Discussion for use with Expecting or New Parents
(10-12 minutes)

1. **Discussion:** Common reasons newborns cry (5-7 minutes).

   **Ask:** “How do newborns communicate with their parents?”

   **Say:** “Remember that babies do not cry or do other things just to frustrate you. They cannot help but cry – it is their only way to let their parents know what they need.”

   **Ask:** “What are some reasons a newborn might cry?”

   - List participants’ responses on flip chart or dry erase board.

   **Possible examples:**

   **Pain** – They may not feel well or something in their clothing or blanket may be rubbing them or pricking their skin.

   **Hunger** – Some new parents are surprised how often some newborns need to eat. If your baby has not eaten in the past hour, he or she might be hungry.

   **Diaper needs changing** – Some babies do not care when they are wet, but others do.

   **Tired** – Some babies cry when they become tired and continue to cry until they fall asleep.

   **Too cold or too hot** – Dress your baby as you dress yourself, or add one more layer. Feel the baby’s belly to see if he or she feels too cool or too warm.

   **Afraid** – When babies are startled, it sometimes helps to swaddle or wrap them in a blanket and hold them until they calm down.

   **Lonely** – Sometimes babies cry just because they want to be with you. If your baby calms when picked up, that may be all he or she needed. Babies *cannot* be spoiled. Hold them often, because this closeness gives them a sense of security and helps build trust.

   **Too much stimulation** – Sometimes having too many people around can upset babies. If you think this is the case, take your baby to a quieter area until he or she calms down.

   **Colic** – *Note: There is a detailed handout in packets about colic and how to cope.*
Conclude discussion by saying:

“You do not have to pick your baby up every time he or she cries, but it is important to remember that you cannot spoil babies by picking them up or checking on them when they cry. Do what you can to keep your baby safe and meet his or her needs, because it helps babies learn that they can trust you and know that their needs will be met. It also helps establish a strong parent-child bond, or good relationship between parent and child.”

2. Discussion: Dealing with crying babies (5 minutes).

Ask: “What are some things you can do if you feel yourself getting really upset because your baby will not stop crying?”

Possible examples:
  i. If your partner is around, have him or her take the baby for awhile.
  ii. If you are alone, put your baby in his or her crib and take a shower or vacuum – the sound may help soothe the baby, too.
  iii. Call a friend or family member.
  iv. Call ParentLink’s WarmLine at 1-800-552-8522.
  v. Put your baby in his or her stroller and go for a walk.
  vi. Put your baby in his or her car seat and go for a ride in the car.

Say: “Until babies are old enough to tell you why they are crying, it can be frustrating. Whatever you do, never hit or shake your baby. Shaking can cause brain damage, blindness, and even death. If you are alone with your baby and you feel like you might be about to hurt your baby, it is important to remember that it is okay to put your baby down in his or her crib for a few minutes while you go to another room to relax. If you ever notice your partner getting frustrated with your baby, tell him or her that you can take over.”

Refer back to the Parenting with Love lesson plan and the activity, “Agree/Disagree game.”