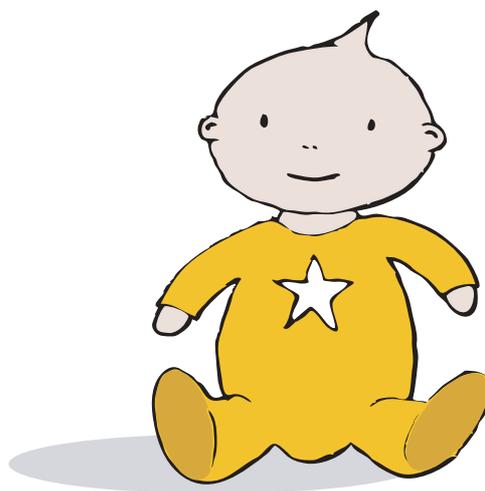


*'Dip into Little Bundle for reassurance, comfort, and companionship in the middle of the night.'* Robin Barker, author of *Baby Love*



# little bundle

*comfort and inspiration for new parents*

*Jodie Benveniste*

**Exhausted from broken sleep?  
Confused by conflicting advice?  
Overwhelmed by your baby's constant demands?**

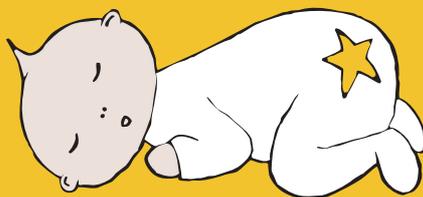
You are not alone. *Little Bundle* provides consolation and inspiration during the first year of your baby's life.

With disarming honesty Jodie Benveniste tells her stories about the emotional highs and lows of caring for her newborn baby.

And, like a good friend, she does not tell you *how* to look after your baby, but her quotes, reflections and affirmations will help you parent *your way*.

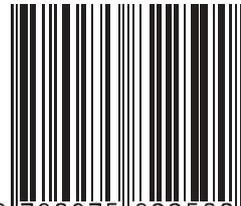
*'Dip into Little Bundle for reassurance, comfort and companionship in the middle of the night or any time to be reminded that the joy, the stamina, the rewards and the buckets of love given and returned are all part of the remarkable experience of parenthood.'*

Robin Barker, author of *Baby Love*



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>> [www.bravenewword.com.au](http://www.bravenewword.com.au)

ISBN 0-9758225-0-0



9 780975 822500

## Foreword

Pregnancy and childbirth are highly significant events in the lives of men and women, but especially women. Birth, and the months that follow, is a time of deep contrasts - happiness and fulfilment, wonder, swinging emotions, dependence and vulnerability.

I find in my work that once parents have mastered the technicalities (which usually doesn't take long), and decided whose advice they are going to follow, the next thing they need is comfort - a shoulder to cry on, someone to tell them that what they're feeling is normal, someone to agree with a decision they've made, someone to acknowledge the good job they are doing, someone to bear them up and give them strength.

The comfort does not have to come from the experts; better in many ways that it comes from fellow parents who have experienced and lived through the dilemmas most of us have to deal with as we hold and care for our babies.

The comfort new parents need is not always available; we tend to live long distances from our extended families and as we often discover non-parent friends from our previous lives may not be fabulous at offering comfort.

Jodie Benveniste, mother of two, has written this book especially for you with all this in mind. *Little Bundle* does not tell you what to do or how to do it but aims to give comfort with large doses of encouragement and understanding thrown in.

Jodie has selected an array of quotes from a diverse range of people; not only baby experts but writers, philosophers, comedians, actors, celebrities and artists. She has added to these her own carefully considered ideas about the emotional, psychological and physical realities of life with a baby.

Dip into *Little Bundle* for reassurance, comfort and companionship in the middle of the night or any time to be reminded that the joy, the stamina, the rewards and the buckets of love given and returned are all part of the remarkable experience of parenthood.

