

PARENT PLAY BOOK

# THE CHANGEMAKER

MONTHS 0-12 AND BEYOND

purposeful play  
monti  
& me



An intelligent way to play, backed by science

## A note from us to you

We're parents too, and like you, want to do everything humanly possible to help our children become their best, most conscious self.

And guess what, the science says it pays off.

How we play and parent has the power 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.



**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

## Doing the best with what we know

We know, without a shadow of a doubt, every parent reading this, wants 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.**

Better understanding each stage makes it easier to approach ourselves, our partner and our bub with empathy and respect in the testing moments.

Understanding allows each of us to create the conditions to thrive.



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

## Secure attachment: the most essential ingredient for brain development

Young children need to be exposed to different textures, sights and sounds for brain development.


But the most essential ingredient 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.



### Secure attachment =

- ✓ 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



Anyone else feeling waaaay  
unprepared for this?

YOUR NEW ROLE:  
**BABY'S FIRST  
TEACHER**



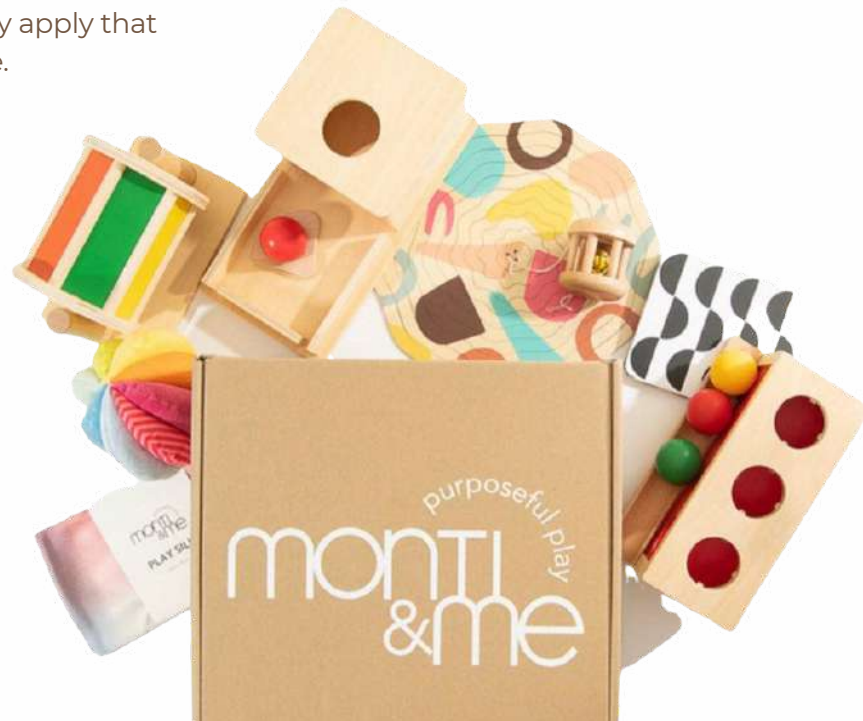
## Baby's first teacher

In Dr. Maria Montessori words, 'education is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.'

To us, the parent's role as baby's first teacher means to act as a guide so your child can learn for himself through exploration.

We can 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 also helps your child better understand concepts, better retain information and later to successfully apply that knowledge.



**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**

## 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

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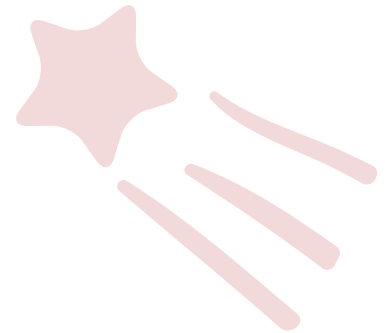
The Montessori method is **one that is gaining a great deal of scientific support and must keep being studied in an exhaustive way as it guarantees the creation of a universe based on affection and respect for the rhythms of each child and environment.**

## The prepared environment

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.





