

# Co-regulating

## What is this?

The world is all new to babies. Every sensation they have is stronger than ours – both the ups and downs. And their brains are still developing so they can't manage big feelings all by themselves.

Co-regulating means noticing when babies are getting stressed and responding with help to soothe and calm them. It also means having fun with them when they are happy and ready for chat and play! And noticing when they have had enough.

## Why does it matter?

Every time we help a baby calm and soothe, we are helping them learn how to do this for themselves. We are building the actual brain systems that do this! It seems a long way from a teenager who can make good decisions or have good mental health – but this is how it begins! People sometimes worry about “spoiling” a baby but you really can't. They will become independent all the sooner if we meet their needs quickly now.

And it is good for us too. Stressed babies are stressful to be around. If we can help them be calm, then life has fewer hassles for everyone.

## What does it look like?

- Noticing the small signs that a baby is getting stressed
- Responding in ways that help them soothe
- Or noticing when they are happy and ready for some chat and play

***/turn over for signs of baby stress and how we can help***

## Signs of baby stress

These can be different for every baby, but include:

- Crying and fussing
- Tense body or tight fists
- Looking away, or turning head away
- Startling
- Breathing fast or shallow

## Ways to soothe a baby

Every family has their own ways that work, from gentle rocking to putting on the washing machine! What is true for everyone is that the quicker we respond the better for baby and for us too. You can't spoil a baby!

Here are some ideas that often help:

- Keep calm yourself – see page on being Approachable
- Reduce stimulation. Make the room quiet and calm, and use soft voices
- Hold and cuddle, gently rocking if baby likes that
- Talk gently and softly, or sing a favourite song or lullaby
- Check if they are hungry or hot or cold and meet that need
- If they are tired, settle them for a nap
- Baby massage can be helpful (ask your Health Visitor where you can learn this)
- Look at the general routine – try and keep it calm and the same from day to day