

PARENTING WITH CONFIDENCE

*A Mother's Guide to Your Baby's
Developmental Milestones*

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Abstract

An eBook aimed at creating awareness on baby developmental milestones, how they support a baby's growth, and the importance of mothers supporting these milestones to help them parent confidently, raising healthy, happy, and confident children.

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About The Author

My name is Christine Muthoni, a mother of two beautiful children aged 7 years and 16 months at the time of writing this eBook.

I had my son 7 years ago in Kenya and I was determined like any first-time mother to be the perfect mother.

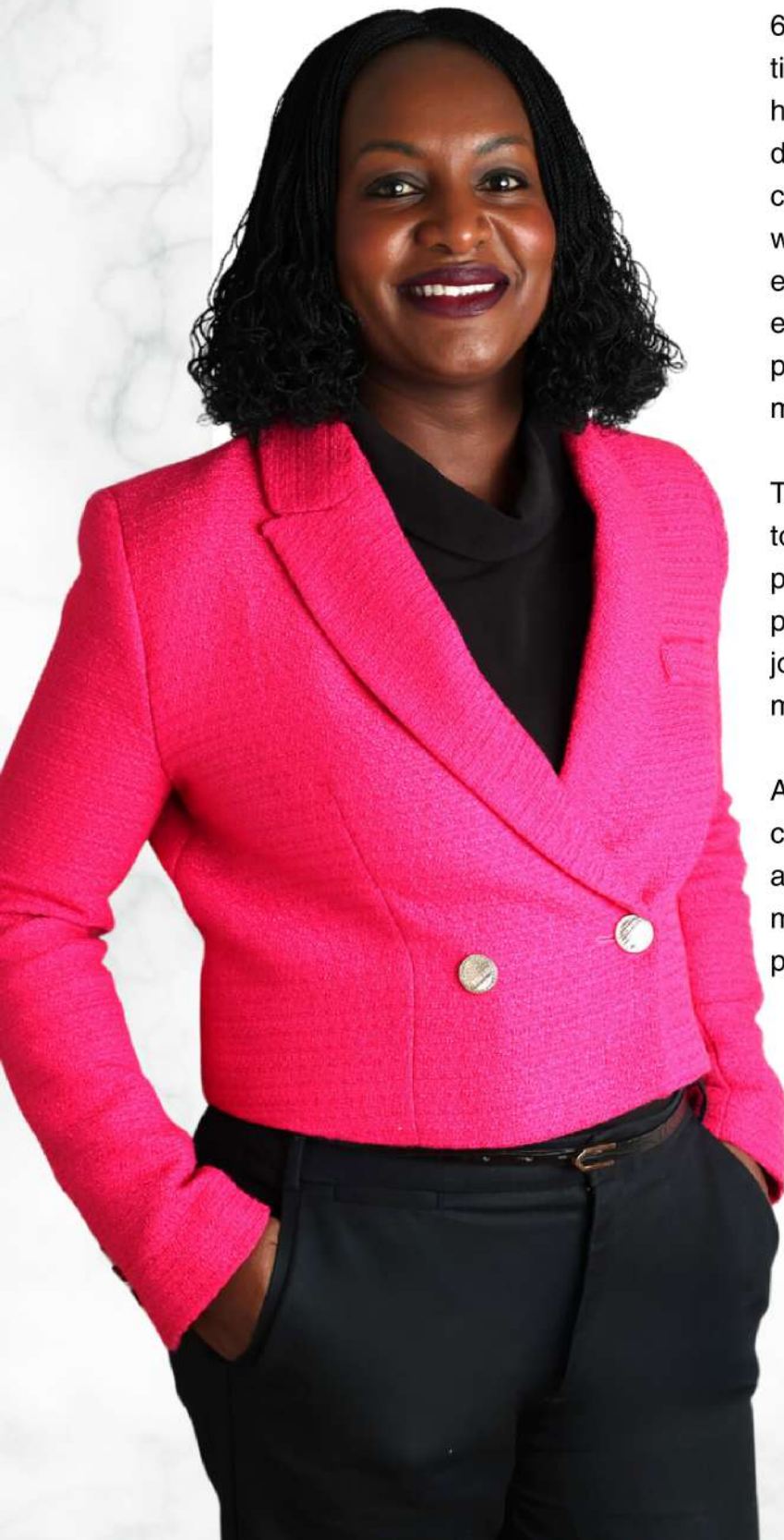
My quest led me to parent via Google and other apps aimed at supporting mothers. Although I got weekly updates from these apps on how my baby was doing or meant to be doing at his age, I never got advance notice of what I should have done to ensure they were reaching that milestone.

The periodic pediatric visits took the same approach and ticked the boxes of what my son had achieved but did not tell me how to ensure they reached those milestones.

On the other hand, I was getting all forms of advice from my nanny, parents, and friends on what I should be doing with my son, some of which were based on myths.

What I was missing was the holistic picture of my son's development to empower me to make the best decisions about how to support it.





6 years later, I had my daughter, and this time, I decided to take matters into my own hands and be more in control of her development. I was lucky that I was in a country where this information and support was offered abundantly through experienced child development experts. I enrolled in several baby classes both physical and online and what I learned was mind-boggling!

