

## Stage 2: Falling in Love

2 – 7 Months

### Goal: Falling in love with each other

Throughout this stage, which roughly spans from first smiles to crawling; your baby becomes more and more focused on you and other persons and things outside herself. Your delightful task during these months will be to promote pleasurable feelings between you and your baby.

Emotional engagement and attachment is important because as your baby relates to you and expresses loving feelings, various motor, sensory, language, and cognitive achievements are also often taking place. The milestone of falling in love usually gives purpose to these skills. For example, when your baby is physically capable of reaching out and grasping something, she will more often attempt to reach for something that she is interested in and takes delight in. There's nothing more interesting in her world than you, and her love for you will continue to spur her on as she learns to reach, grasp, sit, and eventually crawl toward you, the object of her affection.

How you know your baby is falling in love with you:

- Responding to your smiles with a big one of her own
- Making sounds and or moving her mouth, arms, legs, or body in rhythm with you as you move in rhythm with her
- Relaxing or acting comforted when you hold her or rock her
- Cooing when she is held, touched, looked at or spoken to
- Anticipating with curiosity and excitement the reappearance of your face and voice
- Looking uneasy or sad when you withdraw in the midst of playing with her

There are many ways to fall in love. Sometimes it takes a while for love to blossom, sometimes there are lots of bumps along the way. What's important is that your shared intimacy is gradually growing. You have plenty of time to cement a loving relationship with your child, as long as you stay emotionally involved.

Your baby may have individual preferences regarding what is pleasurable to her, and radiate excitement when you amplify her pleasure by:

- Talking and babbling to her, using a variety of high and low pitches and soft to loud tones
- Offering her a range of different facial expressions while talking and babbling
- Touching or massaging her, using gentle touch while telling her what you are doing
- Gently moving her arms and legs while talking to her and looking at her
- Moving her horizontally or vertically fast and slow, through space while beaming at her with big smiles accompanied by lots of sounds and words

### Games to help your child master Stage 2:

#### ○ **The Smiling Game**

Enjoy using words and/or funny faces to entice your baby into breaking into a big smile or producing other pleased facial expressions such as sparkling or widened eyes. You can chatter about the spoon you've stuck in your mouth, or the rattle you've placed on your head, or simply about how "bee-you-ti-ful" her hair is!

#### ○ **The "Dance with Me" Sound and Movement Game**

Try to inspire your baby to make sounds and/or move her arms, legs, or torso in rhythm with your voice and head movements. You might say, "Are you going to dance with me, sweetheart?" Oh, I bet you can – I know you can!" while looking for a gleam of delight in his eyes.