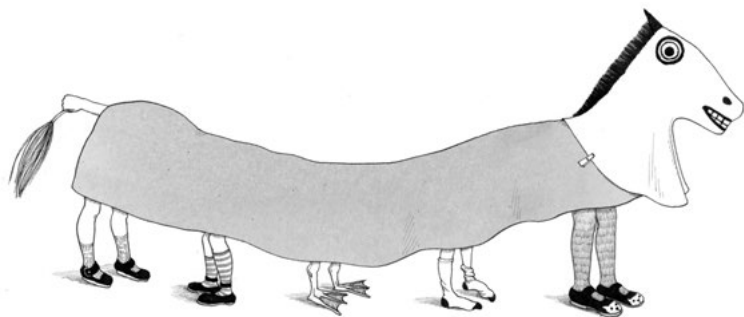


How to Handle a Child

A 22-step guided with anecdotes and
illustrations

By Sveta Dorosheva

Sveta Dorosheva has a lot of experience looking after children. She even gave birth to three sons, decided to raise them and see what happens. She has been taking notes and drawing detailed records of the things she was observing ever since. Parts of her field notes are presented in this book. The author hopes that the reader will learn about the basic functions and properties of children — yelling, griminess, fibbing, foul language, tenderness and love. This book may prepare readers for any sudden encounter or prolonged relationship with a child, should they want to have children of their own and deal with them.



From the author

All the stories in this book are based on real events and conversations with my children — Adam (aged 3), Liran (aged 6) and Alex (aged 11). This book does not contain a single piece of useful advice because raising children is a very individual undertaking. This is a collection of 22 anecdotes about how helpless adults are when it comes to children. Which is why I've dedicated this book to parents —to my own and to all the people of the world who've embarked on this humbling, unpredictable, mistake-ridden journey. All in the hopes that they will laugh and understand that they're doing everything right. Whatever that may be.

Contents

- How to get a child
- How to birth a child
- How to use a newborn child
- How to name your child
- Where to put the child you've birthed
- How to understand what a child is for
- How to keep a child clean
- How to figure out what a child wants from you
- How to get a child to sleep
- How to care for a sick child
- How to get a child to speak properly
- How to get a child to stop talking
- How to figure out what your child is doing
- How to survive your child's tantrum
- How to deal to your child's mischief
- How to make your child good
- What to do if your child isn't as good as you'd hoped
- How and what to teach your child
- How to play with a child
- How to discipline a child
- How to lie to a child
- How to fix the upbringing you gave to your child



How to get a child

Alex says:

“At school they told us that soon we’ll grow hair everywhere, we’ll grow mustaches and beards, we’ll start peeing in our beds, and playing with our privates. And when we turn eighteen, our body will make cells that know how to make a human. You can make a baby with them!”

“Why does it happen at eighteen?”

“Because of credit cards.”

“I don’t see the connection...”

“Well, if kids become parents before they’re eighteen, they get to have a credit card—since they’re parents. But adults don’t want kids to have credit cards. Adults are greedy.”

It is common knowledge that children can be bought at a store, ordered from a stork, or grown in a cabbage patch. But unfortunately, all these methods are random. It’s impossible to tell what kind of a child will grow in the cabbage. The stork, too, is risky—whatever child it brings, you’ll have to raise. And at the store they sell children in boxes and the clerks don’t let you open them up and look inside.

So, the best option is to construct a child on your own—in your home out of things you have on hand. Quickly or slowly, in the pose of “cicada falling off a branch” or “goat looking at a gate,” from the first or hundredth try... you can even do it holding a credit card. Though, between us, it isn’t necessary. And remember, it might not happen immediately, only after nine months, but you’ll always get exactly the right child.



How to birth a child

Alex says:

“Mom! Birth him back in! I can’t stand him anymore!”

“And how am I supposed to do that?”

“The same way you gave birth — lying on your back!”

Children come up with difficult tasks. One time Adam sat down on the couch and started crying. Alex plopped down next to him and also started crying. Liran saw his brothers and had to join them: he squeezed in between and burst into tears. It was a 120 degree heat, and Alex couldn’t stand it. He was wailing as if he were giving birth himself: “Stupid fish! Why did you have to crawl on land? Why did you become dinosaurs, parrots, bananas, monkeys and people, and then my mom came from them, and she gave birth to Liran and Adam, and they won’t let me sit alone on the couch in peace!”

It’s a fact: the emergence of a child is a painfully mysterious process. Doesn’t matter how you choose to give birth — lying back, sitting down, standing up — because any sequence you choose will have to involve the participation of every single thing in this world, including dinosaurs, fish, parrots and monkeys. That’s probably why it’s impossible to birth a child back in. Every element of the Universe has to return to its proper place right after the birth. Only kids can contrive to squeeze together on a small couch in the 120 degree heat just to bawl and demand that the evolution of all species cease immediately.

How to use a newborn child

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

This is the first thing babies say to the world. A newborn child is the most mysterious being in the universe. He is given to his parents without an instructions manual. So at first, it makes sense to just take a look at him and to make the most important realization of your (and his) life: *Ha! Yes, it's a baby! Hmm, we probably ought to take care of it.*

Soon you'll discover that newborn babies do a lot of eating, sleeping, peeing, and pooping. If, at any given moment they are not doing one of the above, it means they are trying to figure out how to do one of the above. Everything is brand new to them—breathing, day turning into night, even farting is a complete wonder.

