

## **Getting Started**

The babies are the bosses here and we are learning to respond to their needs. They will direct the flow of the massage sessions. So, if babies need to be cuddled, nursed, or whatever, do that!

### **Why do babies cry?**

- Hungry – usually begins with whimpering, then becomes rhythmic
- Angry – loud and intense
- Pain – sudden
- Bored – pay attention to me! – loud but not passionate – eyes looking around, easily distracted
- Just like adults, sometimes the feelings just build and build, and they need an outlet. We exercise, eat, talk to a friend. Babies can only cry and sometimes just need to release. Our response to babies cries can instill negative attitudes about the baby's "self". Crying isn't bad and babies don't have the skill to cry to manipulate you.
- Their crying is not about you. Relax, listen to them, figure out if there is an obvious reason for crying (hungry, wet, cold, etc.), and if not, they may be responding to a need to release a feeling or memory –
  - 1) Because they don't have our language, or our logic, we can communicate through touch to let babies release their birth memories.
    - a. Listen and hold in a non-judgmental way
    - b. Use active listening – reframe what you think they are trying to tell you, and watch their response
    - c. Apologize and explain, if you feel it is necessary.
- If baby cries during a massage, or really anytime a baby cries, the frequent socially acceptable response is to try to 'hush' the baby.

### **Parents can take a 3 step approach**

1. Calm themselves – take a deep breath, close eyes, inhale slowly for a count of 4, pause, and exhale to a count of 8.
  - a. This will trigger the relaxation response
  - b. Let go of preconceived notions of crying – it isn't about you, it isn't a punishment for something you've done, or being done to make you suffer. This isn't a way between you and your child.
2. Show acceptance to baby – say "that's right; you want to tell me your story, don't you? Go ahead, I'm listening".
3. Listen to your inner voice, and respond appropriately to what you think baby is saying.

## **Massage 101 - Basic Guidelines for Infant Massage**

1. Create a ritual – make massage a part of bath time, or nap time, or get home from work time.
  - Use the same equipment each time as you establish the ritual
    - A soft blanket for baby to lie on
    - Soft lighting – remember that baby is lying on its back, looking up at the light
    - Put on quiet music that brings you joy and calm.
    - Be sure that the area is warm and comfortable, free of drafts.
    - Have an extra blanket available, and an extra diaper and clothes or jammies ready for after the massage

### **2. Get Ready**

#### **Parent –**

- See this time as a gift for yourself, as well as to your baby. This is the time that you get to de-stress and enjoy your baby
- Get comfortable – if you are working in a position that is harmful or even just uncomfortable for you, you can't give an effective massage to your baby. Get into a position that you can maintain for 30 minutes or more
  - Get on the floor, on a blanket
  - Hold the baby on your lap
  - Sit on the floor, with the baby on a bench

#### **Baby –**

- Always ask the baby's permission to receive a massage – put a small amount of lotion on your hands, rub them together, and with a smile on your face say: "Are you ready for your massage?"
  - This is the start of the ritual – after a couple of sessions, the baby will start getting excited, start wiggling and giggling as soon as she hears the sound of the lotion being rubbed on your hands.
- You can tell the answer by the baby's body language:
  - Wide spread arms and a smile means go ahead!
  - Clenched fist, tight body means no!
  - Always respect the child by respecting the answer you receive
  - This teaches children that they control their bodies and who touches them. Children that have been massaged lovingly will not acquiesce to intrusive touch later in their lives.
  - You can scale back your request – "May I just rub your feet/back/hands?"
- Baby should be in the state of Quiet Alert.

- Babies are in this stage about 10% of the time. This is the time for massage and is the most productive time for learning. During massage, they are learning safety and comfort.
- Baby should be undressed, no diapers, no clothing. Keep extra diapers close, especially for baby boys!

### 3. Older Siblings

- Older children love to help! Give them a job to do, such as holding the lotion bottle, the extra blanket, or singing the baby your own quiet time song.
- Massage time is great for calming down the older sib as well, even if they aren't being massaged. They pick up on the calm, gentle nature of the moment.
- If the older child is a HB baby, they already have the relaxation response anchored before birth, and this is a continuation.
- Be sure the older child gets his own turn, and that he knows that he gets time without interruption, so the baby gets her time without interruption.
- If the older child cannot calm down enough, then it is best that they are out of the room during the infant's massage time, and that the infant is out of the room during the older child's time.

### 4. Spouse

- Infant Massage is Dad's chance to bond with the baby, as effective a bonding time as breastfeeding is for mom. This can be Dad's special time, especially if he is feeling a little left out.
- Because Mom and Dad both have different touches and styles, they shouldn't share the hands on part of the massage.