Robin Barker

Registered nurse, midwife, Child and Family Health nurse

Author of *Baby Love*, *The Mighty Toddler*, *Baby and Toddler Meals*

## Introduction

When I discovered I was pregnant I knew my life was going to change, but I had no idea to what degree. I spent the nine months of my pregnancy tuning into my body and my baby, preparing, I thought, for motherhood. However, the night my daughter was born I was in no way prepared.

The first three months of my daughter's life I was physically and emotionally exhausted, and in shock. My breasts blew up to the size of balloons and my nipples cracked and bled. My conversation became incoherent, my memory went and I cried in front of my GP, the child and family health nurse, my mother-in-law, my mothers group and the lady from road assistance when my car broke down.

During this time, many of the baby care books were only partly helpful. I didn't need information about correct breastfeeding positions, or wrapping techniques, or how to burp my baby. What I needed was emotional assistance. I needed to be told, You are fine and your baby is fine. It's okay. This is a process and you are learning. I needed, like a baby, to be reassured.

I wrote this book because when I stood bleary-eyed in the bookshop looking for reassurance I could not find it. While some experts' opinions helped, others undermined my confidence as a new parent and hindered my ability to respond to my needs and my baby's needs.

*Little Bundle* will not tell you how to care for your baby, but hopefully lend you the confidence to parent your way. As you will or have already discovered for yourself, parenthood is an intense, challenging but incredibly rewarding journey. I trust this book will be a useful tool on that journey.

## Expectations

*'The most common phrases heard from the lips of new parents, especially new mothers, is still, Why didn't anyone tell me it would be like this?'* Robin Barker

 Most of us have had little day-to-day experience with babies before our own is born. So when our baby arrives we are ill-prepared for a new life. The change is so swift and shocking that we may experience paralysis, anxiety and acrimony. No one told us it would be this hard.

When my baby was born, I cursed, Why hadn't I read more baby books? Why wasn't baby care covered more thoroughly in my antenatal classes? Why didn't anyone warn me? I now realise that warnings were probably useless.

Living with a newborn is something you need to experience yourself. No one can explain how you will feel the first time you clutch your baby to your chest, and no one can tell you how you will react the first time you find it difficult to settle your baby. It is your journey into parenthood - an experience you share with other parents, but one that is intimately your own.

**Warnings can only be heeded if they are understood. I may have been unable to truly understand life with my baby before he arrived, but now he is here, my wisdom is growing**

## Trusting yourself

*'Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do.'* Benjamin Spock

 We are responsible for our baby's welfare. It is a huge responsibility. What if we get it wrong? Will letting our baby cry mean he feels unsafe and unloved? Will feeding him formula instead of breast milk compromise his immune system? If we do not take him to baby gym classes and buy him baby genius videos, will his development stall?

I considered myself a relatively confident person before becoming a parent, but when my baby arrived I questioned everything. I worried because I was shaping a human life and I did not want to stuff up. I worried, unnecessarily, because I did not trust myself.

Over time, by observing and listening to your baby, your trust deepens. Over time, by responding to your baby, your confidence grows. Over time, by loving your baby, you realise you know more than you think you do.

**Generations before me have raised happy and healthy children. By observing, listening, responding to, and loving my baby, I am doing the same**

## Love

*'Love is so simple.'* Jacques Prevert

★ On days when I am flustered because the sink is full of dishes, the washing machine has flooded the laundry, the rice has burnt, there are dirty footprints across the recently vacuumed carpet, I've tripped over the cats for the third time, and it is too hot, my baby gurgles and smiles at me and my perspective changes. She reminds me that love is at the heart of family life.

We complicate love by having expectations, setting conditions and being distracted by annoying, but irrelevant, issues. In essence, love is simple. As your baby's guardian, you are best qualified to love him. You do not need a book to tell you how, and you can never give your baby too much love.

