

## Humanist Child-Naming Ceremony for a Welcoming Event

1. Welcome Introductions
2. Reading (poem, essay, quotation, etc.)
3. The Naming of the child
4. Information about the child
5. Words about the importance of parenting & parental promises to the child
6. Importance of wider family and chosen community: the village that raises the child & commitment from community
7. Appointment of "Guide Parents & Guide Parent's Promises"
8. A collective creation to commemorate the event, and to keep as a memento
9. Concluding Words

### **A Welcome Speech for a baby-naming event, addressing guests:**

Welcome. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and will guide our celebration today. We are marking a very important milestone. We gather to witness the commitment of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to parenthood and to officially welcome their child into this circle of family and friends.

Throughout the history of humankind, people have created ways to celebrate important milestones. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are no exceptions. Together they are making new traditions to celebrate their family's journey through life. Their daughter/son/child, born into goodness, will be nurtured by this community and grow into her/his/their own unique self.

Parenthood is perhaps the ultimate expression and severest test of a familial union. Ethical Culture's founder, Felix Adler, said, "The love of the parent is the warm nest for the fledgling spirit of the child. To be at home in this strange world, the young being, with no claim as yet to the score of usefulness to society or of merit of any kind, must find somewhere a place where it is welcomed without regard to usefulness or merit. And it is the love of the parents that makes the home, and it is his own home that makes the child at home in the world."

To paraphrase humanist psychologist Erich Fromm: On the really loving parent, the parent who is happier in giving than in taking, who is firmly rooted in one's own existence, can be a loving parent. Love for the growing child, love which wants nothing for itself, is perhaps the most difficult form of love to be achieved.

## Reading (poem, essay, quotation, etc.)

### [“The One Who Knows” by Dar Williams](#)

This naming declaration addresses the baby directly:

The room is full of you,  
You are the new one,

If you could always be  
the child you are,  
we would gladly  
smash the watches and the clocks,  
tear up the calendars,  
to keep you young and free from care.

But you have a life to live,  
so many discoveries,  
the colors of earth,  
the music,  
loving and being loved.

Your face will show what you are,  
Your voice and smile and talents will identify you.  
Most of all, your life  
will give your name meaning.

## **The Naming of the Child**

We humans have a need to know who we are. It starts with a loving someone looking at an infant square in the face and truly seeing unique, irreplaceable, and inviolable being of immeasurable worth. And it starts with a name.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, will now name your child?

[parents say the name aloud]

\_\_\_\_\_, I welcome you into this community.

Without a name you were born into this world.  
The name you have been given is a new name,  
no matter how many people have worn it.  
It is our hope and our belief  
that you will wear this name in honor

and in peace and in courage,  
and that all will come to look upon you name  
and find it blessed.

### **Information about the child**

[This is a lovely moment to introduce the child to the community by sharing the astute observations and insights from their family. You might write this collaboratively ahead of time by asking the others of your family to “describe the baby in your own words.” Take nothing for granted about this child, and judge not. If a caregiver or grandparent is spending a lot of time with the child, their offerings can be an important part of this.]

What is the baby’s birthdate, day, time, place, weight, height?  
What is the exact age of the child on this day of celebration?  
What are some of the personality traits observed so far?  
What has caught the interest of the child...a color, a shape, a sound, as song?  
What is a joyful anecdote about this child’s time on Earth?  
Finally, what inspirations led to the naming of this child?

### **Words about the Importance and Responsibility of parenting/guardianship**

Parental promises to the child: Vows from parents:

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,

From the smile of the parents,  
a baby learns to smile.  
From your laughter comes her/his/their laughter.  
To you speech she/he/they make sounds in answer.  
You guide your child’s steps by your own,

By imitation of the values she/he/they sees in you  
and the concerns she/he/they find reflected in her/his/their life,  
your child will develop  
values and concerns of her/his/their own.  
From you they must learn of love,  
compassion, and humility,  
the responsibilities of mature adults,  
and the worth and dignity of others.  
Whatever your work may be,  
wherever your universe of interest leads you,  
remember that you share one major calling:  
the shaping and molding of your future  
through the lives of your child.

