Prenatal Conversation Starters

BABY BEHAVIOR SPOTLIGHT #9

A first-time pregnant mom wants what’s best for her baby—she wants to be a good mom. But often pregnant women feel overwhelmed when thinking about their new and upcoming responsibilities, and many lack confidences in their abilities. Some may even have close family members reminding them of past “failures”, further undermining their self-confidence.

Talking about baby behavior **prenatally**, can set realistic expectations, and help build confidence. It’s helpful to start conversations with something familiar to mom—something she probably has noticed in other babies. This acknowledges her personal experiences and fosters a collaborative conversation. What might this sound like?

**PRENATAL CONVERSATION STARTERS**

- “Have you ever seen a sleeping baby whose eyes are rolling all around or twitching?”
  - Explain how to recognize the difference between light & deep sleep.
  - Newborns fall asleep in light sleep; wait until deep sleep to lay them down.
  - It’s normal, and healthy, for newborns to wake often.
  - Expect your sleep to be in short, 2-hour stretches. (Offer tips for sleepy parents.)
  - As babies get older, they sleep for longer stretches. (Refer to BB pamphlet.)

- “How do you react when you hear a baby crying really loudly? How does it make you feel?”
  - Hearing a baby cry is stressful.
  - Babies cry for many reasons, not just because they are hungry.
  - Offer suggestions for calming a crying baby. (Refer to baby behavior pamphlet.)

- “Have you ever seen a baby who’s hungry? What did you notice the baby doing?”
  (If she’s not familiar, offer to show the “hungry baby video”, or demonstrate hunger cues with your hands.)
  - Responding early to hunger cues, helps prevent some crying.
  - Explain the difference between hunger cues & crying without hunger. (Show videos)
  - Offer suggestions for calming a crying baby. (Refer to baby behavior pamphlet.)

- “What have you heard about newborn babies and sleep?”
  - It’s normal and healthy for newborns to wake often.
  - Expect to get sleep in short stretches yourself. (Offer tips for sleepy parents.)
  - As babies get older, they sleep for longer stretches. (Refer to BB pamphlet.)
SECOND-TIME Moms

With second-time moms, simply asking what she remembers about those first few weeks after her first delivery, including her breastfeeding experience, will usually open up opportunities to share baby behavior messages, or to affirm her experiences.

If this doesn’t lead to a discussion, asking questions similar to those above about her last baby, will likely get the conversation going.

Give it a try. See how it works for you.