

BABY

Give Me a Break

Bright lights. Strange smells. Loud siblings. Your infant deals with a world of new experiences from day one. With all this excitement, it's easy for her to get overstimulated, says Carrie Contey, Ph.D., coauthor of *Calms: A Guide to Soothing Your Baby*. "Their little systems are trying to manage things so quickly," she says. "They need things to pause so they can regroup and feel safe." Before the meltdown, try:

FOLLOWING HER LEAD If you and your baby are making faces at each other and then she turns away, that's a sign she needs a break, says Contey. Instead of trying to get her attention, wait until she looks back at you to start playing again.

FINDING AN ESCAPE Sometimes it's not just about you: When there's too much commotion in the room, the best thing might be to help her block out the world for a while. That's what Anne Bowling does to help her

crying 4-month-old when her big sisters get a little too rambunctious. "I have to take her upstairs, pull down the shades, swaddle her, and rock her," the Overland Park, KS, mom says. "As soon as I get her away from the noise, she's fine."

TAKING A BREATHER YOURSELF "Babies can get overwhelmed by our energy," says Contey. If you're feeling stressed, she'll pick up on it. Talk to her soothingly and slow down your movements.
—Anne Muder



Q My mother watches my 13-month-old while I'm at work, and I'm jealous. He goes to her for comfort, even when I'm there. Should I put him in a daycare so that I don't feel so bad?

A It's the fear of most every working mom who has ever left her child in someone else's care—that her baby will fall so hopelessly in love with that person that he'll deny his own mother the chance to be, well, Mom. So your jealousy is normal. But you're going to have to get over it. Fact is, your son's a big fan of the lady who changes his diaper, takes him to the park, and doles out snacks eight hours a day—with a heaping serving of Grandma love, to boot. And that's a good thing. It also doesn't mean he loves you less; he just goes to the person who provides the most waking hours of care. Put him in daycare and he'd be just as prone to fall in love with the teacher, so that won't necessarily make your situation better. What will? Making quality bonding time. Develop your own rituals—a nightly tickle game, for example—and you'll see how quickly he starts running to you for those. Above all, take heart: Kids *always* feel a special bond with Mom.



ASK THE MOM SQUAD
Denene Millner has judgment-free advice for the trickiest kid (and grown-up!) behaviors. Send her your questions at momsquad@parenting.com.

