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opening extract from

The Contented Baby with Toddler Book

written by

Gina Ford

published by

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To all the thousands of parents who have shared their babies with me – without you and your babies this book would not have been possible.

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Introduction

It's 10 years since my first book, *The Contented Little Baby Book*, was published. Since then many mothers have been in touch to tell me how helpful they have found it, and I have continued to be touched by the number of you who have taken the time to express your appreciation. Those first 'Contented Babies' are now approaching their 11th year, and it gives me great pleasure that my first book still seems as relevant today as it was in 1999. Many of you have requested advice about following routines when a second baby comes along, and I have written *The Contented Baby with Toddler Book* in response to your questions.

When your second baby arrives, trying to meet the demands of two small children can be as challenging as it was adapting to life with your first baby, and establishing routines for both children will help to ease the transition. During my career I looked after more than 300 babies and soon learned how vital routines are for both mothers and babies. Your babies, toddlers and older children will thrive on consistent and healthy routines – nutritious meals at regular intervals, plenty of sleep, fresh air and exercise, social playtime, one-to-one attention and cuddles.

I very much hope that the advice in this book will help you to provide both the stability for an older child adapting to life with a new sibling, and the routines that promise a contented little baby.

If you have used the Contented Little Baby (CLB) routines with your first baby, you will know that during the first year they change many times. When starting the routines this time around, it is important not to assume that your second baby will follow the routines the same way as your first baby did. Remember that the whole aim of the CLB routines is to allow for the individual needs of each baby to be met.

If you didn't follow a routine with your first baby, but have decided to try a routine-based approach with your second, you might be a little apprehensive. There are many myths surrounding routines these days, the main ones being that babies are forced to eat and sleep to a strict timetable. While this may be true of some routines, it is not the case with the CLB routines.

The CLB routines are unique because they are created to meet the natural sleep and feeding needs of all healthy, normal babies. They also allow for the fact that some babies need more sleep than others, and that some may be able to go for longer between feeds than others. The aim of the routines is not to push your baby through the night without a feed, but to structure the feeding and sleeping during the day in order to keep your baby's night-time waking to a minimum. By doing this, he will wake and feed quickly before settling back to sleep. The routines also ensure that once your baby is capable of going one longer spell between feeds, this will happen in the middle of the night, not during the day.

'Is it really possible to establish the CLB routines with a second baby?' is a question that I am frequently asked. I know from personal experience of helping to care for many second and third babies that sometimes the joy of having a second baby can be overshadowed when the mother becomes overly anxious about how she is going to cope. Caring for a newborn baby and a boisterous

toddler can seem pretty daunting when you think of all that it entails. Trying to establish breast-feeding and regular sleep times for a newborn while juggling mealtimes, school runs and play dates, and not disrupting a toddler's bath and bedtime routine, are just some of the main concerns that many of the mothers I worked with shared with me. If you are worried, and simply can't imagine how it will be possible to establish a routine that will result in a happy and contented baby and toddler, please trust and believe me when I say that it *is* possible. The important thing to remember is that the CLB routines change nine times during the first year. That is the beauty of my routines, and why they are so successful. Unlike traditional routines, the CLB routines take into account the different needs of all babies, and allow you to structure the feeding and sleeping advice to suit the individual needs of your baby.

Here I have created a set of routines and guidelines that will help you cope in the months ahead, and help you meet the needs of both your baby and your toddler. Yes, there will be times when establishing the routines may be very challenging, and even some days when it all goes totally wrong, but by being consistent and persistent you will, in the long-term, reap the rewards of having two happy and contented children.

Gina

1

Preparing for the Second Baby

Parents often ask me for advice about having a second child and want to know how they can use my routines to satisfy the wants and needs of a baby and a toddler at the same time. In my experience, establishing a good routine for both children is vital when you are trying to spread yourself between the two, without either your baby or toddler feeling overlooked or missing out. Looking after two children will obviously be much harder work than looking after just one, but I am confident that the routines and advice in this book, which have been tried and tested by the thousands of members on my website, will help you to avoid many of the pitfalls that lots of parents experience when the second baby comes along.

