

parents face with their adolescent children in contemporary Australian culture. Issues such as stress related to study, depression, and suicide are dealt with in a realistic yet hopeful way that releases the parents from guilt and replaces it with hope and support.

The authors

The authors of this Parent Program are Constance Jenkin and Dr Di Bretherton. Constance is the Director

of Kidcare, a community program designed to address the needs of families with adolescents in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. She is a teacher and family therapist and established some of the first community-based parenting groups in Victoria.

Di Bretherton is the Director of the International Conflict Resolution Centre in the Department of Psychology at the University of Melbourne. She is the Convenor of the Task Force

for the Prevention of Violence against Women and a member of the Victorian Community Council Against Violence. Di teaches in the Graduate Diploma of Adolescent and Child Psychology and has, for many years been training child psychologists and teachers of young children.

*Reviewer: Pat Jewell
Parent Resource Co-ordinator
Parent Help, Northern Region.*

The Australian baby and child care handbook

by Carol Fallows

Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1994, 394pp, RRP \$24.95.

It was a pleasure to read this book. Carol Fallows has produced a mini-encyclopaedia for parents and carers of pre-school aged children, which portrays her extensive knowledge of the many facets of those early child rearing years. As a mother of three children and editor of a magazine for Australian parents for fifteen years, she is uniquely placed to glean this knowledge. She has spoken to hundreds of doctors, nurses and other health professionals, and most significantly to hundreds of parents. She has also read a vast amount of medical and psychological literature, as well as material written specifically for parents, and in writing this book she has called on a wide range of experts to check much of the information presented. Most importantly, the book reflects the author's sensitivity to both children's and parents' emotional needs which has obviously influenced her selection of material and her approach to the discussion of such material.

The Australian Baby and Child Care Handbook will be a most valuable asset to have lying around and readily available, not only to consult for easily accessible, much needed information and help as different needs and crises arise, but also as a preventive measure. Prior reading of the sections on the different stages of parenting will hopefully help parents recognise and cope better with situations as they do arise.

The chapters follow the sequence of childrearing from some introductory remarks about parenting and preparation for parenthood to a consideration of the birth and caring for the newborn, those first few weeks at home, the first six months, the second six months, the toddler and, finally, the preschooler. There is a chapter about parents' changing roles and relationships, interspersed between those about the first and second six months of the baby's life, and a very comprehensive chapter on children's health which includes and A-Z of children's injuries, illnesses and conditions. The last three sections entitled Resources (for each state of Australia), End Notes and Further Reading together comprise an excellent overall resource of both practical help and extended reading.

There are several topics which are common to the chapters about the different age stages, this structure providing a sense of continuity. The common headings are Growth, Feeding/Eating, Sleep, Development and Learning, and Play. Caring for Your Baby and Crying are covered in the early age stages, and Behaviour, Toilet Training, Preschool and Readiness for School in the later.

A further feature of the structure of the book is the use of inserts which are often vignettes from parents' experiences. They illustrate the text, and in many instances, add some

balance and reality to it. There are also excellent charts related to normal development and it is reassuring to be reminded of the wide age range at which a particular milestone can be expected to be reached. The diagrams and their explanations give clear messages, the many photographs throughout the chapters are engaging, and the coloured plates are quite delightful.

The author writes:

You may not always agree with what I suggest; it may not always correspond with your own experiences of child rearing. However, I hope it will stimulate discussion and help you find the approach that suits you best.

This is an example of the respectful attitude to parents that she adopts throughout the book; she continually affirms parents' ability and right to determine their own courses of action. It is very important that parents' own confidence should not be undermined, particularly in the early stages when they tend to receive a wealth of often conflicting advice.

This reviewer find herself agreeing with almost everything that is written and applauds the fact that developmental, emotional and relationship aspects are taken into account when in particular, issues such as crying, sleeping, separation difficulties, discipline and spoiling, sibling rivalry and indeed much more are discussed.

Controlled crying is mentioned in some detail, the author writing that it 'is said to work, but then so does torture in some cases.' She states that she does not believe it to be the answer, and quotes the opinions of several authorities as well as the results of a survey of Australian parents, conducted in 1987, in which only 34% of 500 were completely happy with this practice. The conclusion of the survey was that:

...the methods that parents have used for generations - feeding, comforting and taking their baby into their own bed - seem to work best for both parents and babies.

But she does also make reference to current awareness campaigns regarding young babies sharing the family bed and the connection with AIDS. Many people around Australia advise parents to institute 'controlled crying' and it is to be hoped that this publication will promote further informed discussion and research on this controversial subject.

In the early chapters, there is a great deal of practical help given for choosing inexpensive nursery, play and other equipment. Measures for safety proofing the home are also described in detail.

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There is an excellent section for mothers returning to the workforce, with much practical advice and reassurance to those who are juggling the care of preschool and other children with employment outside the home, as did the author herself. Attention is paid to the guilt felt by these mothers and to the guilt experienced by many women across the board about their performance as parents generally. It would have completed the picture if some words

of support and encouragement had been given to mothers who, in our consumer oriented society, find themselves trying to resist pressures to return to the workforce against their will. The importance of women being able to make real choices in this respect is the theme of the most recent book by Penelope Leach which the author quotes in this section.

The section on mothers in the workforce also contains a very useful and comprehensive discussion of different types of alternative child care, with some helpful advice about how to find out what a child care centre has to offer. Great faith is placed in the accreditation process as a way of ensuring high quality child care. Certainly it is an important and essential process but it does not remove the need for parents themselves to continue to monitor the child/caregiver relationships (as indeed they must for all child care situations) by keeping in touch with the caregivers and being responsive to the child's day by day reactions to the carers and the care situation.

The A-Z of Children's Injuries, Illnesses and Conditions presents a cross-referenced list of common concerns with a short description of each, which are thankfully in lay terms and, although sometimes not quite 100% accurate, are near enough. These are followed by 'What to do', which give excellent advice, including instructions on when to call the doctor or go to the Emergency section of a hospital. It is suggested elsewhere that parents choose a doctor who likes children and listens to parents. Hopefully the doctor will listen to children too, including their non-verbal messages.

The causes of unconsciousness should include diabetic coma and hypoglycaemia, which are described in the paragraph about diabetes. As the instruction there is to seek immediate medical attention if a child is unconscious, this is not considered to be a serious omission.

The whole chapter on Child Health which, as well as the A-Z section, includes material on family health, children's health tests, immunisation and first aid, brings a much needed local Australian perspective to this very important aspect of baby and child care.

Some will be disappointed in the book's almost total lack of Aboriginal and multicultural content, in

the limited attention to children with special needs and, indeed, in a similar limited attention to the social environment in which children are being reared in Australia today. But this in no way detracts from the inestimable value of the vast amount of material which is presented.

In conclusion, *The Australian Baby and Child Care Handbook* cannot be too highly recommended to all parents, all caregivers, and those who advise and teach those who work with babies, young children and parents. Carol Fallows, as a journalist and a parent, has served us and the coming generation well by providing, at reasonable cost, an Australian handbook with detailed attention to the physical, socio-emotional and other developmental needs of both children and parents. It now remains for someone to convert this excellent material into a series of vignettes, available on video cassettes and played at prime viewing time on commercial television, so that this much needed information, and the sensitivity with which it is portrayed, is available to the wider community.

Reviewer: Dr Elizabeth Puddy

previously lecturer in parent education and counselling at the University of South Australia, now in private practice as a family counsellor, with a special interest in families with pre-school aged children.