You make your baby feel loved every time you kiss his cheek and every time you squeeze him to your chest. You love your baby every time you smile and laugh with him, and every time you listen and respond. When you love someone you are affirming their worth.

**Instead of getting distracted by issues that do not matter, I am simply going to love my baby, enjoy his company and be grateful he is part of our family.**

## Achievement

*'The great high of winning Wimbledon lasts for about a week. You go down in the record books, but you don't have anything tangible to hold onto. But having a baby - there isn't any comparison.'* Chris Evert



We rarely acknowledge our achievements as parents. Unlike holding up the winner's trophy at the Wimbledon final, caring for a baby is without distinguishable milestones, is unlikely to attract media attention and success can be difficult to judge.

Although we may like attributing our baby's three-hour day nap or healthy appetite to our superior parenting skills, must we also accept the blame for her dummy dependence and 'witching hour' crying? Hopefully not.

I struggled with my baby's everyday demands, but there were moments when I gazed at her, instead of simply seeing her. I marvelled at her tiny fingers, her soft, downy head, and her pudgy legs. I held her close and thought, I have helped create you, and now I am helping you grow into a person. During those moments I realised there is no greater achievement than creating and nurturing new life.

Even the most mundane activities become extraordinary when we acknowledge their worth. Do not be fooled. As the giver and nurturer of life, you are achieving more than you think.

**Every day that I feed, clothe, comfort and love my baby, I am helping her develop into a remarkable human being. This is a major achievement**

## Motherhood

*'The shock of motherhood affects every woman's self and lifestyle and is a mixture of a sense of gain, a sense of loss, intense joy, intense fatigue, intense worry of the sort never felt before (which fades but never quite goes), boredom, wonder, delight and lingering fears that the former body she once occupied has gone, never to return.'* Robin Barker

★ I found the shift from 'me' to 'mother' excruciatingly difficult. The first time I walked around the shopping centre while my baby slept in the pram, I thought, What has my life become? When my jaw ached from hours of 'shhing' my agitated baby, I wondered, Does an independent 'me' still exist? After months of mind-numbing fatigue, I questioned, Will I ever write again?

Becoming a mother alters your identity. The new experiences and emotions you face - the enormous pride of watching your baby bum-shuffle across the floor for the first time, the irrational fear that someone or something might harm your baby and the disabling conflict of wanting to seek self-fulfilment from a career or other activities that exclude your baby - change you.

Motherhood happens overnight, but you are unlikely to adapt as quickly. Embracing your new life and your new self takes time. Mourning your old life and your old self may take even longer.

**When I resist the changes my new life is forcing upon me, I deny myself the opportunity to learn and grow. When I accept my new life, a stronger and deeper sense of 'me' emerges**

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## Advice

*'Advice is what we ask for when we already know the answer but wish we didn't.'* Erica Jong

★ When new parents ask for advice, we are rarely seeking new information. Instead, we want someone to confirm our views. If we find someone who agrees with us, then we are happy because we can proceed as we wish. But if our views are contradicted or questioned, this can lead to confusion, anxiety and insecurity. 'Maybe I shouldn't let her cry. Maybe I should feed her less.'

During my baby's first few weeks, I didn't know how to care for her. Attachment parenting told me to never put my baby down, whereas the early child and family health nurse told me to put my baby to bed awake. I wanted a clear-cut answer but there weren't any. Instead, I needed to stop looking outside for answers. I needed to listen to my baby and listen to myself.

Contradictory opinions about baby care are rife. 'Don't let your baby cry.' 'Let your baby cry.' 'Let her feed for as long as she likes.' 'Stop feeding after ten minutes.' So the opportunities for confusion and questioning are rife. If you already know what you want to do, then sometimes it is best to simply go ahead and do it without seeking advice. We can take our own advice and avoid confusion.

**I am a confident and committed parent. I know when to seek advice, and when to trust my own judgment.**

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This is a sample of the book

**Little Bundle: Comfort and inspiration for new parents**

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