

THE EARLY YEARS



PHOTO: ISTOCK XCHING

As a new mum trying to comfort your crying newborn, how many times have you thought, or even said out loud, "I just wish you could tell me what was wrong!"? Well, now you can, says **Michael Franco**.

baby talk

Australian mum Priscilla Dunstan, founder of the Dunstan Baby Language DVDs, claims to have cracked the code of the cries, clucks and coos of infants in their first three months of life. She asserts that by grasping five simple sounds common to babies of all nationalities, parents can take much of the stress out of the first months of child rearing by knowing exactly what their child needs and responding appropriately.

Take “*neh*” for example, distinguished by its telltale “n” sound. If your baby makes this noise, it’s time for a feeding. Then there is the “*owh*” word, when babies form their mouths into an oval and tell us that they’re tired. Know what to do when your baby

starts repeating an urgent “*heh, heh, heh*” pattern? Heading toward the nappy changing table would be a step in the right direction.

Does it Work?

According to Dunstan Baby Language System user Michele Hedden, they work exceedingly well. “Before, we thought our baby was so unpredictable,” she says, “but she wasn’t unpredictable, we just didn’t know what she wanted. Now that we are able to respond quickly to her needs, she cries very little. We are able to take her out and enjoy our lifestyle. We’re happy and she’s happy...that’s the goal.”

Indeed, for many parents, learning five little baby words has had a big impact on their family’s

overall happiness and harmony. Says system user Jackie Goldstone, learning to respond efficiently to her son Declan’s needs has “really given us a lot more time for ourselves as a couple.”

Another way in which the Dunstan system contributes to happy newborn households is by allowing the father to deepen his participation in childcare. Because the five words can unlock a world of understanding between parent and child, fathers now feel able to communicate with their little ones as effectively as their wives. According to Eddie Christudhas, a believer in Dunstan’s system, “As parents we want to think that we know what’s best for the baby. Based on the system, the baby is

telling us some very basic things that he needs...and we just have to respond. It's brought Caleb and I closer and without a doubt it's brought my wife and myself even closer."

In perhaps the most striking illustration of the efficacy of her system, on an episode of the Oprah Winfrey show, Dunstan walked into a room full of mothers with fussy infants. Like a baby psychic she pointed at one pair after the next, telling mothers to either burp their child, offer a bottle or simply change positions. One by one the children settled down and the sighs of contented babies and smiles of amazed mums filled the room.

The System?

From the time she was a young child, Dunstan began to exhibit what is known as an eidetic memory – or a photographic memory for sound. She could listen to a Mozart concerto once and reproduce it note for note on her violin. This ability served her well professionally through many years in the worlds of classical music and opera. But it wasn't until she gave birth to a baby boy that another side of her extraordinary gift came to the fore.

By paying close attention to the sounds her son was making as an infant, Dunstan began to notice that there were just a few basic noises the little boy made and that these "eh's", "eairh's" and "owh's" were related to simple needs like hunger or sleepiness. By logging the sounds and their corresponding needs, she effectively came up with a way to understand what her infant was telling her.


After studying 1000 babies from over 30 nationalities, Dunstan put together her DVD program which now teaches others to identify what she could so easily hear. The video program offers dozens of examples

of babies making each of the five basic sounds over and over again so that parents can develop an ear for recognising the same patterns in their own young ones.

According to Ellesha Kirby, Global Marketing Director of Dunstan Baby, "It's a process of tuning in. For all parents, they have to stop and listen to their baby and hear what their baby is saying. But I think that the notion that babies are talking to us is something that changes every parent's life."

Mum Nicole Harris would certainly agree. She and her husband saw firsthand how the system made a big difference from one child to the next. She says, "We

were really quite amazed, given that Jeremy is our second child, that we had never picked up the "eh, eh, eh" cry – which is that he has wind and he's really uncomfortable. And as we were watching the Dunstan System DVD we were quite amazed and we looked at each other and went, 'we know that cry. Is that what that means? Where was the DVD with our first child?'"

If you're wondering the same, or have just brought home your first newborn, forget "goo-goo" and "ga-ga." Why not learn some *real* baby talk and welcome the little one into a household of peace, love and perhaps most importantly, understanding. 

"I think for most parents the idea that babies cry to communicate something to them is not new and every baby book you buy will tell you that baby's cries have certain sounds. Like they'll say that parents can learn to listen for the hunger cry but none of them actually tell you what that sounds like. With Dunstan Baby Language, it's the first time parents can actually learn to understand what the cries sound like exactly."

- Ellesha Kirby

Where to Buy The Dunstan System Dvds in Singapore

Soon enough, you might not want to hear *everything* your child has to say, but until then, why not tune into the clues they're giving you about how to make them happy by picking up your own copy of this remarkable program? Here's where you can find it in Singapore:

MothersWork

Great World City (The Total Shop)

1 Kim Seng Promenade #01-29A

Tel: 6738 5886

Tanglin Mall (Mother & Baby)

163 Tanglin Road #03-11C

Tel: 6738 2161