## **HOT TIP:**

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

**-Monti&Me**

## Preparing the playspace

### 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.



## **HOT TIP:**

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

**-Monti&Me**

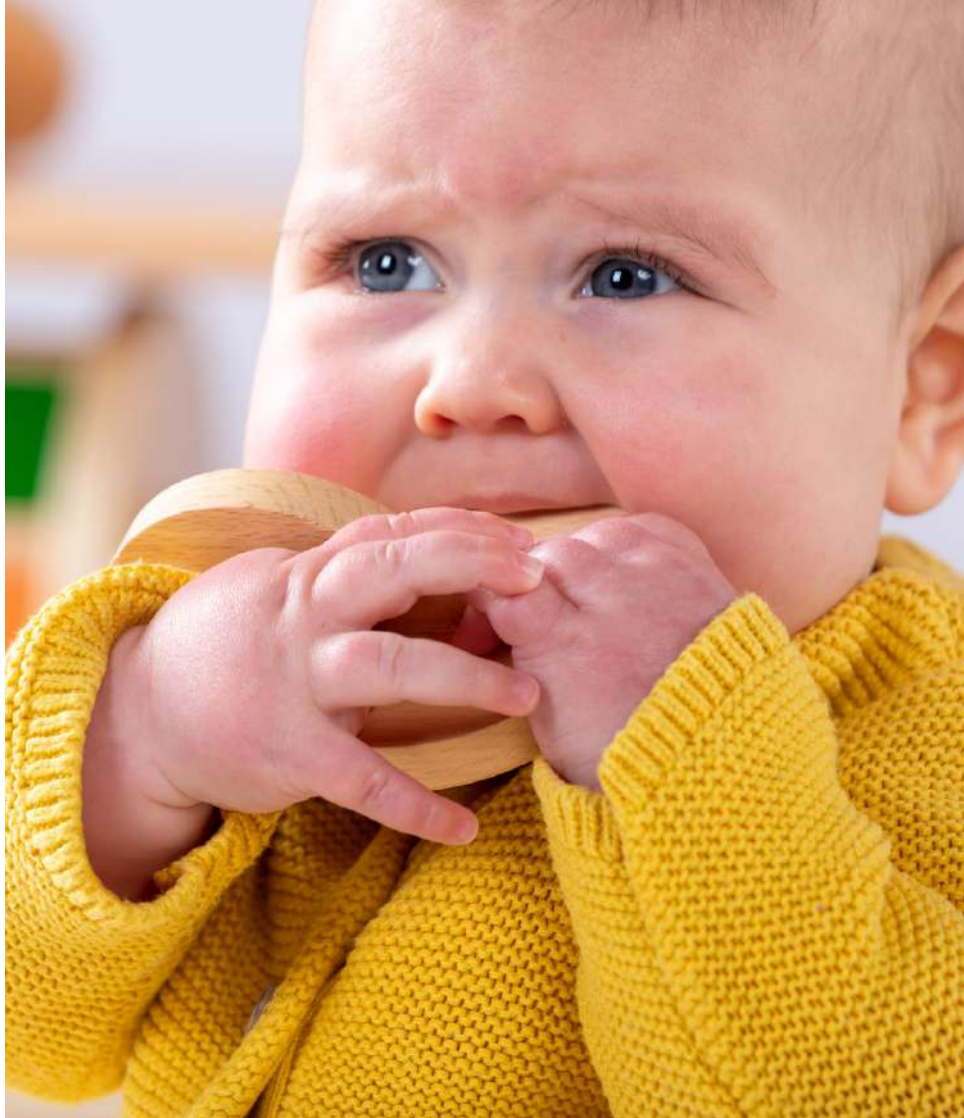


## Learning through play

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 from 'helping' is one of the most helpful things you can do.**



## **HOT TIP:**

**Allow your babe to explore at their own pace. Once *they're engaged*, resist the urge to talk to them as this *interrupts concentration and building focus.***