If you have spent some time thinking about how you will deal with a second child, and about the implications for your family life and finances, you will have a clearer idea of what to expect and this will make the transition far easier for you, your partner and your children.

Are we ready for another child?

I've come across some parents who have been so delighted by the experience of having their first child that they can hardly wait to have a second. However, many others do have concerns about how they will find the reserves of time and energy to devote to another baby. You may know that you want your child to have a sibling, but be concerned about how you will cope physically, emotionally or financially. These are all important issues that you should take time to discuss openly with each other.

Emotional concerns

Dealing with one child is demanding, but when you have two it can seem as if you lose those last small gaps of precious time for yourself. It can be a lonely business looking after small children at home, whether you have opted to be a stay-at-home mother or whether you are on maternity leave. Having a second child is not the complete shock to the system that a first baby can be, as you will know what to expect and will have already made many lifestyle changes. However, you may find that it isn't as easy to get things done once you have two children, and your life starts to revolve around your children more.

Even if you got by happily with your first child, having a second baby may leave you feeling as though you can no longer manage. Think about the support you have available, and whether you may need to get some extra help for a while. Women who have a strong support network of family or friends tend to find it easier to cope with life at home with young children as there is always someone to lend a sympathetic ear or to come to the rescue

in times of crisis. Talk to your friends who have more than one child about how they manage, and consider offering to do some babysitting or childcare swaps so that you begin to build a support network ready for your new arrival.

It is perfectly natural to worry about how you will spread yourself between your toddler and new baby, how you will establish their routines, and how they will get on with one another. Discussing these concerns with your partner is important, as it will ensure that you are both aware of the problems that may arise. Couples sometimes tell me that they seem to argue more after the birth of a second child, as they both feel exhausted and run down. I know how hard it can be to fit caring for a newborn around dealing with a toddler, and that is why I have written this book with adapted routines for a baby and toddler. Encourage your partner to read the book as well so that you are both dealing with any problem situations in the same way.

Financial concerns

You won't need to spend quite as much money when you are expecting your second child because you will have bought the basic baby equipment first time around. If you still have your first child's baby clothes, you will be able to reuse those, too. However, depending on the age gap between your children, your first child may still be sleeping in a cot and using a buggy, in which case there may well be some additional expenses. If your children are close in age, you will have them both in nappies for some time, and, if these are disposable, you may not realise quite how quickly these costs can mount up. If you have thought through the additional out-goings involved, though, there should not be too many surprises.

Couples sometimes feel they need to move house when they are expecting a second child in order to have more space. Your monthly overheads are likely to increase if you are moving to a larger home, and there are costs involved in moving whether you are renting or buying. If you haven't budgeted carefully, the extra expenditure can come as a shock. I have seen how this can make the arrival of a second baby more difficult than it needs to be for some parents. Money problems are one of the main things that couples argue about, and the joy of having a new addition to the family can be completely overshadowed by financial concerns if you haven't thought this through.

Work matters

Women who have found it relatively easy to return to work after their first child may find that things don't slot into place so neatly after the second. Some may make the decision to reduce their hours or stop work altogether for a while. If you are going to become a stay-at-home mother, there will be financial implications and you need to think about this. Some women say they find they spend less money when they are not at work, but you are still likely to have to make some sacrifices if you cut out one income. If you are used to holidays or meals out on a regular basis, to beauty treatments or nights away, you may find that you have to change your lifestyle and cut out some of these luxuries because you can no longer afford them on one salary.

If you do go back to work, either full- or part-time, the costs of childcare will rise when you are paying for two children, and again this is something you need to take into consideration.

Getting pregnant again

Once you've decided you want a second child, you need to consider the age gap. People think that, having looked after so many babies, I must know the perfect age gap between children. In fact, I've worked with some parents who have had their children as close together as possible, and others who have left it many years before having a second child. I believe the age gap itself is less important than the level of agreement between the couple that the time is right, how well they have prepared for a second child and the personalities of the children themselves.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each age gap, and your decision about this may end up being as much to do with circumstances as choice. If you are an older mother, and aware of your biological clock, you may not feel you can sit around waiting for the ideal opportunity and may want to try to get pregnant again as soon as possible. Others who have wanted their children close together may find that they end up having to wait far longer than they had anticipated to get pregnant for a second time.

