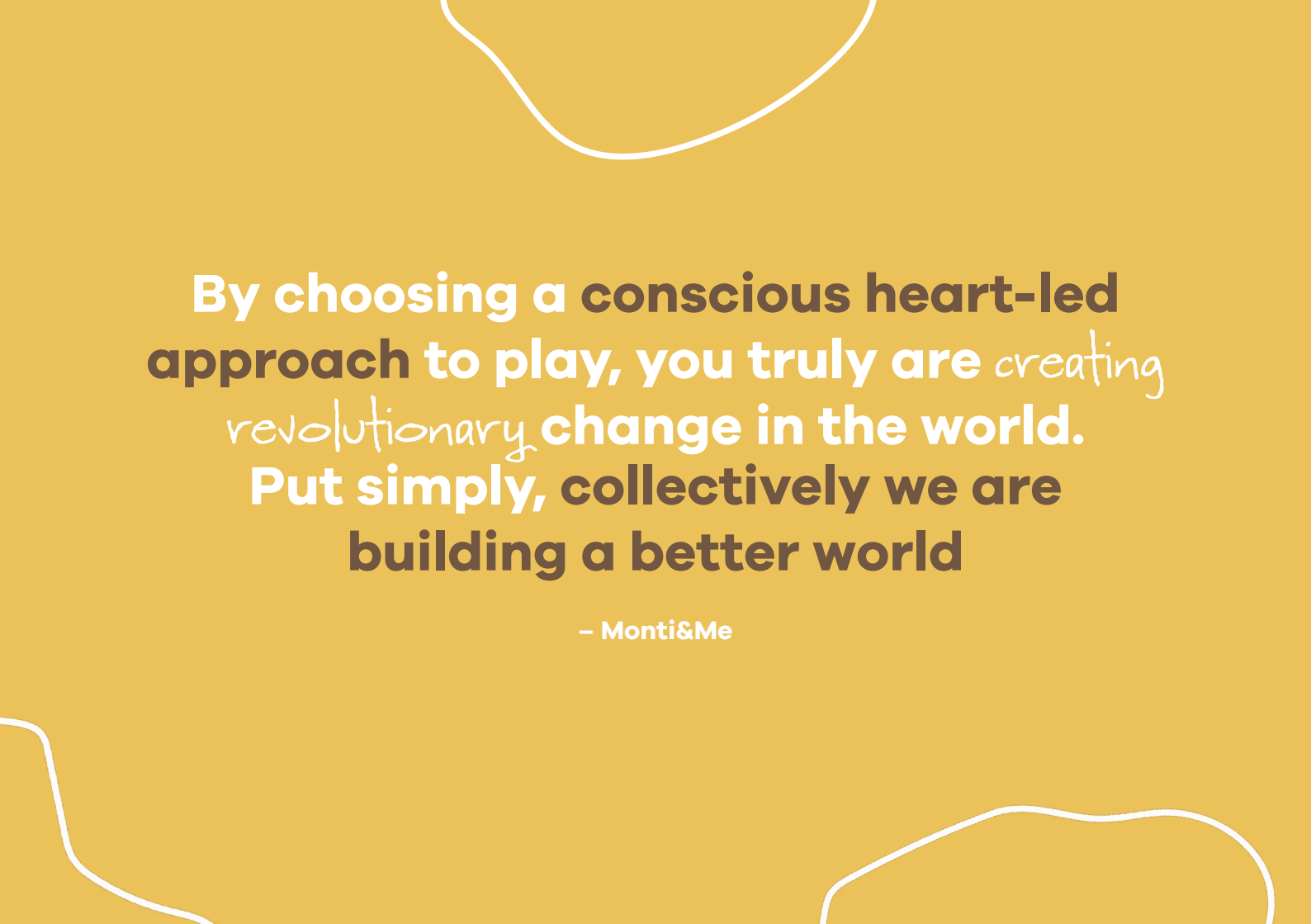
The core structure of the brain is formed in the first three years. By age three, the brain has established a pattern of processing information that will be used throughout life.

Your child's early experiences affect the quality of their brain architecture, forming the foundation upon which future development rests.

Early experiences have a greater impact on the developing brain because new experiences are stored in relation to previous ones.

Children's early experiences are ingrained at a deep level and have lasting effects.



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**By choosing a conscious heart-led
approach to play, you truly are** *creating*
revolutionary **change in the world.**
**Put simply, collectively we are
building a better world**

– Monti&Me

There are no quick tricks in parenting

We believe all parents want to nurture their baby with love, respect and understanding. We're all doing the best with what we know.

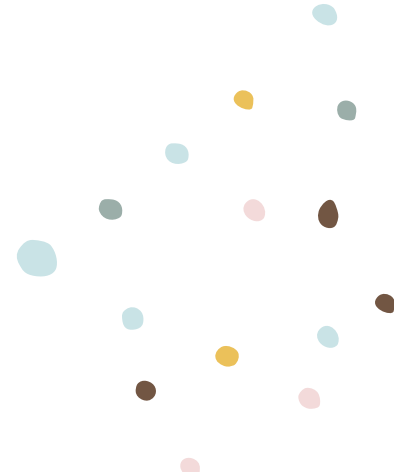
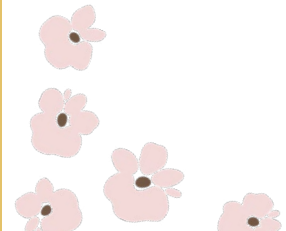
Parents are also human: we have triggers, habits and unconscious beliefs.

Often we don't realise we even have expectations about how babies should or shouldn't behave until they are doing the exact opposite. Nature has a way of bringing us the exact stimulus we need, to learn the lesson we need most.

We created this Play Book to help parents understand what's going on with their baby in months 3-6.

Better understanding our baby makes it easier to show up with empathy and respect in the testing moments. It allows us to create the conditions for both baby and you to thrive.

Leaning on neuroscience and the Montessori Method makes it possible to raise your baby with love, respect, insight and a surprising sense of calm.



FUN FACT:

Brain development is activity dependent so everything a child touches, tastes, sees, hears and smells impacts the brain circuitry. The environment directly influences the structure of the brain. Providing educational play from birth helps fulfil their potential.

– The Center of Developing Child,
Harvard University

Secure attachment is the most essential ingredient for brain development

While young children need to be exposed to different textures, sights and sounds, the most essential ingredient for brain development is a secure attachment to loving caregivers and loving interactions with them.

The research tells us that the quality and stability of a child's human relationships in the early years lay the foundation for a wide range of later developmental outcomes that really matter:

- Increased self-confidence
- Strong sense of self
- Love of learning
- Knowing the difference between right and wrong
- The ability to control impulses and resolve conflicts
- The ability to have respectful and meaningful future relationships
- The ability to empathise with others



Ultimately, all the qualities one needs to become the best human they can be



Your little human *is so capable and receptive to*
the world around them. They are so attuned
to feelings, emotions and the environment
they're in. Their outer world experiences
are literally *creating their inner world.*

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INTRODUCING

The Montessori Method

There are so many “rules” these days with kids and everyone has an opinion. But when you focus on the data, instead of the drama, making informed choices becomes easy.

– Monti&Me

The Montessori Method strengthens certain brain functions that help *expand cognitive development.* **I've nicknamed it "the original system of learning based on the brain."**

– Steve Hughes, neuropsychologist, pediatrician, and Montessori father

Who invented Montessori toys (material) and what's special about them?

Maria Montessori created the materials after she realised that students seem to understand complex concepts better when they engage all their senses.

Activities at her first school included personal care (such as dressing and undressing), care for the environment like sweeping, dusting and gardening. Otherwise they were free to move around and play with the materials.

Montessori observed that children showed episodes of deep concentration and multiple repetitions of the same activity.

Given free choice, kids showed more interest in practical activities and the materials than normal toys, sweets or other rewards. Over time spontaneous self-discipline emerged.

Montessori concluded that working independently children seemed to reach new levels of autonomy and become self-motivated learners.

She began to see the role of the teacher and parent as a facilitator of young human beings who are free to move and act within the limits of a prepared environment.

The goal: to grow children to become independent and responsible adults who share a love for learning.



**The Montessori method is one that is
gaining a great deal of scientific support
and must keep** *being studied in an exhaustive way,*
**as it guarantees the creation of a universe
based on affection and respect for the** *individual*
rhythms **of each child and environment.**



What are the benefits?

Let's talk a little bit more about the types of materials that we would put into the environment to engage the child and pique their curiosity. What are the benefits of having these types of materials?

Montessori promotes hands-on, self-paced collaborative, challenging and joyful learning.

They encourage divergent thinking instead of convergent thinking, innovation instead of standardization.

