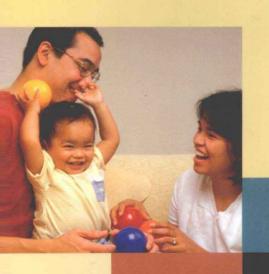
# PROCESS of PARENTING

JANE B. BROOKS







# THE PROCESS OF PARENTING

SIXTH EDITION



Jane B. Brooks





To my grandparents and parents, and my children and their children

#### THE PROCESS OF PARENTING, SIXTH EDITION

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"For most adult humans, parenthood is still the ultimate source of the sense of meaning. For most adults, the question 'What does life mean?' is automatically answered once they have children; better yet it is no longer asked," writes the psychologist David Gutmann after testing and interviewing men and women about the impact of parenthood on their lives.<sup>1</sup>

Do people receive training to succeed in this important activity? No! Anyone who drives a car or cuts hair for pay must have a license or demonstrate a certain level of skill before being permitted to engage in these activities independently. But nowhere does society require systematic parenting education, which may matter most of all.

This book attempts to fill this educational gap. As with the earlier editions, the sixth edition of *The Process of Parenting* shows how parents and caregivers can translate their love and concern for children into effective parenting skills. The book strives to bring to life the child's world and concerns, so parents can better understand what their children may be thinking and feeling. The book also describes the myriad thoughts and feelings—positive and negative—that parents have so that they can better understand themselves. Finally, the book highlights the influence of the social context on both parents and children.

#### APPROACH OF THE PROCESS OF PARENTING

I have selected topics and written this book from the points of view of a parent, a clinician, a researcher, and a teacher of parenting skills. I have the firm conviction that anyone who wants to invest attention and effort in becoming a competent, caring parent can do so in his or her own way. The single prerequisite is the desire to succeed along with the willingness to invest time and energy, and the results are well worth the effort. My experience as a clinician has shown me that children face many difficult situations; with a loving, supportive caregiver, children can live life fully and happily even if temporarily engulfed by trauma.

Children are not the only ones enriched by adults' efforts to be effective parents. Helping children grow is an intense and exciting experience that brings special rewards to us as parents. Our physical stamina, agility, and speed increase as we care for infants and toddlers. Our emotional stamina grows as we deal with our own intense feelings toward our children and help children learn to express and modulate their feelings. Our intellectual skills grow as we answer young children's questions and, later, help them learn school subjects. In helping children grow, we gain for ourselves an inner vitality and richness that affects all our relationships.

#### ORGANIZATION

Organizing and writing the sixth edition has proven exciting and challenging. The aim has been to update and condense the material of the fifth edition and to add three new chapters, one completely new and two that expand on topics in the fifth edition. Let me describe the overall organization, noting the changes as they appear.

Like the fifth edition, the sixth edition has three parts. Part I—General Concepts, Goals, and Strategies of Parenting—includes Chapters 1–5. As in the past, Chapter 1 describes the roles and interactions of the three participants in the process of parenting—the child, the parent, and the social system—and the ways social forces shape parenting. Chapter 2, a new chapter, describes theories and strategies of parenting. This chapter presents an overall theoretical framework of systems theories and includes, along with the new additions, material that appeared in several different chapters in previous editions.

Although it incorporates selected material from the fifth edition, Chapter 3 is also largely new. Focusing on the cultural influences on parenting, it includes cultural models of parenting strategies and presents the values and distinctive influences of six major ethnic groups—Native Americans, European Americans, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Middle Eastern Americans. The experiences of specific ethnic groups continue to appear throughout the text as they relate to the topic of discussion. For example, ethnic identity formation and prejudice are discussed in the chapters dealing with identity formation. Chapter 3 also looks at the influences of social status and of economic hardship on parenting.

Chapters 4 and 5 each detail one of the two basic tasks of parenting: (1) creating close emotional relationships and (2) shaping and modifying children's behavior.

Part II—Parenting at Developmental Stages—begins with Chapter 6 on how parents make the transition to parenthood. This chapter focuses on how the methods and timing of becoming parents influence the process of parenting. Beginning with Chapter 7, Part II describes how general concepts and basic strategies are applied to children at six different stages of development: infancy (the years from birth to two), early childhood (the years from two to five), elementary school years, early adolescence, late adolescence, and adulthood.