A close age gap: 11–15 months

For parents who have two children very close in age, it can be more like dealing with twins. You will have two very young children in nappies, and your toddler will still need a lot of your attention. She will need lifting and carrying, and help with feeding. It can seem as if your entire day is spent servicing the needs of your children and life is a whirl of nappy changing and feeding. It can be exhausting trying to get out and about with them both, and at first it will take a lot longer to get anything done.

Despite this, there are some clear advantages to having your

children this close together. Although it may be tough at the time, at least it means the years of nappy changing and feeding are over much more quickly rather than being spread out over a number of years. Another advantage of this close age gap is that there tends to be less jealousy when the new baby arrives because the toddler is too young to feel that her role in the family is being taken over. As they get older, children this close in age are more likely to enjoy doing the same things and this can make life easier.

An average age gap: 18 months to three years

Most couples tend to aim for a gap of 18 months to three years between their children, but the way a first child deals with a new baby varies considerably from either end of this age range.

Although it is probably the most popular age gap, in my experience it is often more difficult if your toddler is between the ages of 18 months and two years when her baby brother or sister is born. Many changes occur in a toddler's life at this stage: she is learning new skills, such as how to talk and dress herself, and may be learning how to use the potty at around this time, too. These are milestones in your toddler's life, and helping her through them can be time-consuming. She may find these developmental changes more difficult if you can't give her the attention and encouragement she needs; equally, attempting to cope with a demanding toddler when you are looking after a little baby can be frustrating for you. You and your toddler may end up losing patience with one another and it is hardly surprising that this is a time when many toddlers start having tantrums.

If this is the age gap between your children, try to minimise the changes you introduce into your toddler's life when your baby

is very small. If she is ready, potty-train her before the baby comes along (see page 16 and *Potty Training in One Week*), and help her learn to dress herself – this will make all the difference. You also need to reassure your toddler that having a new baby doesn't mean you love her any less. It is important to get your baby into a good routine as quickly as possible as this will leave you free to devote time to your toddler and address her needs.

If your child is at the upper end of this age bracket (closer to age three) when the baby is born, things are likely to be easier because she will be more independent and will need less concentrated attention. It is also easier to explain to a child of this age that the new baby is not taking her place in the family, and she will be able to understand when you tell her that you still love her.

A wide age gap: three or more years

If you have a big age gap between your children, initially the main problem you are likely to experience is having to adapt your life back to living with a baby. By the time your child is three, you will have moved on from focusing your family life around a baby's feeding and sleeping routines, and returning to a world of nappies, hours of feeding and night-time wakings can come as quite a shock.

The main bonus of having a bigger age gap is that your child will usually have some degree of independence. She may have her own circle of friends at nursery or school, and is likely to have started to enjoy spending time with other children. There is usually less jealousy with a bigger age gap, because the older child will not feel that her role in the family is being taken over by the new baby. It can be more of a problem if the older child is not used to spending time with other children of her own age and has

been very focused on her life at home with her parents – if you feel this may be the case, try to address it during pregnancy. If your older child is going to start nursery or a playgroup, try to make sure this doesn't coincide exactly with the arrival of the new baby so that she has some time to get used to it first.

Having a larger age gap does help solve some of the concerns parents often express about how they will divide themselves between their two children. It is easier for parents to split their time between a baby and an older child; the older child has her parents' attention when the baby is sleeping, or in the evenings once the baby is in bed, and the baby is able to have all the attention during the day when the child is at nursery or at school.

Coping with your pregnancy and your toddler

Women often admit that they had at least a moment of panic after the initial joy on discovering they were pregnant for the second time. The reality of the positive pregnancy test can suddenly make all your concerns about how you are going to cope seem a lot more real. For the first time, you may wonder how you will deal with being pregnant when you have a toddler, let alone how you will cope once you have two small children. It is not unusual to feel this way, and being prepared can help you ease your way through this.

