



# **The New Basics: A-to-Z Baby Child Care for the Modern Parent**

*Michel Cohen*

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Dr. Michel Cohen, named by the *New York Post* as the hip, "must-have" pediatrician, has an important message for parents: Don't worry so much. In an easy-reference alphabetical format, *The New Basics* clearly lays out the concerns you may face as a parent and explains how to solve them -- without fuss, without stress, and without harming your child by using unnecessary medicines or interventions.

With sensitivity and love, Dr. Michel describes proven techniques for keeping your children healthy and happy without driving yourself crazy. He will show you how to set positive habits for sleeping and eating and how to treat ailments early and effectively. You'll learn when antibiotics are helpful and when they can be harmful. If you're having trouble breast feeding, pumping, or bottle weaning, Dr. Michel has the advice to set you back on track. If after several months your baby is still not sleeping through the night, *The New Basics* will provide you with tried-and-true methods to help ease this difficult transition for babies and parents.

Dr. Michel recognizes that you're probably asking the same questions his own patients' parents frequently ask, so he includes a section called "Real Questions from Real Parents" throughout the book. You'll find important answers about treating asthma, head injuries, fevers, stomach bugs, colic, earaches, and other ailments. More than just a book on how to care for your child's physical well-being, *The New Basics* also covers such parenting challenges as biting, hitting, ADD, separation anxiety, how to prevent the terrible twos (and threes and fours ...), and preparing your child for a new sibling.

## The New Basics: A-to-Z Baby Child Care for the Modern Parent Details

Date : Published December 28th 2004 by William Morrow Paperbacks (first published 2004)

ISBN : 9780060535483

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Format : Paperback 368 pages

Genre : Parenting, Nonfiction, Family, Health, Reference



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# From Reader Review The New Basics: A-to-Z Baby Child Care for the Modern Parent for online ebook

## Anand Mandapati says

Amongst the many parenting books out there, this one stands out a bit because it's by a practicing pediatrician and he prescribes a very laissez-faire attitude. I came into the book with a similar bias, so take my review and this book with a big grain of salt if you're not going to be that type of parent. Pretty much all the advice he gives is consistent with his laissez-faire philosophy of parenting with the possible exception of breast-feeding vs. bottle-feeding. He really insists you breast-feed exclusively if you can but doesn't give good enough reasons why. With that aside, most of the advice he gives is practical and I've already used some of it successfully on our baby.

The two issues I have with the book though are, first, that the organization is, as the title indicates, a dictionary style book. That seems great at first but for most topics, you really have to read all related topics as well. He does provide references to related topics (e.g., Gums refers to Teeth and Teething), but it would have just been better to group them all together into a chapter on teeth. Still, it's not a very long book so you can remember most things without going back and forth to the cross-references.

Second, he doesn't cite any sources for his advice. For most things, he doesn't even say there are some studies or that the current science believes this to be the case. In fact, quite the opposite, he says he has seen this in his practice which begs the question, how much of his advice is anecdotally true for his patients only rather than for all or most babies. So, I would warn that you be skeptical with some of his advice, even and especially if it jibes well with your philosophy. I certainly will be double-checking with other sources.

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## Jessica says

Michel Cohen is a trendy New York celebrity pediatrician after my own heart! Basically, this book is just the common sense set of answers I want to hear when I have a question about what I need to do for my baby. This guy's short answer: not a whole lot! You can tell he's pretty relaxed by how he's holding that undiapered baby on the cover. Hair products in the baby's butt? No problem! Baby takes a crap on my head? It's cool!

Soap? You don't need it!

"Tummy time"? Useless!

Breastfeeding? Yeah it's great, but your baby won't, like, keel over and die if you give it formula, so calm down. Just, like, in general, you should definitely calm down.

I was so happy finally to hear someone say I don't need to sweat this "tummy time" business, because in addition to having a nauseating name it's an activity my baby hates. I'd sort of given up on making her regularly lie on her stomach the way they tell you because when I do she screams. I feel like a bad mother who's stunting her development when I don't do it, but then I also feel like a bad mother when I do it because it feels a bit ridiculous staring at this baby screaming when I know she'd stop if I just picked her up... But according to this guy, I can just be done with it. Hooray! I sort of still feel like a bad mother for listening to the first book that told me I don't have to do this thing I didn't want to do, but whatever. I think in our culture

these days it's pretty much inevitable that someone will be making you feel like a bad mother no matter what you do, and the best one can hope for is to find books like these that say you're probably good enough.

