The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care

THE COMMON SENSE BOOK OF BABY AND CHILD CARE

The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care, written by Benjamin Spock, is a manual on infant and child care first published in 1946. The book, along with Dr. Spock, attained fame almost instantly, selling 500,000 copies in its first six months. By 1998, over 50 million copies of the book had been sold, making it the best-selling book of the twentieth century in America, aside from the Bible. As of 2011, the book had been translated into 39 languages.

Spock and his manual helped revolutionize child-rearing methods for the post-World War II generation. Mothers heavily relied on Spock's advice and appreciated his friendly, reassuring tone. Spock emphasizes in his book that, above all, parents should have confidence in their abilities and trust their instincts. The famous first line of the book reads, "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do."

HISTORY

CHILD CARE BEFORE SPOCK

Spock's book helped revolutionize child care in the 1940s and 1950s. Prior to this, rigid schedules permeated pediatric care. Influential authors like behavioral psychiatrist John B. Watson, who wrote *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* in 1928, and pediatrician Emmett Holt, who wrote *The Care and Feeding of Children: A Catechism for the Use of Mothers and Children's Nurses* in 1894, told parents to feed babies on strict schedules and start toilet training at an early, specific age.

Furthermore, these experts, whose ideas were embodied in Infant Care pamphlets distributed by the U.S. government, warned against "excessive" affection by parents for their children. To maintain sterility and to prevent children from becoming spoiled or fussy, these experts recommended kissing children only on the forehead and limiting hugs or other displays of affection.

INTENT

As a practicing pediatrician in the 1930s, Spock noticed that prevailing methods in pediatric care seemed cruel and ignored the emotional needs of the child. He wanted to explore the psychological reasons behind common problems seen during practices like...
Spock's optimistic book reflects the hopefulness of the post-war period and society's focus on children. Because post-war children more opportunities, parents became more concerned with providing the best for their children. At the same time, likely result in nutritional deficiencies for children unless carefully planned.

Near the end of his life, Spock's changing ideas on nutrition were reflected in the seventh edition of his book, where he advocated a researcher and relying too heavily on anecdotal evidence in his book. By the mid-1960s, however, book sales quickly slowed due to Spock's tarnished reputation after his publicized involvement in protests of the Vietnam War. Critics believed the current youth were rebellious and defiant they had been brought up by Baby and Child Care. Spock, however, continued to defend himself, saying he had always been firm in his knowledge by parents.

In the 1970s, with the rise of the women's liberation movement, feminists began to publicly criticize Spock for the sexist philosophy apparent in his book. Spock was thus forced to confront his own ideas about gender roles and gender stereotyping. By the end of his life, Spock's changing ideas on nutrition were reflected in the seventh edition of his book, where he advocated a researcher and relying too heavily on anecdotal evidence in his book.

Spock emphasized that ultimately, the parents' "natural loving care" for their children is most important. He reminds parents to have confidence in their abilities and to trust their common sense; his practice as a pediatrician had proven to him that parents usually best.
Nuclear family
Orphaned
Shared
Single parent
Blended family
Surrogacy
In loco parentis

Attachment theory
Applied behavior analysis
Behaviorism
Child development
Cognitive development
Developmental psychology
Human development
Love
Maternal bond
Nature versus nurture
Parental investment
Paternal bond
Pediatrics
Social psychology

Attachment parenting
Concerted cultivation
Gatekeeper parent
Helicopter parent
Nurturant parenting
Slow parenting
Soccer mom
Strict father model
Taking Children Seriously
Work at home parent

After-school activity
Allowance
Bedtime
Child care
Co-sleeping
Homeschooling
Latchkey kid
Parent Management Training
Play dates
Role model
Spoiled child
Television
Toy (educational)

Blanket training
Corporal punishment in the home
Curfew
Grounding
Tactical ignoring
Time-out

Child abandonment
Child abuse
Child labour
Child neglect
Childhood effect
Incest
Narcissistic parent
Parental abuse by children
Parental alienation

Parental support
Cost of raising a child
Marriage
Parental responsibility
Deadbeat parent
Parental
Disenrollment
The book was at times controversial; Spock was accused of advocating permissiveness. Others criticized the book's status as a bible for parents, bemoaning its influence on generations of children. On the other hand, many parents believe that the book increased their confidence; especially for women, Spock's assertion that it was acceptable to be irritated or impatient on occasion debunked myths about the “perfect parent.” He also urged parents to be active in politics and their communities, to make their children's world better. Dr. Spock's book of baby care completely changed the way parents raise their children and is one of the best-selling books of all time. With the aid of his wife, Jane, Spock spent several years writing his first and most famous book, The Common Book of Baby and Child Care. The fact that Spock wrote in a congenial manner and included humor made his revolutionary changes to child care easier to accept. Spock advocated that fathers should play an active role in raising their children and that parents will not spoil their baby if they pick him up when he cries.