

# Meeting nanny



For a lot of new mums today, it is critical to have some help while caring for the baby. Maids and nannies, come to the rescue. **Arundhati Nath** tells you how you can help your tot get familiarised with a new maid

**IF** you're a working mum, and you need to leave your child at home while you and your partner are in office, your maid is usually the person you need to rely on. When you engage a new maid to look after your child, you need to be sure that they get along well together.

**HERE ARE OUR M&B'S TRIED AND TESTED TIPS TO INTRODUCE A NEW NANNY OR MAID TO YOUR CHILD:**

**MAKE HER FEEL AT EASE:** Devasmita Bhattacharyya, mum to two year old Ahana, feels that there is a need to create a warm, welcoming work

environment for the maid. "Consider your nanny's preferences, such as dietary likes, dislikes and allergies as she is the person working in your house and, in many cases, living there. You want your nanny to feel comfortable while working and caring for your child in your home. If she is happy, we are happy and the child is happy," she says.

**INTRODUCE HER:** Introduce the new nanny to your kid. Eileen Kennedy-Moore, professor for The Great Courses audio/video series, Raising Emotionally and Socially Healthy Kids, advises parents to introduce a maid in the

following way: “This is your new nanny. Her name is XYZ. She will be in charge of taking care of you when mommy and daddy are in office. I expect you to listen to her.”

**ALLOW SOME TIME TOGETHER:** Allow them to spend some one-to-one time so that they get an opportunity to know each other and feel comfortable. “We must get the maid to take over gradually with a few tasks at a time. She could take the child to the park for instance, or cleaning up after the baby and so on. These gestures will pass on a message to the baby that the maid is a safe person in mum’s absence,” Devasmita says.

**PLAN FUN ACTIVITIES:** “Planning a fun activity for the child to do with the new nanny may help get the relationship off to a good start,” Eileen says. However, she feels that we want to take into account our children’s feelings and try to choose childcare providers we think will get along well with our children, but childcare is an ADULT decision, not a child decision.

**LET HER BE AN OBSERVER:** Aarti C Rajratnam, parenting expert and author of *Parenting: Innocence to InnerSense*, feels that it is best to ensure that for children younger than seven, the parent is present along with the new maid at least for a period of three months or longer. “The maid at this point will only be an observer and will sometimes take over a chore or task. The role of the maid at this time is to only familiarise herself with the routine, schedule and the behavioural patterns of the child, and see how she is to be handled,” Aarti says. Since separation anxiety is high in toddlers, it is essential that the maid is present as part of the whole process, and not introduced as a separate entity.

**TREAT HER WELL:** In our country, several households tend to treat maids like a ‘servant’. “It is essential to treat your maid with respect and sensitivity. The behaviour shown by the parents to the maid will be modelled by the child,” Aarti reveals. Make sure you behave well with her and be cautious of the language used. Aarti advises

## BETTER SAFE

While it is important to ensure that you make the transition to a new maid smooth for a child, always keep in mind that while you’re choosing a caretaker for your baby, you are assured that she is the right person to take over in your absence. Your child’s safety is of paramount importance so ensure that you take the following steps:

- Due diligence is critical. Run a background check, register her with the local police station and preferably, only go with someone who comes with a recommendation.
- Invest in a nanny camera. If you will leave your child exclusively in the maid’s care, make use of technology. Ensure that you are able to access the footage of your home camera on your smartphone from wherever you are. Remember to tell your maid that she’s being watched as that is the ethical thing to do.
- Lay some ground rules. Your maid must maintain certain hygiene standards around your child. Give her instructions like washing her hands and always after cleaning and using the washroom, etc.
- Leave a list of emergency contact numbers including your paediatrician and family doctor some place where it can be accessed soon—maybe on the refrigerator!
- Enlist support from neighbours. Have your neighbours, friends or family drop by once a day to check on the maid and your baby.
- Have a safety door installed and instruct your maid to engage with courier boys and the likes only through that. Instruct her to never allow strangers into the house.
- The maid should be given strict instructions to stay away from distractions like the mobile phone or the TV so all her attention is on the baby.
- Observe your child’s behaviour once you’re back. Is she quieter, scared or trying to tell you something? Keep communication channels open and assure your child that she can tell you anything.

*Inputs from Swati Chopra Vikamsey*

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parents never to use threats that involve harming the maid, making her leave for the misbehaviour of the child and so on. These things will strain the relationship between the child, the parent and the maid.

**START A RITUAL:** Kirti Mahajan, mum to little Tia has an experience to share: “My baby was an early riser. I put her on a routine when she was very tiny. So, I

fed her at 6.30 am after she woke up and then let her play by herself till 7.30 am when her massage was due. When the *maushi* came, Tia was initially wary of a stranger. But slowly *maushi* started having mock conversations with Tia before starting the massage. She would also bathe her after, and sang songs to her. Changing time was also fun as *maushi* played peek-a-boo with little Tia.” It helps to create positive associations around the time that the baby is going to spend with the maid.

**NEVER COMPETE:** Parents should never attempt to compete with the maid or be jealous of her. This might create a negative impact on the child’s mind, Devasmita feels. It is essential to maintain a good, cordial relations with the maid. This will not only keep her happy but will also teach the child to respect her. ■