Babies cry.
Have a plan.

Coping with crying

(For use with the Crying Plan Activity.)

When assessing a baby's crying patterns, it is just as important to assess the parent or caregiver's coping ability. Coping with crying is one of the biggest challenges parents and people who care for young babies face. These guidelines can help focus your discussion whether or not you use the Crying Plan tool.

When helping parents and caregivers understand and cope with infant crying, focus on:

- Normal infant crying patterns (what to expect).
- Different ways to soothe a crying baby.
- Different ways to calm oneself.
- When and who to call for help.
- The importance of **never** shaking a baby.
- Preparing other caregivers.

The following discussion questions will help you assess how parents and other caregivers are coping. Look for opportunities to communicate the key points in the table below.

Topic	Discussion questions	Key points	Using the Crying Plan
Assessing infant crying patterns	"Tell me about your baby's crying." "What do you think your baby's crying is trying to tell you?"	• It is normal for babies to cry. • Babies cry for many reasons. • Your baby may be hungry or thirsty, need a diaper change, or need to be cuddled. Crying can mean your baby is unwell, feels sleepy, or needs to release tension.	
When a baby can't stop crying	"Are there ever times when your baby can't seem to stop crying?" "Have you noticed a pattern with his or her crying?"	• There are times when a baby can't stop crying. • Expect your baby's crying to change – usually it increases in frequency and intensity around 2 weeks, peaks at 5 to 7 weeks, and starts to decrease by 4 months of age. • This pattern occurs in all normal infants, even those with the very best parenting.	
The importance of soothing and attachment	"What do you do when your baby cries?"	• It is important to try and soothe your baby. Your baby needs you. • Comfort your crying baby. It helps your baby to learn trust and how to calm him/herself. • Soothing does not necessarily equal quieting. Your efforts may provide comfort to the baby even if they do not result in an end to the crying. • Sometimes babies just need to cry. Stay calm and continue to try soothing – your baby will know you care.	

To order the Crying Plan contact the **Wisconsin Children's Trust Fund**:

E-mail ctf@ctf.state.wi.us
Online http://wctf.state.wi.us
Phone 608-266-6871

Topic	Discussion questions	Key points	Using the Crying Plan
Soothing strategies	"What things have you tried when soothing your baby?" "What worked?" "Does it work every time?" "What else works?"	• Many things can help soothe a baby. The same things won't work every time. • Develop a number of soothing strategies. • Although it is normal for babies to cry, check with your doctor if you think the baby is crying more than he/she should.	"Is there anything on this plan that you think might work for your baby?" Using the **infant soothing section**: • Have the parent write down additional ideas that they have heard from others or that they have already discovered on their own. You can suggest ideas, too. • Be sure they have at least three ideas they want to try.
Dealing with parental frustration	"How do you feel when your baby can't stop crying?" "What have you done in the past when your baby couldn't stop crying?"	• No one can calm a crying baby all the time. • Sometimes your baby can't stop crying. It does not mean he/she is a "bad" baby, nor does it mean you are a "bad" parent or caregiver. • If a parent has tried to quiet the baby and the baby continues to cry it is not unusual for the parent to begin to feel overwhelmed, stressed, frustrated, anxious, or even angry. • **Remember, it is more important to stay calm than to stop the crying!**	
Parental self-calming strategies	"How do you keep yourself calm when your baby can't stop crying?" "What worked?" "What didn't work?" "Are there any self-calming techniques you would like to try next time you feel frustrated?"	• Knowing how and practicing ways to keep yourself calm will help you through the challenging times now and in the future as your child or children grow up.	"Have you tried any of the tips for keeping calm given on this crying plan?" Using the **self-calming section**: • Have the parent write down additional ideas that they have heard from others or that they have already discovered on their own. You can suggest ideas, too. • Be sure they have at least three ideas they want to try.
The effects of Shaken Baby Syndrome	"What do you think might happen if a parent or caregiver was so tired or frustrated that he/she shook a baby?"	• There have been some parents/caregivers who have gotten so frustrated with infant crying that they shook and injured or killed their baby. • For this reason it is a good idea for you and everyone who looks after your baby to know that is it OK to take a break from baby's crying.	"Why do you think it says 'Babies cry. Have a plan.' on the Crying Plan?"

For more information about Shaken Baby Syndrome and materials on how to cope with infant crying, visit http://wctf.state.wi.us.

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Topic	Discussion questions	Key points	Using the Crying Plan
The effects of Shaken Baby Syndrome (continued)		Have a plan to keep your cool: • If you are beginning to feel frustrated, place the baby in a safe place like the crib, and take a 10- to 15-minute break. • Letting baby cry for a few minutes is not harmful. • Once you are feeling calm yourself, try again to calm the baby. • If you don't feel like you can handle things – ask for help!	
Getting help	"Do you have people you can call to give you a break when you need it?" "Who among your friends, family, or neighbors could you call on?" "Is there a nurse helpline or a family resource center in your community?"	• Have someone you know and trust to help you. Call them when the crying gets too much. Plan ahead. • Some hospitals have nurse helplines so you can talk to a nurse any time day or night. • If there is a family resource center in your community, consider calling its "warmline" or joining a parent support group.	Using the **asking someone for help section**: • Have the parents fill in the phone numbers of people they know they can trust to help when the crying is too much. • Let parents know about any local agencies that they could call.
Ensuring safe child care	"Have you ever talked to other family members and other caregivers about infant crying, and that they must never shake a baby?"	It can be hard to ask people if they might get frustrated with your baby. Here are some ideas that might make it easier to talk to the other people who live with and look after your baby: • Use the Crying Plan as a conversation starter to talk about infant crying and the importance of never shaking a baby. • Give other caregivers a list of what works to soothe your baby. • Suggest that other caregivers develop a safety plan for their use. • Ask other caregivers what they will do if the baby can't stop crying. • Tell caregivers that if something happens that they can't handle, it is OK to place baby in the crib, leave the room, and take a break. If they are unable to handle the crying, they need to know that they can call you and that you will return. • Let caregivers know who they can call for help and the number where you can be reached.	"Please take the Crying Plan with you and to keep it in a handy place at home. Would you like to take extra Crying Plan forms for the other people who look after your baby?"

Source: "Calgary Health Region – 3 Cheers for the Early Years," developed in partnership with CIPC Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Committee.

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Provided by Wisconsin Children's Trust Fund
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