

# How to Raise A Confident Baby

by Dr. Jenn Berman

We often take for granted our infant child's experience of us and the world. We get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the day and, without a word of warning, we pick her up and put her on the changing table. At other times, we put him in his crib and run out of the room without saying a word when we hear the phone ring. We even get so caught up in our own anxieties about our child being developmentally "on time" that we don't allow our baby to do his own thing at his own pace. In fact, it seems that often we watch our children without really seeing them for who they actually are.

Resources for Infant Educators, known as RIE (pronounced like "rye"), is a parenting philosophy that was born out of a desire to treat infants with respect in order to help children grow up to be independent people with a strong sense of self. RIE focuses on respect, honor and esteem. All parents could benefit from using some of the RIE techniques and philosophies. Here are a few of my favorites:

Explain your actions.

Demonstrate your respect for your child by letting him know what you are going to do to him before you do it. For example, "I am going to pick you up now and take you to the changing table so I can change your diaper" or "I am going to leave the room to get the phone but I will be back in two minutes." When dealing with pre-verbal infants, many parents don't bother to let their child know what they are doing before they do it. This misses a chance to connect with your child, help her feel safe and increase her verbal skills.

Allow your child to work through frustration.

It is instinctual for most parents to try to solve their babies' problems and calm them the minute they start crying. Sometimes,

however, this is a missed opportunity for the child to work through something and even develop a skill. For example, my six-month-old daughter, Mendez, was holding a toy she liked in her hand and accidentally dropped it. It rolled just out of her reach. She clearly still wanted to continue playing with it but couldn't quite reach it. My first instinct was to grab the toy and hand it to her but instead I allowed her the space to try to solve the problem herself. As a result she started to lean over and reach in a way she had never done before and got the toy herself. This was a learning experience for both of us.

Reflect your observations.

Feeling seen and understood is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child. If your child falls down and starts to cry instead of telling him he is fine try reflecting back to him what happened. "You fell and really scared yourself."

Really observe your child.

Don't make assumptions about who your child is. Try hanging back and observing him with an open mind. Look for clues about who he is and what his needs are. The RIE motto is "observe more, do less."

Don't interrupt.

When your baby is babbling allow her the room to speak. This shows that you value what she has to say. When she is playing give her the opportunity to finish what she is doing, which can help her to develop a longer attention span.

Passive toys make for active infants.

RIE educators believe that simpler toys encourage children to use imagination and resources to play. They discourage battery-operated toys and believe that those types of toys encourage a child to sit back and be entertained by the toy as opposed to being an active participant.

Allow your child to initiate.

Trust your infant's competence by giving

RIE Resources:

Dear Parent: Caring for Infants with Respect by Magda Gerber (Resources for Infant Educators)

Your Self-Confident Baby: How to Encourage Your Child's Natural Abilities From the Very Start by Magda Gerber and Allison Johnson (John Wiley & Sons) RIE at RIE.org



her the room to initiate interaction or play. Instead of trying to teach your child to hit a drum give him a few toys to play with and see which one he chooses to play with. This gives your child the opportunity to show you what he is interested in and initiate the play he wants to do.

If you'd like to ask Dr. Jenn a question, please email her at [drjenn@familymagazinegroup.com](mailto:drjenn@familymagazinegroup.com).



Geared to the busy parent's lifestyle, Dr. Jenn's new book, *The A to Z Guide to Raising Happy Confident Kids*, comes to the rescue with 26 fun, succinct, and very user-friendly chapters on everything including pets, sports parent etiquette, food, healthy relationships, and everything in between! It even offers great advice on how to keep your marriage as much fun as it was before the children arrived!

Upbeat, lively, and humorous, this book answers parents' most frequent questions about how to raise a healthy, well-adjusted child. Each chapter is specifically designed to be stand-alone and only a few pages long, so busy parents can read what they need when they need it. Although it focuses primarily on families with toddlers to third graders, every parent will find gems of insight and guidance that will help them in their day-to-day quest to raise a happy and healthy family!

Father  
Figures

It is a wise father that  
knows his own child.  
~ William Shakespeare