Students take ownership of their learning; a critical element in fostering each child's natural learning desire.

What makes a toy, a Montessori toy?

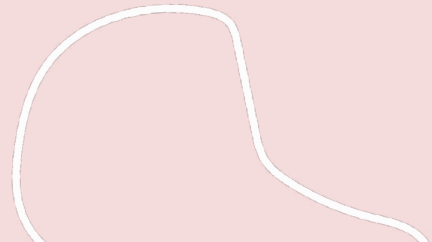
1. They're made of natural materials.
2. There's one specific thing that the child's willing to master as opposed to some of those toys for babies, quite a lot of plastic toys have too much going on so we try to stay away from anything that has an all in one label. The child often isn't that engaged by any of it because every skill they develop needs to happen in stages, offering overwhelming battery toys hinders their development. Montessori toys usually focus on one aspect at a time. So, that the child can master it at their pace then they can move on to the next level.
3. Montessori material is attractive to children because they resemble real life items which makes them more attractive than coloured flashy toys.



HOT TIP:

**Bring order to your child's environment
and pair down, so they play more!**

– Monti&Me



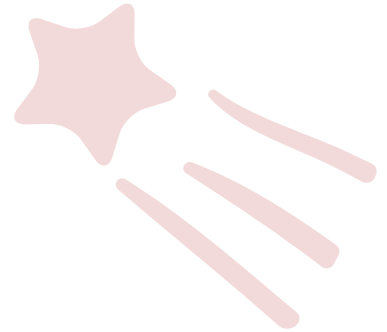
**Education is acquired not
by listening to words but by
experiences in the environment.**

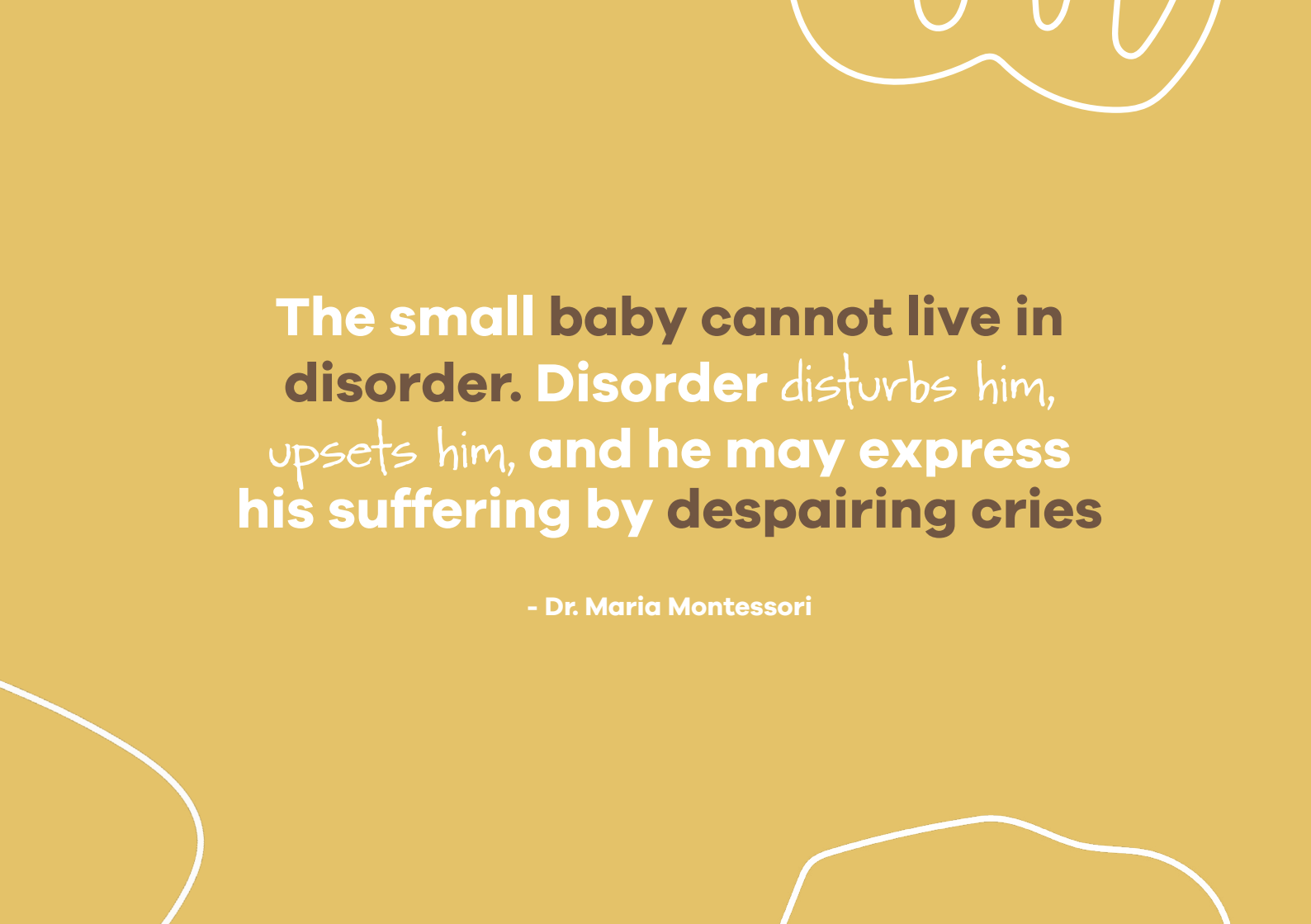
- Dr. Maria Montessori

Prepared environment for brain development

Studies show that children who grow in more stimulating environments do better than those who have fewer opportunities to learn. Brain development is dependent on the brain's activity, therefore, the more material a child touches, tastes, sees, hears and smells impacts the brain's circuitry.

Exposing babies to a variety of age-appropriate stimuli, meeting their developmental needs, and providing just enough challenge to stretch their skills will lay the best foundation for their future.





The small baby cannot live in disorder. Disorder *disturbs him, upsets him,* **and he may express his suffering by despairing cries**

- Dr. Maria Montessori




What can I offer to help baby develop?

Babies are very good at having a reference to a place. They know that when you place them in a bathtub full of water they are going to have a bath. Or when you place them on the changing table, they are probably going to have a nappy change. Similarly, being in the cot represents to them the action of sleeping, of having their belly full, feeling relaxed and loved.

Consider creating a movement area

We advocate creating a movement area for your baby to use in their waking space. The aim of toys is stimulation, to create an opportunity for your baby to 'work'. This is why it's better to create a movement area for your baby's waking space. You are essentially helping babe orient - a fundamental human need - creating security, and signalling what s/he's expected to do.





The role of a teacher is to create the conditions for invention rather than provide ready-made knowledge.

– Seymour Papert, South African mathematician and computer scientist



Setting up a playspace and introducing toys

To maximise your child's interest in this Playkit we recommend introducing one toy every 1-2 weeks.

Step 1: Find an area in your home that works best for your family. Keep in mind that children love to be part of your community. If you set up the playspace in an area like the family room, you'll have the added bonus of being able to get some work done while your little one plays independently.

Step 2: In Montessori it's recommended to put out 6-8 toys at once. This supports your little ones sense of order and allows them to focus on their work/play as they build new skills.

Step 3: Leave toys out for a week or two before rotating because children will thrive when given the opportunity for repetition with their toys.

This enables your little one to experience the excitement and challenge of something new with ample time for repetition. Repetition fosters focus and concentration.





We facilitate experiential learning **by choosing what to put in the environment, observing our** child's development **and** introducing things **that meet their developmental needs.**





Jump In To Help, Differently

We adults mean well and we want to help our babies as much as can. But what's most helpful, often doesn't come naturally. Next time you see your baby struggling to successfully complete a task, rather than jumping in with well-meaning words of encouragement like "you're nearly there" consider a more helpful approach: Stay silent, observe and when they make eye contact with you describe what you see for encouragement instead: "It is tricky to put the ball in the hole. You are using so much arm strength!"

Fun fact: Taking turns helps your baby learn self-control and how to get along with others.

By waiting, you give your baby time to formulate a response and build their confidence and independence. Waiting also helps you understand their needs.

Hot tip: Count to 10 or 20 in your head before jumping in again. Chances are your baby will give you a response before you hit 20!

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Little ones want to spend time repeating things again and again, undoing what was already done. For them, the joy and learning is in the process of the experience. Their version of repetition is very different to ours. For them every time they repeat something, it's actually a new experience – another layer of exploration and knowledge-building. Repetition is a human

tendency Maria Montessori observed. So if you see your child wanting to repeat an activity, step back and observe. It is an urge they need to satisfy which in turn will lead to mastery of the activity.

