

Can you spoil a baby?



Many new parents wonder if they are spoiling their child. This article will address that.

When a woman is pregnant with a child or multiple children, they are totally dependent on them to growth and proper development. After they are born they still require all their needs to be met by their primary care provider. Often if a child doesn't receive attention or aren't nurtured they will feel unsafe and that the world is not trusting, and they develop attachment issues. In counseling we address teaching people to have secure attachments to people. If a parent is inconsistent then this confuses a baby and they may develop a disorganized attachment with people. Some children have avoidant or ambivalent attachment issues (Margret Ainsworth)

In my work with children from birth to age three I have seen and heard a lot about spoiling children. Here are some conclusions I have come up with.

1. You cannot spoil an infant. They need all the love, attention and support they can receive. This helps provide that secure attachment. Believe me when I say that most children will start to distance themselves from you to seek their own independence and autonomy.
2. You parent from you own experiences. We ae creatures of habit. How many of us if we are honest do some of the same things our parents did to us? It is a habit and unless we change it, we will repeat the cycle of what was done to us whether it was good or bad. It is learned behavior. We can change if we work hard to put systems in place that align with our values.
3. Children learn from our cues. If we are anxious and unsure then it is normal as new parent, get support from experienced people we respect. Developmental counselors, nurses, and pediatricians are great with this.

4. Don't compare your child with others. There is a spectrum for child development. Ask your child's doctor or have an age and stage developmental assessment done if you have concerns. Yes, even siblings develop at different levels. (I have twins and they crawled, walked and talked almost two months apart.)
5. You can't spend too much time holding or hugging your child unless they aren't able to sleep or eat because you won't put them down. Children must learn to self-soothe and parents must learn that babies cry for many reasons. Learn when your child is hungry, wet, irritated or sick. The cries do sound different. Look online for articles on the crying sounds of babies.
6. Do have play dates or join support groups for parents with young children. Most hospitals have free or low-cost mom and baby support classes including breastfeeding support groups. Take advantage of these groups. Check the hospital you delivered your baby in.
7. If you feel you are spoiling your child where did you get the idea from. Was it from well-meaning friends or family or is it your own thought? Talk to a respected authority figure for counsel like a pediatrician or nurse. Maybe you need support and your hospital might have an early childhood intervention program to support you and your child. Most counties have programs. Check to see. (Babies can't wait) is one. They will assess your child for a developmental delay.
8. It is okay to get support. No person is an island. Professionals are objective and trained to support new parents. Utilize their expertise. It is usually income driven so don't wait if money is an issue for you. There is support for you. Check with your state's child and family services department.
9. If you do feel you are not equipped to raise your child or are overwhelmed do tell someone and let them help you. It is okay to feel distant and stressed out as a new parent or parent in general, but getting help is critical for both your child and your welfare. Child abuse prevention is free and anonymous. Call your state's number.
10. Take breaks and self-care is critical. You need time to re-cooperate. It takes a whole year for the body to fully physically and emotionally recover from giving birth. Some people suffer from postpartum depression and so you need to have your six weeks follow up and annual checkups. If you feel distant, sad, depressed or even fear you might harm your child **SEEK SUPPORT NOW.**