

# Helpful Terms for New Moms to Know

Here are some of the most common words you may hear during your pregnancy and journey into motherhood.

---

## **A Active Alert (Six States of Consciousness)**

Eyes open and looking around, increased movement of arms and legs, subtle sounds. Typically precedes fussing, crying, or drowsy states. This state is often a signal of need for change (such as feeding or changing positions).

## **Active Sleep (Six States of Consciousness)**

Eyes often flutter under eyelids, slight movements and facial expressions. Babies often alternate between active and quiet sleep cycles.

## **Attachment**

The emotional connection that is formed by children to their parents or primary caregivers. attachment usually develops over the first year of life through repeated positive interactions between the child and parent. Attachment depends heavily on parent or caregiver behavior, and it is critical that it begins early in a child's life. It is in these early positive attachments that children are able to form and maintain healthy relationships throughout their lives.

## **Attachment Cycle**

A four-stage cycle of attachment in which a parent or caregiver responds to an infant's cues and behaviors. First stage: your baby experiences an emotion or stimulation. Second stage: your baby provides a cue. Third stage: your baby demonstrates a cue with a behavior. Fourth stage: you respond to your baby's cue or behavior.

## **Attachment Disorder**

A broad term intended to describe disorders of mood, behavior, and social relationships arising from a failure to form normal attachments to primary caregivers in early childhood, resulting in problematic social expectations and behaviors.

## **Attunement**

The ability to respond with sensitivity to your child's communications and needs. Improving parent attunement positively affects the quality of a child's attachment to his parents and provides feelings of security (Newton, 2008).

## **B Baby Blues**

Affects up to 80 percent of all new mothers, with onset usually between three and fourteen days postpartum. Symptoms may last only a few days or weeks. These symptoms may include feeling tense, anxious, or exhausted; alternating between joy and sadness; an inability to concentrate; and a lack of energy. Twenty percent of women with the baby blues will go on to develop postpartum depression.

## **Bonding**

The parent's emotional tie to the infant which develops in the first few hours of life.

## **C Cognitive Development**

The construction of thought processes including remembering, problem-solving, and decision-making from childhood through adolescence and adulthood.

### **Consistent and Responsive Parenting**

Parents who regularly accept and validate their child's emotional communications.

### **Crying (Six States of Consciousness)**

Eyes often shut restless, fidgety body language. Crying is normal and is your baby's way of attracting your attention. Sometimes, crying is a signal that your baby's limits have been reached.

### **Cues**

The body language and signals your baby uses to communicate.

## **D Drowsiness (Six States of Consciousness)**

Eyes unfocused, small facial movements, irregular breathing. Drowsiness services as a transition both into and out of sleep. When babies are drowsy, they have delayed responsiveness. If left alone, a baby may go to sleep or gradually awaken.

## **E Emotional Regulation**

The ability to keep emotions at an optimal range. For children, this means that they learn to manage their emotions when they experience the environment around them.

## **F Foundation of Trust**

For babies to experience attachment, they need to trust that their needs will be met and that their environment is safe. It is the baby's experience of this response system that lays the foundation for a trusting relationship.

## **I Insecure Attachment**

When the child's needs are ignored, an insecure or unhealthy attachment usually occurs. This is because parents have repeatedly been unavailable to the child or they may have rejected the child's needs. When rejected, children may experience behavioral challenges including anxiety, anger, and depression.

## **K Kangaroo Care**

Holding the baby close to the body with skin-to-skin contact.

## **M Moments of Connection**

Small, everyday events and emotions that are the foundation of the parenting relationship and essential building blocks for the developing child.

## **P Postpartum Depression**

Affects up to 25 percent of new mothers. Symptoms may be exhibited right away or several months after delivery. Symptoms may include chronic crying, panic attacks, anxiety, sadness, compulsiveness, rapid weight loss or gain, sleep problems, a feeling of detachment from the baby, anger, excessive fear for the baby's health and safety, and frightening thoughts.

## **Postpartum Mood Disorder**

A mental health disorder which develops within the first year of giving birth.

## **Primary Caregiver**

Any person that provides consistent care. This can include fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, childcare providers, foster parents, or other significant people in the child's life.

## **Q Quiet/Calm Alert (Six States of Consciousness)**

Alert, bright eyes, wide open gaze, comfortable body language, baby looks and listens carefully and is open for social interaction. Newborns spend approximately 10 percent of their time in this receptive state. This is the best time to interact with your baby.

## **Quiet Sleep (Six States of Consciousness)**

Eyes closed and still; regular breathing; settled body language. A baby in quiet sleep is generally still and difficult to awaken. They will quickly return to sleep if awakened. This is not a good time to try to stimulate or play with your baby.

## **S Secure Attachment**

A state in which babies “miss their caregivers when they leave and feel comforted when they return” (Gottman & Schwartz Gottman, 2007). A secure attachment develops when babies have consistent and responsive communication and interaction with their caregivers.

## **Self-esteem**

The way one views oneself and one's self-worth.  
Self-esteem can be positive or negative.

## **Self-regulation**

The ability to manage the world around us.

## **Self-soothing**

Babies' ability to calm themselves, with or without the presence of a parent or caregiver.

## **Six States of Consciousness**

Each state describes a baby's readiness to interact and the common characteristics or activities infants experience during each state. The six states are: quiet/calm alert, active alert, crying, drowsiness, active sleep, and quiet sleep.

## **T Touch**

Research in the world of touch and massage shows that a way to help babies and toddlers become secure and trusting is to provide an environment where caregivers hold, touch, and become present with their child (Heller, 1997).