### 5. Get Set

- Hands should be warm and smooth. Rub them together briskly to warm them (and let the baby know what's coming). Nails should be short and not jagged. Use hand lotion regularly to soften rough spots and jagged cuticles.
- Rhythm – keep it smooth, slow and regular. Rapid, light stroking can be annoying. You will tune into your baby's preferred pressure and rhythm.
- Relax. Remember that what is thought in the mind comes out through the hands. Relax your mind, and your hands will follow. Start by taking a slow deep breath. Inhale slowly, exhale slowly as you softly think the word RELAX.
- Visualize a relaxed parent and a relaxed child, then step into that picture.

- Remember flow from one area to another. Maintain physical contact as well as eye contact. It is troubling when you are deeply relaxed to suddenly feel a loss of physical contact, and it is startling to feel it suddenly restarted.
- Oil or lotion? Or none at all? Use high quality cold pressed oil – grapeseed oil, apricot. Use a quality lotion, something like Eucerin. Rule of thumb is that lotions are cooling, so they are great for summer, and oil is warming so it is great for winter.
- Another important thing to remember is that whatever you are going to put on the baby is going to end up in the baby's mouth, so only use something that is edible. Toes and fingers will end up in their mouth, sooner or later.
- Avoid petroleum based oils and lotions for the edible factor, and nut oils to avoid the possible triggering of allergies.
- You can use cornstarch powder to do a 'dry' massage, if either lotion or oil isn't tolerated.
- You will develop your own preference, and you can tell from the baby's reaction what their preference is.
- Skin test the lotion or oil before using it on the baby's full body, just in case of allergies – rub a little into a small patch of baby's skin, wait for 30 minutes and watch for any allergic reaction. If there is a reaction, it will usually be red blotches and will usually disappear after 1 hour.
- Should I use scented oils? Don't use with very young babies (under 2 months). Mothers and babies know each other by scent and using a scented oil can distract from this instinct. As the child gets older, you can use a very diluted blend – 3 drops to 2 tablespoons of oil.
  - Tea tree – recommended for skin infections
  - Camomile Roman – calming and soothing, aids digestion
  - Lavender – soothing and calming, can be used as a chest or nasal decongestant
  - Eucalyptus – is a powerful decongestant. Can be used for chest and back massage to relieve colds, coughs and congestion.
- How long? Follow the baby's lead – if the baby is done, you are done. Usually newborns and preemies can only tolerate 5-10 minutes. If the baby becomes restless or upset, you are done. Sometimes you won't have time for a full body massage, sometime what you've done is what was needed. Sometimes just doing hands and feet are plenty and provide the calming moments that are needed.
  - Hands, feet and ears have clusters of reflex points. When you are doing the hands and feet, you are hitting all the associated areas in the child's body
  - Ear rubbing or a containment hold around the head is an effective way to calm a cranky baby.

- Don't not massage your baby because you think you need a large chunk of time. . .a short session, just a short rub on the feet or up and down the spine, is much better than no session at all.
- Stop if the baby cries – REMEMBER, THIS IS SOMETHING YOU DO WITH YOUR BABY, NOT TO YOUR BABY.

#### 6. How old should the baby be?

- Start rubbing immediately, when the baby is put on mom's chest after birth – that I instinct!
- Regular massage can begin before the baby is a week old.
- Start as soon as possible – if you wait too long, the baby gets too busy growing and exploring to sit still for a massage. By the time they are 7-8 months old, they are too busy and starting a massage ritual can be challenging.
- Remember – **any massage is better than none at all!**

#### 7. How to stop the massage session?

- Stop the same way you started, slowly and gently.
- Gradually slow your strokes and your rhythm. Suddenly stopping can startle the baby.
- After you have slowed it waaaay down, place your hand quietly on the baby's back or tummy and just enjoy the moment, until the baby is ready to switch gears.
- Cover the baby to conserve its body heat and dress the baby in the clothes that you have close at hand.

#### 8. When NOT to massage

- Specific conditions contraindicate massage, but not touch. Rubbing the baby's hands or feet, gentle holding, light stroking is always right for a parent to do.
  - High fever, or any contagious disease
  - 72 hours after an immunization
  - Skin conditions or rashes, dermatitis
  - Inflamed joints – this may indicate a serious condition
  - Bruised areas
  - Suspected fractures
  - Areas of acute inflammation
  - Fresh scar tissue
  - An extremely irritable or unwell child
- Do not jab or deeply massage the fontanel, or soft spot, on a baby's head. These are the spots that made it easy for the baby's head to pass through the birth path, and will become solid as the bones ossify as the baby ages. You can lightly rub over the area with hands, or the pads of your fingers