Hot tip: Give your baby opportunities to repeat an activity and notice if it's you wrapping up the learning, or them. Consider whether you could be inadvertently putting expectations on them to move on? Observe your own expectations. Our little ones can teach us more about ourselves than we can ever imagine.



FUN FACT:

Did you know that the most important interactions you have with a child can happen through play? By engaging in playful serve and return with a child, you can literally help build stronger connections in the brain. Strong neural connections are the foundation for all of a child's future learning, behavior, and health.



What exactly is Purposeful Play?

We believe a parent's role is to act as a guide so your child can learn for himself through exploration. In Dr. Maria Montessori words, 'education is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.'

We adults facilitate experiential learning by choosing what we put in the environment, observing our child's development and introducing things that meet their

developmental needs.

Experiential learning helps your child better understand concepts, better retain information and later to successfully apply that knowledge.

At Monti&Me Purposeful Play means building babies' brain through play. Talking with your baby is one of the very best things you can do to help build his developing brain. Hearing lots of words early

is proven to expand babies' mental capacities. The more you talk with him, the more he understands and the more he will learn to say by himself.

Try to encourage only doing one thing at a time to help with the development of focus and concentration. This means not interrupting verbally when baby is concentrating in play.

Be warned –in practice it's much harder than you think.



HOT TIP:

Resist the **urge to TEACH** and
instead create an environment **where**
they can **DISCOVER** for themselves.

– Monti&Me



FUN FACT:

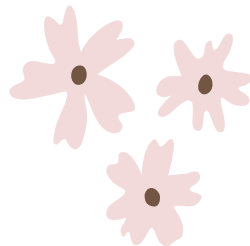
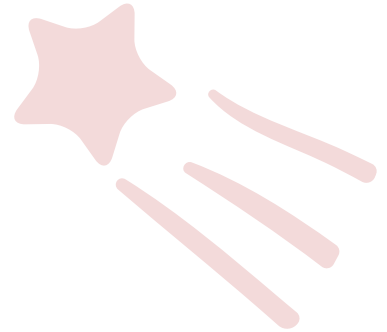
Babies *build capabilities and*
independence through imitation.



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This enables your little one to experience the excitement and challenge of something new with ample time for repetition. Repetition fosters focus and concentration.



With the magical powers of an absorbant mind, there is no better time to begin tackling the big issues in the world than right now. Gender stereotypes, unconcious bias, limiting self-beliefs? Let's intentionally co-create a more peaceful planet.

- Monti&Me

How to Encourage Your Baby to Focus

1. Follow with the child.

We know that this confuses most parents as we don't know what that really means so here are a few examples.

Let's say you're out in a play area or a park with your child, do you notice yourself saying "hey look at that! Let's go play with that over there!" Wanting to lead the play instead of waiting for your child to choose what they want to see or play with is what we want to encourage you to practice changing. Practice waiting to see what your child will be drawn to because they're the ones that lead their

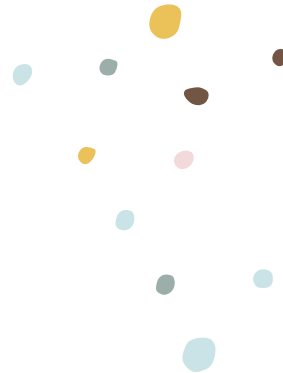
own development and they know what they need to be mastering.

It takes a lot of skill to step back and see what the child chooses and not step in.

2. Avoid talking, testing and quizzing.

When your child is in deep concentration try not to say "Ooh what color is this?" or "have you seen these" or naming everything. It actually can be more distracting. If you take a step back and try to notice why your child is not able to concentrate most times, you will notice that what breaks

your child's concentration, often is the adult themselves. There's so many moments when you can support language development. But when your child is busy concentrating with materials or activities: that's a moment for us to watch and observe.



Help build executive functioning and decision making skills

Decision making is a skill that needs to be practiced. You can help your baby build executive functioning and become comfortable making decisions.

How? By giving her two choices.

Only offer two choices that are realistic and choices you are willing to give.

Fun fact: Any more than two choices will overwhelm a child.

“Would you like to wear this or this?”





Baby Time Is SLOW

One of the hardest things to grapple with as a new parent is re-adjusting adult time with baby time. Young babies operate in the moment. There is no past or future, only now. When it comes to communicating with our child this can become a challenge. As adults, we are used to back-and-forth conversation being almost instantaneous. Whereas it can take 10-20 seconds for a baby to respond to each thing we say or do. For us that can feel like forever.

Babies need time to form their responses, especially when they're learning so many things at once. Giving your

baby ample time to formulate a response builds their confidence and independence.

Tip: Consider counting to 10 in your head before repeating yourself.

Rituals & Routines

Little ones thrive on structure, everyday routines and rituals. Patterns to the day are comforting because they help your baby understand and prepare for what's coming next. But a routine is very different to a schedule. The research doesn't support rigid scheduling.

You can help by establishing a sequence to your day: like leaving the house in the morning, reading a book before nap times or having a bath before bed.

This helps your baby to feel safe, secure and a little more in control.

Fun fact: *Routines promote an understanding of order and sequence: the building blocks of more advanced thought processes like reasoning, anticipation and judgement.*



HOT TIP:

Babies are absorbing everything
we say to them and around them.
Hold off on venting **or speaking**
ill of others in her company.

Little human, big feelings.

It's never too early to teach your baby that it's okay to express emotions.

You can help validate their communication – often crying - in a way that builds vocabulary for emotions and strengthens your bond.

Try saying, "It seems like you're feeling overwhelmed/ powerless/frustrated"



Practice Endings & Beginnings

Children signal when they're done or ready to move on to something new. They might let go of a toy, pick up a new one, turn to look at something else or start to fuss. By tuning into your baby's focus, you'll notice when they're ready to end the activity and begin something new.

Fun fact: When you find moments for your baby to take the lead, you support them in exploring their world. You're telling them that they have free will, are respected, valued and seen. And you're creating opportunities for more back-and-forth conversations.



FUN FACT:

Society expects adults to have the ability to concentrate and focus, yet from birth we are **constantly distracted by** flashing toys, bright lights **and things without purpose.**



Tuning In

Research consistently shows that back-and-forth conversations matter just as much, if not more than the number of words she hears. Lots of back-and-forth interactions builds a strong foundation in a child's brain for all future learning and development. These interactions make everyday moments fun and become second nature with practice. For example, is your baby looking or reaching at something? Making a sound or facial expression? Moving those little arms and legs? Those are big clues into what your baby is focusing on.

Through observation you can learn a lot about your baby's abilities, interests and needs. You'll encourage them to explore and strengthen the bond between you.

Responding

When you hear your baby trying to vocalize, respond even if you don't understand what she's saying. You can make a sound or facial expression, smile or nod to let your baby know you're noticing the same thing. You could even pick up the object they're mesmerized by and bring it closer.

Fun fact: *Responding rewards a child's interests and curiosity. It helps build self-confidence and their innate sense of drive and self-recognition. Doing so tells your baby their thoughts and feelings are heard and understood.*

Naming It

Naming what your baby is focused on helps them understand the world around them and what to expect. Naming also gives your baby words to use and lets them know you care. By naming what your baby is seeing, doing or feeling, you make important language connections in their brain even before they can talk or understand words. You can name anything—a person, thing, action, feeling. If your baby is looking at her feet, you can point to them and say, 'Those are your feet. Here are my feet'

Learning through play

Seeing everyday moments as being purposeful play helps reframe our adult understanding of play and learning.

Simply talking with your baby is one of the very best things you can do to help build his developing brain.

The more you talk with him, the more he understands and the more he'll eventually learn to say by himself. Hearing lots of words early is proven to expand babies' mental capacities. It also increases social and communication skills.

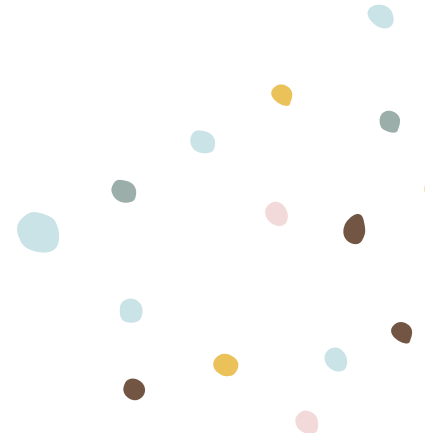
Developing focus and concentration

You help your baby learn to concentrate by responding to her bids for attention during play, rather than interrupting her focus.

Your baby will look at you when she wants you to input into play. She'll be fully immersed in the toy when she's practicing concentration.

Stopping yourself from jumping in and interrupting your baby during play is likely to be much harder than you think. It can be a fun game to become aware of how much you want to jump in and how often.