Chapters 7–11 deal with children from birth through the high school years. Each chapter presents updated information on children's physical, intellectual, and personal-social development during the five age periods, emphasizing ways parents can promote positive behaviors. This edition continues to pay particular attention to understanding and promoting children's emotional regulation, especially the regulation of anger and sadness.

Chapter 12, a new chapter, describes the tasks of parenting children from age eighteen onward. The main sections deal with parenting children in the transition to adulthood, parenting independent adult children, parenting dependent adult children, parenting children who move back and forth between independence and dependence, parenting dependent adults, and, finally, parenting one's own parent. Strategies used with children of younger ages are applied when appropriate.

Part III—Parenting in Varying Life Circumstances—describes how parents adapt parenting strategies to meet the challenges of everyday life—parenting and working

(Chapter 13), parenting in diverse family structures (Chapter 14), and parenting in times of trauma (Chapter 15). Chapters 13 and 14 emphasize understanding the nature of the circumstances and challenges involved in each situation and discuss how to promote effective functioning in parents and children—in combining working and parenting and in less traditional family structures, respectively. In Chapter 15, we look at different forms of trauma for children, including abuse, community violence, and the current threat of terrorism. We discuss ways to minimize the threat of trauma, ways to cope with it when it occurs, and how parents help children feel safe in a world that is sometimes unsafe.

#### PROBLEM SOLVING

A portion of each of the chapters in Part II deals with common problems children experience and parents must handle. Because each child is a unique individual, parents require a variety of strategies and techniques for handling problems, depending on the child and the circumstances. A problem-solving approach is presented that consists of defining the problem specifically, getting the child's point of view, making certain the problem is the child's and not the parent's, maintaining positive interactions and good times with children, considering possible actions, taking action, evaluating the results, and starting again, if necessary.

# THE JOYS OF PARENTING

In addition to describing what parents do, the book describes how parents feel as they raise children. Stages of parenthood are identified, and interviews with parents provide information about what parents wish they had known about parenting before they started. The book also emphasizes the joys that parents experience. In 1948, Arthur Jersild and his colleagues at Columbia University observed that most research on parenting was focused on the problems parents experience and little attention was given to "the cheerful side of the ledger." Because this is still true today, I try in this text to redress the imbalance.

# INTEGRATED COVERAGE OF PARENTING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND SUPPORTS FOR PARENTS

In previous editions of *The Process of Parenting*, the final two chapters have dealt with parenting children with special needs and supports for parents. In the sixth edition, this material has been moved into earlier chapters to present a more complete picture of parenting children at specific ages. For example, the discussion of adoption has been moved to the chapter on the transition to parenthood, and the discussion of depression has been moved to the chapter on late adolescence. Similarly, material on supports for parents has been moved to appropriate chapters—such as supports for parents of infants in the chapter on infancy.

#### SPECIAL FEATURES

New features of the book include, at the start of each chapter, a short outline of important topics and a brief newspaper summary highlighting a topic of contemporary interest relating to the chapter. In many chapters, there are practical questions of interest and significance to parents such as, Do the first three years of parenting count the most? What do parents do if they think their child is not developing according to the usual timetables of growth? When in conflict, should parents stay together for the sake of the children?

#### SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

*Instructor's Manual and Test Bank*: Accompanying the book is an instructor's manual and test bank. Please contact McGraw-Hill for more information.

*PowerWeb: Child Psychology:* Accompanying new copies of the book is a pass-code to access *PowerWeb: Child Psychology* at www.dushkin.com/powerweb. *Power-Web* includes current articles, curriculum-based materials, weekly updates with assessment, informative and timely world news, Web links, research tools, student study tools, interactive exercises, and much more. If you have bought a used copy of the text, you can purchase access to *PowerWeb* at www.dushkin.com/powerweb.

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I am grateful to Paul Mussen, who, fifteen years ago, suggested that I use comments from researchers to make material more vivid for students. His concern with the social forces impinging on parenting has continued to influence my thinking.

