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 and Holt, and other child-rearing experts of their era, were obsessed over rigidly 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.

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, 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.
SYNOPSIS

The Common-Sense Book of Baby and Child Care is arranged by topics corresponding to the child's age, ranging from infancy to teenage years. Drawn from his career as a pediatrician, Spock's advice is comprehensive, dealing with topics such as preparing for the baby, complex family, and preventing accidents with a "wandering baby." Spock emphasizes 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 this was usually best.

REVISED EDITIONS

During Spock's lifetime, seven editions of his book were published. Several co-authors have helped revise the book since the fifth edition. Since Spock's death in 1998, two more editions have been published.

REACTION

Within a year of being published, The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care had already sold 750,000 copies, mostly by word-of-mouth advertising. Mothers appreciated that Spock was not condescending in his writing and instead very empathetic, acknowledging how tiresome child care can be. Although he believed that much of a child's personality and behavior rested in the parents' hands, he did not scold parents with this large responsibility of raising a "good" child, like earlier child care experts. He was lauded for writing with a friendly, reassuring tone and using conversational, easy-to-read language.

The book was popularized by mentions in households and famous television shows, such as [25] Spock quickly became a household name and became very influential for helping to raise a generation of "Spock babies" in the post-war peace era and heavily relied on his advice. By 1956, The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care was already selling a million copies each year.

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.

By the late 1960s, Spock faced widespread criticism for condemning 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 believed in family parenting in practice.

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.

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 vegan diet. Spock clarifies in his manual that while parents should respect their children, they also must ask for respect in return.

By the fourth edition, Spock adapts to society's shifting ideas of gender equality, especially after the rise of [22] He warns against praising girls only on their appearance and notes the sexism present in a household where girls learn to do housework while boys do not. Spock also continues to expand on the role of fathers and acknowledges that parents should have an equal share in child-rearing responsibilities, while also bringing both to the working world.

In the seventh edition, Spock endorses a low-fat, plant-based diet for children due to rising trends in obesity and Spock's own switch to a macrobiotic diet after facing serious health issues.

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 best judgment to raise their children. Spock also masked Freudian explanations of children's behavior in plainspoken language to avoid offending his readers, making Freud accessible to mainstream America. In 1959, Look magazine praised Spock, noting that "perhaps no other book has influenced an entire nation's ideas about babies... My views have been naturalness, common sense, reassurance, Sigmund Freud and even joy to parents all over the world." Spock's optimistic book reflects the hopelessness of the post-war period and society's focus on the child. Because post-war affluence helped parents give children more opportunities, parents became more concerned with providing the best for their children.

Spock's views, however, were criticized by some experts as being too extreme; critics were concerned that a vegan diet could be unhealthy. Spock's views on diet were condemned by some experts as being too extreme. 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 believed in family parenting in practice.

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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 | Curses | Grounding | Tactical ignoring | Time-out

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The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care, Steve Parker (defensive end, born 1956), Steve Parker (defensive end, born 1959), Steve Parker (writer), Shirley MacLaine

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LIMBIC RESONANCE
Child care or childcare, child minding, daycare, or preschool is the caring for and supervision of a child or children, usually from age six weeks to age thirteen. Child care is the action or skill of looking after children by a day-care center, babysitter, or other providers. Child care is a broad topic covering a wide spectrum of contexts, activities, social and cultural conventions, and institutions. By Spock's death in 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.