

THE BEST PARENTING BOOKS I'VE READ (AND THE WORST)

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I gifted myself a Kindle on my birthday this year. Since this May I have bought and read 7 parenting books on it and I am so much richer as a human being. Just to let you know this is the main reason I have been writing less and less, as I am spending all my free time reading (yes it's true).

I am a parenting book junkie. I read parenting books on my Kindle and fiction in hard copy so I am almost always reading two books at a time. I don't think you can learn to parent from books alone, but I do think if you read that many you are bound to get ideas that you can implement for your unique situation and to your unique kids.

For me the best type of books are those that give evidence based information on children's brains and development and ideas to deal with issues that crop up and why a parent reacts a certain way to triggers and how it's all very much a part of being human.

The worse sorts are those that behave like there is only one way to do things like the ones I read when I first became a parent for example 'secrets of a baby whisperer' and many other sleep books I read at that time. The sort of books that give some easy peasy steps, to solve regular problems. Those sort of books may be great for normal kids, but definitely not my shade of crazies no thank you.

Over the years I have gone from reading more generalized books to more specific books that deal with certain issues and day-to-day living with young children as well as books that deal with emotional welfare of kids. As mentioned in my [previous post](#), I have had lots to learn from my older child about myself and how my own responses and ghosts needed to be worked on when dealing with him, in order to help him with his responses and intensities.

A lot of the reading I have done recently has reassured me that many times my knee jerk responses are based on the fear that how I tackle a situation today may prevent a future psychopath or delinquent in the making. This fear in parents is common and it's the fight or flight response getting triggered and more often than not we're over reacting to a child doing child things and he is not doing it because he is a future axe murderer or a pathological liar. **That foresight has really helped me take a step back from traditional discipline and react way more appropriately than I did in the past where I just let myself free fall and let my emotions wreak havoc to the fragile souls entrusted in my care.**

Here's a scene from my house just a few days ago. My almost 5 year old was left at home as I had an errand to run and chose to take his brother as a consequence to the older for something he had done. When I returned I found all the walls of my house scribbled with angry red crayon. This from a boy who has never coloured walls in his 5 years not when he was 1 or 2 or 3 but at 5.

The 'before these parenting books' me would not have been able to come to grips with my emotions. I would not have been able to see that this is a 5 year old boy who I love who is trying to tell me he is mad at me for slighting him. He even told me he had made a huge fire and was proud

of his work. All I would have been able to see was that I was a totally failed parent and that I was raising someone absolutely awful from the depths of beyond who can never be saved and he would've faced my wrath head on. A furious me who would've said horrible things to a special someone. Words that cannot be unsaid. Instead I made him bring out bucket and soap and sponge and made him clean up an entire wall in spite of him saying his arm was aching.

At the end of it he came and hugged me and said I really love you mamma. He knew he was wrong, he didn't need to be told that or screamed at or even punished other than make amends by cleaning up. He realized that I had not punished him but respected his need to express and had asked him to take responsibility for his actions. By not being punitive I gained more connection and a deeper resolve in him to be good for me and that aching arm from all the cleaning will not be forgotten soon and I don't think he will be scribbling on walls in a hurry again. We spoke about his art later and thought of a solution, how we could cover the walls in paper the next time he felt the need to express himself on my walls.

While I always wanted to be a gentle parent, not shout, not raise my hand, connect more etc. I just never knew how. I wanted to but failed and ended up shouting A LOT. To absolutely no effect. Shouting, time-outs, even smacks from time to time (and lying to myself that I will never do that again) blaming and shaming made things so much worse in my house. Now with the aid of these books mentioned below I have changed that a lot. There are good days and bad (read PMS) but on the whole I am quite happy with the way my relationship with my kids has been mended through more connection and less shouting and I really have started enjoying being a mother again.

So without further ado here are some of my favourites: (If you decide to buy any, I'd appreciate it if you clicked on any of the links below)

How to talk so that Kids will Listen and Listen so that Kids will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine

Mazlish: This was the first book I read which changed the way I thought about my kids and how to get through to them. Half way through the book I started implementing some of the things I read about and within two days my then 4.5 year old just got that I was on his side and that I really did love him and he started trying to be better. It gave me confidence to see the bigger picture and realize that we are getting these daily battles all wrong. A must read for each and ever parent. It's even helped in my relationship with my husband.

Calm parents happy kids by Dr. Laura Malcolm – 'Always choose love' was the refrain that came up many times in this book and one that has changed my life. How simple and how much common sense to that and how often do we choose power struggles and inconsequential battles instead? With children it's so easy to forget that now is everything when you are constantly thinking about the future and worrying whether you're doing enough. Love is not enough. We may love our kids but we may not be communicating that to our kids by our actions. We take it for granted that we love our kids so much so our kids have to know it but really they don't always feel it.

This book trains you to be a loving, peaceful, and connecting parent. I know I have become a calmer parent and my kids are way happier just by reading this book.

One noteworthy thing she mentions in her books and [her blog](#) is that the kids who are the angriest and most challenging are in the most need for love and support and all kids want to be good which I found very reassuring.

[Calm parents happy siblings](#) by Dr. Laura Malcolm – I read this book at a time when sibling rivalry was ripping up my sanity and I was really regretting having two children. In spite of my beautiful sweet two year old, my heart and my strength, I felt I had made a big mistake bringing him here to a brother like that. And then I read this book and my boys are fighting way less, connecting way more, loving more and appreciating each other and I know love will find a way. Oh yes there are bad days, but then there are so many amazing ones and I never thought that could be so.

