

Memo to fathers of newborns: there's more to your baby than late-night feedings, changing diapers, and struggling with car seats. I hope you can stay awake long enough to read this, because I'm hoping to make your life a little easier.

Now, in most cases, the first months of a baby's life are harder on the mom than the dad. Mom is usually a bit more connected. If she's nursing, she has to get up several times a night for feedings. So, your baby's mother probably knows a lot more about your baby's unique traits and habits than you do.

But that's no excuse for not getting involved and bonding with your baby. You bring a healthy, unique approach to parenting that your child needs—and the sooner you start relating to your baby, the better.

It may seem like all your baby does is cry, eat, sleep—at all the wrong times, of course—and fill his diaper with various smelly substances. But there's a lot more going on than that, and you'd do well to tune in and see what you can learn.

For example, your baby can communicate better than you may think. You may just hear an annoying cry, and some parents fall into the trap of assuming that the baby always cries because he's hungry. But if you pause, listen, and watch what's happening, you can discern what he's really trying to say.

A hungry cry often has a steady rhythm, where a baby with gas might let out high-pitched wails with longer pauses in between, and pull up his legs or signal his discomfort in some other way. If he's tired, he'll probably blink or yawn, and whine or groan in a more fussy way.

Each baby is different, but you can decipher the signs from your little one if you're tuned in and involved. An added benefit is that, when your child's needs are being met, he's more content, he's probably healthier and sleeping better, his mother is more relaxed and confident, and your home is more peaceful.

And let's not forget that getting to know our children—at any age—is a blast! It's deeply satisfying for a dad, and brings future benefits that we can only imagine.