Finally, I wish to thank my family and friends for their thoughtfulness and company. I want to thank my patients for sharing their lives and experiences with me. I hope they have learned as much about life from me as I have learned from them. Most particularly, I want to thank my children, who are now grown and live away from home. They are very much in my mind as I write, and I relive our experiences together as I explore the different developmental periods. I find that I have learned the most important truths of parenting from our interactions. I believe that when I have paid attention, they have been my best teachers.

The author of this book, Jane Brooks, has had a wide variety of professional and personal experiences that qualify her as an expert in child development. She is a scholar, researcher, and writer in the discipline of child psychology; a practicing clinician working with parents and children; and a mother. Drawing on the knowledge and insights derived from this rich background of experience, she has produced a wise and balanced book that parents will find valuable in fostering the optimal development of their children—helping them to become secure, happy, competent, self-confident, moral individuals. Dr. Brooks offers guidelines that are explicitly linked to major theorists (for example, Freud, Piaget, Erikson) and findings of scientific research in child development, so that the reader is also presented with a wealth of information on physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Students of human development and all who work with children professionally, as well as parents, will profit greatly from reading this book.

Brooks' approach to parenting incorporates many noteworthy features. Her coverage of the fundamental tasks and issues in childrearing is comprehensive. Included are tasks shared by all parents (for example, preparing for the birth of the infant, feeding, toilet training, adjusting to nursery school or kindergarten, the adolescent's growing interest in sex) as well as special, although common, problems (such as temper tantrums, delinquency, use of drugs, and physical or mental handicaps). Critical contemporary experiences such as divorce, single parenting, and stepparenting are also treated with insight and sympathy. Brooks' suggestions for ways of dealing with these problems are reasonable, balanced, and practical; her writing is straightforward, clear, and jargon-free.

Authorities in child development generally agree that the principal theories and accumulated findings of scientific investigations are not in themselves adequate to provide a comprehensive basis for directing parents in childrearing. Given the limitations of the present state of knowledge, guidance must be based on established principles of human development plus the cumulative wisdom and insights of specialists who have worked systematically and successfully in child-guidance settings. Yet many, perhaps most, academically trained child psychologists pay little attention to the writing of such clinicians as Briggs, Dreikurs, Ginott, Gordon, and Spock, regarding them as unscientific "popular" psychologists. This is not true of Dr. Brooks. After careful and critical reading of their work, she concluded that, as a consequence of their vast clinical experience, these specialists have achieved some profound insights about children and have thus developed invaluable techniques for analyzing and dealing effectively with many problems that parents face. Furthermore, Brooks believes that parents themselves can successfully apply some of these techniques to resolve specific problems. Some of the experts' suggestions are therefore incorporated, with appropriate acknowledgment, where they are relevant.

The book is not doctrinaire or prescriptive, however; the author does not advise parents simply to unquestioningly adopt some "system," plan, or set of rules. On the contrary, Brooks stresses the uniqueness of each individual and family, the complex nature of parent-child relations, and the multiple determinants of problem behavior. In Brooks' view, each problem must be placed in its developmental context, and evaluated in terms of the child's level of physical, cognitive, and emotional maturity. The processes of parenting are invariably bidirectional: Parents influence children and children influence parents. Furthermore, families do not function in isolation; each family unit is embedded in a wider network of social systems that affect its functioning. Successful childrearing depends on parents' accepting these complexities, yet also attempting to understand themselves and their children and maintaining a problem-solving orientation.

It is a pleasure to note the pervasive optimistic, yet realistic, tone of the book. The author has recognized that promotion of children's welfare and happiness is one of the highest parental goals, and she communicates her confidence that most parents *can* achieve this. Underlying this achievement is parents' deep-seated willingness to work hard and to devote thought, time, energy, and attention to their children's development and their problems. Reading this book will increase parental understanding and thus make the difficult tasks of parenting easier.

