

"WAAAHHHH!!!"

You've been pacing the floor for what seems like hours. Your baby just won't stop crying and you feel as though you could go through the roof! Hearing a crying baby is equivalent to--if not worse than--fingernails repeatedly running down a chalkboard. The crying can make you want to scream!

Babies cry in order to let us know they are in need of food, water, cuddling, or are sick. Sometimes, they just cry. But let's face it, they have no other way to communicate with us! Unfortunately, we have forgotten the language of our infancy and so must play guessing games when our children cry. While the cries of babies are designed to get our attention, if we are tired or stressed ourselves, the cries can feel as though they are purposefully trying to irritate us. It is easy to feel out of control when children cry and you can't comfort them. If your baby is crying and you have fed, burped, changed, and checked them from head to toe, the following may help stop the crying:

- 1) Remember that your baby is not purposefully trying to irritate you. Your baby doesn't realize that it's two in the morning and you haven't slept for days. He is simply trying to communicate in the only way he knows how. When you are tired, hungry, and stressed it is difficult to remember that your role is to help your child and to ease discomfort if possible.
- 2) Try to relax as much as possible. If you are tense, your infant will sense this and will take longer to calm down. If you've been at it for a while and are stressed, trade off with another adult or take a few minutes and do some stretching and deep breathing. When you are more relaxed, hold your baby close, rock him, talk softly to him, or gently stroke his skin. Some people find it helpful to sing to their infants or play soft music--you may want to keep a tape of soft music in the baby's room or have a radio handy.
- 3) Try walking your baby while in your arms or in the stroller. Sometimes, even a car ride can help!

4) If weather allows, a visit outside can help calm your baby down. A breath of fresh air and the openness of the outside are often calming.

5) If your child's crying is excessive and he can't quit crying, you may need to call his pediatrician to be sure everything is OK. Sometimes, though, you may just need to let your child cry. Unless he is sick or in danger, it is OK to leave him in his crib to cry for a while (do be sure to frequently check on him). This is especially important if you are to the point of crying yourself or are feeling frustrated and angry. It is OK for you to take a time out--continual crying is frustrating to anyone. Call a friend or relative and talk with them or have them come to help.

At 2 a.m., it's hard to remember that the crying will eventually cease. But do remember that this too shall pass!