Dr Laura Malcolm writes an amazing blog called [AHA Parenting](#) and most of my Google searches on aggressive behavior and other parenting issues have led me to her blog and have given absolutely fabulous and insightful advise. Her two books are the best gifts to myself I could ever have purchased (or downloaded). Highly recommended.

[Transforming the difficult child](#) by Howard Glasser and Jennifer Easley: I have read and implemented the techniques in this book with my difficult child. this book follows a technique called the Nurtured Heart Approach. If your child is an average normal child all the other books here will work for you, but if you have an intense or spirited child on your hands (and if you do you know that you do) then this is THE book. Just as soon as I started this book the real transformation has happened and my high needs, intense 5 year old is unrecognizable in a very positive way. This book talks about how children like this who are not able to direct their energy tick and how they thrive when they are getting the most energy payoffs. When we are angry or they misbehave is when we are the most energetic and the child receives the maximum payoff. It doesn't take long until they are sucked into this cycle of behaving badly for any sort of attention and how we can reverse that pattern and channel the child's energies into positive things. I loved loved loved this book and cannot recommend it enough to anyone who has tried all the various parenting techniques and failed.

[It's OK not to share and other renegade rules](#) by Heather Shumaker: Phew ! (taking the back of my palm across my forehead and wringing my fingers kind of phew!) This book really talked to me. I loved it so so much. In a nutshell what it says is that it's ok if it's not hurting people (physically or emotionally) and property. And the billion things we parents sometimes worry about? Some of them are not really the biggest of deals.

To give an example let's talk about sharing since the title says it's ok not to share. The author makes some excellent points on how it must feel like from a child's point of view when they are so engrossed in play and we adults swoop in just because another child wants the same toy. Would we stop reading a book we are engrossed in just because someone else wants it just at that moment or

would we say 'sure you can borrow it when I'm done?'

Instead she writes that the child whose turn it is should take as much time as she needs and decide when to give the next child a turn while the other child gets lessons in having to wait. She backs her points with excellent research and this is a very child friendly resource that I simply loved reading and implementing in my home.

Raising Your Spirited Child by Mary Sheeda Kurcinka : For anyone living with a child who is MORE or as the title says : A guide for parents whose child is more Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent and Energetic this book is for you. Most books that I have shared about are for normal children but when nothing works with your unique child is time to crack open the books for us bewildered few. What this book did for me was helped me relate and get the sense that my child does fall into some sort of bracket however loose a bracket it is. You always feel strength in numbers and I feel that if you can find a sense as a parent that you belong somewhere and are not completely alone as I often feel as a mother of an unpolished diamond, then that's always a positive. I could relate to loads with this book and would definitely recommend it if regular parenting strategies are not working for you.

Between Parent and Child by Dr Haim Ginott – Dr. Haim Ginnott is the father of gentle parenting from what I can see. His book between parent and child and his workshops laid the foundations for all these authors I wrote about above. Adele Faber, Elain Mazlish and others quote him a lot and have borrowed from him to write these fabulous books. His book makes you see underneath the surface of what children are thinking and really can help you become an emotionally intelligent parent. A good read to get a deeper understanding although not a must read if you are trying to make changes in your home. As per me the 4 listen above may suffice for that.

How to talk so that kids will listen – Siblings without rivalry by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish : This was the first book I read about siblings and it more or less just had examples from their workshops unlike their first book – How to talk so that kids will listen and listen so that kids will talk, that really gives you a great idea on how to talk. Yes this book does touch upon basic things to avoid, that causes sibling rivalry but it's not as easy to put into practice as Dr. Laura Malcolm's sibling book I wrote about above. I would give this a miss and pick that.

Emotional Intelligence – Daniel Goleman: I'm still in the middle of reading this one. This is not a parenting book perse but emotional intelligence is the crux of good parenting and it can be taught to those kids who don't have it as easily as others, which is why it has got me hooked. It's a really heavy book that digs into the workings of the brain and emotions so I'm taking my time with it. I am still to get to the part on how to go about raising empathetic beings so I can't comment to much. Do I recommend reading it? Not for parenting per se but if you are hooked into human behavior as I suddenly am then yes.

Kids, Parents and Power Struggles by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka: On my reading list (to be updated.)

And some I disliked

Free Range Kids by Lenore Skenazy: This one is all about not worrying too much every step of the way and letting kids do more things on their own. Which is great, just that it did not apply too much to me as I do a lot of the things she wrote about anyway and there were too many repetitions.

1-2-3 Magic by Thomas W Phellan : Beware of these books that write from the start and keep repeating on how gentle their strategies are but they give cookie cutter approaches to parenting by promising magic all the while totally disrespecting children as people. The author repeated a good many times that the number one mistake parents make is that they mistake children for mini adults and try and talk and reason with them when in fact children are nothing but selfish unreasonable little creatures. And the sad part is many a people would buy into anything that makes life so simple if they haven't read better.

Thanks for reading this LOOOONG post and staying with me. I'll update here the more I read.

If you want to buy any of these books I would be really glad if you clicked on the links in this post as it goes directly to Amazon and gives me a small fee :)