## 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.

**Each time 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.**



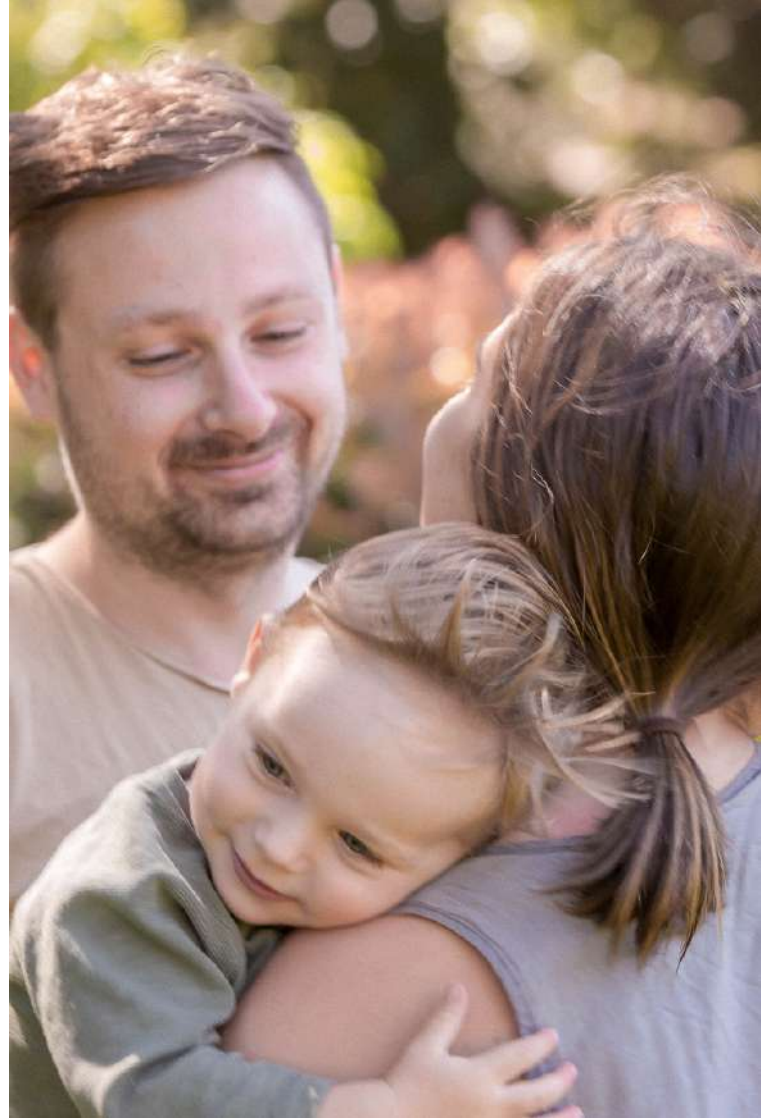
**It's so easy to fall into the trap of**  
interrupting your little one. **But that's not the**  
**way nature intended. Observe your babe**  
**and** you'll notice just how enthralled they are  
with **the world around them.**

## 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-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.

**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.**



## **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”





## 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'



## Building 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.  
Note: Only offer two choices that are realistic and choices you are willing to give.

**“Would you like to wear this or this?”**



Fun Fact

Any more than two choices will overwhelm babies and toddlers

The background features several abstract, hand-drawn shapes in various colors: a large yellow shape at the top left, a brown shape at the top right, a pink shape on the left, a blue shape at the bottom left, and a teal shape at the bottom right. Some shapes have thin black outlines.

# TUNING IN

Brain building moments to  
enjoy and savour

## Supporting early development and movement

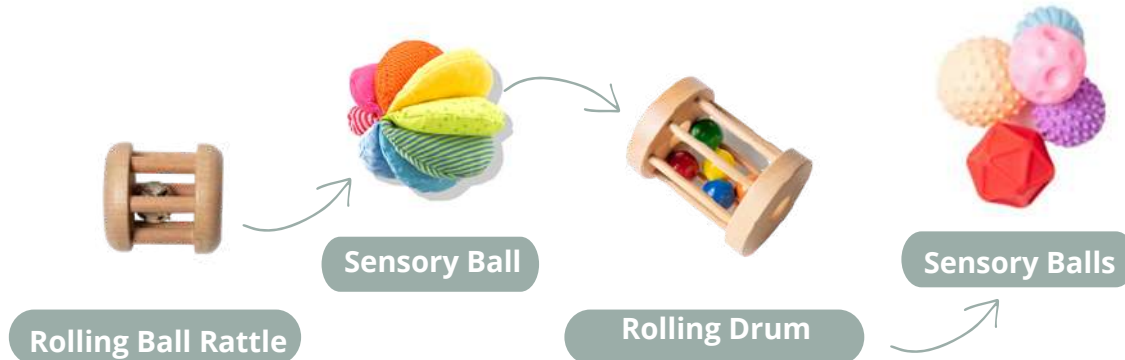
Each stage is such an exciting time in your baby's development. Your baby is still fairly new Earth side but you're probably starting to feel like you've known each other forever. It takes self-awareness (and self-control!) To truly appreciate the now, and not drift ahead to when your baby is more independent.

### Is baby ready?

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?



