



The Most Important Books Parents Need

Every January, we make resolutions to improve ourselves. We all strive to be better parents: more knowledgeable, more patient, and of course, better read. An important first step in becoming a more informed parent is knowing what books to read.

This month, I spoke to some of the top parenting and childbirth professionals in Los Angeles and asked them what books they most frequently recommend for parents to be better informed. This well-educated group of experts has over a century of experience between them with degrees in medicine, psychology, child development, nursing, and social work. For background information on this dream team and the complete version of this article with more information on the recommended books, visit www.familymagazinegroup.com.

Pre-conception

Preparing your mind and body for motherhood is as important a part of the transition to becoming a parent as taking your prenatal vitamins. One of the most frequently recommended books by our experts is *Taking Charge of Your Fertility: The Definitive Guide to Natural Birth Control, Pregnancy Achievement, and Reproductive Health* by Toni Weschler, M.P.H. I recommend this book along with Sunkin, Raker and Klausner. Sunkin also recommends *Fertility and Conception: The Essential Guide to Boosting Your Fertility and Conceiving a Healthy Baby—From Learning Your Fertility Signs to Adopting a Healthier Lifestyle* by Dr. Karen

Trewnnard B.M., M.F.E.P.

In preparation for pregnancy, Altmann recommends *Eating Expectantly* by Bridget Swinney. I also like *Before Your Pregnancy: A 90-Day Guide for Couples on How to Prepare for a Healthy Conception* by Amy Ogle, M.S., R.D., and Lisa Mazullo, M.D.

On the emotional front Spivack recommends *Surrendering to Motherhood: Losing Your Mind, Finding Your Soul* by Iris Krasnow which tracks the emotional journey of successful journalist who became a full time mother. On that same note, I highly recommend *The 7 Stages of Motherhood: Making the Most of Your Life as a Mom* by Ann Pleshette Murphy.

Pregnancy

With the understanding that pregnancy is not for the faint of heart, both Altmann and I recommend Jenny McCarthy's *Belly Laughs: The Naked Truth About Pregnancy and Childbirth*. Another very popular choice from our Dream Team is Vicki Iovine's *The Girlfriend's Guide to Pregnancy*, while a more controversial choice is the best selling *What to Expect When you're Expecting* by Arlene Eisenberg, Heidi Murkoff and Sandee Hathaway B.S.N., which outlines each month from preconception through six weeks after birth. Both Corwin and Sunkin recommend this classic but Raker feels it is too alarmist. Schneider recommends *Fearless Pregnancy: Wisdom and Reassurance From a Doctor, Midwife and a Mom* by Victoria Clayton, Stuart Fischbein MD, Joyce Weck. Rosenberg recommends *Your Pregnancy Week By Week* by Glade Curtis O.B., Gyn and Judith Schuler M.S. which, true to its title, follows pregnancy week by week. I really like

Conception, Pregnancy & Birth: The Childbirth Bible for Today's Parents by Miriam Stoppard, M.D. This book is filled with photographs, drawings and ultrasounds showing the developing fetus and mother.

Some believe parenting begins in utero, so Harvey and Halderman recommend *Prenatal Parenting: The Complete Psychological and Spiritual Guide to Loving Your Unborn Child* by Fredrick Wirth M.D., which instructs about prenatal parenting in order to improve neurological development in utero and create more peaceful babies. Spivack recommends *Excited, Exhausted, Expecting the Emotional Life of Mothers to Be* by Arelean Modica Mathews which has been described as "The 'What to Expect When You Are Expecting' emotions book".

Childbirth

Childbirth can be an overwhelming and frightening experience, especially if you are not prepared. The following books, recommended by Harvey and Halderman, help you make the best choice for you and your baby. They recommend: *The Thinking Woman's Guide to a Better Birth* by Henci Goer, *The Doula Book: How a Trained Labor Companion Can Help You Have a Shorter, Easier, and Healthier Birth* by Marchall Klaus M.D., John Kennell M.D., and Phyllis Klaus C.S.W., M.F.T., *Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn* by Penny Simkin P.T., Janet Whalley R.N., B.S.N. and Ann Keppler R.N., M.N., *Spiritual Midwifery* by Ina May Gaskin, *Gentle Birth Choices: Making Informed Decision About Birthing Centers, Birth Attendants, Water Birth, Home Birth, Hospital Birth* by Barbara Harper R.N., *Birthing From Within: An Extra-Ordinary Guide to Childbirth*

Preparation by Pam England C.N.M., M.A. and Rob Horowitz PhD, and *Mothering the New Mother: Women's Feelings and Needs After Childbirth a Support and Resource Guide* by Sally Placksin.