Tip: *Holding back is one of the most helpful things you can do.*



FUN FACT:

It can be easy **to create an environment that fosters independence, confidence and learning for your babe. Children love to do things on their own when given the opportunity.**

Preparing for this plane of development

Planes of development

Dr. Maria Montessori outlined four consecutive planes, or stages, of development from birth to maturity. Each plane spans approximately six-years.

At each plane of development children and young people display intellectual powers, social orientations and creative potential unique to that stage.

Each plane is characterised by the way children learn in that stage, building on the achievements of the plane before.

0-6 Years

The first plane of development is the period from birth to approximately age six.

During this stage children are sensory explorers, learning to become functionally independent in their immediate environment and community.

Children at this stage construct their own intellect by absorbing every aspect of their environment, language and culture.

The prepared adult

Nature unfolds according to the environment it's in. We can help our children thrive by:

- Offering toys and tools that meet our child's interests, needs and potential of each developmental stage
- Enabling independent exploration and self-directed learning
- Preparing a safe space that enables unrestricted movement and freedom of choice

Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future. Let us treat them with all the kindness which we would wish to help to develop in them.

– Dr. Maria Montessori

Little human, big feelings.

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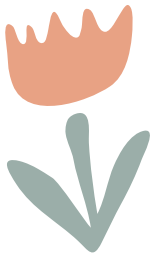
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Parenting Mantras

Repeating mantras in times of stress throughout the day is a physiological way of slowing down the mind. Saying these to yourself, out loud, is a beautiful way to teach your child how to self-regulate. Most adults were never given a blue print to regulate emotions. Imagine the world we can create with a generation that are?



How to do it:

- Pause. Breathe. Mantra.
- This is hard. I can do hard things.
- This is not an emergency. I can respond in calm.
- They are having a hard time - not giving me a hard time.
- I am calm. I am loving. I am kind.
- I am exactly who my children need.
- I want to react. I choose to respond.
- I am doing my best, that is enough.
- I can be peaceful even in chaos.



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WOAH!

There's *so much* going on
with your baby's evelopment
in the *months 3-6!*

Their stage is such an exciting time in your baby's development. Your baby is still fairly new Earth side but you're probably starting to feel like you've known each other forever. It takes self-awareness (and self-control!) To truly appreciate the now, and not drift ahead to when your baby is more independent.

Supporting Early Movement

Observing your baby while asking yourself these questions will help you decide whether or not your little is ready for a toy or if you need to wait until they can move a little more efficiently.

Consider Things Like:

- How big is the toy?
- How heavy is the toy?
- How easy is it to roll?
- Can my baby pick it up?
- How far will it roll away at one time?
- Does their encourage movement or make baby give up?



Montessori Ball



Rolling Ball Rattle



Plush Ball



Rolling Balls Drum



Sensory Balls



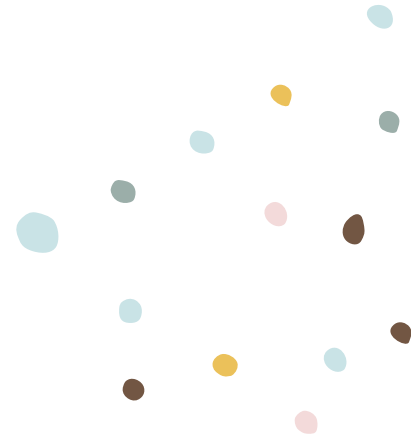
Essentially it is discouraging when a toy moves too far, too quickly...

FUN FACT:

**The research shows babies learn
best through play.** *Lessons are out.*
Discovery is in.

In Months 3 & 4 Your Baby Might

- Be much more aware of the world around him and less sensitive to light and sound vs. the newborn stage
 - Discover his hands, sucks fingers and often grasps objects
 - Reveal more of his unique personality. He now recognises your face – cooing at you, smiling, and delighting everyone he meets
 - Coordinate seeing and movement—spotting something they want, then reaching for it
 - Lift up and looks around during Tummy Time and may start rolling from tummy to back
 - Your little one will have preferences, even strong responses to touches and textures they find soothing or uncomfortable
- Ideas for play:**
- Mirror gazing is a favorite activity at this age. Your baby doesn't yet recognize her own face but she gets to see a fascinating little human looking back at her
 - By looking your baby in the eyes when you talk and make facial expressions, you help her learn the link between words and feelings
 - Sing during transitional times like nappy changing and getting dressed



FUN FACT:

Learning how to focus starts now
and it's crucial for future learning.

– Monti&Me

Every interaction we have with our children *shapes the people they are and the ones they will become.* **That's a powerful truth. But it comes with a parallel truth: our imperfections, our failures, our mistakes and our flaws** *make both us and our children human, and most importantly, it is how we handle those human moments that teach our children that* *being perfectly imperfect humans is perfectly okay.*

- L.R KNOT, HOLISTIC PARENTING MAGAZINE

In Months 5 & 6 Your Baby Might

- Be much better at using his eyes to guide his hands. She can reach out for objects with one hand, grab things and put them in her mouth or move things from hand-to-hand
- Start to experience and reveal new emotions like anger and frustration. Instead of primarily crying she may growl, grunt or whine
- Show signs he's ready to start eating solid foods like reaching at your food. Touching, mouthing and tasting is how he learns about things now vs. learning primarily through sight as a newborn
- Start to move her body more by reaching, wriggling and rolling
- Might bang or shake toys to learn how they work
- May sit up with some support and use his hands to help him balance

Ideas for play:

- Sing during transitional times - like nappy changing and getting dressed
- Read books, sing songs, tummy time, play with toys and make funny sounds together – your baby will love it! Playing together helps you both get to know each other more and helps him feel loved and secure





**Within the child lies the
fate of the future**

– Maria Montessori

There Are A Few Simple Things You Can Do To Help Your Baby's Development At Their Age:

Talk and listen to your baby: you're helping him learn about language and communication. While you talk and listen, look your baby in the eye and make facial expressions to help your baby learn the link between words and feelings

Create a rhythm to your day: when it feels right for you and your baby it helps to do things in a similar order each day – feed, play, sleep. This pattern helps your baby feel safe and secure

Smile at your baby: when your baby sees you smile, it releases natural chemicals in her body

that make her feel happy and safe. Smiling also helps your baby's brain develop and helps her form a healthy attachment to you

Reassure your child when they meets new people: when you comfort your baby when she's crying or upset, she learns that she's safe. Avoiding labels and judgements like shy is most helpful.

Read together: reading, talking about pictures in books and telling stories develop your baby's imagination. These activities also help her build the skills she'll need to understand language.

Play together: sing songs, play peekaboo, ring bells, hide toys and make funny sounds or animal noises together

Start to introduce foods: feeding your baby solid foods from around 4-6 months helps her get enough iron and other nutrients. It also strengthens her teeth and jaw and builds mouth control enabling those first words

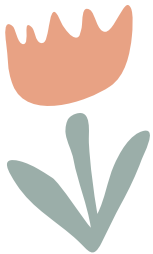


It's easy to fall into the trap of interrupting
your little one. **But that is not the way**
nature intended. **Observe your babe and**
you'll notice just how enthralled **they are with**
the world around them.

**Purposeful Play with close-ended toys
and tools** build skills **like** executive functioning,
perseverance, concentration and focus.
Critical skills for success as an adult.

Parenting Mantras

Repeating mantras in times of stress throughout the day is a physiological way of slowing down the mind. Saying these to yourself, out loud, is a beautiful way to teach your child how to self-regulate. Most adults were never given a blue print to regulate emotions. Imagine the world we can create with a generation that are?



How to do it:

- Pause. Breathe. Mantra.
- This is hard. I can do hard things.
- This is not an emergency. I can respond in calm.
- They are having a hard time - not giving me a hard time.
- I am calm. I am loving. I am kind.
- I am exactly who my children need.
- I want to react. I choose to respond.
- I am doing my best, that is enough.
- I can be peaceful even in chaos.