When to tell your toddler

Don't be tempted to tell your toddler you are expecting a baby until you are at least four months pregnant. Although it is not

something anyone likes to dwell on, as many as one in four pregnancies will end in miscarriage and this is most common in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. It is probably worth waiting until you have got through the first few months before telling your toddler the news.

It is important to remember that, although your toddler may know she is about to have a new baby brother or sister, her understanding of what this means will depend on her age. Younger children don't always realise that the new baby will be a permanent addition to the family, and even older children are unlikely to have much idea of the way a new baby will change your family life.

Of course, the other thing to bear in mind is that, once they have started talking, toddlers have little in the way of discretion when it comes to who they talk to and what they talk about. If you don't want the milkman, the supermarket cashier or the nursery assistant to know you are pregnant, it may be advisable not to tell your toddler for a while!

What to tell your toddler

Once you have decided the time is right, you will want to explain that your child is going to have a new baby brother or sister, and that the baby is growing in Mummy's tummy. You should aim to introduce the idea of the new baby gently and gradually, and to follow your toddler's lead on this. Try to keep the message positive, and to emphasise what fun it will be to be a big brother or sister, but don't be surprised if your child seems less than impressed by the news. Some toddlers will be genuinely interested, will want to talk about the baby and will ask lots of questions. They may enjoy being involved in your pregnancy, perhaps talking to the baby or

giving it 'kisses' through your tummy, and they may want to help to choose baby clothes and get the baby's room ready. However, not all toddlers will react this way. If your child doesn't seem interested, don't feel you have to keep trying to explain things as this may make her feel pressured. A toddler who is under the age of two and a half will still have a fairly limited understanding of what is about to happen, so don't bombard her with information. You should be aiming to create a scenario of gentle change rather than turmoil. There is a wide variety of children's story books available that can help toddlers understand about 'Mummy having a baby' and give them some idea of what to expect.

Coping with morning sickness

If you are suffering from morning sickness or nausea, having to feed your toddler can be a real challenge. When you're pregnant with your first child, it is relatively easy to avoid having to spend too much time in the kitchen, but once you've got a hungry toddler in tow, this is much more difficult. Although it's called 'morning' sickness, the reality is that many pregnant women experience sickness and nausea throughout the day and, if you're feeling this way, the last thing you'll want to do is cook.

This is when batch cooking and freezing can make all the difference. If there are times of the day when you usually feel better, try to get some of your cooking done then. Sometimes particular foods and smells trigger nausea and if you can avoid cooking food that makes you feel really ill without upsetting your toddler's balanced diet, that may help.

The good news is that nausea and sickness are generally associated with the first three months of pregnancy, and after that the

symptoms are likely to improve. Unfortunately this isn't always the case for everyone. If you are in the minority who feel sick throughout your pregnancy, you may need to get your husband or friends to batch cook for your freezer so that all you have to worry about is heating up food for your toddler at mealtimes.

Coping with tiredness

Many women feel completely exhausted in early pregnancy, and it is hard to entertain a bouncy toddler when all you want to do is lie down and sleep. As with morning sickness, extreme tiredness is usually a symptom of early pregnancy, although you will also have less energy at the end of your pregnancy when you are quite large. You may want to find some quiet games to play with your toddler that don't involve too much jumping about. If your toddler feels she is getting all your attention playing with her dolls or building blocks, she is less likely to notice that you are not running around the garden. I know mothers worry about children watching too much TV but, if you are completely exhausted, it may be helpful to let your toddler watch a DVD or some children's television now and again.

If your toddler still has a nap in the day, I know it can be tempting to use the time when she is asleep to catch up with some housework, but do try to use these opportunities to get some rest yourself. It is vital to make sure you look after yourself properly. If your toddler is no longer napping in the day, you can relax by enjoying some quiet time together perhaps looking at a book or doing a jigsaw.

