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. Watson, Holt, and other child care experts obsessed over rigidity because they believed that irregularities in feeding and bowel movements were causing the widespread diarrheal diseases seen among babies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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...
Holt, Luther Emmett. "Dr. Spock's Children." New York Times Spock's optimistic book reflects the hopefulness of the post-war period and society's focus on children. Because post-war parents were giving their children more opportunities, parents became more concerned with providing the best for their children. At the same time,

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Spock's Baby and Child Care had already sold 750,000 copies, mostly by word-of-mouth advertising.[35] Mothers appreciated that Spock was not condescending in his writing and instead very empathetic with mothers, acknowledging how fierce love can be.[36] Although he believed that much of a child's personality and behavior rested in the parents' hands, he did not scare parents with this large responsibility of raising a "good" child, like earlier child care researchers and relying too heavily on anecdotal evidence in his book.

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He was lauded for writing with a friendly, reassuring tone and using conversational, easy-to-read language.[35] Spock's views, however, were criticized by some experts as being too extreme; critics were concerned that a vegan diet could

Although Spock was approached to write a child-care manual in 1938 by Doubleday, he did not yet feel certain enough of his professional abilities to accept the offer. Eventually, though, after several more years of giving advice to mothers, Spock felt ready to publish his advice and published a paperback copy of The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care in 1946 with Pocket Books.[28] His intent in writing the book was to disseminate comprehensive information to all mothers, giving advice that combined the physical, psychological aspects of child care. So that any mother could afford it, the book was sold at just twenty-five cents.[35]

REVISED EDITIONS

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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. Skepticism of his work increased, especially among colleagues, who criticized Spock for not being researcher and relying too heavily on anecdotal evidence in his book.[36]

By the late 1960s, Spock faced widespread criticism for condoning an overly permissive parenting style. Many commentators blamed Spock for helping to create the counterculture of the 1960s. Critics believed the current youth were rebellious and defiant because they had been brought up by Baby and Child Care. Spock, however, continued to defend himself, saying he had always been in firm control of his parenting.[36]

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.[20] 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 macrobiotic diet, in order to give less arbitrary advice to mothers who came to his practice. He thus became trained in

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Each subsequent edition of the book brings medical information up-to-date. Other revisions have emerged to deal with contemporary social issues, such as daycare and gay parenting.[36]

In the second edition, Spock emphasizes in several new chapters the importance of "firm but gentle" control of children.[36] He warns against self-demand feeding, a type of feeding that had become popular in the 1940s. Because parents were letting their

He also realized that parents have their own needs as well. 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 know all about their children. His intent in writing the book was to disseminate comprehensive information to all mothers, giving advice that combined the physical, psychological aspects of child care. So that any mother could afford it, the book was sold at just twenty-five cents.[35]

SYNOPSIS

The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care is arranged by topic corresponding to the child's age, ranging from infancy to teenagers. Drawn from his career as a pediatrician, Spock's advice is comprehensive, dealing with topics such as potty training, school, illnesses, and special problems like "separated parents" and "the fatherless child."[35]

Unlike leading child care experts prior to the 1940s, Spock supports flexibility in child-rearing, advising parents to treat each child as an individual. Drawing on his psychoanalytic training, he explains the behavior and motivations of children at each stage of life and parent's responsibilities for their own decisions about how to raise their children. For example, Spock has an entire chapter devoted to "The One-Year-Old," in which he explains that babies at this age like to explore the world around them. He then suggests ways to

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Although Spock's reputation has changed over time, Spock continued to be an authority on childhood advice after his death. In 1990, Life magazine named Spock one of the 100 most important people of the twentieth century.[21] Upon Spock's 1998 New York Times noted that "babies do not arrive with owner's manuals…. But for three generations of American parents, the next best thing was

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Legacy

Baby and Child Care popularized new ideas about child care in the years following World War II, encouraging flexibility, common sense, affection, and Freudian philosophy. Spock's reassuring advice gave parents the confidence to use their judgment and love for their children.[35] Spock also masked Freudian explanations of children's behavior in plainspoken language to avoid offending his readers, making

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Nuclear family | Orphaned | Shared | Single parent | Blended family | Surrogacy | In loco parentis


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 date | 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 | Chernobyl effect | Incest | Narcissistic parent | Parental abuse by children | Parental alienation

Child support | Cost of raising a child | Marital | Parental responsibility | Deadbeat parent | Parent empathy | Discipline

Abuse | Legal and social aspects