



Chapter One



Insider Secrets!

Motherhood is the last thing I expected to be writing about when I graduated high school. Scholarship, scholarship, scholarship was all I could think about. When I got one to Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, I switched gears and focused on GPA, GPA, GPA. After graduating it became career, career, career. But after working for four years I found myself married and pregnant with my first child. It wasn't a long, thought-out decision. If I considered it at all, I thought, *You get married, you get pregnant.* Right? Right!

My son arrived in 1993, two weeks early. I was on my way out from work when my labor started. When I took him home from the hospital, I was about as uninformed as I could possibly be. I had read *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, of course, but I hadn't touched a childcare book. I figured taking care of my baby would just come to me and I would like it. I was wrong.

After about two weeks of feeding on demand (a.k.a. putting a bottle in my son's mouth every time he cried and my son not only eating poorly but screaming all the time) I was convinced he could not be mine and was ready to return him to the hospital. *How can women enjoy this?* I thought. "Liars, they're all liars," I told myself.

I scoured the bookshelves for help but found none. Not only did the books not cover this incessant crying or what to do about it, but they seemed to skip the truth about those first days and weeks altogether. I needed some answers, so I called the doctor. The doctor said he would grow out of it in about three months. Three months! What was I supposed to do for the next three months? Recreational drugs were not an option. I was sinking and sinking fast. I had gone from managing an accounting office of five professionals to holding, rocking, feeding, and changing a cranky infant. There was no smile on my face and not many on his either.

I could not believe this was motherhood: Misery and crying and being enslaved to a demanding infant. I was desperate for help. I needed the truth and I was willing to search for it wherever I could find it. Books didn't have it. Doctors were out. Finally I realized that other mothers would have the answers I was looking for. I started with my own.

"No one really likes it in the beginning," she confessed. Now she tells me. "It takes a little while to get that first smile and then you'll see it's all worth it."

It was a relief to discover that my own lack of happy feelings was normal, but I quickly moved on to more pressing matters.

"Demand feeding?" I asked. "I'm feeding this kid all the time and he still cries."

"I'm on it," she said. She spoke to a friend who let her in on "the schedule" and the rest is history. "The Schedule" was the

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first new mom “insider information” that I received in my quest for help. I discuss baby schedules in detail in Chapter Eight. Once I learned about the schedule, I suspected that there was more information out there to be discovered.

I was right. My continued research unearthed a treasure trove of tricks, secrets, and tips that mothers don’t advertise. They remain tight-lipped because so much of what they have to say may not be considered politically correct. After all, who wants to actually admit that this experience of motherhood isn’t always like the Ivory soap commercials?

The insider information was so helpful to me that I decided to record it so I could share it with other mothers. Survival, I felt, was all I was after. As the months passed and my son developed a reasonable schedule, I decided to research the other issues I was dealing with. That research took the form of informal discussions with other mothers working full-time outside the house. After two years, I decided to be an at-home mom. Here is where things started to get interesting. I had a whole new territory to explore. I began visiting the places stay-at-home moms go — shopping malls, indoor playgrounds, outdoor playgrounds, parks, schools, and preschools — and I spoke with

Easy... I promise!

Some babies spit up a lot. It doesn't necessarily signify an allergy or an acid reflux problem. Sometimes what looks like a lot really isn't. Take a tablespoon of milk and spill it on the table and see how much it looks like.

anyone who would talk to me. The questions were generally the same:

- * How much is too much spit up?
- * Do you use a schedule?
- * How many weeks do you think it is before a mom can expect her baby to sleep through the night?
- * Do you let your baby cry?
- * Do you feed cereal before the first year?

Easy... I promise!

Well-rested babies sleep better than poorly rested ones. Don't skip naps in order to help your baby sleep better at night. It will backfire!

I also loved to ask the “forbidden” questions, although I reserved those for mothers of older babies and children.

- * How do you feel being at home?
- * Do you miss work?
- * Has your relationship with your husband changed?
- * Why don't women talk about how they *really* feel?

For twelve years I recorded other women's thoughts and my personal experience with what really works. The learning spans three children, a move across country and back, and several forays into the workforce. This book is my best effort to provide new mothers with help in a humorous and honest voice — an alternative to the old adage, “It gets easier. I promise.”

Of course, one of the most common sources of information on the subject of pregnancy and childrearing is books. I, too, read books in preparation for pregnancy and found their information useful; I still do. What I felt these books were lacking

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and what I have tried to provide for you is the uncensored advice. You know, the “behind the scenes” advice that no one ever tells us. This is the kind of counsel I was desperately searching for on the bookshelf and ended up finding by talking to other mothers — those from my generation and from past generations. I am excited to share it all with you because I honestly believe it will help tremendously in your efforts to take care of your new baby and to take care of yourself and your family in the twenty-first century. It will at least give you a leg-up on the experience.

Summary

It was a bit disconcerting to realize that new motherhood was not quite as easy as I thought it was going to be. I was always looking over my shoulder, wondering if anyone could tell that I didn't actually like motherhood every second of the day. The truth is, although many will never admit it, new motherhood is incredibly tough. It is back-breaking, neverending, confusing, frustrating, and largely thankless. Aren't you glad you decided to read this book? I sure know how to spread the sunshine around, don't I? The good news is — help is here. Read on to uncover some great advice from research and experience that will open the door to the truth about motherhood and the ways to make it a bit easier. Taking some of this advice to heart will enable you to actually enjoy motherhood a whole lot more *without* your having to lie about how you really feel.





Chapter Two



Getting Ready, Getting Real!

It's strange how everyone keeps the truly helpful advice to themselves when you're pregnant because a pregnant woman receives no shortage of unhelpful and unwelcome advice. The source of that is usually strangers who mistakenly believe that your pregnant body is public property. When I was eight months pregnant with my first child, I had a woman stop me in the mall and tell me that I shouldn't be drinking diet cola. For some reason when it comes to a pregnant woman, all etiquette flies out the window and everyone seems to have something to say.

Ignoring "advice" from random strangers is probably a good idea — especially when it comes with a dash of judgment or negativity. Another good thing to ignore is everyone's scary stories. You know the kind. The "I was in labor for ten days and I only dilated to three centimeters" kind. Ignore them. You probably shouldn't even dwell too much on the "scary" chapters in books. Years ago our mothers

didn't even have access to this information. I wonder sometimes if it's better to go into the situation a little less knowledgeable of all the things that could possibly go wrong. Did I say *scary*? Did I say *things that could go wrong*? Forget about that. Let's focus on before-birth preparations — and I don't mean preparing a fancy nursery. I'm talking about the advice you really need that no one tells you.

Easy... I promise!

When you're getting up with the baby during the night, make sure you hold the banister as you carry the baby down the stairs.

Unnecessary Preparations The “Birthing Plan”

After seeing close to a thousand episodes of *A Baby Story*, you may feel motivated to prepare a birthing plan. The nurses in the hospital just love these by the way. They have a good chuckle. The birthing plan is a step-by-step plan for the faultless delivery that will welcome little Kaitlyn or Noah into the world.

Most birth plans include these “essential” elements:

- * Stay at home for as long as possible when labor begins.
- * Play soothing music.
- * Watch a video.
- * Surround yourself with *all* your relatives.
- * Refuse all drugs.
- * Squirt the bundle of joy out while your husband feeds you ice chips and coaches you through your breathing.
- * Celebrate with champagne after delivery.
- * Fill out form for the most faultless delivery of the year.