If you are feeling very tired, you should also make the most of whatever childcare you have available. If your toddler spends some

time at a playgroup or nursery, or even with friends or relatives, use the time to relax and recuperate rather than rushing about trying to get things done.

Antenatal appointments

I know many women have no choice but to take their toddlers with them to antenatal appointments, and this may help them to feel more involved. However, it is not much fun for a toddler to sit in a surgery or hospital waiting room so, if it's an option, let friends or family take care of her instead. It is not a good idea to take a toddler to an ultrasound scan because you will be unable to look after your toddler while you are being scanned. And some toddlers might find the dark room and strange-looking equipment frightening.

Preparing your toddler for the new arrival

I always advise trying to prepare your toddler before the new baby arrives, but what you tell her will depend on her age. At just over a year, your toddler will have little understanding of pregnancy, babies or siblings. At three or four, she may have friends with baby brothers and sisters and may be looking forward to having one of her own.

If you have friends or family who have young babies, it is a good idea to invite them round so that your toddler gets used to babies. One problem parents often face is over-exuberant toddlers who want to play with their younger siblings or cuddle them, but have no idea how carefully babies have to be handled. If your

toddler has spent some time with other babies before her own brother or sister comes along, she will have seen how gently people handle them. Take some time to explain that newborn babies are small and fragile, and that they need a lot of gentle handling. It is also useful to prepare your toddler for the newborn baby's crying; she may not get distressed by it if she knows it is the only way the baby has of getting attention and that it doesn't mean that her little brother or sister is in pain or unwell.

If you are planning to breast-feed, you may want to talk about this to your toddler. If you have friends with young babies, she may be used to the idea of breast-feeding, but if she has never seen it before, you need to explain that the new baby will feed from your breasts, just like she did as a baby.

Get her involved

Now that she is going to be a big sister, your toddler may enjoy making some decisions for the new baby. If you are going shopping to buy new equipment for the baby, or if you are decorating a nursery, you can get her involved in the choices and talk about them together.

However, a word of caution here: it may be a good idea to involve your toddler, but you don't want her to feel too aware of how the central focus in the family is shifting. If you are out shopping for the baby together, you may want to make sure she chooses something small as well (even if it is something you need to buy her anyway, such as socks or toothpaste), and maybe let her choose it for herself.

Establish some ground rules

Your toddler will see your tummy growing and learn that its size prevents you from doing some activities. For example, you may not be able to run very fast any more or get involved in rough and tumble games. Now is also the time to replace any activities you are going to want to put a stop to later in pregnancy or when you are trying to breast-feed your newborn baby – for example, playing ball in the sitting room or bedroom. If you find other ways of spending time with your toddler, or some less vigorous activities that you can enjoy together, she may not feel that your pregnancy or the new baby are threatening her fun.

Try not to disrupt her life

Your toddler is used to being the focus of the family, with everything seeming to revolve around her. Things are about to change very rapidly, and the more secure and confident she feels, the easier it will be for her to handle this. Try to keep things in her life as normal as possible during your pregnancy and to maintain her routine of playgroups or visits to the library, toddler gym or music classes. If you need to make changes that could feel important to her, do this either well before or well after the new baby arrives.

Moving into a new bedroom

I know parents often want to move their toddler into a new room when they have a second child. Think carefully about how you present this, as you want your toddler to see it as her moving into a new bedroom rather than the baby taking over her old one. Let her have

some say in the decoration, which doesn't have to be expensive; just a fresh coat of paint or a few pictures on the wall can go a long way to making her feel that this is an exciting new place to be. As with any changes, if you are planning to move your toddler into a new room you should do this at least two months before the baby is due, so that she has time to adjust. If your toddler and baby are going to be sharing a room, see pages 238–9 for advice.

Moving your toddler into a bed

Mothers often tell me that they have to move their toddler into a bed once they have a second child because they need her cot for the new baby. Moving into a bed is a big deal for a young child, and certainly, if your toddler is under 30 months old, it may be worth investing in a cot bed, or buying or borrowing a second cot instead. You don't want your toddler to feel she is being pushed aside by a new baby who is now sleeping in her cot. There are also some practical considerations here, such as having to deal with a toddler getting out of bed if she hears the new baby waking for a feed in the night.

