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Bringing Up Bebe: One American Mother Discovers The Wisdom Of French Parenting



Synopsis

The secret behind France's astonishingly well-behaved children is here. When American journalist Pamela Druckerman has a baby in Paris, she doesn't aspire to become a "French parent". French parenting isn't a known thing, like French fashion or French cheese. Even French parents themselves insist they aren't doing anything special. Yet the French children Druckerman knows sleep through the night at two or three months old while those of her American friends take a year or more. French kids eat well-rounded meals that are more likely to include braised leeks than chicken nuggets. And while her American friends spend their visits resolving spats between their kids, her French friends sip coffee while the kids play. Motherhood itself is a whole different experience in France. There's no role model, as there is in America, for the harried new mom with no life of her own. French mothers assume that even good parents aren't at the constant service of their children and that there's no need to feel guilty about this. They have an easy, calm authority with their kids that Druckerman can only envy. Of course, French parenting wouldn't be worth talking about if it produced robotic, joyless children. In fact, French kids are just as boisterous, curious, and creative as Americans. They're just far better behaved and more in command of themselves. While some American toddlers are getting Mandarin tutors and preliteracy training, French kids are - by design - toddling around and discovering the world at their own pace. With a notebook stashed in her diaper bag, Druckerman, a former reporter for The Wall Street Journal, sets out to learn the secrets to raising a society of good little sleepers, gourmet eaters, and reasonably relaxed parents. She discovers that French parents are extremely strict about some things and strikingly permissive about others. And she realizes that to be a different kind of parent, you don't just need a different parenting philosophy. You need a very different view of what a child actually is. While finding her own firm non, Druckerman discovers that children - including her own - are capable of feats she'd never imagined.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As is the case with many books comparing American parenting styles with that of other countries, some potential readers have felt opinionated - even defensive - before even buying the book. While I certainly haven't concluded that French parenting is "right" and American parenting is "wrong", this intriguing book deserves a fair chance - one obtained by reading it - but some initial "reviews" were written by people who simply refused to read a book comparing American and French parenting techniques. So what will you find in *Bringing Up Bebe*? What makes this one worth a look? To start with, the author, Pamela Druckerman, does not come off as someone who is crazy about France, let alone French parenting - at first. As she writes early on, "I'm not even sure I like living here" although she does change her tune later. She came to her opinions about French parenting slowly and she backs up her main points with plenty of research studies as well as techniques she learned from French parents and parenting authorities. As a result she concludes that "the French have managed to be involved without becoming obsessive. " They aren't waiting on their kids hand and foot and they don't assume that they have to push their children to succeed. Even so, she notes that she hadn't thought she was supposed to admire French parenting. So consider her a reluctant convert to French methods of parenting. Druckerman observes that there doesn't appear to be a relentless drive to get babies and children to various lessons or such activities as early swimming lessons. A neighbor was content to let her children simply find ways to play, often with old toys or perhaps by exploring her outdoor environment. Meals are also handled differently with set times for eating and with children being expected to exert enough self-control to wait hours in between meals. Vegetables, varied types of cheese, and other foods American kids might snub are not only served but actually eaten. Then there are the studies. They are certainly food for thought and perhaps some spirited debate. One study notes that mothers in Columbus, Ohio find child care twice as unpleasant as mothers in Rennes, France. There is the University of Texas study that concludes that French mothers aren't concerned with accelerating their children's cognitive development or academic achievement. Instead, they are comfortable with letting their kids simply be children while they still can. The author cites another study which indicates that 90 percent of fifteen-year-olds eat their

main meal with their parents - compared to 67 percent of those in the United States. The author took detailed notes as she observed French parents. She learns that they expect their babies to start sleeping through the night within no more than a few months - or even in the first month. They ask Druckerman if her baby is "doing her nights" (sleeping through the night). Admittedly, a certain number don't...but a fair number do because their parents use "the Pause", not responding immediately to a baby's cries. When Druckerman tries using "the Pause" her own baby starts sleeping through the night, although...to be fair...she does wait until her baby is more than a few months old, unlike the French parents she describes. Even infant mortality rates are lower in France, 57 percent lower than in America. There is an emphasis on a calm pregnancy and not eating too much. This doesn't mean starving but an overly obese mother isn't necessarily serving a baby's health. I won't stress this point too much because there could be many other factors that determine the possible difference in infant mortality rates between one country and another. To sum it up, the author has discovered the "wisdom" of French parenting and has written a book that seems to be aimed at imparting that wisdom to American readers. Druckerman also seems to be encouraging parents to try and change the way American parents perceive children, to not base their lives so much around the kids. To be clear, the parenting advice here is centered on children, not teenagers, as French teenagers are given more freedom but in Druckerman's view also seem to have less cause to rebel. I did have some issues with this book. The first chapter has far too much info about Druckerman's career before moving to France as well as her time meeting and dating her husband-to-be. This takes up an entire chapter. I wanted to get to the parenting observations more quickly. The book consists mostly of personal observations and Druckerman's parenting experiences which are also peppered with interviews with such people as the French "Doctor Spock" as well as other experts. I'm sure it will be controversial and from what I've seen and read it already is. Even so, this book deserves to be judged based on its contents.

A must read for parents, especially in the US. My highlights: "Babies aren't helpless blobs, they can learn... they do best when given clear boundaries and freedom within them...must teach children patience, impulse control and delayed gratification...there is no such thing as kid food, offer them everything!"

Very inspirational! I knew there had to be a better way to raise a child and this was it for me! This book teaches so many valuable parenting skills, I am using it as an instruction manual although it is not so much in instruction-manual format as it is story format. She gives a brief intro to each value,

then goes into stories and examples of what she had experienced or seen. It teaches how we don't need to give up our whole lives as parents to be GREAT parents, that we can go out to eat and actually ENJOY the meal together, knowing the difference between teachable moments, listening moments, allowing small acts of naughtiness, and just plain unnecessary micromanaging (!!), and so much more! Going to also purchase her "Bebe Day By Day" and look for cook books that specifically emphasize the French values of introducing foods to your children. I NEVER made separate meals for my daughter, always had her eating what we did (and at 3 she eats tons of fresh veggies and fruits), but this book is inspiring me to find more interesting ways to do it :)

I love this book!!! As a first-time American mom, having read and heard one warning after another about what to eat/what not to eat, what to do/what not to do, during both pregnancy and breastfeeding, I found myself more anxious about how I might be messing up my child and feeling like he dictated my sleep schedule rather than the other way around. This book has brought be confidence and sanity and has validated the intuitive tendencies I already exhibited towards my child and has allowed me to enjoy motherhood 200% rather than the 90% I was feeling, given all my anxieties. Pamela's prose is funny, and she's backed up her observations of French parenting with journalist-style research on child sleep and development. A must read for any American parent, male or female, new or veteran. I'd also recommend this book to all grandparents who might be assisting in raising your children! It's been a while since I've passionately loved a book this much--especially one on the topic of raising children!

I enjoyed everything about this book. The idea that some cultures produce more polite and well-behaved children has always interested me and now that I'm pregnant, this book couldn't come at a better time. Druckerman's ability to offer real-life examples and scientific research to back up her statements makes this book all the more interesting. It is so important to me to have a child that is polite, well-behaved, and who lives in the real world. I interview a lot of recent college graduates and am baffled by how many of them have never heard a negative comment or heard the word no. I think all new parents should be forced to read this book to get ideas on how to raise their children to be contributing members of society, instead of the spoiled, self-centered kids that I see on today's playground. My husband is reading the book now and really is enjoying it as well. Highly recommended read!

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