

CRYING

A parent responding to an infant's cry is a vital part of emotional nurturing. It helps the baby learn to trust and bond with the parents or caregivers. Therefore, it is important that parents learn to differentiate the various cries of a baby and to recognize how to respond to him/her.

Infants have four basic cries:

- the hungry cry
- the cry of pain
- the bored or grumbling cry
- the angry cry

The hungry cry has a rhythmical rise and fall with a short pause between the cry. It sounds demanding but not desperate.

The cry of pain is probably the most obvious, fearful cry of all. It begins with a loud inward gasp and is followed by a rising shriek. The inward gasps may take a few seconds before the baby can get enough air to shriek again.

The bored or grumbling cry is low pitched, not very demanding and extremely rhythmical. However, if left unanswered, this cry will get loud and demanding, and the infant will learn to use this cry more often.

The angry cry is loud, demanding, and varied. This cry does not usually enter the infant's types of cries until round six months of age.

There are many reasons why an infant might cry. Review the transparency "Crying Infants Guide." An infant cannot be spoiled, especially not by a parent responding to his/her cries. Explain that an infant does NOT cry to exercise his/her lungs or to manipulate parents. They cry because there is something they desperately need, and they are begging for the parent or caregiver to meet that need. Crying is their way of communicating.

Sometimes a baby cries for no apparent reason. This is often labeled as colic. If this occurs, remember that you are there to help the baby, not necessarily to stop the baby from crying.

Review the COPING WITH CRYING transparency.