



## FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

### Who's on First?

In Abbott and Costello's famous baseball comedy routine, Costello asks Abbott to tell him the **names of players** on a baseball team. Here is part of their conversation:

**Costello:** Who's on first?

**Abbott:** Yes.

**Costello:** I mean the fellow's name?

**Abbott:** Who.

**Costello:** The guy on first?

**Abbott:** Who.

**Costello:** The first baseman?

**Abbott:** Who.

**Costello:** The guy playing...?

**Abbott:** Who is on first!

**Costello:** I'm asking YOU who's on first?

**Abbott:** That's the man's name.

**Costello:** That's who's name?

**Abbott:** Yes.

**Costello:** Well go ahead and tell me?

**Abbott:** That's it.

**Costello:** That's who?

**Abbott:** Yes.

All parents, no matter how compatible, will sometimes talk past one another. This often gives rise to misunderstandings, differences, and disagreements. It's how you handle misunderstandings and disagreements that is important, both for your relationship with each other and your relationship as a family. Clear communication is important for family unity because it allows you to begin to talk *with* the other person, rather than just *to* that person, which helps *you* move forward on an issue together.

Following good communication rules can help you avoid the "Who's on First" problems illustrated by Abbot and Costello's comedy routine. Classically, the elements of good communication include the following suggestions:

- Use "I" statements, such as "I feel like my opinion isn't important when we discuss the baby's bedtime." This lets your partner hear your perspective without raising defenses.
- Share your feelings. You can discuss how an action or a position makes you feel, to help your spouse know how it affects you.
- Ask questions to make sure you understand your partner's viewpoint. Communication goes two ways. To work together, you both need to understand where the other person is coming from.
- Use nonthreatening body language. Crossed arms or clenched fists communicate defensiveness and anger, two reactions that make it difficult for people to have a calm, rational discussion.

When you do experience misunderstandings and disagreements, try to discuss them when you and your spouse are calm, rather than in the heat of the moment. When you're tired or angry, the lines of communication shut down almost before you start speaking.

If you take the time to cool off before discussing a disagreement or a potential misunderstanding, you are better able to explain your viewpoint and listen to your spouse's viewpoint without defensiveness or anger. At that point, it becomes easier to find solutions that are agreeable to both people.

For example, take a situation where the parents feel very differently about how quickly their baby should be picked up when she is fussy. One feels the baby should be picked up the moment she fusses, but the other believes the baby should be left to cry for a few moments first. If the parents haven't taken the time to discuss their feelings about this scenario, it would be very easy for the parents to misunderstand each other's position and for

an argument to occur. If good communication rules are used, however, the parents could discuss the reasons behind each opinion, and hopefully come to a compromise that would help both partners feel heard and respected.

Instead of coming into discussions seeing your spouse as the "enemy," try to view him or her as a true partner in finding a workable solution for your family. In the book, *Between Parent and Child*, Dr. Haim G. Ginott talks about a principle between parents and children that also works with spouses: "When [spouses] feel understood, their loneliness and hurt diminish. When [spouses] are understood, their love for the other [spouse] is deepened. A [spouse]'s sympathy serves as emotional first aid for bruised feelings."<sup>1</sup> Once bruised feelings are patched up, it's easier to move forward together.

Open, clear communication helps you to avoid talking past one another. It encourages you to really listen to your spouse and to understand one another's point of view as you work together to create a happy, loving family. 





## SINGLE PARENT CORNER

### Prepare in Advance

*Always plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.*

Richard Cushing, novelist

#### Maternity Leave:

Most maternity leave is over between 6 and 12 weeks in America. The longer a single mother can be with a baby, the better, so see if your company will allow you to work reduced hours, or work from home for a while after maternity leave is over.

It's best to negotiate the terms of your maternity leave at least two or three months before your baby is born. This gives your boss a chance to find a way to take care of your work responsibilities while you are gone, and it also shows that you understand the challenges your absence will create. This may help your workplace to be more understanding of your work/life challenges, as well.

#### Selecting a Caregiver:

Regardless, you'll need to find a caregiver you can trust when your maternity leave arrangements come to an end. Whether you end up choosing a family member, an in-home daycare provider, or a daycare center, it's important to find a caregiver that is on the same page with your parenting goals and plan.

To do this, you obviously need to have adopted parenting goals and a plan to carry out your goals. As mentioned in the Parent Leadership article in this issue, establish your parenting plan while your child is young. If you have not done so yet, Month 3 is a perfect time to formulate your plan. Then, you'll be able to select a caregiver with confidence by asking the right questions to determine whether the person or center will carry out your parenting goals and plan.

If you select an individual you have not known previously you must use **great, great care**. Make a background check and check the caregiver's references extensively before trusting your precious baby to a stranger. If you don't feel absolutely comfortable with the individual, it may be best to consider licensed child care institutions.

Selecting an institutional caregiver also requires careful research. Most U.S. states require such caregivers to be licensed. Some states operate and/or fund child care centers. Many child care centers belong to or are licensed by trade associations or organizations.

