Crying and comforting

Some babies cry more than others. Even once they are “settled” there are babies who seem more inclined to the miseries, more jumpy or just generally less contented than other babies.

But there are changes during the second and third months which make even “difficult” babies easier to live with and love. Your baby may still begin to cry many times every day, but he will no longer go on and on despite all your efforts at comfort — unless, of course, you are coping with “colic” (see p. 92). Pick the baby up for a cuddle and a chat and the crying will stop. If he is in pain or acutely hungry, it may start again. But usually he will stay calm just as long as you will go on cuddling.

So instead of those dreadful times in the newborn period when you felt like the most useless parents in the world, you will now know that you are magic. Maybe you wish the baby did not need your magic quite so often, but at least it is better to feel useful. The crying becomes more comprehensible, too. The baby still uses that basic hunger cry. He still lets out that pain cry which makes your heart thud. But he adds a “grumpy” cry, a sort of whimper, fretful, almost whiny sound. And he uses that one first on most occasions. He is not saying “disaster!” or “I’m starving!” just “I don’t seem to be quite happy just now.” Soon afterward he adds an “anger” cry, quite unlike any of the others. It is an indignant roar: “Come back!” it seems to say, or “I want it!” or “Don’t!”

Maybe you could not describe all these different cries in words. But you will know them apart when you hear them. When he starts to grumble, you know that he is getting hungry or getting bored. You know it is time to do something for him and it is easier to think what to do because you are not overwhelmed by the urgency of a full-throated roar. So at least you can begin to understand his crying better, and you can always stop it, at least for the moment. But what can you do to make him start crying less often?

Typical cries

The baby’s repertoire of cries grows. Presented usually from a sound spectrograph you can see the differences in volume, pitch and rhythm in three typical cries. More important, you will soon be able to distinguish the cries when you hear them and know what it is he needs.