

Mother and Child

Jan de Vries



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MOTHER AND CHILD

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Introduction

M*other and Child* is not like other books on the subject of childcare. It is a practical approach to the best way to care for children growing up in a world full of pollution and other influences that may adversely affect their health, mentally, emotionally and physically. As a father and grandfather of four children and ten grandchildren, I have some experience of this! I have also taken care of both adults and children as patients for nearly 45 years and have given some of my findings in this book.

When writing *Mother and Child*, I asked my youngest daughter Maria, and her husband, Marcus, who have three wonderful, healthy boys, to pass on some of their advice, based on their experience of bringing up children in the 21st century. In this rapidly changing world, adjustments have to be made in how we look after our children. It is a great privilege to have them, but we also have a great responsibility from the time we bring them into this world until they grow up and want to stand on their own feet. Children are only 'lent material' and one day they will have to look after themselves. We can only, for as long as they are entrusted to us, do the very best for them.

I am sure that the knowledge passed on by Maria and Marcus in this book will be of help in filling the gaps in other books on this subject. I do hope that it will find its way into many homes, where we can share the experience of looking after our little treasures to the best of our ability.

ONE

Nature or Nurture?

Whilst I was thinking of writing this book – which I had put off for quite some time – something happened which inspired me to start it. After a very busy day at my practice in Montagu Street in London, I rushed to get a train from Liverpool Street station to Stansted. When I was sitting in the train, a young black mother boarded with her three beautiful children. Their hair was spotlessly clean. Both mother and her three children looked happy, but I asked myself why these beautiful children had such pudding faces. I discovered the answer quickly, as I could see what the mother was dishing out to these children: coloured sweeties, chocolates and fizzy drinks. They were sitting on the other side of the corridor and, as there was a place next to me, the eldest girl (who was about seven or eight) came to sit beside me. Although there was no conversation, the girl looked at me as I was starting on my usual banana, and I asked her if she would like to share it with me. Wisely, the girl glanced at her mother for permission first, who nodded that she could, and we both had half a banana. As the train passed Tottenham Hale, it suddenly stopped quite abruptly. The little girl took my hand in shock and looked at me, and I calmed her down. When the train started to go again, she was tired and quite happily put her little head against my shoulder and slept all the way to Stansted. The mother, busy with the other two children, never spoke a word. I wish I'd had an opportunity to talk to her about her children's diet, but unfortunately I couldn't. When the train stopped in

Stansted, I wakened the little girl quietly. She looked up to me with those beautiful dark eyes and said, 'Thank you for being my daddy.' That really was very touching and it made me think about how wonderful it is to have responsibility for children.

My mind went to my own ten grandchildren, and I thought of today's society in which these children grow up, the care that we give them and the love that they need to cope with life in the 21st century. Of course, to nature or to nurture is a very personal choice. I have seen parents in my day who made a lot of fuss if their child had a little fall or suffered a tiny scratch, and I have watched these children growing up into little hypochondriacs. I have also seen parents who just pooh-poohed every scratch, graze or fall, and who perhaps made their children too hard.

There is a balance in everything, but nature very often takes its own course. If we have a small scratch, it is best to allow nature to heal it. When children grow up with this attitude, they will be influenced by how we approach their problems and will let nature take over. I have lived in countries where babies were born in the most bizarre circumstances. These children grow up to be very independent, learning to cope with whatever life may bring.

My own children were all born at home and it was a wonderful experience to see from the very beginning what happened after they came to earth. I studied their little heartbeats, their hearing and swallowing, and watched their first reactions to life, which I always think is such a great wonder. Once the babies were fed, it was very interesting to see how they developed, both physically and personally. My youngest grandchild, who has just been born, came to earth fully aware of all that was happening and, after a little while, developed the sort of personality that I saw in my own mother. On observation, there was the same twinkle that my mother used to have. It is a wonderful thing to think that those children and grandchildren bear the characteristics of

parents and grandparents as they grow up, and how their personalities are formed. Some are there immediately and some develop slowly. Some babies have to fight, as one of my grandchildren did when she was born. It was her will and resistance that kept her alive, for she weighed just 1lb 8oz. It was clear that physical contact for this tiny baby did everything to help her fight for the life that she had been given. The feeling of being confident, safe and warm was very important and to let nature take its course is one of the most wonderful things.

