



Family life can be rough, but feel free to share your bed, says new baby guide

A book for parents-to-be claims single parents suffer prejudice, loneliness and financial hardship. The new Rough Guide to Babies, from the publishers more normally associated with travel guides, claims single parents are more likely than couples to suffer from a range of disadvantages. Prejudice from middle-class mothers can be extreme, says the Rough Guide. “I was astonished by the reaction at mother-and-baby groups” one 21-year old single mother is quoted as saying, “where many women just ignored me, or asked intrusive questions”.

There can be a silver lining: women who come out of a bad relationship before the baby is born may be relieved, and even feel happier than other mothers.

The new baby care bible also states that mixed-race parents can experience prejudice, especially outside big cities. The Rough Guide quotes Geeta, 35, as saying “I’m desperate for my children not to lose their identity, but I don’t want to ram it down their throats. Getting together with Sam has scuppered any plans we might have had for moving outside London: the other day we went to the pub in Devon, and everyone turned around and stared.”

The UK has one of the highest rates of mixed race identity in the world, growing by 75% in the 1990s to more than 400,000 people.

Prejudice against lesbian and gay parents is diminishing, according to the Rough Guide, which cites the example of lesbian couple Kay and Debbie who have each had a daughter with their gay friends John and Alex. “While my parents were initially astonished that I was pregnant, they treat both the girls as their granddaughters. So far we’ve been lucky that we haven’t encountered any prejudice, but we do live in a cosmopolitan university town – a lesbian couple in a country village might not be so fortunate.”

As well as addressing special circumstances, the Rough Guide to Babies offers outspoken advice to all parents on what works in child care:

- **Crying:** lie on the floor with your baby, face to face, for instant calm;
- **Sleep positions:** place your baby on his back from the very beginning;
- **Bedtimes:** make the routine relaxing, consistent and short.
- **Breast-feeding:** cards on the table – you’d be hard-pressed to find an expert who would deny that “breast is best”.
- **Sleeping with your baby:** nine out of ten babies the world over sleep in their parents’ beds – do what works for you and don’t worry about bossy directives



NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Rough Guides is delighted to announce a much-anticipated new arrival: The Rough Guide to Babies, by Miranda Levy. Witty, practical and down-to-earth, this Rough Guide will help you navigate the strange new world of Planet Baby. As Miranda writes in her introduction: “You’ve done it now – you’re a mother. You have to experience it to believe it”

The Rough Guide includes:

- First days: midwives, health visitors and aftercare
- Eating and sleeping: breast- and bottle-feeding, colic, crying, cots, fussy eaters and restless sleepers
- Health and progress: keeping an eye on growth and development, and looking out for common conditions and symptoms
- The new you: getting back in shape, sex and relationships, returning to work – and staying sane
- The entourage: how to get the best from health professionals, while sidestepping competitive other mums and know-better grandparents.

Also available: The Rough Guide to Pregnancy & Birth (2nd edition).

“I couldn’t put it down. . .it made me howl with laughter. But also incredibly useful. A constant source of reassurance and reason”

Pregnancy & Birth Magazine.

The Rough Guide to Babies and The Rough Guide to Pregnancy & Birth; both large format, 234mm x 169mm; illustrated with cartoons; out now; £9.99 each.

For review copies, extracts and author interviews, contact Anna Paynton at Rough Guides Publicity: press@roughguides.com; tel 020 7010 3701.