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Joining Society:

From Six to Twelve
Months

• She had a passion for being held hanging by her ankles and looking at the world from upside down.

• He loved to be held and to flap his legs alternately as if walking.

• She loved to stick her fingers up my nose.



GAMES AND OTHER THINGS TO DO

Finger Sucking

At six to seven months babies begin to sit up. This seems to put them in contact with people and things. They reach out, even lunge for objects. They enjoy pushing, pulling, and twisting any gadgets, knobs, or toys that are within reach or banging with anything they can hold. They discover the rest of their bodies. They even suck their toes, something we would like to be agile enough to do in later years. Finger sucking is an oral game that still works. You suck their fingers into your mouth, and they pull them out. They have been sucking your fingers for months and now are fascinated by your doing the opposite. We should warn you that sticking their fingers up your nose or in your eyes is a side play that they will enjoy if they get the chance.

Mock Falling

With mock falling you stand the baby on your lap, hold his hands, and then let him fall. With a great cry he falls backward, only to be held firmly by the hands. If you do this right, with the proper anticipation and balking, this is really exciting for him. There are innumerable variations of this that you can invent. At this age, for example, some infants are crazy about hanging upside down or being dropped and caught. These minor forms of vertigo are presumably the beginnings of the circus and carnival impulses. Here we first manifest our delight for those forms of disorientation that are later packaged into roller coasters, tightwire performances, and merry-go-rounds. Some sturdy children even enjoy being thrown from person to person like a football. We would not advise it for most. Passing is fun enough.

In the second half of the first year many important things happen in babies' play life. The most important is that they begin to be able to take the initiative in many of the games we play with them. They actually start the games themselves. These games have a more *social* give-and-take quality. In their own play babies are also much more active. During this period they sit up, stand, and begin to walk. They begin to get into everything. Their own actions take on much more meaning than we could see before, partly because their own play is that much easier to recognize. Play in the first six months has been so fleeting that we could not always say as much about it as we would like.

By this age children also can do some of their own communicating. They may have a word to say, perhaps "Mama." At least they respond to their name and sometimes a command or two, such as "stop." Actually they are responding to the feel of these things, taking in your facial and arm expressions at the same time as the word, so that responding to the words associated with them correctly is no mystery. There is much imitation of gesture—waving bye-bye, shrugging, following a pointed hand. The melody of our communications is there in these six months even before the full meaning.

So what with their starting the games we have already played with them, imitating us, and being in touch with our expressions, they, as our partners, have become real game players.

Bed Roughhousing

Your bed is always a great place for babies. They can hide under the blankets when they are in bed with your knees holding the blankets up. Then they come crawling out. They can slide down the slide of your legs. They can be sat on your knees and suddenly plopped down as the knees go flat. But those are all games that leave you in the bed. Bed roughhousing is using the bed as a trampoline, as we did in the last chapter. Now, however, we add the crescendo of numbers—"one, two, three, and up"—thus adding anticipation to the mayhem. The same "one, two, three, and up" principle can be used by two parents swinging their child when out for a walk. On "up" they lift the baby into the air as they walk along. Babies will play this one until either your arms or theirs fall off.

The Game of Give and Take

The big new games of this age are *social* rather than *physical*. You give something to them, and then you take it away. It can be a book or a toy or a newspaper. After a few repetitions they grab it back. Then later they give it to you and take it back. In a short time you are both grabbing it from each other. This is the beginning of the great market game. They are doing the same thing when they share their wet cookie with you. One suck for them, one for you.

Although it sounds very simple, a great deal of social growth has been necessary for this to happen. Babies can now interpret many of your expressions (of happiness, anger, scolding), and you can interpret theirs. You know the meaning of their different cries. There are different cries for hunger, pain, and annoyance. This insight into how each other

is feeling is an important part of social games like this. Let us say again though that, as with all other games, it is "staged" by you. Your mock surprise and annoyance when they take the object away are the important elements that account for the baby's merriment.

It is usually not until the end of the first year that babies will "give" things to people in order to enjoy their pleasurable response—the "thank you" and "how nice." Usually they want them back immediately, so they can play the game with someone else. This is not the last time we will find a social relationship occurring in a game before it occurs in ordinary relationships. That is, the give and take is experienced in game play before children can manage it or understand it themselves in ordinary social activity.

