

Practical and Relational Needs

There are two basic types of needs: practical and relational.

Practical needs include housing, food, transportation, and a few personal and infant items. Breastfeeding is completely free and is the healthiest option for both you and your baby.¹⁶

Being a single parent can sometimes feel lonely. You may want to turn to a romantic relationship to meet your relational needs, but it's important to keep in mind that nobody should rely on a significant other to meet all their relational needs, especially not a single mom. If you do decide to pursue a relationship, choose a man who is interested in marriage. Avoid living together outside marriage. Even if you trust your boyfriend or fiancé, the rate of mistreatment for children is highest when living with a man who is not a family member.¹⁷

Your child will have **relational needs** from birth, and you are the best one to meet many of those needs. Start by focusing on the ABCs to meet some of your child's most important relational needs.

A is for attention.

Your baby will thrive through the attention you give them! When you're around your child, give them your attention by looking at and talking to them.^{18,19,20,21}

B is for boundaries.

Early on, boundaries include bedtime and naptime routines and gently redirecting older infants when they try to explore anything unsafe.²² As your child gets older, they will need you to set appropriate boundaries on their behavior to keep them safe and teach them to respect others.^{23,24}

C is for care.

Your child will need you to encourage and accept them no matter what.^{25,26} From the start you should tell your baby how much you love them, and give them lots of cuddles and kisses.²⁷

Your child will soon begin developing relationally as well. By six months old, your baby will be able to recognize and feel more comfortable around familiar people, and babies soon begin to benefit from play dates with other children.^{28,29}

Remember, don't leave your child with anyone who you don't fully trust, and always take precautions for their safety.

Plan for Changes

Plan to meet practical and relational needs for both mom and baby. Begin by asking for support from family, friends, and others. Remember to set boundaries, especially within a romantic relationship.³⁰ This protects you and your child. Plan to continue learning parenting skills so that you can better meet your baby's relational needs as they grow up. Check with the local pregnancy resource center for no cost parenting education options.

Another Option

You have options. If you decide that being a single parent is not a challenge you are ready to take on, you can consider adoption. Modern adoption is different from the way adoption has been practiced in the past. Modern adoption is typically "open."³¹ This means that you, as the birth parent, have the opportunity to decide how much contact to maintain with the child, which can include regular visits or updates. In addition, you typically get to choose the parents.

Adoption practices vary from state to state. It does not cost you anything to meet with representatives from adoption agencies to see which one you feel most comfortable with.

Choosing adoption means you will need to make fewer changes in your life. Because someone else will meet all the needs of your child, you can just focus on your own needs.

Whether you are leaning towards parenting or adoption, you can accomplish whatever option you decide is best for your situation. Single parenting takes a lot of work but can be very rewarding and you will have help along the way. Adoption may seem like a difficult decision, but many single mothers have chosen this option as they believed it was best for them and their child. Either way, you can make a plan to meet the needs of your baby and yourself.

Resources include:

16 <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/features/breastfeeding-benefits/index.html>

17 https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/nis4_report_exec_summ_pdf_jan2010.pdf

18 Klerk, Carina C.J.M. de, Antonia F. de Hamilton, and Victoria Southgate. "Eye Contact Modulates Facial Mimicry in 4-Month-Old Infants: An EMG and fNIRS Study." *Cortex* 106 (September 2018): 93–103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2018.05.002>.

19 MacLean, Peggy C., Kristina N. Rynes, Crystal Aragón, Arvind Caprihan, John P. Phillips, and Jean R. Lowe. "Mother–Infant Mutual Eye Gaze Supports Emotion Regulation in Infancy during the Still-Face Paradigm." *Infant Behavior and Development* 37, no. 4 (November 2014): 512–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infbeh.2014.06.008>.

20 Niedźwiecka, Alicja, Sonia Ramotowska, and Przemysław Tomalski. "Mutual Gaze during Early Mother–Infant Interactions Promotes Attention Control Development." *Child Development* 89, no. 6 (2018): 2230–44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12830>.

21 <https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1034-22.2023>

22 Bedtime routines child wellbeing & development

23 Ibid doi.org/10.7759/cureus.30574

24 https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume12/1-Parental-Love-Irreplaceable-for.pdf

25 Ibid https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume12/1-Parental-Love-Irreplaceable-for.pdf

26 doi.org/10.7759/cureus.30574

27 doi.org/10.1016/j.infbeh.2020.101494

28 <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-6mo.html>

29 <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/142/3/e20182058/38649/The-Power-of-Play-A-Pediatric-Role-in-Enhancing?autologincheck=redirected>

30 https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/nis4_report_exec_summ_pdf_jan2010.pdf

31 https://cwlibrary.childwelfare.gov/permalink/01CWIG_INST/1td0vqu/alma991000491399707651