I mean, Cohen never uses that phrase, but this philosophy could be summed up as "good-enough" parenting, which appeals to me because that's really been my goal and something I struggle to remember now that I actually have a baby and am exposed to all these opinions about what I should be doing with her. I feel like the parenting prescribed by many experts has gotten more and more high maintenance, and it doesn't seem to me that the products of this new parenting have improved over the products of the older, less intensive styles. So much of what he says is just common sense -- e.g., don't reason with or explain things to a misbehaving toddler -- but it seems like a refreshing return to a simpler time. He's basically the anti-Sears attachment parenting guy, and points out that while the frequently repeated adage "you can't spoil a baby" is technically true, you can spoil your life and your relationship with your partner (he does seem to assume that parents are married, and to heterosexual partners, which is a bit vexingly quaint) by trying too hard to meet all your infant's needs. Obviously, I know this to be true -- it's common sense -- but it was nice to hear someone with a medical degree and cultish following repeat it.

Before I got pregnant I was all, "I'm gonna just be totally cool and not buy into all the hysterical stuff about pregnancy and babies and just, like, not physically abuse her and I'll keep her reasonably clean and warm and feed her and just not worry too much." AHAHAHAHA! At the time that I read this, I'd stopped eating milk and soy because my baby was fussing and spitting up a lot, and somehow various commentators and my own neuroses had convinced me that milk and soy might be upsetting her stomach and making her unhappy. Since I don't eat meat, this wasn't exactly the greatest thing nutritionally, and aside from nuts and peanut butter most other protein sources are more labor intensive than the parent of a two-month-old would ideally like. Now maybe my initial impulse was the right one, but reading this book granted me permission to view my new diet as a useless exercise in misguided masochism, just in time to enjoy a nice Thanksgiving dinner. So thanks for that!

Again, there's nothing in any of this that isn't just common sense, and I only liked the book because it said what I already thought anyway. I didn't read the whole thing, but of what I did read the only part I wasn't into was his stuff on toilet training. He says you should just wait until the point between ages two and three when your kid decides she'd like to be potty trained, and then just let her shit all over the house until she feels like using the bathroom -- I'm nowhere near this stage yet, but I imagine that when I am I'll favor a more proactive approach.

My biggest takeaway? Babies cry. It's what they do. You can't always stop them, nor should you try, either through silly efforts to modify your diet for no scientific reason, or by constant obsessive attention driven by your terror of being a bad parent. He doesn't say this, but reading the book and reflecting on other stuff I've read it does seem like we have a very American, capitalist, medicalizing approach to childrearing these days, which is that if your baby is upset or behind some schedule or abnormal in any way, there must be something you can do or buy or administer to correct it. But probably there's nothing wrong, and your baby's just crying because sometimes being a baby just sucks. Who knows if that's the right approach to childrearing, but it's the one that appeals to me most right now, so I'm gonna go with it.

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## **Jessica Nickelsen says**

When I read this book I wasn't previously aware of Cohen's reputation in the States, so came to it with a completely unbiased opinion. Cohen's calm, reasoned advice made sense to me, and fit in with my approach

and theories on parenting. It's very no-nonsense, and no-fluff; very appealing when compared to other approaches I've seen and heard about. I recommend The New Basics to people searching for a good way to take a calm, balanced approach to bringing up kids.

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### **Sara says**

My favorite book for parenting advice

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### **Jennifer says**

my kid came with a manual.

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### **Sense361 says**

A very concise reference. All my questions were answered in a precise manner. Now I am feeling really calm and prepared. I absolutely loved methods of sleep learning, feeding and discipline. They are exact and to the point, and actually not as complicated as I have feared. The key is to be consistent in applying them. I absolutely would recommend reading this book to the new parents.

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### **Becks says**

Alphabetic/encyclopedia format made for somewhat dry reading, but will be good as a reference. Dr. Cohen's recommendations are pretty chill -- let your kid be themselves and let most things run their course and everything will turn out OK.

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### **Betty Huber says**

This guy is the celebrity pediatrician in NY and his "to cool for school" attitude is a bit hard to swallow, but there is helpful info in this book. He is very mellow which is helpful in getting a nervous parent to not worry too much.

