
Infant Massage Training and Teen Parents—Creating Physical Bonds, Emotional Communication

When teenagers become parents, they assume adult responsibilities for which they are often not prepared. They must balance the needs of their child with their goals of attaining an education, and they must find time and resources to develop parenting and life skills.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that teen pregnancy and teen parenting rates are decreasing in the United States, these rates are high compared to those of other western industrialized countries. The CDC estimates that 229,715 babies were born to mothers aged 15-19 in 2015, and that 50% of these mothers will not graduate from high school by their 22nd birthdays.

Dulce is one of the thousands of teenagers in America who has recently become a mother. She is sixteen years old, and her daughter, Althea, is six months old. So that Dulce can pursue her high school diploma while Althea receives high-quality care and education, Althea has just joined an infant classroom at Educare West DuPage.

Educare West DuPage is using Red Nose Day funding to provide parenting education to new parents like Dulce. Specifically, it is offering a series of infant massage classes to teach parents how to create physical bonds with their infants, how to calm them with touch, and how to identify and respond to their children's emotions and communication.



Dulce says that infant massage has helped her to bond with Althea and has given her the opportunity to spend meaningful time with her baby. Because Dulce's boyfriend, Jesus, has also been participating in the classes, he has learned these bonding and comforting skills as well, and has a stronger sense of his role as a father.

Research supports Dulce's observation that infant massage has improved Althea's well-being. Studies have shown that infant massage improves children's sleep patterns, promotes weight gain and bone growth, and helps infants recover from illness.





Dulce shares infant massage routines every day with Althea, after baths or before bed. Dulce says, “She seems comfortable and happy, really likes it, and stays calm.” The classes have also improved Dulce’s confidence as a parent, and her sense that she can help her baby with whatever she needs.

Dulce says she wants to continue with parenting classes at Educare West DuPage, and that she is looking forward to learning how to teach Althea things like shapes and colors as she grows. Meanwhile, Dulce has stayed on track to graduate from high school, develop job skills, and work full-time.

With support from [Educare West DuPage](#) and from [Red Nose Day](#), Dulce will achieve her goal of giving Althea the best possible life while also realizing her goals for herself.

In 2018, the [Educare Learning Network](#) received a grant from the Red Nose Day Fund at Comic Relief USA, half of which has been allocated across all Educare schools to support innovation, peer learning and professional development efforts.

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