

Sample chapter

Little Green Parent Series 1.0 Baby

“50 ways of going green with your baby”

Introduction

This first part of the Little Green Parent Series focuses on the very basic (but by no means simple) needs of newborn babies and babies before they reach the toddler stage. Although anyone who has ever had a baby (and not surprisingly there is a lot of us), knows how very big a person already inhabits that tiny little body.

This is neither meant to tell you what you should or shouldn't do nor is it based on years of medical expertise and experience. It is more likely to be read in the vein of responsive parenting coupled with ideas how one can maintain an environmentally conscious lifestyle without giving up some of the amenities we are now so used to.

You won't find any thoughts on strict routines as those that have been promoted by Gina Ford² nor would I advocate a completely anti-authoritarian up-bringing, nor do I want to offer any medical advice. My aim is to mainly share my thoughts on how we can begin to instil a sense of wonder in our children and help them to realise that without the natural world we live in there is no life.

Along the way, I asked myself some questions (amongst others) that you might have thought about, too:

How can we protect them from the constant onslaught of technology on their senses and the detachment it produces without banning it completely from their lives? I believe that it leads to greater confidence in your own abilities, i. e. finding your way without a GPS but of course be able to use it in times of need.

How can we achieve this healthy balance, i. e. be able to function if our electronic devices fail to do so?

How can we build a future for them where wild flower meadows still exist and where there is still natural food, which is non-processed and actually still

looks like a piece of fruit?³

How can this more natural life style lead to healthier children right from the start even before they can walk?

To offer one or two solutions and several suggestions is the aim of this book.

The Green Basics

Going green with your baby is not just about what "things" to buy and get. In fact, it is about how to get by on a small budget, upcycling things without looking threadbare. Because you won't have to. In this sense, every letter of GREEN BASICS stands for something else.

G – Generosity and/or Gratitude

I know you have all heard it about being grateful for the little things and writing a gratitude diary. Indeed, the above go hand in hand. It seems that we are waking up to the fact that living in communities and establishing trust is essential for a healthy and happy life. Even environmental biologists are more in favour of a rather symbiotic than survival of the fittest theory whereas the fittest are those who know how to help others and therefore themselves. But there is a lot to be said about reminding yourself about what we are actually taking for granted and focusing on the simple and yet important things in life (and/or meaningful). This practice certainly helps when you are feeling frazzled and overtired (which you are bound to do). This is also about sharing the load and accepting help.

R - Recyclable

This speaks for itself. But it is not just about dumping things in the right bin which is often somewhat of a challenge especially when multiple materials have been used on one product, cardboard and plastic is a classic very often to showcase toys or food. It's about thinking what you can use in your own home, i. e. cloth nappies as cleaning cloths once your child is happy and ready to use the potty/toilet, old glass jars for storage instead of buying plastic storage boxes and using them for homemade jams and preserves, tea lights, yoghurt making and even freezing⁴.

E – Ecological

A lot seems to be assumed and umbrella-ed underneath it. A lot pretends to be “eco”, but that won’t automatically make it good for the environment. So simply buying something with that label won't make you eco-conscious, it is more about observing, trying things for yourself and reminding about what you really need, which very often isn’t as much as you might think.

E – Ethical

This is about fairness, support and fair trade. Globalisation has very often taken exploitation to a different scale, but only because it isn’t right next door doesn't mean it doesn't happen. Modern slavery is a big problem and we can't relegate it to some far away past where things are done differently. As a Go-between you can do a lot by choosing products that benefit people, animals etc. It's about who makes them and what is in it. Make that little extra effort by consuming less.

N – Nutritious and/or Non-toxic

These two terms are not quite the same but very similar. A lot of food stuffs that are the least nutritious contain things that are perhaps not exactly toxic but bad for your health nonetheless. The main way to protect your family against this is to make your food up from scratch.

B – Biodegradable

This is mainly about using products in your household which contain fewer chemicals which make them safer not only for the environment but also for yourself and your baby. This includes household cleaners, nappies and different types of plastics which can very often be reduced by taking a few simple steps.

A – Affordable

You might be surprised that going green will almost certainly save you a lot of money in the end. Very often there needs to be a bigger investment to be made initially as you will see with the cloth nappies. It's also about swapping things within a community and helping each other. Another way is to learn to make your own things without having to be an expert and reduce the use of plastics, especially single-use plastics.

S – Sustainable

This is not always within reach and more about trying to find out whether have been sustainably sourced and/or produced. This is especially important when it comes to toiletries which very often contain palm oil which can come in many different guises. This also comes into play (quite literally) with toys.

I – Informed

This is about yourself and your decision making and whether you are accessing the resources available to you. Going green is also about knowing the options which are available to you and that you can always opt out.

C – Conscious

Be conscious and aware of what is going on around you. Be open to raising awareness of nature and sparking that interest in your child. Do this without trying to teach it something straight away. This is about entering that state where exploration is the key without having a specific goal in mind all the time.

S – Social

Share in a community. Find out about small holdings and allotments if you don't have enough garden space yourself and connect with groups of like-minded people. Very often that is where another hint comes from, a possibility to find a platform for new projects and support, new ideas and more.