

What are Cues?

Cues are a signal from one person to another to do something. They are a child's way of telling you what he or she wants, even without using words.¹

Why are Cues Important?

- Noticing cues and responding to meet a child's needs:
 - Contributes to healthy attachment.
 - Teaches children how to regulate their own emotions, trust others, and build healthy relationships.
 - Promotes security by helping children feel cared for and understood.
 - Helps children feel safe enough to explore and learn about their world.
 - Makes caregiving easier and more rewarding.



What Can Be Done?

- Practice learning to understand what children are telling you through their signals.

Engagement cues encourage people to be with, pay attention to, or play with a child.¹

- Smiling
- Vocalizing
- Making eye contact with caregiver
- Reaching out to caregiver
- Turning eyes or head toward caregiver
- Lip smacking and other feeding sounds

Disengagement cues signal the need for a break or rest, which may be long or short.¹

- Crying or fussing
- Turning head and/or body away from caregiver
- Squirming or kicking
- Back arching or pulling away
- Coughing, choking, spitting up or vomiting
- Falling asleep



1. Adapted from "Nursing Child Assessment" (from satellite training, University of Washington, Seattle, 1990.)

MORE INFORMATION



Understanding Your Child's Behavior: Reading Your Child's Cues from Birth to Age 2

From the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning.



Baby Talk: Nonverbal Infant Communication

From Psychology Today.