

# OVERWHELMED

CLIENT	BEHAVIORS	TOOLS
Formula-fed infant (around 5-6 months old)	Trust baby to decide how much to eat, if anything	Photos of parents in overwhelming situations

## TOOLS:



## OPENING ACTIVITY:

Lay photos on the table that show moms and dads in overwhelming situations.

**SAY:** “Pick a photo that says something about how you feel when overwhelmed.”

Listen to client responses.

**SAY:** “You know what it feels like to be overwhelmed. Now imagine your child feeling overwhelmed. Would you want that for your baby?”

Listen to client responses.

“Just like parents, babies can feel overwhelmed when they are encouraged or forced to eat more than they want. Since babies can’t talk, how can loving parents know how much to feed them so they don’t feel overwhelmed?”

Listen to client responses. Discuss ways parents can introduce foods in a kind, caring way that leads to happy children who don’t feel overwhelmed.

Introduce solid foods when baby is relaxed and after breastmilk or formula. “Eating solid foods for the first time is an exciting adventure for you and your baby. To keep it a happy memory for both of you, offer solids when Baby is relaxed and after a small amount of formula or breastmilk. If your baby is too hungry, she may be frustrated, rather than excited, about solid foods.”

Offer very small amounts of food to Baby, and trust Baby to know how much to eat—or whether to eat at all. “It’s amazing how babies know what to do on their own. They know how often to breathe and how often to fill their diapers on their own with no coaxing or encouragement from parents. They come equally skilled at knowing how much food to eat. It all comes down to trust. Trust your baby to know when they are full, and honor them by not pushing food on them and by allowing them to decide when to stop eating—or whether to eat at all.”

**How to know when baby is done eating:** “Babies give clear clues when they are done eating. How can you tell when your baby is full?” (Baby loses interest in the food, plays with food without eating it, is distracted or cries, turns his head away from the spoon.)

**Reassuring parents who may be worried their child won't get enough to eat:** “Babies are unpredictable. At times, they may be experiencing a growth spurt and be excited to eat a wide variety of foods while ignoring or refusing food at other times. By letting your baby (and children of all ages) decide how much to eat, you are protecting him from feeling overwhelmed. Babies who learn how to eat in response to their own hunger cues are more likely to enjoy a lifetime of healthy weight instead of eating struggles.”

#### **ACTION PLAN:**

**ASK:** “How will you feel if you were able to give your baby the gift of not feeling overwhelmed with too much food? How would you feel if you were able to give your baby the gift of deciding for himself how much he wants to eat? What can you do this week to set your baby on the path of healthy, happy eating?”