FUN FACT:

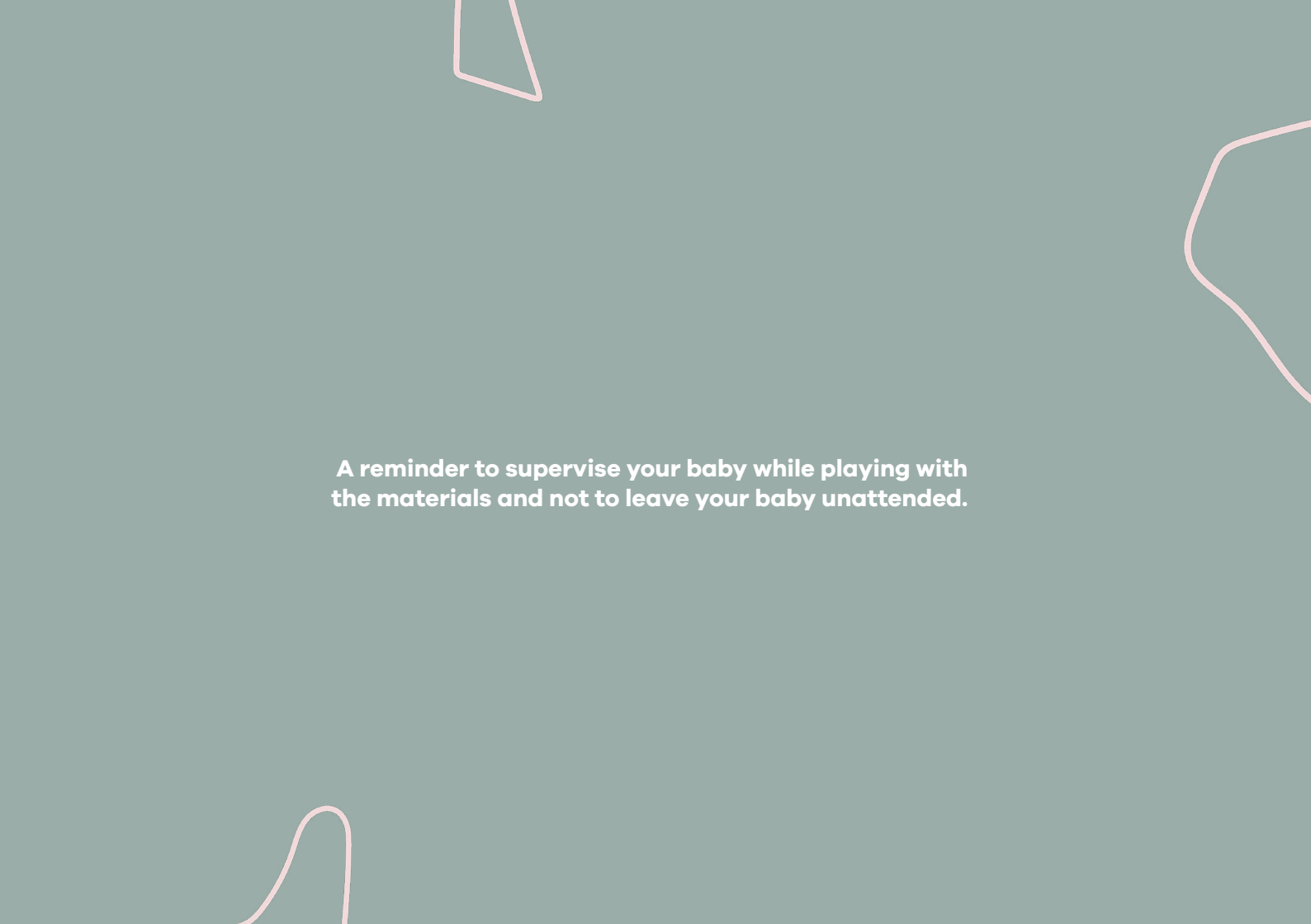
Babies don't need much: **A simple shelf with a handful of materials your babe can engage with. Their space within your space.**

– Monti&Me



INTRODUCING

**Toys designed to nurture
babies developing brain**

The background is a solid teal color. There are three abstract pink line drawings: a triangle at the top center, a large irregular shape on the right side, and a curved shape at the bottom left.

A reminder to supervise your baby while playing with the materials and not to leave your baby unattended.

Who invented Montessori toys (material) and what's special about them?

Maria Montessori created the materials after she realised that students seem to understand complex concepts better when they engage all their senses.

Activities at her first school included personal care (such as dressing and undressing), care for the environment like sweeping, dusting and gardening. Otherwise they were free to move around and play with the materials.

Montessori observed that children showed episodes of deep concentration and multiple repetitions of the same activity.

Given free choice, kids showed more interest in practical activities and the materials than normal toys, sweets or other rewards. Over time spontaneous self-discipline emerged.

Montessori concluded that working independently children seemed to reach new levels of autonomy and become self-motivated learners.

She began to see the role of the teacher and parent as a facilitator of young human beings who are free to move and act within the limits of a prepared environment.

The goal: to grow children to become independent and responsible adults who share a love for learning.





What are the benefits?

Let's talk a little bit more about specifically what the types of the materials that we would put into that environment to engage the child and pique their curiosity. What are the benefits of having these types of materials?

Montessori promotes hands-on self-paced collaborative challenging and joyful learning they encourage divergent thinking instead of convergent thinking innovation instead of standardization seeing the big picture allows students to take ownership of their learning a critical element in fostering each child's natural

learning desire which leads to point to grabbing that child's interest.

What makes a toy, a Montessori toy?

1. They're made of natural materials.
2. There's one specific thing that the child's willing to master as opposed to some of those toys for babies, quite a lot of plastic toys have too much going on so we try to stay away from anything that has an all in one label. The child often isn't that engaged by any of it because every skill they develop needs
3. Montessori material is attractive to children because they resemble real life items which makes them more attractive than coloured flashy toys.





Trust in Nature

Babies often need to be introduced to things multiple times before they will engage. If your baby doesn't seem interested in something, try again later.

A gentle reminder that nature unfolds exactly as it's meant to. Your baby is no different. Every development path is unique and no two babies are the same.

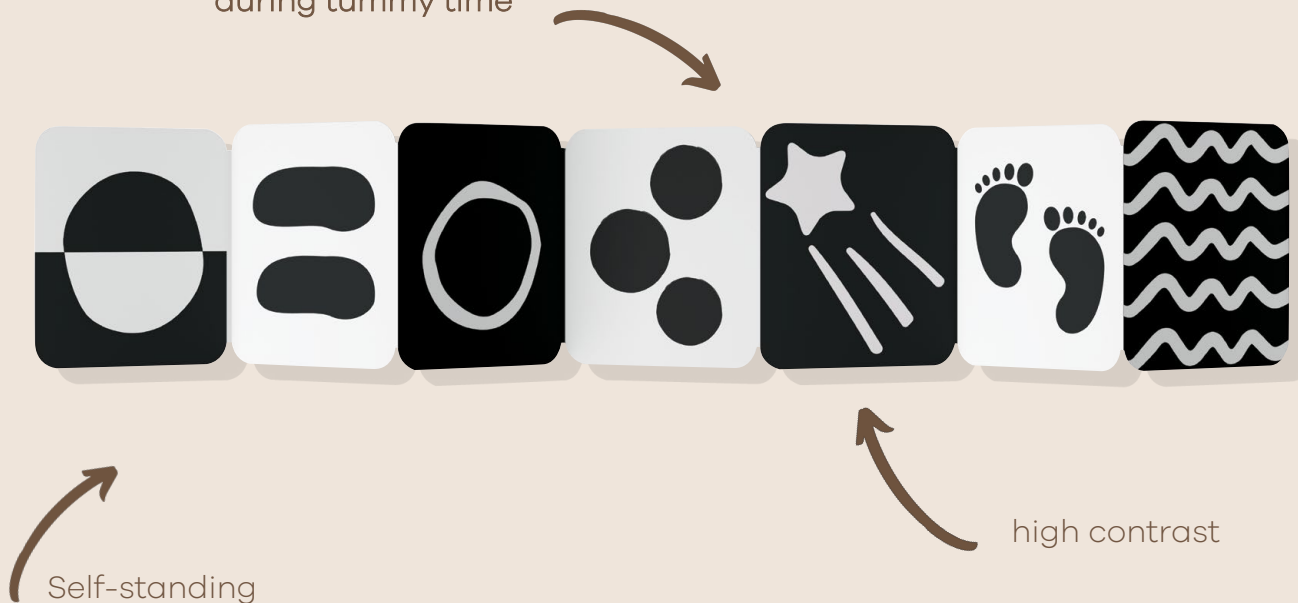
It's perfectly okay that your baby's development may not align perfectly with our suggested ages, stages and toys of interest.

Every baby is perfectly unique. With different interests and different capabilities.

You are both gifted something truly precious. The present.



increase attention span and improve visual scanning
during tummy time



Strengthen baby's vision and attention span

Increase attention span and improve visual tracking during tummy time

Why:

Babies are riveted by high contrast images in the early months. Decades of research shows time spent looking at high contrast images is important for a baby's cognitive development.

When infants look at images that stimulate them visually, the connections between their eyes and brain strengthen.

High-contrast images with varying pattern complexity help develop and strengthen your baby's vision.

By offering the card set when baby is awake and alert they help your baby learn to focus, track and develop the senses.