Peek-a-Boo

Peek-a-boo does not have to be with a person to begin with, although that is the most usual way to catch infants' attention. When you and they have been playing with a toy, if you suddenly make it disappear and then reappear, this can lead first to surprise, then to delight, and then to peals of laughter after several repetitions. In person, you play the game by popping up beside their crib after disappearing or you pop up from behind the table. It is a very special thing to watch babies anticipating the emergence of their mothers' or fathers' heads, with their mouths and eyes wide open. As the head pops into view, they often show a slightly startled effect, and then their faces burst into broad smiles. It will be some months yet before the babies themselves look for things that are lost. But as early as seven or eight months you can produce these startle and amusement effects by making things or yourself reappear quickly.

We know that in this second year of life babies are some-

times upset by strangers. What we parents seem to do in this game is momentarily make ourselves into strangers. But our suddenly popping up head, momentarily taken for something else, is quickly recognized, and the aroused anxiety collapses into enjoyment. Children made versatile by such play might more easily handle the onset of strangers, although we are aware of no research on that possibility as yet.

Bury the Baby

In the game of bury the baby you throw the baby's own light comfort blanket over her head, then pull it off. As with other games the introduction must be accompanied with smiles, so that the baby is relaxed and reassured. At first the baby is a little startled but is then pleased to see your face again. She then anticipates the blanket, pulls it off by herself, and the game has begun in earnest. You cover her, she uncovers herself, you cover, she uncovers.

Hear-a-Boo

Hear-a-boo is the same as peck-a-boo, but now you are making a noise with a bell, and he is looking for it as you slide your hand behind him, underneath his chair, etc. You do not hide your hand so much as put it out of his line of vision; then he has to switch his head somewhere else to be able to see it.

Crackle

Crumple a sheet of newspaper so it makes a lot of noise and throw it onto the baby's head and face, showering down

on her. First make the big crackling noise until she is enjoying that, then throw it at her head. You can repeat this until she is deep in a pile of newspaper and she flails around enjoying herself.

Chase the Dog

If you have a nice old dog that runs away from little babies, infants love to be carried around chasing the dog. They cannot run after the dog by themselves yet. Needless to say, six-month-old babies are enraptured by dogs and will bury their faces and mouths in their hair and suck it. Whether you want that for your dog or for your baby is something else.

Ride the Camel

The camel is one of the parents sitting on the floor with hands behind his or her back and legs bent. You walk on feet and hands, tummy up. As you move along like a four-legged animal, you get a weaving, bobbing camel effect. This is a safer mode of transport at this age than carrying children on your back because they can be cradled on your stomach and you can sink quickly to the floor if they seem about to flip off.

Riding on your back does not come until some time during the second year, and even then it is sometimes hard to hold the baby on. Often you find yourself giving your eighteen-month-old a horsey ride on your back with one hand high up behind you trying to stump along on all fours, only it is all threes. Usually this is not good for very much transport. Your arms cannot take it, but the baby is happy to sit and wait on your back as you lie on your face waiting to recover.

Funny Faces

Making funny faces is one of the great games for the last few months of the first year. From about six months onward children usually begin to get more or less apprehensive about the faces of strangers. As they become more settled with the familiar people in their own home, they become more intrigued by the faces of strangers. The differences in these other faces fascinate them and sometimes scare them. We have seen children at this age become upset by the face on a toy if it was strange enough. A game that this stage permits is the making of funny faces by familiar people. Babies now love your most clownlike and weirdest faces.

You can make things more dramatic by galloping up to the sitting baby on all fours wearing such a funny face. Another variety is to make a funny face when they pull off your dark glasses, which infants love to do when they get the chance.

Mirror Faces

You can play a game of making funny faces in the mirror for the baby to see. Babies recognize themselves in the mirror in some sense and they recognize you too. At least there is research evidence that babies are not as disturbed by seeing themselves in the mirror as they are by seeing strangers. Thus, looking at each other in the mirror and then back to each other's faces, with some funny faces thrown in, is an amusing pastime.

Book Peek-a-Boo

If you have a simple picture book of animals, you can make an animal sound to match each picture. Then try quickly

opening the book and making the sound of the picture you find. Keep opening and closing the book. This is combining peck-a-boo with a contest of showing the animal and shutting the book while the baby tries to hold it, or you try to hold the picture while the baby tries to turn the page or throw the book away. Do not use books that are heirlooms.

By twelve months children sometimes will turn pages on their own and babble expressively as if they are reading. They are imitating your reading to them. This roughhouse with books and the baby's own page turning and reading will not occur unless you have been telling stories to them with picture books or, rather, acting out the animal noises. Although this can all occur by twelve months, it is more typical of the second year, when the baby has had more outings and has seen more animals.

