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. These experts observed 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...
Spock’s optimistic book reflects the hopefulness of the post-war period and society’s focus on children. Because parents were letting their children be themselves, some parents began indulging all of their child’s desires, resulting in unregulated sleep schedules and a loss of control for the parents. Spock clarifies in his manual that while parents should respect their children, they also must assert control.

By the fourth edition, Spock adapts to society’s shifting ideas of gender equality, especially after the rise of the feminist movement in the 1960s. Spock was thus forced to confront his own ideas about gender roles and gender stereotyping. 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.

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

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

Styles
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Techniques
After-school activity | Allowance | Bedtime | Child care | Co-sleeping | Homeschooling | Latchkey kid | Parent Management Training | Playdate | Role model | Spoiled child | Television | Toy (educational)
Blanket training | Corporal punishment in the home | Curfew | Grounding | Tactical ignoring | Time-out

Abuse
Child abandonment | Child abuse | Child labour | Child neglect | Child exemplar | Incest | Narcissistic parent | Parental abuse by children | Parental alienation
Child support | Cost of raising a child | Marriage | Parental responsibility | Deadbeat parent | Paternity | Disownment

Legal and social aspects
"When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new."

Bogle, John C. The little book of common sense investing: the only way to guarantee your fair Lit.