

**WORKING MODEL OF THE CHILD INTERVIEW  
(PRENATAL VERSION)**

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The Working Model of the Child Interview is a structured interview to assess parents' internal representations or working models of their relationship to a particular child. The setting of the interview should be comfortable enough to allow for attention to the questions posed and a relaxed atmosphere that permits the opportunity for reflection.

This version of the interview is to be used with expectant parents. Some parents may struggle with the idea of talking about a baby they have not yet even met, although the vast majority will have thoughts feelings and perceptions related to the baby. The idea is to use this interview to explore those thoughts and feelings. The introductory section on developmental history has been modified substantially from the original to focus primarily on the pregnancy and on anticipations of infant development. Here, and throughout the interview, the interviewer should follow the outline, always maintaining an easy, conversational style.

The interview allows for some follow-up probes, particularly those that encourage the individual to elaborate on responses. Vital to scoring is that the interviewer not make interpretive comments, since we are interested in the degree to which individuals make these links on their own. Requests for clarification about contradictions may be made, but only for purposes of ascertaining whether the individual recognizes and/or maintains contradictory views of the infant and only after allowing the individual an opportunity to recognize, acknowledge, and resolve the contradictions on his/her own. Essentially, the purpose of the interview is to have individuals reveal as much as possible in a narrative account of their perceptions, feelings, motives, and interpretations of the baby they expect and their relationship to that baby.

Instructions: **Bolded items below are probes to be used in the interview**; non-bolded parts are instructions to the Interviewer.

## **WORKING MODEL OF THE CHILD INTERVIEW**

### **(Prenatal Version)**

**We are interested in how parents think and feel about their young children. This interview is a way for us to ask you about your baby and your relationship to him/her. The interview will take us about an hour to complete.**

- 1. I'd like you to begin by telling me about your pregnancy.**
  - a) I'm interested in things like whether it was planned or unplanned, how you have been feeling physically and emotionally, and what you have been doing during the pregnancy (working, school, etc.).** In a follow-up probe, find out how much the baby is wanted or not wanted. **Have you ever been pregnant before? When did this pregnancy seem real to you?** The idea is to put the subject at ease and to begin a chronological history of the pregnancy. Additional probes may be necessary to make sure the individual is given a reasonable opportunity to convey the history of their reactions to and feelings about the pregnancy.
  - b) Tell me about how you imagine labor and delivery.** Give some time to respond before proceeding. **How do you think you will feel and react at that time? What will your first reaction be when you see the baby? What will be your reaction to having a boy/girl? How will your family react?** Be sure to include husband/partner.
  - c) Do you think the baby will have any problems in the first few days after birth? Do you plan to breast-feed or bottle-feed? Why?**
  - d) How do you imagine the first few weeks at home: feeding, sleeping, crying, etc.?**

e) **Tell me about how you imagine your baby’s developmental milestones, such as sitting up, crawling, walking, smiling, and talking. What do you think about your baby’s intelligence early on? What will it be like?**

f) **Do you think your baby will have a regular routine? What will happen if you don’t stay in the routine?**

g) **How will the baby react to separations from you? What will it be like for you and for the baby?**

2a) **Describe your impression of the child’s personality now.** Give the subject enough time to respond to this before proceeding to the specific descriptors below.

2b) **Pick five words (adjectives) to describe your child’s personality now. After you have told me what they are, I will ask you about each one.** For each one, say, **“What do you imagine about the baby that makes you say that.”** Then, **“Tell an example of a specific moment you are imagining that illustrates what you mean by each word that you chose.**

Some subjects will have a hard time coming up with five descriptors. If you feel that they cannot come up with five, then move on. The numbers are less important than the descriptions.

3a) **At this point, whom do you expect your baby to remind you of? In what ways? In terms of personality characteristics, to which of his/her parents is your baby going to be similar? Why?**

3b) **Are there any family characteristics on your side you expect to find in your baby’s personality? What about (other parent’s) side?**

3c) **Have you decided baby’s name? How did you/will you choose?** Find out about family names, etc.

**(4) What do you expect to be unique, or different, or special about your baby compared to what you know of other children?**

**(5) What about your baby's behavior do you expect to be most difficult for you to handle? After a pause, "Give an example."**

**(a) How often do you think this might occur? How will you feel? What will you do?**

**(b) Do you think the baby will know you don't like it? Why do you think he/she will do it?**

**(c) What do you imagine will happen to this behavior as your child grows older? Why do you think so?**

**(6a) How would you describe your relationship to your baby now? Give time to respond.**

**(6b) Pick five words (adjectives) to describe your relationship. For each word, describe a particular scene you imagine that illustrates what you mean.**

**(7a) What do you expect will please you most about your relationship with your baby? What do you think you will want to change about that?**

**(7b) How do you feel your relationship with your baby will affect your baby's personality? Give ample time to respond to this.**

**(7c) Will your relationship to you baby change at all over time? In what ways? How will you feel about the change?**

**(8) Which parent will your baby be closest to? How will you know? Do you expect that to change (as the child gets older, for instance)? How do you expect it to change?**

**(9) Do you expect your baby to get upset often? Give some time to respond before proceeding to specific queries. What will you do at these times? What will you feel like doing when this happens? What will you feel like at these times?**

- (a) What about when he/she becomes emotionally upset? Can you imagine a specific example?** Indicate that you want an example by providing a reasonably long time to think of one. **What will you do when that happens? What will you feel like doing? What will you feel like?** If the subject becomes extremely anxious and cannot recall an example, then proceed to part (b).
- (b) What about when he/she gets physically hurt a little bit (e.g., scrapes a knee, bumps his/her head)?**
- (c) What do you imagine it will be like when the baby is sick? How will you feel? What will you do?**
- (10) Do you have a favorite story about the baby? I know it's early... but anything you've told to your family or friends.**
- (11) Are there any experiences which your child has had which you feel may be a setback for him/her? Why do you think so?**
- (12) Do you expect ever to worry about your child? What will you worry about?**
- (13) If your child were to be one particular age forever, what age would you choose? Why?**
- (14) As you look ahead, what will be the most difficult time in your child's development? Why do you think so?**
- (15) What do you expect your child to be like as an adolescent? What makes you feel this way? What do you expect to be good and not so good about this period in your child's life?**
- (16) Think for a moment of your child as an adult. What hopes and fears do you have about that time?**