First Year of Parenthood

Every pediatrician I interviewed highly recommends the American Academy of Pediatrics' book *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child- Birth to Age 5*. Altmann warns that the size of the book can be intimidating, so she recommends that parents only read chapters as needed. She also recommends *Baby 411: Clear Answers and Smart Advice for Your Baby's First Year* by Ari Brown and Denise Fields, which covers immunizations and other controversial topics. Another popular choice by the experts is *The Happiest Baby on the Block: The New Way to Calm Crying and Help Your Newborn Sleep Longer* by Harvey Karp which is helpful for new parents. Sunkin, Holloran and Spivack recommend the *The Gesell Institute Child Development Series*, which explains year by year growth and helps parents understand their child's developmental leaps through the age of fourteen.

Breastfeeding has become the rage for this generation of mothers since it was shown to have numerous physical and even psychological benefits for infants. Harvey and Halderman, as lactation specialists, recommend *The Nursing Mother's Companion* by Kathleen Huggins R.N., M.S., *The Ultimate Breastfeeding Book of Answers: The Most Comprehensive Problem-Solution Guide to Breastfeeding From the Foremost Expert in North America* by Jack Newman M.D. and Teresa Pitman, as well as *The Breastfeeding Book: Everything You*

Need to Know About Nursing Your Child from Birth Through Weaning by Martha Sears R.N. and William Sears M.D..

Altmann also recommends *New Mother's Guide to Breast Feeding* by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Harvey and Halderman recommend William/ Martha Sears' books *The Baby Book: Everything You Need to Know About Your Baby From Birth to Age Two* and *25 Things Every New Mother Should Know*. Corwin is a big fan of the books by Berry Brazelton, M.D.

On the parenting front, Sunkin recommends *The First Year Of Parenthood: Your Baby and Child* by Penelope Leach. Spivack recommends *A Mother Circle* by Jean Kunharet & Lise Spiegel as a "must have, easy-to-read, comprehensive book on many issues pertaining to the transition to parenthood for both mom and dad as well as baby." Spivack, Holloran, Raker and Klausner recommend *Laura Davis and Janis Keyser's Becoming the Parent You Want to Be: A Sourcebook of Strategies for the First Five Years* to help parents discover their own parenting philosophy and strategies. Corwin likes *The Ten Basic Principles of Good Parenting* by Laurence Steinberg who uses parenting research to outline the core ingredients of successful parenting from infancy to adolescence.

For new parents who have not spent a lot of time caring for children I recommend *The Baby*



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& *Child Question & Answer Book* by Carol Cooper, M.D. because this book, which is packed with lots of photographs, shows parents how to do everything from giving your baby a bottle to putting a jacket on an infant who can't hold its head up. Another book Rosenberg and I recommend (and I actually buy in bulk and give to my new parent friends) is *City Baby L.A.* by Linda Meadow and Lisa Rocchio, which lists great local baby resources.

Toddler Years

Time-Out for Toddlers: Positive Solutions to Typical Problems in Children by James Varni M.D. and Donna Corwin came highly recommend by both Sunkin and Altmann. Holloran, Rosenberg, Spivack and Sunkin recommend *The Blessing of A Skin Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children* by Wendy Mogel. She also recommends *Parent School: Simple Lessons from the Leading Experts on Being a Mom and Dad* by Jerry & Lorin Bieberman which is a collection of parenting tips and strategies from childcare experts like pediatrician William Sears, psychologist Lawrence Kutner, columnist John Rosemond and other doctors, therapists and writers. In order to help children develop a strong sense of self Rosenberg recommends *Your Child's Self Esteem: Step-by-Step Guidelines for Raising Responsible, Productive, Happy Children* by Dorothy Briggs. Sunkin also recommends *The Highly Sensitive Child* by Elaine Aron, Ph.D. and *Coping with Preschool Panic* by Michelle Nitka for coping with those specific issues.

Young Children/Tweens/ Teens

Raker and Klausner are fans of the American

Girl series, particularly recommending *The Care and Keeping of You* by Valerie Schaefer and Norm Bendell from the American Girl Library. Schneider recommends *Deal With it! A Whole New Approach To Your Body, Brain and Life As A Gurl* by Esther Drill, Heather McDonald and Rebecca Odes.

Sunkin, Corwin and I recommend *Rejoicing Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* by Mary Pipher, Ph.D. and *Pushed to the Edge: How to Stop the Child Competition Race* by Donna Corwin. Another Corwin recommendation comes from Altmann who is a fan of *The Tween Years*. Altmann also recommends *Caring For Your Teenager* by American Academy of Pediatrics. Corwin is a fan of *High School: The Real Deal: From GPA's to Graduation* by Juliana Farrell and Colleen Rush. Rosenberg and I both recommend the classic *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish and Corwin recommends *Stop Arguing with Your Kid: How to Win the Battle of the Wills by Making Your Children Feel Heard* by Michael Nichols Ph.D..

I hope this great collection of books helps you to expand your parenting library and become the kind of parent you hope to be.

Dr. Jenn Berman is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in Beverly Hills. She has made appearances on approximately one hundred television shows. This February she will be appearing on the A&E series *Family Forensics* and on NBC's newest primetime reality show *Propose or Die*. You can hear her giving advice Monday nights 10 to midnight on Star 98.7. For more information go to www.DoctorJenn.com.

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