Fun Fact

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

## In the first month your baby might:

- Be easily overstimulated because she can't yet filter out information. Everything she hears, feels, smells and sees - even what is happening inside her own body is stimulation
- Spend most of the time sucking and sleeping
- Like to be held and rocked
- Stare at soft light and high contrast images
- Be sensitive to smells
- Have trouble tracking moving objects until around 5 weeks past due date

### **Ideas for play:**

- Snuggling, smiling and lots of silence.
- Singing and telling stories.

## Fun Fact

In the first eight weeks infants in have no control over their movements and all their physical activity is involuntary or reflex!

## 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



## 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

- 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

- 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

### 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

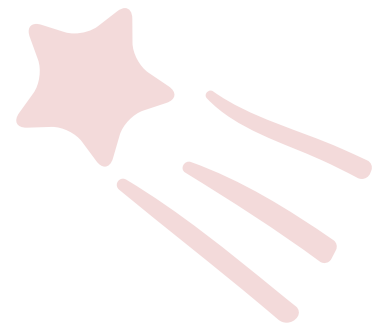
## In Months 7 & 8 Your Baby Might

- Be exploring: paying attention to smaller details, enjoying de-constructing, undoing shoelaces, knocking over towers, emptying cupboards
- Love playing hide and seek and peek-a-boo, and sit-and-stand games
- You might see rolling, shuffling, crawling, babbling, clapping hands and pulling up to stand
- Talking and listening, singing, reading, playing outside and trying new foods are all great for baby learning and development

## In Months 9 & 10 Your Baby Might

- Be in the object permanence stage: learning that objects still exist even if they are hidden and cry when you walk out of the room
- Make silly faces at the mirror and laugh at themselves
- Imitate people and instructions. Your baby may wave when you say “goodbye” or “see you” to a friend

- Start to understand the concept of rough and gentle
- Pick up things using her thumb and pointer finger together
- Be crawling, shuffling, babbling, clapping hands and pulling up to stand





## In Months 11 -12 Your Baby Might

- Be getting better at using his hands and fingers and will probably be feeding himself with his fingers at most meals
- Pull herself up to stand by holding onto furniture, or she might even stand well by herself
- Take her first steps or could even be walking by herself
- Choose to crawl sometimes because walking is tiring!
- Help you more when he's getting dressed without being prompted
- Start to link words with their meanings – for example, if you say 'ball' or 'teddy' he might look around for these things or go find and bring to you

The background features several abstract, hand-drawn shapes in various colors including yellow, pink, orange, and teal. There are also stylized handprints in pink and teal scattered around the text.

# **SELF- REGULATION STARTS WITH CO- REGULATION**

*Here's a simple way you can help*

## 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 proven 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 was?

### How to do it:

Pause. Breathe. Mantra.

This is hard. I can do hard things.

I want to react. I choose to respond.

This is not an emergency. I can respond in calm.

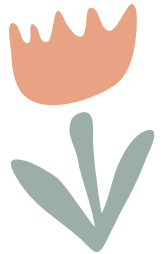
They are having a hard time - not giving me a hard time.

I am exactly who my child needs.