It is also terribly important that, as a mother, you take care of yourself. Problems might arise such as jealousy or post-natal depression, and possibly even a feeling of anti-climax, as I discuss in my book *Pregnancy and Childbirth*. Do be open about it, talk about it and get advice about what remedies it may be necessary to take in order to meet the needs of your body. I have often seen that one simple mineral may be lacking at this time, zinc, and it may be necessary to take a zinc supplement.

Babies have a terrific sense of smell. This is a gift from nature and it is very important that small babies, once they have come to earth, smell, 'This is my mummy.' They are also very tuned into sounds and the sound of Mummy's or Daddy's voice is very important. Believe it or not, babies can also see. For the first two months, babies can see things most clearly when they are about eight inches from the bridge of the nose. Things go a bit out of focus when they are a bit further away. The most amazing thing is that a baby will always see the waving of a tree and will be very interested, when you walk under one, to see the leaves of the tree moving. It is very important to get the baby tuned into nature.

Sleep is one of the most important things for babies. Babies know how much sleep they need. Once they have had enough, they will waken and will not go back to sleep, no matter what one does to try and make this happen.

Often it is a question of getting the baby used to a routine. If natural sleep does not happen quickly enough, it is good, in order to make sure babies get a little rest, to give them ten drops of *Valerian hops* before they go to bed.

Nature will tell babies when they are hungry. Regular feeding times are important, as this helps them understand routine. Follow your own feelings about this, as you will come to know your own child better than anybody else. The baby loves his or her mother the best of all. It is a good idea to naturally help babies when feeding by giving them little strokes and thinking loving thoughts – vibrations are very important. There are plenty of books available from the Health Service and the Education Board that will educate you on how to feed your baby. The material you use is important, and will help you to monitor your baby's development.

Babies' bowels must be looked after and there is nothing more important than allowing them to use their bowels naturally. It is important to learn and read a lot about toilet training. If there is a problem in the form of constipation, there are natural remedies to help. I often see with breast-fed babies who have soft stools (they are basically never hard) that if there is slight constipation, laxatives are certainly not the answer. Bottle-fed babies often become constipated. Their stools are usually harder and smellier than those of breast-fed babies. Natural foods like prune juice and sometimes a little yoghurt can remedy this. When there is such a problem, you can also give the baby natural remedies to help. For example, if the baby develops a sore bottom you may use a soft herbal ointment like *Ung Em*, made by the herbalists Abbots of Leigh especially for this problem, as well as nappy rash. It is a very safe remedy for the relief of discomfort.

Having practised homoeopathy for almost 45 years, I have seen how very beneficial homoeopathy is in looking after children. One of the finest ways to help children is to learn

to understand the four principles of homoeopathy, one of them being to see what kind of character the baby develops and then use similar remedies. In other words, 'like cures like'. We often see that if the baby is a certain type, for instance *Belladonna*, *Gelsemium* or *Pulsatilla*, the very low potency remedies will quickly be effective. One of the other principles of homoeopathy is to look at the cause of a problem. It is often the case that children are bombarded with certain medicines to cure the symptoms of childhood illnesses and then run into more health problems at a later stage. Let nature take its course and when there is chickenpox, mumps or measles, always make sure that they get it well out of their systems as quickly as possible. Today, after all these years in practice, I have seen so many patients who have been the victims of not being properly treated when they had childhood illnesses. I am convinced that some of the degenerative diseases patients suffer from, such as multiple sclerosis, have their roots in the wrong treatment of childhood illnesses. Many men are sterile as a result of mumps. It is therefore very important that these particular problems are treated properly at the time. I have seen many people who couldn't have children at first, but who, after using homoeopathy to treat the miasmas which were left in their systems from former inflammation, viruses or infections, have become happy fathers and mothers.

