

**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.

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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

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rearing from the point of view of the child; that is in terms of physical, cognitive and emotional development and needs. The intention is to give useful information rather than sets of rules that will not work for everyone. Child rearing "by the baby" is encouraged rather than "by the book". It is hoped that this approach will guard against unnecessary guilt in parents.

The book is organized in chapters dealing with six age-stages from birth to five. Each chapter is divided under consistent general headings such as feeding and growing, sleeping, crying and comforting, using his or her body. There is also an index which doubles as a sort of encyclopaedia giving information on many subjects (particularly medical and safety related ones) that were not dealt with in the main part of the book.

The material in the chapters for each age-stage is of two kinds. There are detailed practical guidelines for care right down to nappy folding, bathing and wrapping for the newborn — often with diagrams. And there is information about the child's physical, emotional, language and behavioural development which will greatly increase many parents' interest in and understanding and enjoyment of their children's growth.

Following logically from this information, are discussions of how parents can help with each bit of development (for example several simple and reasonable approaches to helping language development at eight to twelve months), suggestions of easily and cheaply making toys appropriate to current learning and ways of organizing the household, work routines, play areas etc. to allow the child what he needs at the age in question with minimum disruption to the rest of the family.

There are many clearly set out criteria and checklists that may help to allay anxieties or alert to problems; e.g. "your child is not spoilt if . . ." followed by six criteria including, he usually accepts "no" with reasonable

grace and you as a parent can face an obnoxious scene when necessary. This refers to the 2½ to 5 year group. Such guides will not be completely acceptable to everyone and there will be some room for disagreement about all of them but they can be very helpful if not too rigidly applied.

Probably one of the most important functions of a book like this is to provide reassurance to parents anxious that they may not be doing things well or that their child is showing problems. If such guidelines as the one described above can do this for some people, then their existence is justified. The risk is that they may have the opposite effect and unfortunately in some parts of the book, this seems likely as the suggestions sound too complicated and rigid and do not give sufficient encouragement to parents to trust their own responses.

For example the section of when to start solid foods acknowledges that no hard and fast rules apply — but then goes on to give some rather confusing rules involving weights and mls. of milk taken at each feed which, if applied without thought, could lead to solids being introduced to a two month old baby. These rules undermine the common sense of the parents which is just as likely to lead to foods being introduced at a reasonable time. For a book that is supposed to be encouraging flexible child rearing, there are rather too many complicated rules and tables for calculating things.

Throughout, the text is clearly set out and readable. There are delightful photos with captions that illustrate the main points of the text. Many of the tables provide easy reference (with the rider that some may be daunting). The language is quite straightforward. All of these factors may encourage some people to use this book who otherwise would be put off by such a hefty volume.

There are some limitations in that it is consistently assumed that the reader is one of two parents caring for

the child, that there is a non-working mother, and that the child is normal. Although a paperback, this book is well bound and has a good chance of surviving five years' hard use.

Baby & child is aimed at parents and will be of most use to them. For professionals it probably does not acknowledge sufficiently the limits of our knowledge about children and child rearing (e.g. outcomes of particular child rearing practices). Although the book is thoroughly cross referenced, it does not give references to sources of information. Its concentration on the normal child may also limit its use for professionals. However, many people working with children and families will find it a helpful handbook to be used in conjunction with more specialist literature.

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"THE NOWHERE BOYS"

Cairine Petrie
(163 pages) Saxon House, Teakfield
Limited, England

Readers who like myself, are not fully conversant with the details of the Scottish Juvenile Justice System and the various dispositions available to it, may have some initial difficulties relating to information contained in "The Nowhere Boys" to the Victorian scene.

This difficulty however does not diminish the relevance or the importance of the book for those interested in what happens to kids when they