This led me to further research in addition to all that I had done for my son and the pieces all came together beautifully like a puzzle. This has made my parenting journey easier and allowed me to enjoy motherhood.

Additionally, this newly found knowledge came with a form of empowerment that allowed me to make the right decisions for my baby's development and therefore parent confidently.

What are Developmental Milestones?

Developmental milestones are physical and behavioral benchmarks that are used to determine if a baby is developing well and as expected. These are mainly used by pediatricians and health professionals to monitor a baby's growth progress.

Most milestones are age-dependent and are usually reached when the baby is within that age range. An age range is used to track milestones as every child is an individual and will meet the milestones in their own time. This is a concept I uphold as my two children met their milestones at different times.

Milestones build on each other and are dependent on one to happen for another to be reached. I refer to this as the stacking-up concept in this eBook. This concept demonstrates that milestones are the building blocks of our babies' development and therefore work together to support this development while building on each other.

Developmental milestones are usually grouped into the following categories called domains:

1

MOTOR SKILLS MILESTONES

These have to do with the movement that babies need for everyday activities. They are further classified into:

1. Gross motor skills which focus on the movement of large muscles such as legs and arms,
2. Fine motor skills which focus on the movement of small muscles such as fingers and wrists.

2

SENSORY SKILLS MILESTONES

These have to do with the baby's 7 senses. Yes! We have 7 not 5 senses.

These include the 5 commonly known ones:

1. Sight,
2. Hearing,
3. Taste,
4. Smell,
5. Touch and 2 less known ones
6. Vestibular- body balance and movement
7. Proprioception- body position.

3

COMMUNICATION MILESTONES

These have to do with the baby's ability to communicate (not by words only) and their ability to respond to communication.

4

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL MILESTONES

These have to do with the baby's ability to socialize, show, and manage emotions.

5

COGNITIVE MILESTONES

These have to do with a baby's ability to learn, think, and problem-solve.

6

FEEDING MILESTONES

These have to do with the baby's ability to feed from birth to weaning and nutrition.

The Importance of Developmental Milestones:

The time between a baby being born and when they start school is crucial because it is when their brain develops the most.

This brain development, although invisible to the naked eye is noticeable through developmental milestones that a baby reaches.

Developmental milestones help mothers track and understand their baby's development which then enables them to:

1. **Take control and proactively support the baby's development:** through targeted activities aimed at enabling the baby to reach the desired milestones.
2. **Make the best decisions for their baby:** through a better understanding of the baby's developmental milestones which brings empowerment.
3. **Parent confidently:** without the need to make comparisons with other babies' development because they are equipped with the correct knowledge.
4. **Anticipate the developmental milestones:** and celebrate when the baby reaches them, giving parents motivation that they are on the the right track but also ensuring that we capture these special moments.
5. **Identify a baby's strength or talent:** through the developmental milestones reached early and ensure we nurture that talent early.
6. **Wean off old wives' tales:** for instance, when the right time to wean a baby is. This is a very controversial area with pressure/advice usually coming from friends or relatives about whether a baby is ready for food or not.
7. **Identify when things are not going as expected:** with the baby's development and therefore prompt parents to seek medical help early.

What Happens If My Baby Delays in Reaching a Milestone?

The most important thing is to know and understand the time range given by medical experts for the developmental milestone to occur.

For instance, the time within which a baby should start walking is anywhere between 9 months to 18 months. (They usually give ranges as every baby develops differently and is an individual). If your baby reaches 20 months and they still cannot take a step, then this could be a red flag, and you should consult a medical expert for further advice.

Developmental milestones should be used as a guide to how your child is developing with the understanding that every child is a unique individual and therefore should not be compared with other children of the same age who might have met or not met the developmental milestones.

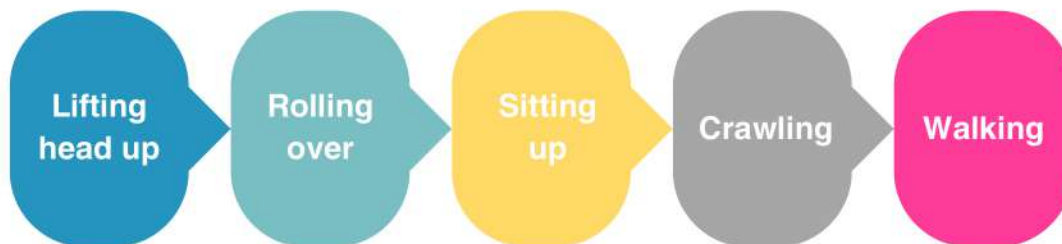
Examples of Developmental Milestones:

When you think of baby milestones the first ones that come to mind are the physical ones naturally because they are visible to us. These would include milestones such as crawling, rolling, walking, smiling, clapping, etc.

However, other milestones are not obvious but are equally important to understand and monitor, such as a baby's sight which is not fully developed at birth but is critical to their cognitive abilities, or a baby's ability to express their emotions a key developmental milestone that contributes to a person's emotional intelligence among others.

