



So much more than signing!

Mellow Baby signing courses are so much more than songs and signs. They are an opportunity to provide a lively environment for parents and babies to communicate by facilitating;

- Friendship between parents
- A time for parents to enjoy social time out
- Social and sensory discovery for babies
- Sharing and support within a group
- Provision of relevant advice, guidance and referral contacts where needed
- Learning something useful for Parent & Baby
- Fun for all

It is important to consider baby signing as the use of gestures rather than 'a language'. A language would have a host of grammatical rules and expressions attached to it. Even if parents don't train their baby to use symbolic gestures, it is likely babies will naturally use them anyway. For example, pointing at something they are asking about, tugging at their sweater if they wish to take it off, etc. Understanding baby gestures can improve communication and make parents more sensitive to what their babies are thinking about. This can have profound benefits. When parents are more tuned into their baby's thoughts and feelings, babies are more likely to develop secure attachment relationships.

With baby signing, parents say the keyword associated with the sign to their baby in the context of the situation, so it is possible that baby signing motivates parents to speak more empathetically with greater variations in pitch, and with greater emotion. Research suggests that this sing-song style of speaking, called infant-directed speech has a greater effect on the part of the baby's brain processing auditory sounds than normal adult speech (Lloyd-Fox et al. 2015). People using infant-directed speech also tend to repeat their words giving babies extra opportunities to listen and learn.

Aside from the research, anecdotal feedback from families lends great strength to the reasons for pursuing baby-signing. Parents frequently reported that they find communication with their little one less frustrating and more rewarding -- for both parent and baby. They also say that they had no idea the child had so much to say or understand so much before they could talk.

We teach the parents the signs through music and song. This has its own added benefits, as the babies enjoy observing and participating in a series of action-singing music sessions. According to Sally Goddard Blythe, Director of the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology, singing lullabies and nursery rhymes to babies and infants before they learn to speak, is an essential precursor to later educational success and emotional well-being. Research has also shown that the better children are at detecting rhymes the quicker and more successful they will be at learning to read (Bryant et al. 1990).

Top Tips for Baby Signing

1. Always do the keyword when you sign
2. Always sign in the context of the situation
3. Make eye contact
4. Use expressions!