

Stage 3 – Individual Communication

6-10 Months

Goal: Becoming a two-way communicator.

How you know your baby is communicating: Your baby may open up gestural dialogues with you by doing the following:

- Reaching out to you to be picked up, or hugging you back when you hug him
- Smiling, vocalizing, putting a finger in your mouth, taking a rattle from his mouth and putting it in your own, or touching or exploring your hair
- Pushing undesired food off a high-chair tray with an accompanying angry look, screaming when a desired toy isn't fetched quickly enough, or wiggling out of your arms when he has no interest in getting dressed (His angry face, shouts, and squirmy body clearly communicate his sense of protest or anger).
- Looking for the toy that fell to the ground or (toward the end of this stage) looking in your hand for a hidden, desired rattle.
- Showing caution or fear by turning away, clinging to your leg, or looking scared when a stranger approaches too quickly.

Follow your baby's lead and challenge him to exchange gestures and emotional signals with you about his interests.

Do's and Don'ts as your baby learns to communicate

- **Do** simultaneously exercise as many of the seeing, smelling, hearing, touching and moving elements of your child's nervous system as you can while the two of you interact.
- **Don't** be a ringmaster and direct the way your play unfolds. Follow your baby's lead and help him use his interests to give direction and organization to his new abilities.
- **Do** play lots of emotionally pleasurable games for longer times. The more interactive playtimes you share, the more fun you'll have.
- **Do** seek out the magic moments.

Becoming a Communicator

Take note of the things your baby is naturally interested in (your funny nose, or the rattle you've placed in your mouth, for example) and then challenge him to express himself with feelings and actions in a purposeful way. In this way you will help him become a two-way communicator!

Games to help your baby master Stage 3:

- **The Funny Sound, Face, and Feeling Game**
Notice the sounds and facial expressions your baby naturally uses when he's expressing joy, annoyance, surprise, or any other feeling, and mirror these sounds and facial expressions back to him in a playful way. See if you can get a back-and-forth going.
- **The Circle of Communication Game**
Try to see how many back-and-forths you can get going each time your baby touches a tiny red ball or pats your nose and you make a funny squeel or squawk in response. Or see how many times he will try to open your hand when you've hidden an intriguing object inside. Each time your baby follows his interests and takes your bait, he is closing a circle of communication.