At around 4 months, your little one develops colour vision and will become captivated by the red in the Complex Contrast Cards. By month 5 babies can see in colour and in 3D and want more of a challenge.

Ideas For Play:

- Start with the simple Black and White side
 - Introduce one or two cards at a time and describe what you see. Simply in your hand while you and baby sit together
 - By slowly moving the card back and forth you're helping her practice visually tracking and following a moving object
- Make tummy time more enjoyable by opening the full accordion. Your baby may even stare at the cards for up to a few minutes at a time if there is no background noise distracting her

Tip: Although your baby will be drawn to screens, the research strongly suggests completely avoiding screen time in the first year. Screens drastically undermine your baby's developing attention span.



Promoting body awareness & control

The Montessori Batting Ball promotes body awareness and control

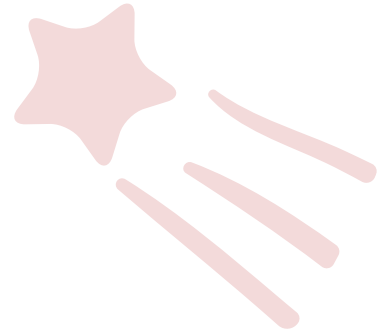
Why:

The Batting Ball works with your baby's natural reflexes to develop their grasp, strength, motor skills, and body control. Designed to be detachable from a play gym and ideally shaped for grasping, kicking, rolling and transferring from hand-to-hand.

The intentional puzzle design captures your baby's attention and enlivens the senses through the contrasting colours, soft texture and gentle hidden bell. The sound of the bell gives baby an early lesson in cause and effect and strengthens the connection between the left and right sides of the brain.

Ideas for Play:

- Add a ribbon and hang from a Play Gym for babe to kick at. This prepares your baby for their first steps by strengthening their feet, legs, knees, hips, and core as they begin to coordinate their feet
- Gently roll the ball just out of reach, to promote movement like rolling and crawling
- At around 5 months, baby will begin grasping at it: the unique shape, makes it easy to grasp. In time baby will transfer it from one little hand to the other and turn it around, developing wrist movement and hand-eye-coordination





Strengthen baby's grasp, core and hand-eye coordination

The Rolling Bell strengthens baby's grasp, core and hand-eye coordination

Why:

Most baby rattles are too much for young children: too loud, too busy, too bright. Our Rolling Bell rattle excites baby's senses and stimulates hand-eye coordination without overwhelming them.

When your baby plays with the Rolling Bell, he discovers new ways to coordinate his senses: the feel of the wood when he's grasping it, the sound it makes when you or he rolls or shakes it, and how it moves when it's rolling along.

Who knew there were so many learning opportunities in one little toy: touch, sound and movement? Baby is learning that he can produce sounds, movements, and effects by touching and exploring. Understanding that objects can make sounds is an early lesson in cause and effect.

This lightweight rattle helps strengthen your baby's grasp, hand-eye coordination and body control.

As babe approaches the rolling and scooting phase, this jingly rattle invites movement and engages your baby's core to support crawling.

Ideas for play:

- Present the rattle by offering it so baby can see it for up to 10 seconds before they feel it.
- This supports multi-sensory learning. Shake it gently to pique babes attention and then gently place it in your little ones hands
- Hold the bell within reach of your baby and move it to make noise – see if he responds by waving his arms or legs in excitement
- At 3-4 months your baby will start to look for and track the sources of sounds he hears. He'll recognize the sound of his rattle even when there are other noises in the background
- Help your baby shake the rattle and learn that two shakes feels different from three—this helps him start building associations between numbers, sounds and movement
- For an early lesson in math, shake the rattle in a rhythm - Shake, shake, pause, shake, shake, pause—then vary the pattern. He'll soon be able to tell the difference between the number of shakes he's hearing.





Strengthening attachment & sense of security



Reading to your baby helps strengthen secure attachment

Why:

The most essential ingredient for brain development is secure attachment, reading to your baby promotes 'shared focus' – joint experiences between you and your child that form the basis of strong relationships. Reading to your baby helps her learn that book time is comforting, fun and time spent close to you.


The human voice is the most interesting sound to your baby. In the first few months your baby is constantly listening to the intonation, rhythm and patterns of your voice. Laying the groundwork for acquiring language later.

Babies eager to learn about the world around them, benefit from books that feature realistic,

concrete images of things they see in everyday life. Our book contains real life images – interesting for baby to look at and fun for you to describe

Ideas For Play:

- Your job as Chief Storyteller is to lead a conversation about what you see – ideally with sound effects!
- Talk in a high, sing songy voice. Research shows this helps her access language. The higher the tone, the easier for her to hear
- When you come to the end, choose a phrase like 'We're finished' or 'The End' and repeat it at the end of every book

- Keep background noise to a minimal so baby can develop attention and focus
 - It is important to read slowly so your baby can absorb language
 - Create a rhythm to your day and make book time a special experience baby looks forward to. The more you do it, the more enjoyable it becomes
- 



Using my mouth to learn

I understand things better when I put them in my mouth

Why:

Until about month 12, babies take in more information through their mouths than they do through their fingers. At this stage, the nerves in your baby's mouth are more developed than those in any other part of their body.

Studies show that mouthing objects helps with speech development and prepares your baby for encountering different food textures.

The 'mouthing phase' usually begins around month 4 and lasts for the entire year.

The rattles and teethers in this Playkit help baby explore her world safely.

Ideas For Play:

- Present rattle to your babe by offering it so they can look for up to 10 seconds before they feel it. This supports multi-sensory learning
- Shake gently to pique babes attention and then gently place it in your little ones hands
- Other safe textures for your baby to explore include infant cutlery, wooden books, sensory balls and ribbons. Adult supervision is always required





Practicing hand-to-hand transfer

Hand-to-hand discs help build fine motor skills

Why:

A simple yet purposeful tool that can follow a child from first toy to childhood favorite.

Young babies benefit as they begin working on fine motor skills, passing the discs from hand-to-hand. Hand-to-hand transfer has positive implications for brain development.

So while they may look like a simple wooden trinket these discs can actually keep your child entertained for long periods of time and do wonders for early development. They also promote the rotation of the wrists – building strength in a purposeful way.

Passing an object between two hands is a step babies work

towards for months. Skilled hand-to-hand transfer won't happen until around 5-7 months. It's the basis for later motions like getting dressed independently, holding crayons and running.

As baby grows, interlocking discs make a wonderful fidget toy for little hands that find it hard to rest.

At first your baby may grasp other things - like rings and rattles – yet struggle with the discs, as holding them requires building up new fine motor skills

Holding the discs by month 4 is a major accomplishment—it will likely take some practice!

At about 6 months infants begin to examine objects more closely through hand-to-hand transfer

They will continue to enjoy practicing the skill until well after they're sitting

Help build vocabulary and language skills by narrating and verbally interacting with your baby once baby makes eye contact with you: 'You're holding the discs in your left hand!'

Tip: by using positive tone and body language you're fostering intrinsic motivation rather than offering external motivation. Your baby will feel empowered to do things for themselves and not for the adult. Comments/praise like 'good job' or 'good boy' have the opposite effect

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safe for mouthing and
fun for pulling!



linkable cotton tissues



Mouthing: unrestricted exploration for brain development

Mouthing supports brain and motor development

Why:

Research consistently points to unrestricted exploration being valuable to baby brain and motor development in the first year, so think about mouthing as an opportunity for your baby to learn about everyday objects, not just teething relief or taste.

Ideas For Play:

- Support multi-sensory learning by presenting the cotton tissue in front of baby before placing in her hands
- An older child will practice hand-to-hand transfer, bang and explore
- Help language development by narrating your observations: 'You're holding the polka-dot tissue'
- If your baby makes any kind of vocalization in response, pause - to model listening before responding. Make a mental game of observing how many back-and-forth interactions you have





Building hand strength and dexterity



The Manhattan Skwish builds hand strength and dexterity

Why:

The Skwish was designed by one of NASA's engineers and is a world-renowned, one-of-a-kind rattle and teether.

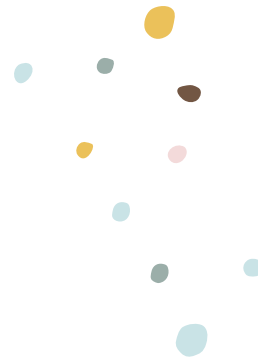
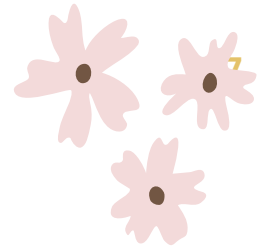
The Skwish encourages multi-sensory learning through touching, tasting, smelling, hearing and working with natural materials.

Babies are fascinated by its twisted web of rods, strings and beads that slide and rattle, which encourages grasping and reaching.