Laughing

By now there are many ways of making babies laugh. All the methods of play mentioned in the first six months will probably work better now. When we play with children in the early months, laughter is a major achievement. Now it is easy and is a natural outcome of almost every game we have described. By and large, the noise-making and touching forms of laughter making are better in the earlier months (six to eight months), and the social and visual forms become better later (nine to twelve months).

Funny noises—sounds in an unusual sequence, with the last part different, taking longer, or whatever—and high-pitched funny voices are good laugh makers during the first year but seem to become less effective toward the end of the year.

Bouncing babies, suspending them, blowing on their faces, kissing their stomachs, stroking their cheeks, tickling them

under the chin, and blowing raspberries on their necks are better in about midyear, six to nine months.

Socially produced laughter—which you get from “This Little Pig,” rushing up to babies and grabbing them with anticipatory cries, throwing the blanket over their faces, etc.—is more successful as the year goes by.

Visually produced laughter also improves throughout the year, such as your walking in a funny way, falling over and making a spectacle of yourself, or two parents’ jumping about and making an object disappear and reappear.

THE BABY'S OWN PLAY

When we move to what children are doing as compared with what we have been doing with children, the focus must be more on *action* and less on these amusing social events. Furthermore, these actions comprise the bulk of their play. Our social games are usually just a small part of their total play time.

Exploratory Actions with Basic Forces

The big difference is that babies can crawl at around seven to nine months of age and pull themselves up to stand and sometimes walk at about ten to eleven months. They are now as interested in what they can do as in what we have to show them. A sense of themselves as the ones who do things is dawning. You are beginning to be ever so slightly phased out.

They go about sticking a stiff little finger into every crevice. They are fascinated by teeny weeny crumbs on the floor or old cereal pieces under the sofa. They test everything with

their mouths—sand, dirt, bits of fluff. They are fascinated by all small objects and knobs and explore the world of cupboard handles and TV switches. It is surprising how many things there are around that are like nipples and, as such, seem good to chew. Obviously you have to think about what is lying around that is dirty or dangerous or precious, because such things can be hazards for the locomoting explorer.

By eleven and twelve months they are all over the floor, either crawling or taking steps between the sofas or moving around the sides of the furniture, holding on. (Some toy designer should dream up some maze equipment for nine- to eighteen-month-olds; it could be patterned after a maze with toys hanging at various intervals, the whole thing about two feet high, for babies to make their way through. Although it would be a cumbersome toy, if it were ingeniously designed, it would be useful for some good explorations. But where would you put it? It would have to be able to be put away or it could become as limiting as a playpen can be.)

The actions babies can now carry out are almost endless. We are only going to list the main ones. What we want to emphasize is that they must learn these actions by trying them out. It is as if they were learning to use their hands, arms, and bodies as *forces* that they could apply to the world.

Judging by the amount of time they spend at it, during the second half of the first year infants are very concerned about mastering such forces as *banging*, *inserting* (poking) small objects into spaces, *twisting* or turning knobs, *pushing* and *pulling* movable objects, *crawling under* things (such as tables and chairs), *getting into* things (such as cupboards under the sink), *opening* and *shutting* doors, *pulling* drawers *in and out*, *getting in and out* of cardboard boxes, *climbing* stairs, *squeezing* water out of sponges, and *dropping* objects from heights.

These forces, when they are mastered, become the basis for

the children's playfulness. Thus, banging things that are held in the hand, which is carefully mastered first, later becomes one of the earliest forces to lead to hilarious enjoyment with the noises that they make. They delight in banging toys, newspapers, and the like on the table. Such variety, when it is added to previous mastery, is the height of playfulness. That babies can also get your attention and, if they are lucky, a smile, probably makes it that much more rewarding.

The approval babies get from their parents for all their feats is a very important part of the baby-parent relationship. In many of the games described in the first six months the fun for the infants is that they are the audience anticipating the adults' making things happen. Now the coin is turned, and we have some dramatic displays by them, although we might say that these are generally all climax, with little opportunity yet for plotted anticipation. Making a loud banging noise with a spoon is the whole drama. Anticipation will come during the next year, when the child, yelling peek-a-boo from far off, comes running around the corner of the kitchen door. At this age, six to twelve months, the baby's exultation at making a big noise is the performance itself.