Paul Mussen Former Professor Emeritus of Psychology Former Director, Institute of Human Development University of California, Berkeley CONTENTS vii PREFACE xxiii FOREWORD xxix

#### PART ONE

# General Concepts, Goals, and Strategies of Parenting

- 1 Parenting Is a Process 3
- 2 Theories of Development and Strategies of Parenting 35
- 3 Cultural Influences on Parenting 67
- 4 Establishing Close Emotional Relationships with Children 107
- 5 Shaping and Modifying Children's Behavior 136

#### **PART TWO**

# Parenting at Developmental Stages

- **6** Becoming Parents 163
- 7 Parenting Infants: The Years from Birth to Two 193
- 8 Parenting in Early Childhood: The Years from Two to Five 223
- 9 Parenting Elementary School Children 255
- 10 Parenting Early Adolescents 292
- 11 Parenting Late Adolescents 323
- 12 Parenting Adults 354

#### PART THREE

# Parenting in Varying Life Circumstances

- 13 Parenting and Working 381
- 14 Parenting in Diverse Family Structures 409
- 15 Parenting in Times of Trauma 444

EPILOGUE 477 NOTES N-1 CREDITS C-1 INDEX I-1 PREFACE xxiii FOREWORD xxix

#### PART ONE

# General Concepts, Goals, and Strategies of Parenting

# CHAPTER 1

# Parenting Is a Process 3

WHAT IS PARENTING? 4

Parenting Is a Process 5

THE ROLE OF THE CHILD 5

Children's Needs 5

Children's Importance to Parents 6

Children's Importance to Society 7

#### THE ROLE OF THE PARENT 7

A Short History of Parental Roles 8

Parents' Importance to Children 8

Parents' Importance to Society 8

■ Voices of Experience: The Joys of Family Generations 9

#### THE ROLE OF SOCIETY 10

Defining Roles 10

Providing Assistance 11

The Power of Social Forces 11

Social Forces over Time 13

Contemporary Families 13

The Social Health of the Country 16

INTERACTIONS AMONG CHILD, PARENT, AND SOCIETY 18

#### HOW IMPORTANT ARE PARENTS IN CHILDREN'S LIVES? A LIVELY DEBATE 19

Group Socialization As the Major Socializer of Children 19

The Importance of Genetic Influences 20

Adequate Test of Parental Influence 21

Socialization Researchers' Response to Harris's Criticisms 21

The Intertwining of Genetic and Environmental Influences 21

Environmental Modification of Genetic Traits 22

Greater Sophistication of Socialization Research 23

Parents and Peers 24

Parents As Advocates 24

A Study That Meets Harris's Requirements 25

Summing Up the Debate 26

PARENTING LICENSE 27

#### PRACTICAL QUESTION: WHAT ARE SOCIETY'S OBLIGATIONS TO PARENTS? 27

■ Interview with Sylvia Hewlett 32

MAIN POINTS 33

**EXERCISES 34** 

ADDITIONAL READINGS 34

# CHAPTER 2

# Theories of Development and Strategies of Parenting 35

#### SYSTEMS VIEW OF DEVELOPMENT 36

**Evolutionary Developmental Theory 38** 

Developmental Contextual Theory 40

Bioecological Theory of Development 41

#### **LEARNING THEORIES 42**

#### **PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES 43**

Erikson's Lifespan View of Development 44

Lifespan Attachment Theory 46

■ Interview with Susan Harter 47

#### THEORIES OF KNOWING THE WORLD 52

#### STYLES AND STRATEGIES OF PARENTING 57

Parenting Styles 57

Parenting Strategies 59

PRACTICAL QUESTION: ARE THE FIRST THREE YEARS THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR PARENTING? 60

The Importance of Experience in the Early Years 61

The Modifiability of Early Experiences 62

In Conclusion 64

MAIN POINTS 64

**EXERCISES 66** 

**ADDITIONAL READINGS 66** 

# CHAPTER 3

# Cultural Influences on Parenting 67

CULTURAL MODELS OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS 69

PATTERNS OF IMMIGRATION OF ETHNIC GROUPS TO THE UNITED STATES 72

THE CULTURAL INFLUENCES OF MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS 74

Native American Families 75

Americans of European Descent 79

Americans of African Descent 79

■ Interview with Sherrie 82

Latino Families 84

Americans of Asian Descent 87

Americans of Middle Eastern Descent 90

The Self-Esteem of Ethnic Groups 92

COMMONALITIES AMONG CULTURAL THEMES 94

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS 96

THE INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC HARDSHIP 97

Who Are the Poor? 98

The Effects of Poverty on Children's Development 99

Ways to Intervene 102

PRACTICAL QUESTION: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PARENT EDUCATORS AND PARENTS HAVE DIFFERENT VALUES? 103