When newborn Liran first felt the wind, he almost suffocated. I'm not sure if it was out of outrage or wonderment. Adam was astonished when he realized that the thing in his mouth was his foot. How sensational! I have a foot! Alex could spend a whole hour glaring at his reflection in the mirror above his crib. He would scowl at the grumpy stranger, kick him with his foot, scratch him with his nails, while the stranger threatened him with his eyebrows again and again.

Evidently that's why the first letter of the alphabet is "A," because not a single language of the world has a word for "I am amazed by absolutely everything and all at once!" In times like these, parents must carry their baby in their arms, rub his belly, nurse him, sing songs to him—basically make sure the baby eats, sleeps, and farts enough and that nothing gets in the way of him experiencing his incredible "A."





How to name your child

Adam says:

“No! I’m not a bunny. I’m Adam.”

No matter what you call him, he deems it unacceptable: “No, I’m not your baby boy, I’m Adam! No, I’m not your sunshine, I’m Adam! No, I’m not your sweetheart, I’m Adam!”

Once we tried calling him “no, I am not Prince Hamlet” but he started crying. Grownups will spend an eternity picking a name for their child, and then avoid using it at all costs. While the tiny child is so cute that everyone loses their minds over him, they will call him a little monkey, bean, dumpling, duckling, chickpea, shrimp, pumpkin, goober, and various other critter names. There’s practically no need for the family to use his real name. When Alex and Liran are fighting, they will call each other anything...

Alex: You’re a headless turkey!

Liran: And you’re a stinky goat!

A.: And if I’m a stinky goat, what does that make you? You’re my brother!

L.: If you’re a stinky goat, I am a noble prince.

A.: You’re a tapeworm inside a hippopotamus!

L.: And you’re that stupid dinosaur that Adam is always kicking around!

A.: And you’re a dung beetle!

L.: And you’re a toothless old man fighting with an old lady who keeps throwing cats at him!

A.: And you’re a giant booger that’s stuck to the couch!

L.: And you’re a lumpy maggot!

A.: And you’re a rotting buttcheek!

L.: And you’re a phone made of poop, and you’ve been run over by a car, and dogs use you to call each other!

It’s not surprising that Adam insists that we only use his name. He’s the third child, and he figured it out — a name is a serious message from the outside world; without it, anyone could call you any old thing.



Where to put the child you've birthed

Alex says:

"You never stand still. Why do you do that? It's hard to talk to you."

Of course it's hard. A person who has just given birth doesn't stand, she simply sways. You can spot her from a great distance — in the supermarket, at the gas station, in synagogue. She stands like a palm tree, swaying, always thinking of where she can put down her newborn child.

The only thing a newborn wants is to be rocked. Anything resembling a swing will do — a cradle, a tub, a stroller, a crib, a carrier. For some reason children have to be in constant motion. Even when they're sleeping, they would rather not rest. If you put a sleeping child on a fixed surface, he will open his eyes with quiet menace, like the Antichrist in "The Omen" movie.

But here's another important thing. You have to put the child on a surface from which he cannot fall, and which he cannot eat. If you put him down on the sand, he'll eat the sand. If you put him down on the grass, he'll eat the grass, a fistful of dirt, and a couple of ants. If you put him down on the floor, he'll eat some cat food, a slipper, and a page from a book with a picture of a crocodile wearing a coat. When Alex's second brother was born, he noticed that many grownups would place a blanket between themselves and a baby. Alex concluded that they are making sure the baby doesn't eat them.

As they age, children spend less time lying around. They start moving around so much that they switch from swings and carousels to scooters and bikes. And from there — to cars and trains, moon rovers and floating islands. Anything that will carry them toward the horizon, away from the palm tree that used to rock them right after she gave birth to them. Because if you think about it, with each new year life rocks you faster and faster, and you have to work hard not to fall from it and eat it all up until there's nothing left.



How to understand what a child is for

“Mama, juice!” yells Liran.

“Is Mama your slave?” demands Alex.

Liran doesn't know what “slave” means. He thinks the key word here is “your.”

“Nooo, Alesha. She isn't my slave. She's our slave,” he says apologetically.

Once you've birthed a child, your first impression might be that he's there for you to take care of. To love. To experience joy from absolutely idiotic things. But in fact, there are a variety of uses for a child. With the help of a child you can: understand the universe, stop time, improve the world, learn how to make cream of wheat, find out the truth, experience sorrow, find comfort and that broken pearl bracelet, sing songs to river rocks, fall in love with a cement mixer and a trash truck, and hear the magical sound of an open palm smacking a human bottom.

Of course, all of these are possible without a child, but it'll take considerably more time and effort. But more importantly, you won't have the brainpower: who in their right mind would make it a goal of accomplishing these things just for fun? But after the birth of a child, you don't need your brain anymore. This is easy to demonstrate using the well-known philosophical glass concept. Before having a child a person can ask the question, “is my glass half empty or half full?” But after having a child, a person doesn't have a glass anymore. Their child has taken it and filled it up with juice, soda, or some other crap. It's said that when they're all grown up they give the glasses back to their parents. But that seems to be just a myth.