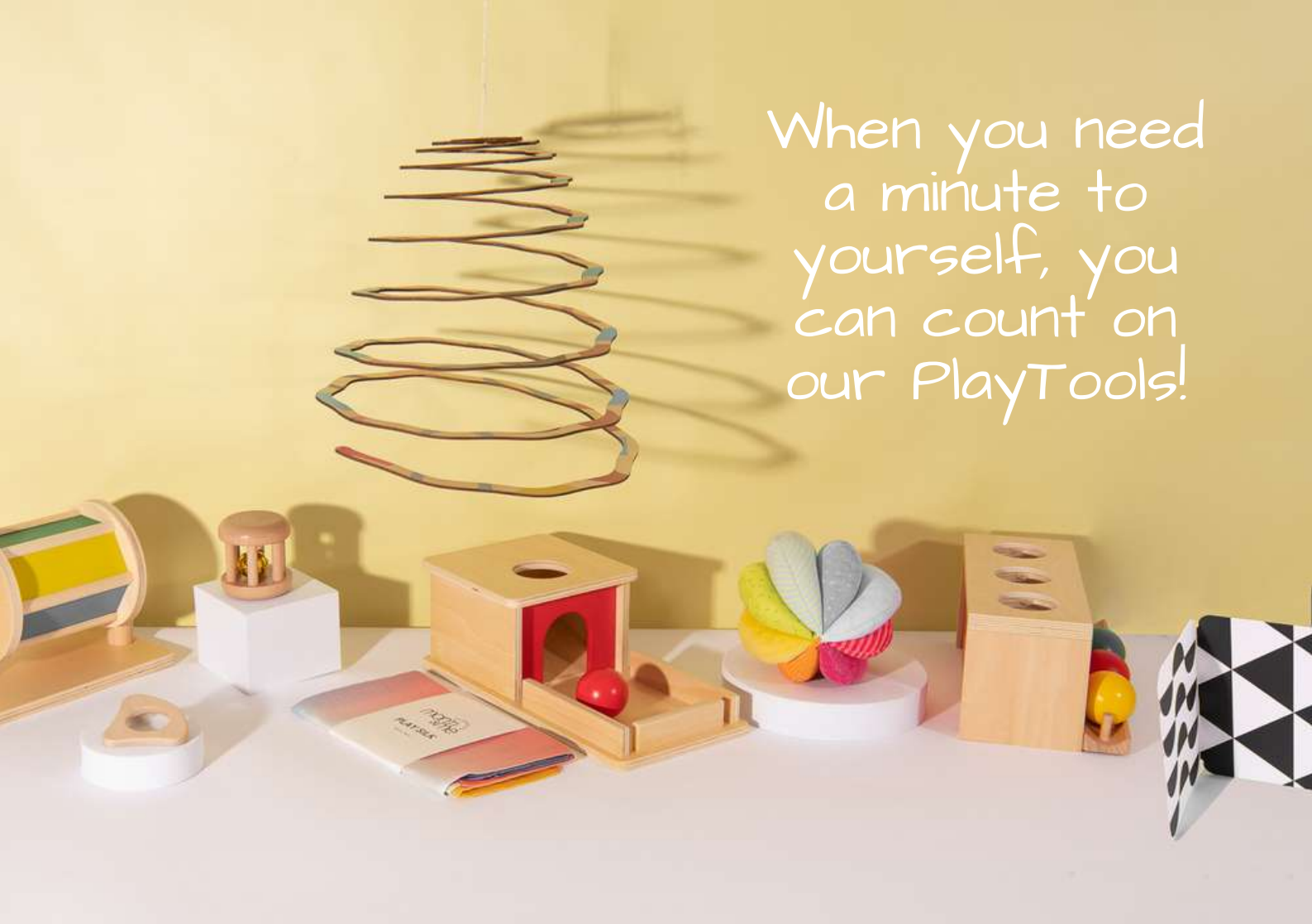
I am calm. I am loving. I am kind.

I can be peaceful even in chaos.

My best is enough.



When you need  
a minute to  
yourself, you  
can count on  
our PlayTools!



The background features several abstract, hand-drawn shapes in various colors: a large yellow shape at the top left, a brown shape at the top right, a pink shape on the left, a brown shape on the right, a yellow arch at the bottom left, a light blue shape at the bottom center, and a teal shape at the bottom right. The text is centered in the middle of the page.

# LET'S PLAY

**PlayTools to nurture  
babies developing brain**



**From birth: Strengthening baby's vision and attention**

## Increase attention span and build brain connections during tummy time

### Why:

Babies are riveted by high contrast images in the early months.

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 build brain connections.

### Ideas For Play:

Start with the simple Black and White side

Make tummy time more enjoyable by opening the full accordion.

Even newborn babies may stare at the cards for up to a 10 minutes at a time if there is no background noise distracting them before falling asleep!

At around 4 months (or when baby seems less engaged) introduce the Complex side.

## Fun Fact

**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.**



From month 2: Learning through everyday moments



## Everyday moments build neural pathways

### Why:

The best experiences are real life learning with you.

Interpreting everyday moments as purposeful play helps us to 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.

### 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'

·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!**





From month 2: Strengthening vision and awakening  
the senses

## 2-in-1 Mobile: designed to nurture baby's developing brain

### What is a Montessori Mobile?

In Montessori, mobiles are a go-to item for visual development in the early months.

In the old school parenting paradigm, mobiles were about entertaining or boring a baby to sleep.

In Montessori philosophy, they are about developing and strengthening bubs vision and concentration. Sometimes this is described as 'working' through play.

