

Developing a Successful Parenting Style

There were, and may still be, times when it is scary how small and fragile your baby appears. However, your baby is growing, and will continue to grow, becoming bigger, stronger, and more resilient.

Unfortunately, for some parents, if the worried feelings take over, they may get stuck in seeing their baby as more immature and fragile than they really are. This can cause some parents to be **over-protective** and **over-anxious**, even when it is no longer necessary or helpful to the baby. Parents also sometimes feel so guilty for the early experiences of their baby that they are **overly lenient** to compensate.

Parents who fall into this pattern:

- won't leave their baby
- won't let their baby do things that they are developmentally ready to do (such as "tummy time," eating solid foods, or walking by themselves)
- treat their baby as sick or fragile (for example, frequently check baby for signs of illness)
- have difficulty setting appropriate limits or discipline as their baby gets older

Can you imagine falling into this pattern?

These ways of parenting often cause children to be difficult to control, demanding, and overly dependent. Here are some ways to avoid falling into this pattern:

- Right now, try not to let worried feelings keep you from holding and interacting with your baby.
- Practice doing new things with your baby even if you are nervous.
- Pay attention to the ways your baby is developing new strengths and abilities.
- Notice ways you may view your baby as more fragile and/or less competent than they are in fact becoming.
- Encourage your baby to do as much as they can as they grow.
- Get the support you need. Talk with your partner and others if you find yourself becoming anxious.
- If you find that after you bring your baby home, you experience distress that is troublesome, consider seeing a therapist; many parents find this is helpful after leaving the hospital. Your social worker or physician can give you a referral.
- When your baby gets older, it is crucial that you are able to set limits. Children gain self-control and security when parents set appropriate limits in loving and clear ways.

What is something that you could do with your baby now that may stretch your comfort and encourage your child's competency?

You can also list these in your Baby Diary under "My Caregiving Goals."