With this in mind, do you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,  
take upon yourselves  
the joys and responsibilities  
of caring for this child in body, mind, and spirit,  
that she/he/they may grow in the fullness of life  
to the abundance of years?

*We do!*

### **Importance of the wider family**

An age old adage, often attributed to African wisdom, says: “It takes a village to raise a child.” The village that raises the child includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, neighbors, community members, etc.

Vows from community:

Let’s take a moment now to look around this circle and truly see one another. Each of you has been invited here because of your relationship with this family. You are the people with whom they celebrate life’s special moments and to whom they turn in times of need. You are the extended family, honoring your commitment to a new member of this family.

Throughout his/her/their childhood, you are the people who will be the world and culture for \_\_\_\_\_. How we relate to one another will determine what conclusions she/he/they draw about how life works. Therefore, let us make a commitment to this child. Let us promise to love her/him/them unconditionally, respecting her/his/their uniqueness and eliciting her/his/their best self.

Do you, here gathered, promise to respect and honor \_\_\_\_\_, to care for her/him/them in tenderness, to support her/him/them with patience and love, to walk with them through all the seasons of her/his/their life, and to do all in your power to permit her/him/them to become who she/he/they is yet to be?

*We do!*

### **Appointment of “Guide Parents”**

Guide parents are specifically chosen to take on a primary role in the new baby’s life. It is a wisdom role, as well as a practical role. At best, seeds are planted here for a lifelong reliable caring relationship of support and understanding. Guide parents can even be entrusted in a will to ensure their connection to the child, in the case of their deaths. Introducing the guide

parents, and sharing some information about their lives with the community is a lovely way to support this connection.

Vows from Guide parents:

Guide parents are those people who promise to be there to help children grow into their true selves. It is the promise of a physical presence, someone who will always be there, encouraging good choices and sharing lessons they themselves have learned.

A mentor is a wise and trusted guide, an advisor who has nurtured a special relationship with a protégé that allows for the free exchange of ideas and advice. A mentoring relationship is meaningful and deeply rewarding to both child and mentor.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [parents] trust your motivations and judgment completely, and they take comfort knowing that although there will be times when \_\_\_\_\_ [child] cannot come to them, she/he/they will always be able to go to you for guidance and support.

Will you protect her/him/them from harm, encourage, guide and support their endeavors, recognize the beauty they have within themselves and all things and become the person, not that we wish for, but the realization of their own hopes, dreams, and fulfillment?

*We will.*

**A collective creation to commemorate the event, for the family to keep as a memento**

“These gifts for the child represent our hopes, dreams, and wishes for the future of.”

**Letters** from parents and/or guide parents to child: Letters can be read during the ceremony or kept private.

**Memory Box:** This is a collection, through childhood, of cards, documents, letters and other items, which are special memories. It starts today by placing in the box the written wishes offered by family and friends fathered, and later the child can add their own.

**Plant a tree:** You can provide a meaningful symbol as both the tree and child grow, choosing a species based on its meaning, such as an olive tree for peace or citrus for energy. Or choose plants for your garden that will bloom each year around your child's birthday.

**Advice for Life:** Choose a nicely bound book in which naming ceremony guests can write advice for your child. Pass the book around to guests, asking each to write some words of wisdom, along with their name and their connection to the child.

**A lantern ceremony:** This works best at a nighttime naming ceremony. Each person writes their wishes and hopes for the child and ties them to a lantern. The lanterns are lit and then floated on a lake or a stream.

**Patchwork Quilt:** If you have crafty friends and family, each one can bring a square of fabric, and you can put it together into a quilt for the baby.

**Start a library:** Each guest brings a favorite book and, as part of the ceremony, explains its importance and meaning.

**Petal Ceremony:** Petals are sprinkled over the baby's head while the child's chosen names are announced and any reasons behind the choice can be shared.

### **Concluding Words**

Your concluding words might be a selected quote from a family hero or ancestor. The event may end with gratitude to all and an inclusive invitation to collect for a group photo.