Teaching your toddler to dress and undress

If your toddler is old enough, encourage her to try to dress herself. Establishing this before the baby is born will help you and give your toddler something to do during the morning and evening routines, when you are feeding the baby and trying to keep her occupied. By the age of about 14 months, most toddlers will have learned how to pull off their socks, but the majority will not be able to remove the rest of their clothes until they are aged

between 18 and 24 months. By the time they reach 30 months, toddlers are usually capable of getting themselves dressed and undressed, although they will still need some help with buttons and poppers.

It is easiest to help a toddler learn how to dress and undress herself if you take it one stage at a time, starting with one or two items of clothing that she finds easiest and moving on gradually.

Potty-training

Mothers who have problems with potty-training their toddlers often tell me that they are in a hurry to get it over and done with before their second baby comes along. It is true that it can be more convenient not to have to deal with two lots of nappies, but it may be far worse to have to deal with one lot of nappies and endless accidents. If you are going to potty-train your toddler before you give birth, do it well in advance. If you end up leaving it until you are in the late stages of pregnancy, your toddler will pick up on any stress you feel about getting it all done in time, and you may find that it suddenly takes far longer than you would have expected.

I always tell parents that the key to successful potty-training is not just that their child should be ready, but that they should be ready, too. If you are in the last stages of pregnancy and your toddler is showing signs of being ready to come out of nappies but is still under the age of two, I would suggest delaying potty-training. It is worth waiting until the new baby is three or four months old and you are all more settled. It is very common for potty-trained toddlers to regress when a new baby is born, and this is far less likely to happen if you wait a while.

Get your partner to spend some time alone with your toddler

Your toddler should not feel that her life has been turned upside down by the new baby. For children who spend their days at nursery or with a nanny, you may assume that this will be less acute, but if you're the one who usually feeds your toddler her supper or reads her a story and puts her to bed, she may feel she is being pushed aside if these tasks are suddenly handed over to her daddy. Make their time together into something special that your toddler looks forward to, and that way she will feel it is a good thing if she gets to spend more time with Daddy once the baby is born.

New childcare arrangements

If you are going to employ a new nanny or mother's help, or send your child to nursery after the baby arrives, you should start this at least a few months before you are due to give birth. Toddlers do not always adapt easily to change and they will be far happier if this is something that has been instigated before the new baby arrives. If you can make it seem like a privilege only available to your toddler because she is older, she is far less likely to feel that she is being shunted out of the way. Arranging this while you're pregnant will also give you some precious time to yourself in the final months.

Find some activities your toddler can do alone

Try to encourage some activities that your toddler can do on their own, such as play dough, drawing or doing jigsaws, so that you know she will be able to occupy herself for short spells while you

are looking after the baby. She should see these as fun activities, so that she looks forward to them. Boys and girls can both enjoy having a baby doll of their own, too. If the doll has a bottle, nappies, a bath and a Moses basket then your toddler can look after 'her baby' in just the same way that you are caring for her younger sibling.

Imagine what it is like for your toddler

Your toddler has been the centre of your attention throughout her entire life; older children are often said to be different in character to their younger siblings and although this may be a generalisation, it is true that their start in life is very different. The new baby will grow up having to share your time, love and affection, but this is not something your toddler has been accustomed to.

All the discussion about the new arrival can make your toddler feel as if her central role in the family is about to be taken over by this new baby. It will become gradually more and more apparent throughout your pregnancy that things are changing. When you meet friends and family, they will inevitably want to talk about the new arrival, and how you feel about it. They may want to look at your scan pictures or discuss your antenatal appointments, to ask whether you know the sex of your new baby or have decided on a name. It can feel as if everyone is less interested in your toddler than they used to be. If your child is younger, she may not be quite as aware of this, but older children may need extra reassurance as to how special and loved they are.