Any of the new-found skills can become the basis for fun. The psychologist Jean Piaget in his book *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* (Norton) gives the example of his ten-month-old daughter who, putting her nose close to her mother's cheek, discovered that she was forced to breathe harder. This interested her and, presumably because she was already a master at blowing against obstacles, she did not just repeat the process; she immediately complicated it for the fun of it. She drew back an inch or so, screwed up her nose, sniffed and breathed out alternately very hard (as if blowing her nose), and then again thrust her nose against her mother's cheek, laughing heartily. These actions went on every day for quite some time and were a kind of ritual game of child with mother's cheek.

New Ideas for Appropriate Toys

If the discovery of basic forces and their control is as important as we have suggested here, it also follows that the right kinds of toys and objects ought to be critical for young children—objects to suck and bang or to climb into, things made of toweling, wood, or plastic (not the kind that breaks easily), and cardboard boxes.

We have already suggested a few toy inventions in previous chapters. Let us "play" with a few more for the creative parent who knows how to engineer objects. For the first six months we have had face dolls and hand dolls; some additional ideas follow for those months. A *mobile* should be simple, and it should be able to move as a result of the baby's movement or wriggling in the crib.

The parent might wear a variety of kinds of necklaces for the baby to grasp, suck, and tinker with. For example, you can thread large wooden beads, or even empty spoons that you have colored yourself, on to elastic to make a necklace. The baby can pull and explore the different shapes. You can also tie lengths of different-colored cord or braid together. You can attach small articles of different textures to hang from these, such as keys, bells, and furry balls. Naturally, it is better to wear one necklace for a while and then substitute one that is slightly different. The difference leads to surprise and to examination. Babies are fascinated by any jewelry that a mother wears anyway, so they might as well have some childproof jewelry to play with while they are drinking their bottles.

A *pacifier* might have several nipples of different sizes and softness. It would be an education for the mouth. It must be safe to suck and impossible to swallow, and it must not hurt if accidentally banged against the baby's face. A *tracker* could be an apparatus on the crib that would release an ob-

ject that goes from side to side across the top of the crib when the infant pulls a suspended cord. Each tug would put it in motion, and babies would be able to track it with their eyes (good for future bird watchers). A *grasper* would be a device for grasping. It would have holes for your fingers to go into. There would be one-finger, two-finger, and three-finger holes. When squeezed at one end, all the weight could move to the other end.

Toys for the second six months can be more complex. Good ones illustrate the principle that what babies do with the toy must produce some other effect. The good old-fashioned *jack-in-the-box* nicely illustrates the effect of doing one thing (winding it up) and getting another action (the Jack popping up). That toy can be appropriate at the end of the first year, although more so during the second, since it also includes a strange face and a sudden startling action, which the baby must get used to. The tune that goes with winding it up gets the baby ready for it.

What is interesting about toys appropriate for the second half of the first year is that they lead beyond the children's major line of activity. Babies are largely growing used to their own application of power and what they can control. These toys work on the edge of their dawning consciousness of the effects created by different forms of their power. *Nesting boxes*, which are so popular at this time as a way of putting things into things and taking them out again, can be made more sophisticated by being transparent and permitting babies to see animal pictures when they get them together in a certain way. Another possibility might be a flashlight, attached to the crib, that works to produce changing *shadow patterns* on the white end of the crib as the baby pushes buttons on it.

We suggest toys like this to illustrate the basic idea that what babies do with the toy must produce some other effect. In the *bing-bonger*, for example, when the babies turn the

toy upside down, a metal ball bearing inside runs down to one end and produces a tone; when the toy is turned up the other way, the ball bearing runs down to the other end and produces a different tone. Each end is differently colored. This way the babies can produce an immediate effect, but they also produce a puzzle for themselves. Why the different sounds? With careful discriminating they will in due course learn to associate sound and color and be able to anticipate what sound they will get when they have the particular color on the bottom.

These have been some of our dreams. You can also have fun dreaming up toys for the toy companies to make and then testing their catalogs to see how good they are.

Adding this kind of effect to the toy enlarges its life well into the second year—that is, if you can still find the pieces, which is the handicap with all these schemes for infant toys of an intricate sort; you lose the bits. Anyway, there are always pots and pans, and they seldom get lost; or at least, if you cannot find them in the kitchen, they will be in the bath.

We assume that those who play a lot with their babies in the first year of life will have babies who continue to be playful in the following years. The shifting of position and the creation of excitement in physical actions certainly suggest themselves as the beginning for the more imaginative and intellectual versatility of the years to come. Versatility in one should lead to versatility in the other. At least that is our assumption. It seems a reasonable one to us.