

Baby's Talking Scenarios

What is the problem? “Look”, “Recognize” and/or “Respond”? What should you say or do?

1. Mother A has 3 children (all under the age of 5). As she waits for her appointment, her 2 month-old begins to kick and fuss a little. Mother A keeps arguing with her 4 year old daughter about a toy she has taken from her 2-year-old brother.

Look	NO	Mother A has all of her attention on her older children. You don't know if she would recognize or respond to the baby's cues if she looked at the baby so your first job would be to draw her attention to the baby. Suggested intervention: Walk up to family, the family will likely stop talking. To the mom: “Looks like you have your hands full.” To the kids and the mom. “What a beautiful baby, looks like he wants to play too.”
Recognize	NO	When they look at the baby, tell the family: “Isn't it amazing how babies can show us what they need? When babies kick around and fuss a little, that means they are having a hard time keeping themselves calm. He might start to cry soon. Maybe you can help your mom figure out what he needs.”
Respond	NO	Response will depend on what the child needs.

2. Mother B is a first time mother with a 5-week-old baby. As she waits at the counter, her baby starts to root and make sucking noises. She tells you she thinks the baby is hungry and starts to bounce the baby vigorously.

Look	OK	Mother B is looking at her baby.
Recognize	OK	Acknowledge that she knows what her baby needs. “You know your baby so well already and he is really good at telling you that he is hungry.”
Respond	NO	Encourage her to feed her baby. Imagine what her barriers might be. You might say: “Would you like me to find you a quiet place to feed your baby?”

3. Mother C has a 3-week-old baby and a 4-year-old son. While talking to you during an appointment, the mother tells you with pride that her son just loves to play with the baby. You watch as the son puts his face very near the baby's face and the baby tries to turn away. The mother smiles and keeps talking to you.

Look	NO	Mother C is not looking at her children. Your first job will be to get her to look at the children's interaction. Suggestion: "Older children can be such a help with a new baby. I can see he loves his brother."
Recognize	NO	When the mother looks at the children, you might say. "It's great how babies can show grown-ups what they need but it is hard for kids to know when the baby needs a break. I can see that your baby is looking away from your son and giving signals that he needs a little break."
Respond	NO	Ask the older child "Do you know what your baby is saying?" Tell both of them: "He's saying that he's had fun with you but he needs to stop playing now. Just for a little while. Isn't that amazing that your baby can tell you that?"

4. Mother D has a 4-month-old baby who has just been fed and is now trying to reach for anything nearby. During her appointment, you watch Mother D smile at her baby and hand her several small pieces of orange colored crackers as you talk. The baby drops most of them and reaches for other things. Mother D continues to hand the crackers to the baby.

Look	OK	Mother D is looking at her baby.
Recognize	NO	Mother D does not recognize that her baby is practicing reaching for things and is probably not hungry. Suggestion: "I see your baby is 4 months old, that's just when they can finally reach for things. They love to practice."
Respond	NO	Suggestion: Encourage the mother to let the baby reach for something else. You might say: "Babies might seem hungry when they are reaching for everything, but often they just want to reach and hold things. I think your baby just wants to practice holding things. Let's try a toy. You can tell if they are really hungry by looking for other hunger cues."

5. Father A is bottle-feeding a 3-month-old baby as he waits for an appointment. As you watch, the baby stops sucking and tries to turn his head away. The father jiggles the bottle until the baby starts sucking again and looks out the window.

Look	NO	Father A is not looking at his baby. Your job will be to get him to pay attention during the feeding. Suggestion: "What a beautiful baby!"
-------------	----	--

Recognize	NO	When he looks at the baby “Looks like he’s done with the bottle. Isn’t it amazing how they can tell you when they’re done without words? They just stop sucking and turn away.”
Respond	NO	Wait a moment to see if he puts the bottle away. If he doesn’t, offer him a baby behavior handout. “Have you seen our new handouts?”

6. Father B is proud of his 2-month-old son. While waiting for his wife to finish her appointment, he talks about his son’s interest in solid foods. He has been giving him “tastes” of table food because he can tell by the way the baby looks at food that he wants to eat more than just breast milk.

Look	OK	Father B is looking at his baby.
Recognize	NO	Acknowledge that it is great that he spends so much time with his baby and that it can <i>seem</i> like babies want solid food when they look at it so intently but babies will look at anything when they are in a quiet alert state.
Respond	NO	Encourage him to interact with his baby in other ways. “Did you know that your baby will follow your face and your voice when he is in that quiet, learning state? Soon he’ll try to copy your face too.” Remind him that giving solid foods too early can make babies sick.

7. Mother G has come to the desk to ask if she can get some help with breastfeeding. She tells you that her 7-day-old baby will not wake up to feed. You notice the baby is moving around in the car seat, his eyes are open and he is rooting.

Look	NO	Mother G is not looking at her baby. Suggestion: “Oh, I see your baby is awake right now.”
Recognize	NO	Suggestion: “When babies are so young, they do seem to sleep all the time. Looks like he is telling you he wants to eat right now. Can you see how his is looking around and trying to suck on something?”
Respond	NO	Encourage her to feed her baby. “Would you like me to find you a quiet place to feed your baby? I’ll make sure you get a chance to talk to someone who can answer your questions about breastfeeding.”

8. Mother H has a toddler and her large 3-month-old baby with her as she speaks with you about her toddler’s diet and low weight gain. Mother H is worried about the toddler’s lack of interest in food. She tells you that the baby is also a “very picky eater” who never finishes her bottles.

Look	OK	Mother H is looking at her baby and noticing that he doesn't finish his bottles but she is assuming that he is "picky" rather than full.
Recognize	NO	Acknowledge that you understand her concerns about her children getting enough then talk about the baby's cues. Suggestion: "Isn't it amazing how babies can tell us when they are full without words? They stop sucking and they try to turn away. It sounds like your baby is good at telling you what she needs."
Respond	NO	Encourage her to follow her baby's cues. "I know you're worried about your baby but her growth is excellent. Letting her decide how much to eat is very important to keep her healthy and strong. If she 'tells' you that she is done, let her stop. Now let's go talk to the nutritionist about your older child."

9. Mother J tells you that she is thinking of weaning her large 3-week-old because she is "never satisfied" after breastfeeding. She tells you the baby will start to fuss a little and move around just a few minutes after each feeding. Mother J is sure she doesn't have enough milk even though the baby has gained plenty of weight.

Look	OK	Mother J is looking at her baby.
Recognize	NO	Mother J does not recognize that her baby is in active alert after feedings (probably because of bowel movements) and is thinking the baby is still hungry. Suggestion: "I can see why you would think that the baby is still hungry but I can see that her growth is excellent. Remember that everything is new to your baby and she may be still getting used to having bowel movements or maybe she needs to burp."
Respond	NO	Encourage her to try burping her baby more often during feeds and putting the baby down for some "tummy time" after feeds. Ask her to pay attention to her baby's mood after a bowel movement or burp.

10. Mother L is very upset and comes to the clinic carrying a two-month-old baby, asleep, in a car seat. She is breastfeeding but wants some formula because her baby sleeps well during the day but is keeping her awake all night. After calming Mother L down, you determine the baby is waking up 2-3 times a night.

Look	OK	Mother L is looking at her baby but does not recognize normal infant sleep.
Recognize	NO	Acknowledge you know how hard it is not to get enough sleep. Show her the handout on normal infant sleep and explain that babies who sleep during the day, sleep less at night.
Respond	NO	Encourage her to play with her baby during the day and discourage too much time in the car seat. Explain that breastfeeding will promote active sleep and that her baby's sleep patterns will change soon.