

9L 2: HANDOUTS FOR CAREGIVERS AND COMMUNITIES – FEEDING AND INTERACTION CUES

CHILD COMMUNICATION AROUND FEEDINGS¹⁵

Young babies and children have many ways they communicate their wants and needs. Through the use of sounds, body movements and facial expressions (also known as cues), children let caregivers know when they are ready to eat and are enjoying interactions, and also when they need a break or are full. Cues are important because they help caregivers understand the needs of children when they cannot speak. When caregivers recognize and respect these cues, feedings and interactions with children are much more successful. Use this chart and photos as a reference for identifying cues and letting them guide your responses to the children in your care.

Some cues are obvious and others are subtle. The two main types of cues shared in this manual are:

- ① Engagement Cues – “ready to go” cues
- ② Disengagement Cues – “ready to break” cues

ENGAGEMENT CUES

- Eyes bright and wide
- Eyebrows soft but raised
- Facial brightening
- Smiling
- Gazing at others
- Giggling
- Cooing and babbling (making happy sounds)
- Feeding sounds (sucking, smacking lips or tongue)
- Turning head and body toward caregiver and food or liquid
- Hands to mouth
- Hands under chin
- Hands on stomach
- Hands open and fingers loosely flexed
- Reaching arms toward caregiver and/or food or liquid
- Smooth, slow body movements (not jerky, tight or flailing)

DISENGAGEMENT CUES

- Dull looking eyes and face
- Eyebrows furrowed or lowered
- Facial grimacing (frowning), pouting, crying
- Wrinkled forehead
- Eyes blinking or closed tightly
- Looking away from others
- Lip compression (lips pressed tightly together)
- Fast breathing
- Increased sucking noises and movements
- Fussing, whining or whimpering
- Coughing, choking, gagging, spitting, spitting up or vomiting
- Yawning or hiccupping
- Head shaking
- Turning head and body away from caregiver and food or liquid
- Hand to ear, eye or back of head and neck
- Halt hand (“no” signal with hands)
- Joining hands together
- Finger splaying and extension
- Grabbing onto own clothes and/or body
- Pounding on tray/table or waving arms up and down
- Pushing or pulling away from food or caregiver
- Arms and/or legs stiff or straightened
- Leg kicking
- Crawling or walking away
- Falling asleep quickly during feedings

ENGAGEMENT CUES



Facial Brightening



Bright, Wide Eyed



Gazing at Others



Smiling and Hand to Mouth



Hand to Mouth



Turning Head to Caregiver



Engagement cues are signs that a child is becoming hungry and they are ready to interact with you.

*When a child shows these cues, she is giving you the **green light** to offer her food and interaction.*

DISENGAGEMENT CUES



Cry Face or Grimace



Finger Splaying and Extension



Yawning



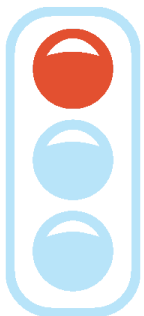
Grabbing onto self



Head Turn and Furrowed Brow



Furrowed Brow and Hand to Ear



Disengagement cues are signs that a child is full or the interaction they are having is too overstimulating.

*When a child shows these cues, he is giving you the **red light** to stop feeding him, give him a break and help him become calm. Incorporating calming activities can be helpful (refer to Appendix 9K).*



Crying is the last cue that a baby uses to show when he is hungry. Catching early cues that a baby is hungry before they begin to cry, can lead to easier feedings and happier babies. Watch for cues – not the clock.

