



Australian Association for
Infant Mental Health

Infant Mental Health Awareness Week

“Speaking up for babies”

We speak for them as they have no words (yet)

Letter from a baby

“My quiet words to my parents”

Dr Naomi Thomas, Clinical Psychologist, Secretary & Membership Secretary of the Tasmania Branch of AAIMH

I am not you.

But I am a baby with a lot to say. I may not have words, yet I do have a voice and my body says a lot. Just listen to my cry and watch how my body moves on my own and when I’m in your arms.

Listen to my babbling words, when do I do this? I’m often looking at you, waiting for you to look and talk back to me.

Look at my arms and legs. When do I show I’m excited and really into what I, or we, are doing? Look at how they slow when I am learning and being curious, or when I’m feeling cautious and needing your touch or look of ‘it’s okay’. You show me you have ‘got this big world’, through your face, the way your body calmly holds me, and your steady familiar voice. This helps me feel safe.

Look at my arms and legs when I’ve had enough and are tired, they get quick and jerky. I need your help now.

Look at how I use my head to turn to what I’m interested in and also when I need a break or have had enough of the good times. Thank you for giving me space to look away or close my eyes when I need to slow down this world of ours.

Look at how my breathing changes when I’m feeling and experiencing all these things that you as a grown-up don’t see as big or maybe even notice. It’s new to me, just like getting to know me has been new for you. Together, listening together, I will grow (and you will grow too).

Thank you for speaking up for me. And not thinking that what is happening for me is the same as what’s happening inside you. By looking at my body, hearing my voice, and listening to my own separate experience, you put my words out there in the world that I will do for myself in time. How confident I am doing this, speaking up for myself when I am big, will be in part dependent on you doing this for me first. Seeing me for me, different to you, and saying it out loud to the world.

Thank you for knowing your worries and fears are that of grown-ups and not mine - seeing them for what they are, a history that I haven’t lived. It matters that you tried to put a bit of space between “them” and “us”.

Being my voice in the big adult world is your job. It’s the job of every grown-up (and professional) in our world. It changes my path, clears the way for me to have a better start to my life journey and will give me a stronger voice when I am a grown-up (and parent).

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