Most babies lift their heads and then roll before they can crawl, then they sit before they can crawl, and then crawl before they can walk.

Remember the stacking-up concept I introduced in Chapter 1, where milestones build upon each other? I will now illustrate this using a physical milestone development:



These milestones develop sequentially illustrating the stacking-up concept. However, it is also important to note that other milestones are also developing in parallel, to support these milestones. For instance, for a baby to crawl their hands need to be able to fully open so they can use them for navigation.

Opening of the hand will fall under fine motor skills while sitting up then crawling fall under gross motor skills and so they require different sorts of support and activities to be reached.

As milestones develop, they continue supporting brain development which then enables other milestones to be achieved. Looking at the example above, crawling enhances the development of both sides of the brain which in effect supports cognitive development, problem-solving, and learning skills such as writing.

What Happens When a Baby Skips a Milestone?

It is not uncommon for a baby to not go through all their milestones; crawling for example is a milestone that is not uncommon for babies to skip. Although this is not considered a problem, it could affect the development of other milestones through reduced brain development as explained above.

This is why parents need to understand the linkages between the developmental milestones to ensure that they are supporting all milestones.

Each milestone is important and helping a baby reach it, not only supports the development of another milestone but enhances brain development.



Why you Should Support your Baby's Development

The most important reason for supporting our baby's development is to help them unleash their potential. Many public figures including Bill Gates have said that *the first 5 years of life are the most critical and will determine our babies' lives for the next 80 years* (I prefer the rest of their lives).

Although babies are born with certain abilities such as the ability to communicate through crying, or the ability to feed through suckling, they still need to develop a lot of the skills they will need to survive in this world. Ensuring they develop all their abilities enhances their survival skills- **survival for the fittest.**

A baby's brain develops in the first 6 years of life with the most rapid development happening in the first 2 years. This brain development supports the development of all the other senses we use as human beings. Equally, the development of these senses enhances brain development through exploration and learning.

Parents therefore have a great responsibility to support their babies' development through this critical stage of their lives that will shape the rest of their lives! However, this is not only a responsibility we have as parents but an opportunity to take advantage of this crucial stage of our baby's lives to ensure they realise their full potential.

By proactively supporting their baby's developmental milestones, parents not only ensure that the baby reaches them but also that they do so at the indicated time range to avoid delayed development.

Once we understand what the developmental milestones are and when they occur, we can support them correctly. For instance, waving a colorful ribbon or cloth in front of a newborn baby to sharpen their eyesight is pointless if they cannot see the colorful cloth.

How to Support your Baby's Development

Tracking the developmental milestones using a tracker is the first and most important step in supporting them. Trackers can be in the form of a simple Excel sheet or as sophisticated as an app but regardless of the form it should focus on their ability to:

1. Play,
2. Learn,
3. Speak,
4. Act, and
5. Move.

Is it enough to track the milestones? No, in addition to tracking them, mothers should also proactively support their baby's developmental milestones through specific activities targeted at promoting the development of that aspect of brain development.

Using the previous example of a baby walking, the activities needed to support this milestone would be:

1

Those that strengthen the core muscles enabling the baby to lift their head, roll, sit, crawl, and eventually walk. Tummy time is a well-known targeted activity to strengthen the core muscles and it has a recommended incremental pattern as the baby grows in age. Tummy time can also be varied to avoid it being boring for both mother and baby and to cater to babies that might not be keen on lying on a mat on the floor. Variations include the use of toys or specially designed pillows as enhancements, using your body or a different surface instead of the floor etc.

2

Activities that help with balance by stimulating the vestibular muscles would also help support this walking by promoting the baby's ability to maintain balance. This could be an activity that promotes body balance such as swimming as an example.

3

Activities targeted at promoting fine motor skills to allow the palm the open and be flexible enough to support the movement would be useful.

4

Hand-eye coordination is also key to ensuring that a baby can crawl.

Each developmental milestone has recommended activities aimed at supporting it something I share with mums in my **Online Program- *Nurturing Your baby's Potential.***

Supporting your baby's development does not mean pushing them to attain a milestone when they are not ready. It's not unusual for parents to try and get their babies to do things as early as they can, but this could also be detrimental to their babies reaching certain milestones that are critical.

Conclusion

Babies are the most precious gifts we have as parents and all we want is for our children to grow up to be the best they can be through realising their full potential. For this to happen, their development must be supported through proactive parenting and support of their developmental milestones right from birth.

Understanding your baby's developmental milestones will help you to parent confidently, by knowing what to expect from your baby. Knowing their developmental stage will enable you to select the appropriate activities for your baby and work together on their development.

Supporting your baby's development does not need to take up too much of your time or require a great amount of effort. What is most important is to dedicate a bit of time each day to doing an activity with your baby geared towards supporting their development and doing it consistently.



Are you Ready?

I would like to work with like-minded mothers who do not have time to scroll through thousands of confusing pieces of information but are 100% committed to doing their best to support their baby's development.

In my program, ***Nurturing your Baby's Potential***, I provide mothers with information about their baby's development in the first 0-2 years while demonstrating how they can proactively support this development.

**If this is you, what are you waiting for?
Get in touch and let's get started!**



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