

10 Principles of Caregiving

Philosophy by Janet Gonzalez Mena

- **Involve the infant in caretaking chores (such as diapering)**
 1. Babies have long attention spans if they are actually involved in something
 2. Consider that you can give the baby a feeling for team work which can become a life-long attitude
 3. Realize how much learning goes on in these kinds of interactions
- **Invest in quality time when you are totally available to the infant**
 1. Give the baby privacy—space and time alone
 2. Give yourself privacy—space and time alone
 3. Think of care activities as quality time, not as chores
- **Respect the baby as an individual**
 1. Try to tune in on the baby's real needs—not your own projected needs
 2. Really listen to her when she expresses needs. She will learn to refine her ways of expression
 3. Don't talk about the baby in front of her
 4. Respect the baby's feelings and her right to express them. It's okay to be mad, sad, frustrated, etc.
 5. Offer strength to a child in conflict by being available, reflective, neither judgmental nor overly sympathetic
 6. Help the baby to anticipate what will happen by telling her what you intend to do. Give the baby a chance to respond before you start the action.
- **Learn the baby's system of communication and teach him yours**
 1. Regard crying as communication and try to understand it, not just stop it
 2. Talk to the baby in a natural way using daily language (not baby talk)
 3. Cut down on chatter. Focus on a small amount of meaningful talk which will be listened to
 4. Don't repeat yourself over and over
- **Be honest about your feelings**
 1. Give appropriate, honest feedback, being careful not to hook the baby on praise
 2. Try to be aware of sending mixed messages and guard against it
- **Invest the time and energy to build human relationships**
 1. Help the baby to learn to use the potential she has
 2. Help the baby come to see herself as a problem solver
- **Build security by teaching trust**
 1. Don't sneak away from a child. Tell him when you are leaving.
 2. Be available, if possible, when he really needs you
 3. Understand he will go through periods when he needs you even more than usual
- **Pay attention to the quality of development in each stage**
 1. Don't push the baby to do things she can't do on his own. Let her develop at her own pace
 2. Don't teach the baby. Let her learn
 3. Give baby plenty of physical freedom
 4. Let the baby stimulate herself—respect her for knowing what is best for her
 5. Try not to promote a “circus atmosphere” where the baby gets hooked on being entertained
- **Model the behavior you want to teach**
 1. Respond to aggression with gentleness if you want to teach gentleness.
 2. Teach sharing by sharing
 3. Be aware that all you teach is yourself
- **Let a baby learn to solve her own problems**
 1. Try to wait after the expression of a need to allow enough time for the child to attempt to satisfy herself
 2. When the baby is going around in circles, or seems stuck, facilitate the smallest step necessary to enable him to solve the problem himself (offer the smallest amount of help which allows the child to solve her own problem)