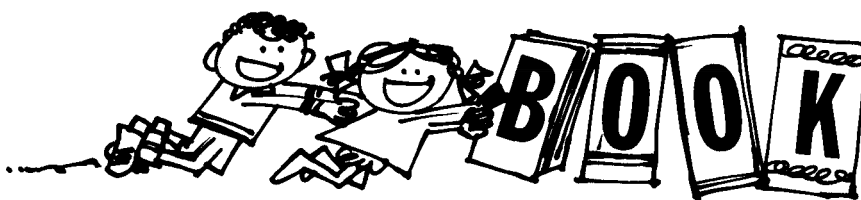


**Book Review Editor
Ruth Stewart**



“THE TODDLER AND THE NEW BABY”

by **Sylvia Close**
Routledge and Kegan, London, 1980

If you have liked Sylvia Close's five previous books on birth and infant care then you will like this book "The Toddler and the New Baby" which is on a topic of agonising concern to those so struck with a toddler and a new-born baby at the same time. If you have not read any of her books before, then be cautious about your approach to this book that promises all the answers to handling a difficult toddler but which may leave you, once again, feeling an inadequate and confused parent.

The book has a ready market, I should imagine, as the topic is one of frequent discussion between parents: what do you do with number one when number two comes along. The toddler's difficult and messy behaviour Ms. Close ascribes more to lack of firm discipline from parents than from any feelings of rejection by the toddler. She approaches the discussion in an easy to read format, putting each problem into a chapter of its own with subheadings to catch your eye as they are in the form of questions you may well be asking; for example, Chapter Two is headed "The New Baby Comes Home" with subheadings including "Should he get a present from the new baby?" and "Is jealousy inevitable?"

The book has some good points, namely its practical discussion aimed at parents and, more importantly, the many ideas she has to pass onto the reader about how to solve problems. In a way she acts as a grandmother outlining how various solutions have succeeded in the past; a good example is her check list of twelve factors that are conducive to sound sleep at night for toddlers. It can thus be seen as a good practical book of advice with many hot tips for managing daily problems.

However, to me the book has some glaring faults and deficiencies. The chatty format does not allow for any clear outlining of her philosophy about child care, so the reader must glean them from her practical advice. I feel this is an important point, as her approach may not accord at all with a parent's beliefs about how to relate to their children as a person and a disciplinarian. When she says that modern parents are too frightened to discipline their off-spring she is raising the Victorian era spectre that each child if left undisciplined can ruin life for everyone. "Spare the rod and ruin the child" the old saying goes. Modern parents who are more concerned with nurturing the growing toddler will not like this approach. Parents who read such books as "The Continuum Concept" by Jean Liedloff should avoid this book. In addition an anxious parent may read the book, put the hot tips into action, find the toddler does not positively respond and he left with even bigger feelings of failure and inadequacy than before. In sum, the main criticism is that the book is written in the guise of being modern in its approach but is, in fact, only an updated book essentially filled with lots of ideas and approaches that are being discarded these days. For example, there are some rather sweet old-fashioned ideas on feeding and sleeping; parents should not have young children in their own bed lest "the small child falls out ... or takes away parents' privacy", and all babies whether breast fed or bottle fed should be weaned directly on to a cup when they are approximately nine months old. A minor criticism is that the book is written for the English market with some consequent charming idiosyncracies, such as assuming that we all live in two storey houses; one subheading is titled "What ... if he stands at the top of the stairs crying and calling?"

Child care workers need not bother to read this book to increase their theoretical knowledge. It may give

some pointers to novice workers in the field, but I feel they would benefit more from using the money to go out to lunch with a more experienced worker who could share past experiences and knowledge. I'd even be careful about giving it to parents seeking assistance with this toddler problem, as the book assumes an ideal of family behaviour they may not be able to fulfill.

For all the parents trying to survive living with under-fives and interested in buying the book, I say be wary. You may do better to have a quick browse in the bookshop through the index, choose your problem and the sub-heading question, turn to the page, read it, and go home and try it if you will. If it helps, buy the book, as it may fit your approach to parenting, but if it doesn't go spend your \$6.50 on something else.

*Jan Armstrong-Conn,
Social Worker and Mother of Three*



BABY & CHILD

Penelope Leach
Penguin Books, 1980
Harmondsworth
512 pages
Price \$12.95

Baby & child is another of those books that takes on the enormous task of being a comprehensive guide to children and child rearing, in this case in the first five years of life. It is not a new book, having been published in hardback in 1977. Its recent appearance in paperback prompts this review.

Baby & child aims to look at child