

A First Time Parent's Survival Guide: A How to Manual for the First Two Years

Clifford Dale James

Dan Rosandich, Illustrator

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A First Time Parent's Survival Guide deserves a place on new parents' shelves for its much-needed humor, practical advice, and valued perspective.

Any parent can recall that the first days after bringing home a newborn are heady enough. Unfortunately, most parenting books only overwhelm moms and dads further by listing every single possible thing that can go wrong in the first two years of a baby's life. That's why Clifford Dale James's concise parenting guide is a refreshing and useful read.

In *A First Time Parent's Survival Guide: A How-To-Manual For The First Two Years*, James, a pediatrician, presents a lighthearted rundown of the most likely concerns and milestones for new parents. His tone aims to calm rather than scare parents, and he helpfully organizes each of the development chapters around how a doctor will conduct the baby's well visit.

Each short chapter covers two months in the baby's first year and three months in the second year, and is divided into sections on eating, peeing, pooping, sleeping, hate (i.e., parents' gripes at this stage), safety, tricks (the new things babies can do), panic (i.e., parents' worries), and checkup (what to expect at the doctor's office).

A First Time Parent's Survival Guide is unique for including just the right amount of information to be helpful to parents who are likely so overwhelmed that they hardly have time to shower, let alone read. It also stands out among other parenting guides for James's jovial tone, which adds a welcome layer of humor to some absurd baby situations. For instance, when talking about the correct way to burp a baby, he reassures with "No baby has ever blown up from not burping." He's able to address parents' worst fears while adding a pediatrician's trusted common sense approach.

Each of the development chapters ends with a section called "Kaden's logs," a tongue-in-cheek rundown of the months according to the baby who is named after James's own son. For example, around the fifteen-month mark, Kaden "writes" an entertaining list of how to give a helicopter parent a heart attack.

James will no doubt win over parents with his true confessions of his own parenting blunders, like the time he tried to soothe his baby by swinging the infant car seat only to realize that his son was not strapped in.

Illustrator Dan Rosandich complements James's wry writing style with one-page cartoons that appear at the start of each chapter and highlight some of the humorous themes, from parents' utter exhaustion to toddlers who act as if they are possessed.

Despite these successes, there are some glitches. One drawback is the overall flow of the chapters. For instance, the first few chapters on anatomy, breastfeeding, and vaccines awkwardly appear before the chapter on birth. The book also lacks an index, which would be a helpful resource for harried parents hoping to quickly locate appropriate content.

These minor grievances aside, *A First Time Parent's Survival Guide* deserves a place on new parents' shelves for its much-needed humor, practical advice, and valued perspective.

AMANDA MCCORQUODALE (December 4, 2015)

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