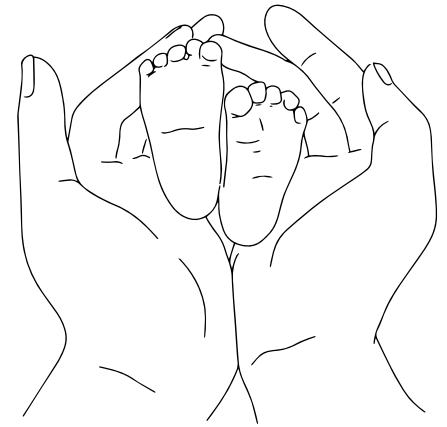


Welcoming Your Baby

With the Power of Positive Experiences



What is the HOPE Framework?

HOPE stands for Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences. It's a powerful way to understand how simple, loving, everyday moments can shape your baby's future.

From cuddling and singing to keeping routines and showing love—these experiences build your baby's brain, strengthen emotional bonds, and support resilience, confidence, and lifelong well-being. When parents, caregivers, and communities focus on creating positive experiences, they help children grow stronger, healthier, and happier.

The Four Building Blocks of HOPE

Research shows that positive childhood experiences (PCEs) help children grow into healthy, resilient adults. The HOPE framework centers around the Four Building Blocks of HOPE, key types of PCEs that all children need to thrive.



Relationships

Loving, supportive relationships are the foundation of your baby's healthy development. From the very beginning—even during pregnancy—your voice, touch, and attention help your baby feel safe and loved. These early bonds build trust and emotional security, essential for your child's brain development and lifelong well-being.

How to nurture relationships after birth:

- Cuddle skin-to-skin as often as you can.
- Respond to your baby's cries with calm, loving words and gentle touch.
- Make eye contact, smile, and talk to your baby throughout the day. Your baby learns from you!
- Pay attention to your baby's cues and answer with love, comfort, and kindness.
- All babies cry. Once you are sure that they are OK- fed, clean diaper, etc. – sometimes you need to let them cry it out. This is where having another adult available can really help!
- Build routines filled with love—feeding, bathing, sleeping, and playing are all bonding moments.
- Encourage your baby's "conversations" (when they make sounds or gestures, be sure to respond. This back-and-forth helps them learn and connect.

Take a moment to reflect

- Can you remember a time when someone made you feel truly loved and supported?
- What simple moments of love would you like to share with your baby every day?
- Every loving interaction helps your baby feel secure, seen, and valued





Environments

A safe, stable, and equitable environment gives your baby the foundation to grow and thrive. It reduces stress, supports healthy brain development, and helps your child feel secure and loved.

How to promote environments after birth:

- Create simple, loving routines (like a bedtime song or morning cuddle).
- Keep your baby's space clean, quiet, and smoke-free.
- Reduce overstimulation by keeping the sounds soft to create a peaceful environment.
- Babies learn from their own experiences. Avoid screens as much as possible for the first two years.
- Make your home a kind, nurturing place for both you and your baby.
- Ask for help when needed: emotional safety for you creates safety for your child.

Take a moment to reflect

- Was there a place where you felt especially safe and calm as a child?
- How can you create that kind of peaceful space for your baby now?
- When your baby feels safe, their brain can focus on growing, learning, and connecting.



Engagement

Positive social and community connections help children build trust, empathy, and a sense of belonging. These experiences shape how they relate to the world and others throughout life.

How to can promote engagement after birth

- Foster social connections that feel meaningful to you—such as with extended family, friends, or community groups.
- Introduce your child to new faces and experiences in a way that feels safe and nurturing for you both.
- Visit community spaces like parks or libraries when you feel comfortable.
- Celebrate family and cultural traditions—it strengthens identity and belonging.

Take a moment to reflect

- Think back to ways your parents helped you feel part of a community. Is there anything there you would want to repeat for your child?
- What things do you do, or what groups are you part of? What helps you feel connected and how could your child be part of that?
- What community or cultural experiences would you love to share with your child?
- Every connection, big or small, helps your child feel loved, accepted, and part of something greater.



Emotional Growth

Babies and young children begin to learn about emotions through their relationships with caregivers. Understanding, expressing, and managing emotions are key skills for lifelong mental health and healthy relationships. Early emotional support helps children feel safe, seen, and capable of handling the world around them.

How to can promote emotional growth after birth:

- Use playful facial expressions, songs, and gentle touch to connect with your baby.
- Pay attention to your baby's cues and answer with love, comfort, and kindness
- Create moments of back-and-forth play (peekaboo, simple games)—these "serve and return" interactions build emotional connection.
- Name emotions during daily routines: "You're excited to see me!" or "That loud noise surprised you."
- Laugh and play together—positive shared moments help your child feel safe and understood.
- Sometimes caring for a new baby is sheer joy. However, parents of infants also feel tired and sometimes overwhelmed. Think about how to take care of yourself, and remember that as your baby grows, it will become easier.

Take a moment to reflect

- Newborns respond well to being held, gently rocked, eye contact, and a soothing voice. As you and your baby get to know each other, you will figure out what works to co-regulate!
- When you play and connect emotionally with your baby, you're teaching them that feelings are okay—and that you're there to help them understand and handle each one calmly.