MAIN POINTS 105

**EXERCISES 106** 

**ADDITIONAL READINGS 106** 

#### CHAPTER 4

# Establishing Close Emotional Relationships with Children 107

#### FOSTERING A HARMONIOUS FAMILY ATMOSPHERE 108

The Power of Positive Feelings 108

Close Emotional Relationships 110

Storytelling 111

Family Rituals 111

Interview with Emmy E. Werner 112

Providing Respect and Encouragement 115

Coaching Children to Manage Emotions 117

Providing Opportunities for Self-Expression 121

#### **IDENTIFYING AND DEALING WITH NEGATIVE FEELINGS 122**

Sources of Negative Feelings 122

Creating Family Time 125

Developing a Support System 126

Maintaining Realistic Expectations 128

Managing Negative Feelings 129

PRACTICAL QUESTION: HOW DO CHILDREN DEFINE THE GOOD PARENT? 130

**INCREASING THE JOYS OF PARENTING 131** 

MAIN POINTS 132

**EXERCISES 134** 

**ADDITIONAL READINGS 135** 

# CHAPTER 5

# Shaping and Modifying Children's Behavior 136

THE LEARNING PROCESS 137

PROMOTING LEARNING 139

Establishing a Collaborative Atmosphere 139

Setting Realistic Expectations 139

Helping Children Meet Expectations 140

Paying Attention to Positive Behaviors 140

Teaching Acceptable New Behaviors 142

Contents xi

#### ESTABLISHING AND ENFORCING RULES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR 142

Stating Limits Effectively 142

Enforcing Limits 143

The Use of Physical Punishment 146

#### HOW A CHILD'S TEMPERAMENT INFLUENCES PARENTING STRATEGIES 152

# PRACTICAL QUESTION: HOW DO PARENTS SELECT INDIVIDUALLY APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES IN REARING CHILDREN? 153

■ Interview with Jacqueline Lerner and Richard Lerner 154

MAIN POINTS 157

**EXERCISES 158** 

**ADDITIONAL READINGS 159** 

#### PART TWO

# Parenting at Developmental Stages

# CHAPTER 6

# Becoming Parents 163

**REASONS FOR HAVING CHILDREN 164** 

THE DECISION TO PARENT 165

Married Couples 166

**Unmarried Parents 166** 

Coerced Parenting 170

#### THE TIMING OF PREGNANCY 170

Age and Pregnancy 170

Age and Parenting 172

#### HOW THE WAY OF BECOMING A PARENT AFFECTS PARENTING 174

Adoption and Parenting 175

■ Interview with Steve and Michelle 178

ART and Parenting 180

#### TRANSITION AND ADJUSTMENT TO PARENTHOOD 181

Parents' Preparenting and Personal Characteristics 181

■ Interview with James Levine 182

The Power of a Positive Marital Relationship 184

Changes the Baby Brings 185

Dimensions Underlying the Transition 185

Transition for Parents Who Adopt or Who Have Premature Children 187

PRACTICAL QUESTION: WHAT CHANGES

CAN PARENTS ANTICIPATE FOR THEMSELVES? 187

**SUPPORT FOR PARENTS 188** 

Classes 189

Support Groups 189

MAIN POINTS 190

**EXERCISES 191** 

**ADDITIONAL READINGS 192** 

#### CHAPTER 7

# Parenting Infants: The Years from Birth to Two 193

THE NEWBORN 194

Early Social Reactions 194

Voices of Experience: What I Wish I Had Known about the First Two Years 195
 Early Parent-Child Relationships 196

#### DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF LIFE 197

Physical Development 197

Intellectual Development 198

Language Development 198

**Emotional Development 199** 

Development of the Self 201

Development of Self-Regulation 202

#### THE PROCESS OF ATTACHMENT 202

#### TASKS AND CONCERNS FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS 203

Voices of Experience: The Joys of Parenting Children in the First Two Years 204
 Establishing an Optimal Level of Arousal 205
 Promoting Self-Regulation 209

#### PARENTS WHO FACE SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES 210

Adolescent Parents 211

Depressed Parents 213

Substance-Abusing Parents 215