37% of BabyCenter moms describe their 4- to 6-month-old as "easy-going." Just 3 percent call their baby "fussy" or "difficult."

89 percent of BC moms have given their baby a pacifier. But half think pacifiers are acceptable only through the first year. By comparison, 22 percent think it's fine to let a baby suck his thumb for as long as he wants.

78 years: That's how long the average 4- to 6-month-old in the U.S. today will live—an increase of about 20 years since 1929.

name that mood!

Suddenly your baby is a bundle of emotions—and he's looking to you for help in understanding what they all mean.

BY HEIDI KOTANSKY

You can't wait for your baby to sit up or roll over. But there's more to development than that. Right now he's having an emotional growth spurt. And the feelings he's starting to wrestle with are every bit as important as the more visible flip-flops on the floor.

BROADENING HIS RANGE Your baby has been able to feel a few basic emotions—contentment, distress, interest, disgust—since birth. Now, with some life under his belt, he's formed definite likes, dislikes, and expectations—and his emotional repertoire has expanded accordingly. These days, he burbles with excitement as you strap him in his swing, then grows surprised if you walk away without hitting the "on" button. A few more minutes and frustration turns to fury—he wants to rock-a-bye now! Soon, fear sets in: Where the heck are you, anyway? When you finally return, he may even seem put out, refusing to greet you with his usual sunny smile.

At this age, babies can feel such subtle emotions as joy, sadness, empathy (studies have found they cry in response to the sounds of another baby's wail), and jealousy (just look at his face if you snuggle a rival 5-month-old—or even a lifelike doll). While it's too early to teach your little one to manage his feelings, simply acknowledging and responding to them will help his emotional development, says Sybil Hart, an associate professor at Texas Tech University. "He's testing the waters to see what he needs to do to get a reaction from you."

SECOND THAT EMOTION You'll also help by using words to label feelings, starting with his own—"Look at your smile. You are so happy!" Mimic his expression, too, to show him what it looks like. He's little, but he's paying close attention. As he gets older, point out how the characters are feeling when you read books together. Eventually, you'll end up with a child who can not only articulate his own feelings but recognize other people's, too—an important component of his emotional well-being for decades to come. ☺