

What's Normal?

Use the Centering Agree-Disagree and Infant Care cards or additional suggestions below to initiate conversation about normal newborn behaviors. Ask participants to raise their cards to show whether they agree or disagree. They can show they are neutral or not sure by holding the card parallel to the floor. Or, simply ask participants to raise their hands if they agree. Encourage the parents to add their own experiences in these first weeks. Wrap up the exercise with reassurance to parents about normal newborn behaviors.

Suggestions include:

- I can't put my baby down!
- her eyes cross
- poop looks like watery mustard

My baby:

- seems to be crying more at 2+ weeks
- sleeps a lot
- has a rash
- loves her bath time!
- eats all the time
- spits up a lot



Soothing and Comfort

Continue the discussion about normal infant behaviors and infant crying. To reinforce that crying is a form of communication for baby, you might start with an open question for group, "What could your baby's cries mean?" and lead into deeper discussion about importance of responding to baby's needs, establishing trust, and building a secure attachment.

Encourage each parent to demonstrate their techniques for soothing their baby. Invite everyone in group to practice these new suggestions for comfort holds, motion, massage, wearing baby, swaddling, soothing sounds, etc. and encourage everyone to use their techniques throughout every session to comfort their babies. Use positive affirmations as each participant shares and emphasize that she already knows what soothes her baby best!

Explore what each of the parents and support people can do to manage their stress during these difficult periods. This activity may promote discussion about postpartum blues, parental depression, and anxiety.

Discuss the dangers of shaking a baby (may refer to resources such as the Period of Purple Crying Program).

Dealing With Conflict

The intention of this exercise is to model positive approaches to communication, including eye contact, “I statements”, body language, respect and reflective listening.

In this exercise, the group is divided and each half is paired with one of the facilitators who will be role-playing a conflict within a family. The two facilitators start off role-playing a couple with a conflict over their 6 month old baby’s sleep. One “parent” is committed to a sleep regimen, while the other is not. Allow the role-play exercise to go for several minutes using realistic issues and reactions common in a sleep-deprived family situation. Pause for a few moments and then each of the facilitators can turn to their half of the group for ideas and suggestions of positive responses to the conflict.

Ask if other participants want to role-play additional scenarios (television and screen time, back-to-work, family intrusion, etc.). Encourage them to identify other areas of conflict. Be ready to intervene to refocus the conversation with positive responses to the issues.

My Personal Goals

Facilitate a discussion around the importance of self-care, wellness and having a strong support system. Dive deeper into topic of goal-setting for interconception health.

May move organically into the next exercise when participants have identified financial goals as their priority.

Financial Security

Money is the number one stressor for most Americans, current research shows, particularly affecting women, parents and younger adults. One recent survey found that one in five adults said they have skipped or considered skipping going to their healthcare provider for treatment because of financial concerns. And almost one-third of adults with partners report that money is a major source of conflict between them.

Understanding money management is critical for young families to balance their work and home needs. Use a popcorn exercise to share responses to prompts such as “When I think about money, I:” or “When I think about my family’s financial situation now that I have a baby, it would be helpful to learn more about:”

Be prepared to provide information and links to available local resources. This exercise may also inform whether it would be beneficial to dive deeper into topics such as smart shopping, (Session 6) and budgeting (Session 8) or other topics around money management.

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My Personal Goals

Many women find that they have something they would like to change in their life, especially after baby's arrival.

Draw the face that best matches how you feel.

😊 = Good 😊 = Could be better

Exercise	😊	Drinking & Drugs	😊
Diet	😊	Support System	😊
Stress	😊	Relationships	😊
Weight	😊	Time	😊
Smoking	😊	Teeth & Gums	😊
Daily Vitamin	😊	Other	😊

Feeding the Family

Begin with brief visualization:

"It is the end of a long day. You have prepared a delicious, healthy meal for your family (fill in several healthy elements of meal that would be appropriate for group). As you are setting the food on the table, your older child complains that they don't like (meal choice) and that they want you to make them something else. Your partner is focused on a video game. You are rushing around and don't even get a chance to sit down. The baby turns his head away from the first bite of her favorite (fill in), drops it off the tray and starts to fuss... What happens next?"

Facilitate discussion about "family mealtimes." What are mealtimes like for each of the participants? Challenges? Stressors? What is working well?

What about the baby? At about the same time we see significant developmental progress as the child is becoming increasingly mobile, we often see regression in their eating. How does baby's growing independence impact mealtimes? Signs of fussy eaters? Positive parenting approaches?

In a family with older siblings, explore how mealtimes may be changing. One menu or many? What is their definition of family mealtimes? How to involve the older children with meal preparation. What are some of the lessons learned from experiences with older children?

Opportunity to check-in about parent's diet.

To provide another perspective, gather the group for an additional activity to illustrate the recommended portion sizes for each member of the family. Offer a healthy snack that can be enjoyed by all of the group participants. Ask parents to use the food package labelling to determine the recommended serving size for themselves and to use the healthychildren.org site (or other source of nutrition information) for guidance. For example, the recommended serving size for an adult is 1 egg and for a 1-4 year old child, the serving is $\frac{1}{2}$ of an egg. Or, 1 slice compared to $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ slice of bread. May be helpful to have a variety of empty food containers, measuring spoons and cups, and access to nutrition content available for this exercise.