Squishing it down builds hand strength and dexterity, delighting infants by returning to its original shape.

Ideas for play:

- With practice your baby will be able to grasp and manipulate objects placed in front of them
- Watch as he pulls his legs up and starts to roll over to the side where the noise just came from—and eventually all the way over onto his belly
- To encourage rolling, lay baby on his back and place the Skwish just out of reach
- Roll away during tummy time to entice baby to reach and scoot





Encouraging independent eating

The Dining Set encourages confidence and independent eating

Why:

Your baby has watched you eat meals at the table since birth. The Dining Set gives him the opportunity to model what he's observed.

While it may be messy at first, your baby will soon impress you with their eating skills.

As well as empowering your baby to self-feed, using utensils helps improve hand-eye coordination. Drinking from an open cup helps build mouth muscles that will be used later for forming sounds and words.

Children love to do things on their own given the opportunity, like wiping down their hands, face and placemat after eating. Any opportunity for a child to engage in self care and independence boosts their self esteem.

The satisfaction of independent success empowers your baby to feel capable and self confident.

Tip: Once your baby is walking, she can help participate in setting, clearing and cleaning the table.

These practical life skills are incredibly fun for children and enables your little one to participate in the natural rhythm of the home.

Ideas for Play

- For the first few months your baby may need help getting the food onto their fork, but let them do as much of the process as possible
- Show your baby how to drink from the little cup. Place a small amount of water in the cup, and then let them bring the cup to their mouth. They probably will not be able to do this successfully for several months, but you can guide the cup with your hands so that they have the experience of drinking.

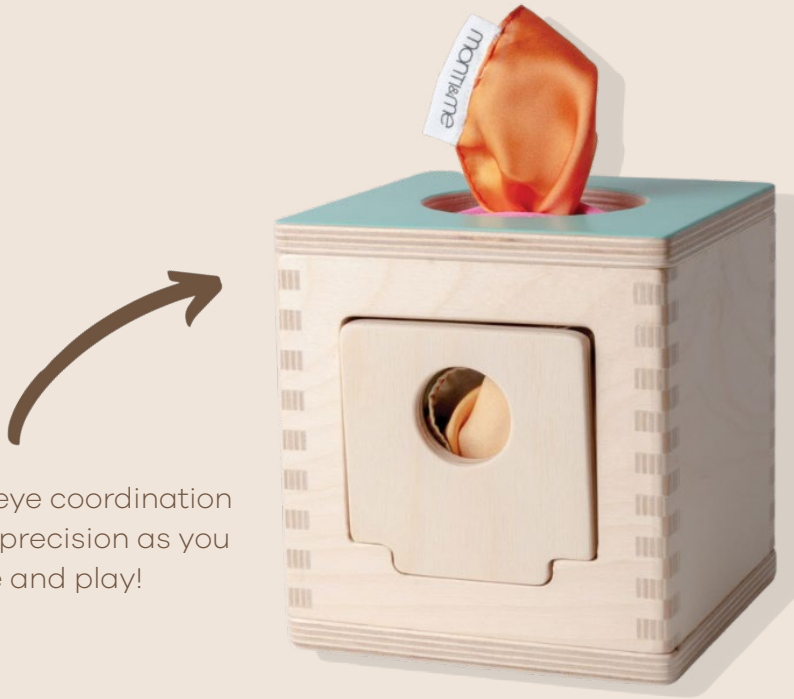
Tip: always assume that they will spill most of the water as they experiment with how the cup works and control how much water you provide accordingly.

- Model the behavior. Slowly pick up your glass with two hands when you take a sip
- Create a ritual of wiping you face and hands after every meal. Offer a wipe to your baby. With time she will do the same – impressing dinner guests!
- Create a signal for finished eating. For example: at the end of a meal, hold both hands up and say 'all done' or 'finished.' This gives your little one a clear way to communicate with you long before talking

As babe transitions into the toddler stage, many parents find their baby starts standing at or climbing onto the table. To help avoid power struggles and model respect, try using phrases like 'In our home we sit to eat' and 'bottoms on seat.' This reminds baby of the desired behaviour which is more effective than scolding/demanding.



PULL AND PLAY BOX



Practice hand-eye coordination and fine motor precision as you pull, poke and play!

Exploring space, capacity & containment

Explore space, capacity and containment with the Pull and Play Box

Research shows we can influence our child's ability to focus through activities of shared focus like reading and playing.

At first your baby will love watching you pull the tissues out and stuff them back inside. Think of it as an early STEM lesson. Your child is learning about space, capacity and the concept of one thing being able to fit inside of something else. This is sometimes called containment.

Ideas for play:

- Introduce once baby is grasping. In tummy time, place the box on its side and encourage your baby to practice pulling the tissues out. Later move the box just out of reach to encourage babe to stretch and reach. This exercises muscles in their neck, shoulders and back in preparation for crawling
- Play a game of taking turns: Start by modeling the action, then encourage your baby to imitate you. Narrate as you go: "It's your turn to pull. Look, it has hearts on it. Can you grab the tissue? You did it!"
- Use the tissues to partially hide other toys - like the teethers or rattles. Does your baby try to find it? This is an early lesson in object permanence, or the idea that even if something disappears for a while, it still exists. Help your babe begin to understand this concept by narrating as you play "where did it go? Can you see it anywhere? Oh! There it is —it's under the tissue!"
- Your baby gains feedback about the world through touch receptors in their fingertips. Create a sensory basket of items safe to touch and mouth, and include the cotton tissues for free exploration during tummy time.
- For toddlers, our Magic Tissue Box transforms into the perfect mystery bag alternative
- The key to using this with a toddler is to start with only hiding a few items (say 1-3) and only using items the child knows the name of
- Try to avoid making it too challenging too quickly, otherwise we're setting them up to fail





**Develop hand-eye coordination
& build hand strength**

The Rainbow Spinning Drum develops hand-eye coordination and builds hand strength

Why:

This colorful Spinning Drum helps your baby develop hand-eye coordination, which builds cognitive skills and strengthens the muscles throughout the arm and wrist.

The easy rolling movement is captivating for babies and encourages repetition during play. Repetition fosters concentration.

Toddlers still enjoy coming back to this toy, making it a favourite in toy rotations until around age 2.

Ideas for play:

- Show your baby how the Spinning Drum works with one swift push. If baby seems interested let her explore
- Your baby is exploring cause and effect by purposefully rolling the Drum
- Make up songs about the rainbow colours
- Narrate baby's actions by asking questions: 'If you roll the drum does it make a sound?'





Ignite curiosity and practice visual tracking

Ignite curiosity and practice visual tracking

The Playsilks bright eye catching colours, seen in most sensory lessons, improve hand eye coordination and colour perception. From three months you can begin to slowly move the playsilk up and down as well as left to right, developing both horizontal and vertical tracking skills. An early precursor of reading!

Playing with rainbow silks can be such a fun addition to music and movement. They make wonderful toys for both outdoor and indoor play and inspire all kinds of dancing, twirling, and imaginative play!

Ideas for play:

- Hold the coloured silk hanging above your baby's line of vision
- Make gentle movements so that your child can attempt to track the silk
- Challenge baby to intentionally reach for and grasp while you swirl the silk above her
- Hang from a play gym near a gentle breeze
- Touch their little hands and feet with the silk. This helps activate sensory receptors and reflexes, igniting curiosity at the same time
- As babe gets older use to dance, twirl and spin





More Play Ideas
to nurture babies
developing brain



Develop the confidence to examine and explore

Develop the confidence to examine and explore

We spend our early years trying to “make sense” of the world—seeing, touching, smelling, tasting and listening to what’s around us. The multi-sensory connections that form in our brain allow us to create meaning and memory.

The more senses we engage, the more strongly we are tied to a moment, an object, a space. It’s why we advocate for experiential learning instead of the traditional approach to learning. Sensory play encourages your baby to examine, explore and strengthen the senses.