Nature will always heal and, as my grandmother always said, 'Give me a flu and I will treat every illness.' In other words, a temperature that produces a sweat might sometimes be very necessary. Although medical care is important, please remember that if there is an imbalance in the body it should be removed from the system before it becomes a problem. Homoeopathy is certainly not a piece of chocolate, as one professor said. It deals with the causes of problems and it is very necessary in treating the child. When the child grows up nature will take its course, but nature needs to be given a chance. We so often want to feel

well quickly, and we want the same thing for our children, but please help them with minor health problems by looking after them naturally.

The very first thing I look for when a baby is born is how well he or she breathes. Breathing is very important, and while the paediatrician thought one of my grandchildren would die, I knew she would live because she arrived breathing from the tummy. The breath of life was quite clearly seen in this baby and she has now developed into a lovely child who has no problems at all. When the baby grows up and its character starts to form, it is often the case that a relaxed child breathes in the tummy, whilst a very nervous or hyperactive child breathes above the tummy or in the chest, which is also the case with asthmatic children. It is very important to teach that child Hara breathing: inhaling through the nose, filling up the tummy with air and exhaling through the mouth in a nice, rhythmic manner. This sort of education is very important for the child.

It is a tremendous gift of God to have a child entrusted to you and that child, who depends on you completely and loves you, needs to know how much you love him or her. This determines a lot in later life, such as how much the child will be attached to you and how much influence you will then have when you want to protect the child when they meets situations that, as a parent, you can see are not good for him or her. Often, the best thing is to follow the voice of nature.

When I got married, I said to my wife, as she was in education and knew a lot more about children than I did, that I would back her decisions even if I did not always agree with them. Later, when we had children, we usually discussed both ways of thinking as to what was best for the child. Our task in making these decisions was even greater as we were both busy with our work and our children had to depend a lot on nannies. Although, thankfully, we had very good nannies, there were of course things we had to discuss

in order to bring the children up in the best possible way, and secure their futures. We both knew that our children were confident that they were always very greatly cared for – something that I personally missed out on a lot in my own life.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, I asked Maria and Marcus to work on this book with me, to tell me their views on bringing up children. This is a very personal matter, but it is quite important for the child's health and well-being that some experienced advice is given. I once heard a couple asking an older, childless person how they should bring up their children. The older man asked what age the child was, and when he was told the child was five, he then said, 'You are too late. You should have made up your minds when your child was born on how to bring it up.' This sort of advice, however, requires the experience of people who have had children and who know the kinds of problems that can arise. For all of us, each day brings new experiences, especially for a child who is only just awakening to life. Each day new things happen for a child. He or she will have many questions about these new experiences, which need honest answers from a parent.

TWO

Baby - Small or Big

Quite some time ago my youngest daughter informed me she was pregnant. I was very happy. After eight weeks, her husband, although working in medicine, told me that on the scan the baby looked like 'a little cashew nut'. He showed me the scan - everything looked marvellous, and I thought then what a great wonder it all was. Sixteen weeks later, he showed me another scan and I saw that the baby had grown very well. I told him that all these scans were very, very nice to see, but I wasn't over-keen on them for pregnant women, and thought that my daughter shouldn't have too many scans. The pregnancy went very well and today when I look at their lovely boy and see how lively he is, I think of that little cashew nut and it makes me very happy.

A while later, my third daughter told me that she was pregnant. However, I was very worried about her health as she was not really made for having babies. Her pregnancy didn't go too well and she'd had a few miscarriages in the past. At one point, unfortunately, some mistakes were made during her pregnancy and I was very worried at times. Things progressed all right, though, but towards the sixth month her doctor, with whom she was quite friendly, became very worried and phoned to tell me that because of my daughter's high blood pressure and other complications, the baby had to be delivered straight away. She advised my daughter to go to the hospital to have the baby. When my