



Minding the Baby
home visitation program

Minding the Baby

Yale Child Study Center
230 South Frontage Road
New Haven, CT 06520-7900
Phone: 203-785-5589

August 2011

Greetings from Minding the Baby!

We hope you have enjoyed the summer! Many of your little ones are now returning to school. This may be a very happy and exciting time of year. It can also be really hard. Getting back into bedtime routines alone can be a challenge. If you or your child has a tough time with something, stop and wonder....could this be about changes and starting school again? Is your child missing being home? Could your child be worrying about friends, rules, or teachers? Think, wonder, and talk about how you and your child may be feeling. You might be surprised at how much better you both feel!

Wondering: Making Sense of Thoughts and Feelings

Do you ever wonder...

Why did my child find that joke funny?

Why did my child get angry today when we do the same thing every day?

You are wondering about your child's thoughts and feelings.

Why am I so sensitive today?

Why did I say something that annoyed my friend?

You are trying to make sense of what you are feeling and thinking.



Why do we do this?

We are born wanting to understand the world and the people in it, including ourselves. Our brains are made to try to puzzle out what others are thinking and feeling, AND to wonder why we think or feel a certain way. We want to understand—but sometimes it is hard to do. It takes practice.

You are your child's first teacher when it comes to wondering!

Remember when your newborn stared into your eyes and watched your face so carefully? Your baby was trying to learn about you and your feelings!

Babies watch faces and listen, and they try to imitate what they see and hear. They try to understand the world, and themselves, by trying to understand how you feel!

While your baby was doing all of this, YOU were trying to guess how the baby felt, too.

When the baby cried, you wondered: *Is my baby hungry? Tired? Wet?* Then you tried ways to help, and you wondered: *What is making you smile? Is your tummy full of milk now? Do you like it when I hold you close?*

Later, you wondered: *Why do you put everything in your mouth? Is that how you learn or are you hungry? Why do you have to touch everything I am doing? Do you like the buttons on the phone and remote or do you just like to do what I do?*

Sometimes we are right and sometimes we are not!

Sometimes when we wonder what someone is feeling, we guess wrong. Have you had this happen to you? On a day when you felt sad remembering your grandmother

before she died, your partner said to you, "Why aren't you talking to me? I didn't do anything!" Your partner was wondering why you were so quiet. He guessed it was because you were upset with him, not that you were thinking of your grandmother.

This can happen with children too. Maybe your child has a tantrum when you ask him to put on his coat at school pick-up. Usually he is ready to go home and you don't know what's going on. So you try to guess what's wrong.

"I guess you don't want to go home." His teacher comes over and tells you he had a hard day because his friend didn't want to play with him. His feelings were hurt. He is crying for a completely different reason!



What can you do?

- **Try to have an open mind.** Maybe you don't know what your child is feeling.
- **Be curious!** Let your child know you are interested in what she feels and thinks. "I can see you are upset. I'm wondering what's going on."
- **Try to take your child's point of view.** "If my best friend wouldn't talk to me I guess I might be sad and angry too."
- **Admit you aren't sure what your child is feeling.** "I'm just guessing, but are you not ready to go home? Is something bothering you right now?"



Minding the Baby

Co-Directors: Lois Sadler, Nancy Close, Arietta Slade, & Linda Mayes

Home Visitors: Denise Webb, Sarah Fitzpatrick, Tanika Simpson, Bennie Finch, Dana Hoffman, & Rosie Price

Researchers: Patricia Miller & Andrea Miller

Project Director: Crista Marchesseault