Ideas for play:

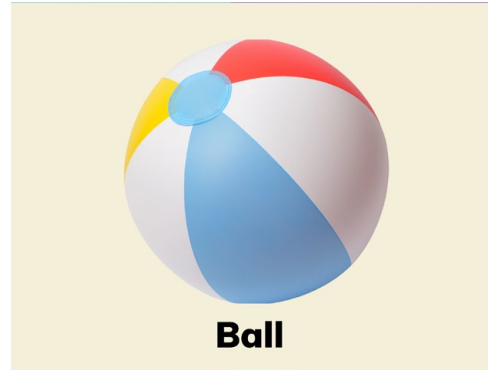
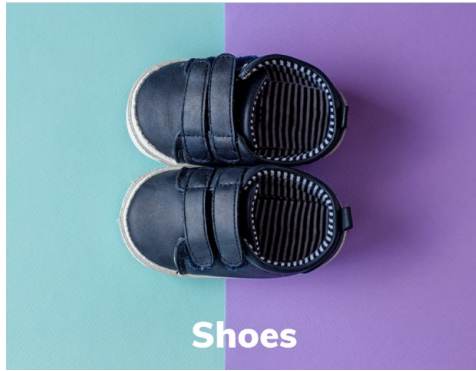
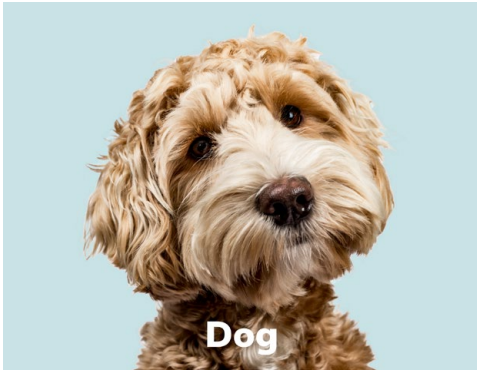
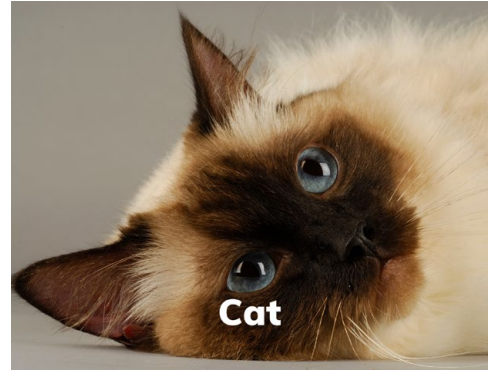
- Consider creating a sensory corner in your lounge room with a baby-safe mirror at floor height. Babies can spend hours enjoying them. They love looking at the world and themselves.
- Create a small basket or sensory ring of various fabrics for your inquisitive child to dump and explore
- Have a bath with a playsilk - wet silk feels interesting
- Peek-a-boo is a classic that never gets old! Try saying ‘Where am I? Where did I go?’



WARNING STRANGULATION HAZARD!

Adult supervision is required. Any string from toys or window blinds longer than 30cm is considered a strangulation hazard for all children. DO NOT leave your child unattended with these toys.





Laying the groundwork for language

Simple ways to help build vocabulary and communication skills

Why:

If your baby hears constant conversation in her first three years, she'll have a larger vocabulary, increased social and communication skills which are integral to life!

In the first few months your baby is constantly listening to the intonation, rhythm and patterns of your voice. Laying the groundwork for acquiring language later.

Consider printing our downloadable routine cards or Things I see cards, to create fun parent-child interaction and give you easy prompts to talk about.

Ideas for play:

- Talk in a high, sing song voice that is instinctual when talking to babies
- Research shows this helps her access language and the higher the tone, the easier it is to hear
- Use as a prompt for story-telling. Share memories and stories with your little one, perhaps while facing each other on your tummies
- Make up silly songs naming and describing the scenes you see





Hello world house tour

Everyday moments build neural pathways

Why:

Interpreting everyday moments as purposeful play helps reframe our adult understanding of play and learning.

Babies learn by seeing how things work in the real world. Neural associations are being built in your baby's brain with each and every experience they have.

The best experiences are real life learning with you. Listening to your voice every-day – reading, singing or talking – is key to growing connections in your baby's brain.

How To Do It:

- Your home provides plenty to talk about and describe to your little one
- Start the tour at the same place each day like the front door to create routine and help baby feel safe and secure. Find a phrase that works for you like 'Hello World'
- Bring your baby close enough to focus on an interesting object. As long as they're engaged give them time to observe
- Name things for your baby in simple language: 'That's the kitchen' Giving your baby new words helps with language acquisition
- Point to things. With time, your babe will begin to follow your point and share your observation

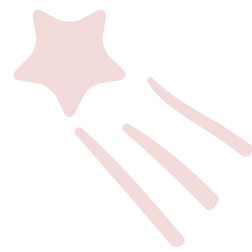
- Find all the places where there is water. Turn on and off all the lights. In the beginning you can do the light switch for them, later your baby can practice herself

Tip: *Young babies may get over-stimulated and fussy quickly, and that's okay. Interpret that to mean the tour guide is over – try again later!*





Follow my gaze



Things that move are fascinating

Why:

Babies can perceive moving objects much more easily than those that stay still. Help stimulate baby's visual development with new sights: which is pretty much everything when you're a baby!

How To Do It:

- When introducing any new object, slowly move the object and see if your baby follows it with their gaze. Once their eyes have locked in on the item, talk to your baby and name the object for them

- Bring your baby close enough to focus on an interesting object. As long as they're engaged give them time to observe
- Changing facial expressions are incredibly fascinating to babies. Silently make funny faces to keep the game going longer without overstimulating babe

Tip: Young babies may get overstimulated and fussy quickly and that's okay. If your baby isn't interested, just try again later.





Exploring the senses through sensory play

Stimulate the sense of touch with Sensory Ribbons

Why:

From birth, humans use our five senses to explore and try to make sense of the world around us.

Sensory play

encourages baby to actively explore her sense of touch.

Sensory play has been scientifically proven to have a really positive impact on the physical development of your little ones' brain. This kind of play enables your baby to use the 'scientific method' of observing, forming a hypothesis, experimenting and making conclusions.

Incorporating sensory play supports language development, cognitive growth, fine and gross motor skills, problem solving skills, concentration, increases memory function and social interaction.

There are hundreds of ways you can introduce sensory play with your babe. One of which is with a Sensory Ribbons Ring, designed to stimulate the sense of touch for babies.

The movement of the ribbons also introduces the concept of cause and effect, strengthening the connection between the left and right sides of the brain.

Ideas For Play:

Your baby will love watching the bright colours swirling above them and feeling the silky ribbons on their skin

Challenge baby to intentionally reach out and grasp at the ribbons while you swirl the ribbons above her

Sensory exploration is not only fun for little ones, it creates opportunity to connect and bond with your baby through play. It's so incredible to see their little eyes mesmerised by their senses! Let your baby know how much you love playing together

Consider creating a sensory corner in your lounge room with a mirror at floor height. Babies can spend hours enjoying them. They love looking at the world and themselves

Reintroduce the Sensory Ribbons from 36 months: perfect for twirling and dancing



Unlocking potential through open-ended play

Unlock creativity and leadership potential through open-ended play

There's a saying in neuroscience "cells that fire together, wire together." The idea is that the more we use our brain to do something, the stronger the connections between the cells involved become. By intentionally offering our children materials that tap directly into creative thinking, like age-appropriate puzzles and play silks, we help unleash humanity's inherent creativity and unlimited potential. As your baby moves into childhood, she will spontaneously use her imagination to transform The Playsilk into a cape, a sea to sail a boat on and limitless dress up costumes. We love that open-ended play gives your child the opportunity to be a leader. Borrow her child-like wonder and buy into the vision!

Ideas for play:

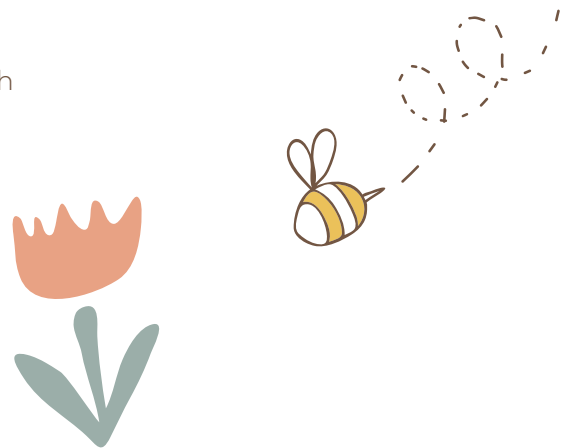
Help spur creative thinking by asking your little one open-ended questions as you hold up the Silk. Your enthusiasm will be contagious!

- What if we use this for dress ups?
- Imagine if we tied this on as a cape!
- I wonder how we could make this into a bag?
- Could this be a roof for our fort?
- I wonder if this is long enough to use to jump rope?



WARNING STRANGULATION HAZARD!

Adult supervision is required. Any string from toys or window blinds longer than 30cm is considered a strangulation hazard for all children. DO NOT leave your child unattended with these toys.





**Thank you for sharing this Monti&Me Play Set with
your little one.**

**A reminder to supervise your baby while playing with
the materials and not to leave your baby unattended.**

This Playguide isn't for little hands – it's for you.

**We are here for you! If you have any questions about any of
the toys and tools, please email hello@montiandme.com.au**

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