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### **Tari says**

4 stars for the general logic and good sense of the advice, but points deducted for the structure / writing / concept. The book is organized like an encyclopedia, with a somewhat arbitrarily selected laundry list of topics organized purely alphabetically (no thematic continuity) -- would be really disjointed to read cover-to-cover. Some people may prefer this "reference manual" style structure, but I'd always prefer a book with a coherent narrative-like structure that I can sit down and read continuously from end to end (with a good

index, to facilitate finding specific topics when needed).

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## Rea says

My husband purchased two parenting books before the baby came. The first was this one. The other was an encyclopaedia that I only perused.

Michel Cohen takes a very relaxed view of parenting, and it was something that just *worked* for me. It was lovely to read and he was often very frank in disregard for the advice that gets heaped upon you as a new parent. To sum it up, it came down to something along the lines of “*You’ll be told you need to do X, but ignore them. X isn’t necessarily better than Y, so if you want to do Y, then do Y.*”

It was so great to be told that I don’t have to worry myself sick about every little thing, to be reassured that if my parenting instinct tells me to handle a situation in another way to how I’m being told to handle it, then my parenting instinct isn’t necessarily bad. But it’s possible that the advice I’m being given is bad, and I should take everything with a grain of salt, then measure it up against how I feel the situation ought to be handled.

One specific example from the first 10 days or so after the birth is the problems I encountered with breastfeeding. Cohen reassures you that it’s not the end of the world if it doesn’t work out for you: the baby can survive just as well on formula as on breastmilk. Don’t worry, you’re not a failure as a mother just because breastfeeding didn’t work out for you. But he also delves into something more specific. Due to the pain I had with every single latch on in those first days, I called in a lactation consultant to help me figure out how I could tweak my breastfeeding style in order to reduce the pain. She helped with some good tips about the positioning of the baby, and I was very grateful for her help. But she also started going on about the frenulum (that little membrane that attaches the tongue to the floor of the mouth), saying my baby’s was short and tight - so I should get it cut! Luckily, I’d already read about this in Cohen’s book and knew that lactation consultants are often trained to view this as a solution, but that in reality it doesn’t actually tend to solve the problems. I was very relieved to have this knowledge, and to not feel like I needed to mutilate my baby’s mouth. In the end, my nipples toughened up after about five or six weeks, and it wasn’t necessary to have the procedure carried out but thanks to Cohen I was able to go through those six weeks with some peace of mind, rather than fretting whether or not I’d made the right decision.

Cohen’s advice really is *back to basics*, and that was what really worked for me. He tackled the points where parenting advice has become more and more specific, and let you know why this isn’t necessarily the best option for parent or baby. He reassured me that it’s ok to follow my own instincts, to not agree with everything I’m told, and that it’s perfectly fine to disregard any advice that conflicts with what I think is the better way of handling something.

This book has become my baby parenting bible. And whenever I come across something in there that I don’t agree with 100%, I know it’s ok to just take it with a pinch of salt. Rather than contorting myself this way and that to apply something exactly as described, I can carry on with how *I* feel I ought to do it, and just keep the advice in mind.

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## **Opica says**

Super "manual" za starše, ki nočejo za vsako malenkost viseti pri pediatru in delati cirkus iz vsakega zamujenega kakca. Lepo po abecedi gre od angine mimo cepljenja (neškodljivo in priporočljivo), domačih živali do alergij na žitarice (zelo zelo redke, verjemi, tako strašansko redke, da komot daš otroku kifelj). Moto je "samo brez panike", cilj pa zdrav, radoživ otrok in starši z ohranjeno lastno identiteto.

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## **Allie says**

This is an excellent parenting reference. I refuse to get bogged down in wild, child-rearing details, and Dr. Cohen's relaxed, straightforward approach to kids and what might arise while having them is such a breath of fresh air in this overanxious world. If you have a child or are planning on one, this book is solid gold.

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## **Robert says**

On second thought, I don't like this book. I got rid of it on paperbackswap.com. Dr. Cohen's "too cool for school" attitude is annoying, to say the least. Not recommended.

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## **Monica says**

A pediatrician after my own \*throws arms up in the air and shouts "whatever!!" heart.

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## **Heather says**

This guy kind of gives me the creeps. He's got a cult-like following in the New York parenting circles and has recently opened several offices in every trendy neighborhood in Brooklyn.

That being said, in this age of touchy-feely Dr. Searsian parenting, I kind of respect his hard-core attitude about things like sleep training, weaning and toilet training. In fact, I think I'm going to try taking his advice.

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