Montessori mobiles are “powered” by natural air movement and support the practice of visual tracking and concentration.

The natural movement of the air in the room moves the mobiles at slow speeds allowing your baby to focus with an appropriate level of challenge.

Hang from a play gym, above the change table or near an open window and watch your little one be mesmerised.

Safety watch out:  
The Mobile is for the eyes to enjoy, not the hands to grasp.  
Or in the words of  
Australian consumer law:

**Warning! Adult supervision is required.**  
Attach these toys out of reach of the child.

To prevent possible strangulation or injury by entanglement, remove the toy when the child starts trying to get up on hands and knees in a crawling position.



**From month 4: Using my mouth to learn**

## Babies actually learn by putting things in their mouth

### **Why:**

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

During this time babies take in more information through their mouths than they do through their fingers - predominantly because nerves are more developed in their mouth than any other part of the body.

Recent studies show that mouthing can reduce dribbling (by working mouth muscles), helps with speech development, and prepares bub for learning to eat.

### **Ideas For Play:**

- Present toys so they can look for up to 10 seconds before they feel them (to support multi-sensory learning)
- Tie to a ribbon or elastic and hang from a play gym (to use as a grasping mobile!)
- Other safe textures for your baby to explore include infant cutlery, wooden books, sensory balls and ribbons.

Safety watch out:  
Adult supervision is always required.



From month 3: Ignite curiosity and practice visual tracking

## Ignite curiosity and practice visual tracking

### Why:

The Playsilks offer bright eye catching colours and are used in most baby sensory classes.

We love that playing with silks from a young age helps 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.

### Ideas for play:

- You could create a sensory ribbon by tying the Playsilk in a knot around the teething ring

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

## Fun Fact

**Visual tracking is a foundational skill for learning to read!**

### 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.





**From month 4: Strengthening baby's grasp and hand-eye coordination**



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

### Why:

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

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.

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

### Ideas for play:

- 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

- From around 3-4 months your baby will start to look for and track the sources of sounds he hears.

They will recognize the sound of the rattle even when there are other noises in the background

Play with pattern recognition by shaking the rattle in a rhythm.

(Shake, shake, pause, shake, shake, pause—then vary the pattern.)





From month 5-6: 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 2-3.

### Ideas for play:

- Introduce when your child has control of their hand

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?'





From months 9-10: Learning about object permanence

## Explore the Drop Box to learn about object permanence

### Why:

Your baby is still learning how the world works including that objects still exist when they are out of sight.

This concept is called object permanence.

Here, the ball is pushed through the hole in the Drop Box, disappears then rolls out into the tray.

Surprise, it can now be retrieved! This develops gross motor strength by reaching across while sitting to post the ball.

Posting sends information to the brain and develops hand, wrist and finger control. Intentionally grasping, posting and releasing is also a fun lesson in cause and effect.

### Ideas For Play:

- Show your baby how the box works by holding the ball above the box then posting it through the hole
- If the ball misses the hole (which it will many times!) resist getting the ball immediately—you are helping by not helping!

- If your baby doesn't seem interested at first, try again later— babies learn to love the box at different times







**From month 11: Strengthening fine motor skills**

## The Push Balls strengthens fine motor skills and builds on the understanding of object permanence

### Why:

Bae is working on fine motor strength and hand-eye coordination when they push the balls through the holes.

Babies love pushing the coloured balls and watching them disappear and (surprise!) pop out down below. The balls disappear, then reappear, building on the concept of object permanence.

This toy also helps her understand cause and effect as she practices posting. It's fun to watch as your baby explores which other toys fit (or don't fit!) in the holes.

### Ideas For Play:

- If your child doesn't explore the material on their own, you can push down a ball—modelling how it works and piquing her interest

Narrate and ask questions:

- 'Which coloured ball will you push down first?'
- 'I see you have the yellow ball, can you place it in my hand?'
- Use tone of voice as encouragement: 'You did it!'

Foster wonder and curiosity by asking questions like:

- 'I wonder what else will fit inside these holes.'
- Does your soft ball fit inside the hole?'

## Fun Fact

**Toddlers enjoy coming back to this keep it in your toy rotation through to age 3**



**From 15 months: Fostering curiosity 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 PlayTools and not to leave your baby unattended.**

**If you have any questions or feedback, please DM us  
@montiandmeau or email [hello@montiandme.com.au](mailto:hello@montiandme.com.au)**