So, in addition to finding an institutional caregiver whose policies and reputation fit with your parenting goals and plan, you need to satisfy yourself that the institution you select has a good reputation and record for providing quality service. For example, you don't want to send your child to a caregiver that practices poor hygiene or that accepts too large a number of children compared to the number of caregivers.

As with other relationships, communication is key. You may find these websites helpful in selecting a caregiver:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children <https://families.naeyc.org/find-quality-child-care>
- National Association for Family Child Care <https://www.nafcc.org/Accredited-Provider-Search-Function>
- Child Care Aware <http://childcareaware.org/>

Also, check with local government agencies regarding child care services. Many city, county, and state governments license caregiver services and/or provide public information for selecting caregivers. **kk**

# Baby Chatter

## PLAYING IS LOVE

**Baby:** Hi, Mom and Dad! I thought you'd like to know a little bit more about how to interact with me this month. Since I don't speak your language yet, I thought I'd teach you about speaking mine.

Now that I'm more alert, and able to respond and pay attention for short periods of time, you can show your love by helping me learn how to play!

**Parent:** What can you play at age 3 months?

**Baby:** I learn about the world around me through play. It's how I explore and learn how things work. When I play with a toy, I suck on it to see what it tastes like, and what it feels like in my mouth. I might bang it on the floor, to see if it makes a noise. If I'm up in your arms, I might drop my toy, just to see what happens. When I rub my toy against my cheek, I'm learning about texture. When you help me direct my play, I can learn even more.

**Parent:** How can I help you with your toys?

**Baby:** You can sit me in your lap, facing you, and hold out a toy. Make sure I'm paying attention by calling my name and waiting until I look at you. Show me how the toy works, then let me try. I may decide to chew on the toy or drop it, instead, but that's okay—it's just a different way to play with the toy.

**Parent:** Should I be doing anything else while we play?

**Baby:** Yes! Talk to me. Every word I hear helps me learn and grow. You can tell me about the toy we're playing with, or act surprised when the toy falls to the floor. If I'm playing with a soft toy, help me stroke it, then tell me that it's "soft." Ask me questions as we play, and pause as if I would respond. This helps me learn how a conversation works, even if I can't answer back yet. Learning to play with you now helps me learn about my world, shows me how to interact with objects and people, helps me bond with you, and will help me to learn to play independently when I'm older. **kk**



**Keep in mind the perspective of your baby.**

# KinderKronicle®

a parents journal

## PARENT LEADERSHIP Planning Your Parenting Journey

*Good plans shape good decisions. That's why good planning helps to make elusive dreams come true.*

Lester Robert Bittel (b. 1918), writer

As a parent, you have set a goal for what kind of person you want your child to become. To accomplish this, you have also set a goal for what kind of parent you have to be to help your child become the person you have visualized. Now what?

Basil S. Walsh said *"An intelligent plan is the first step to success. The man who plans knows where he is going, knows what progress he is making and has a pretty good idea when he will arrive."*



Adopting a parenting plan early-on in your parenting journey has these BIG advantages:

- A plan gives parents a clearly marked path to help them keep on course as they navigate the challenging journey inherent in parenting.
- With a parenting plan in place, parents can check the choices and decisions they make against the principles they've chosen to follow to achieve their goals.
- When a defined goal-oriented plan leading toward a desired goal is in place, it's much easier to make course corrections.

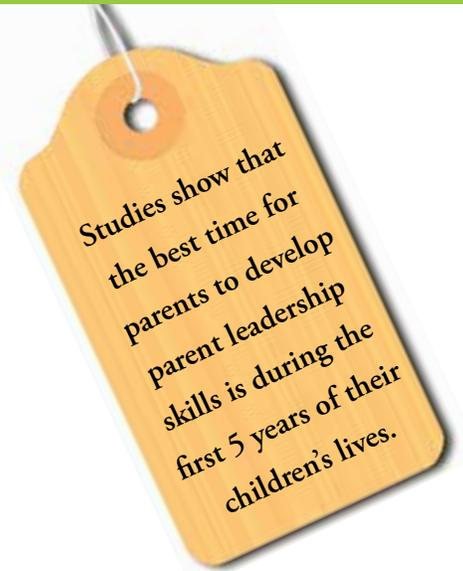
The bedrock parenting principles used in our *Begin with the Children* program are simple, time-tested principles, used by parents for centuries in most major societies, that are easy to use as you guide your child through life. These principles are:

- **Love,**
- **Personal responsibility, and**
- **Teaching your family noble virtues and values.**

These principles can be applied in different ways to suit the needs of individual families, and they will be discussed differently, and frequently, in your monthly issues of *KinderKronicle* in light of your child's age.

Your weekly Family Hour®, faithfully held, brings parents and children together in a very useful family forum. This is the time and place for the family to periodically discuss whether your family gameplan needs some adjustments. When both parents are invested in a plan designed to help their child grow, the family works better together. 

1. Ginott, Haim G. *Between Parent and Child*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1965 (updated in 2003). 8.



**NEXT ISSUE-**  
**MONTH 4**  
**LOOK FOR THESE**  
**EXCITING FEATURES**  
**AND ARTICLES**

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Putting Your Plan to Work
- **FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**  
Negotiating Parental Roles in Unity and Love

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