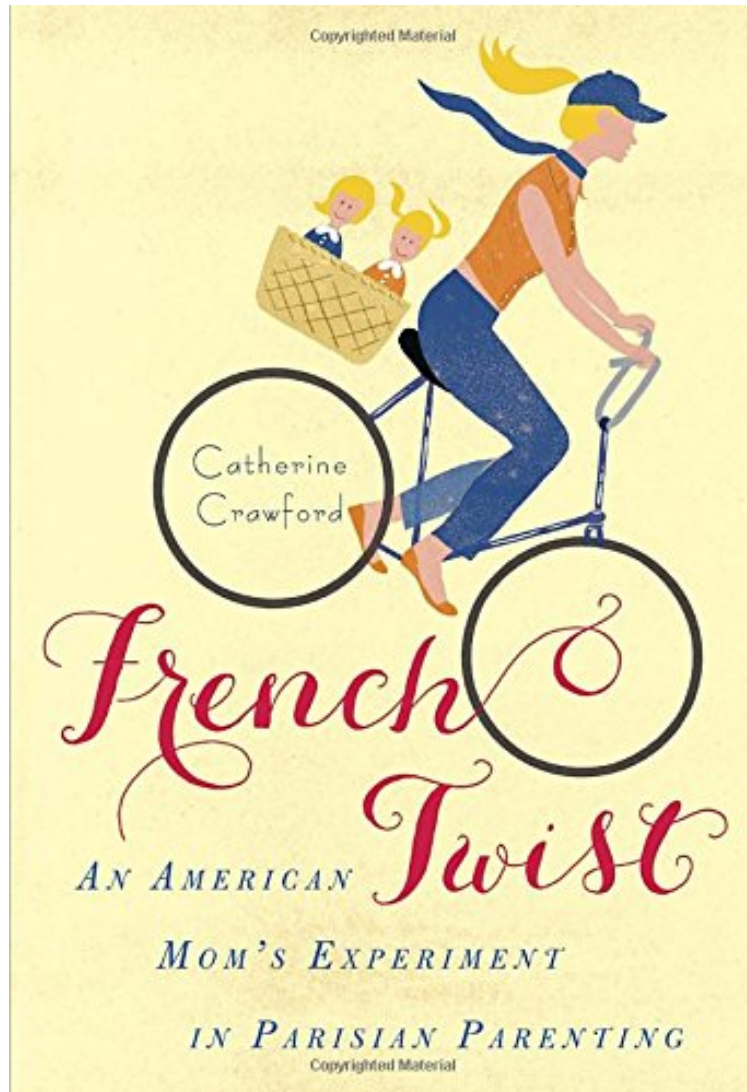


[Ebook free] French Twist: An American Mom's Experiment in Parisian Parenting

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Catherine Crawford

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Catherine Crawford : French Twist: An American Mom's Experiment in Parisian Parenting before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised French Twist: An American Mom's Experiment in Parisian Parenting:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Buy this book for a baby-shower gift ! It's the best read for a young

parent. By paper chase Having grown up in the 40's and 50's in the UK, this "French" way of parenting where children are not the epicenter of a parent's world reminds me of my own childhood and subsequent parenting methods. I couldn't resist checking this out at the library and then purchased for my own adult daughter. It was entertaining but also full of 'yes I strongly agree' moments that seemingly follow the same natural parenting ways of my own childhood recollection. The author is effective in highlighting the seamless ways that French parents instinctively interact with their children to instill respect, good manners and an expectation of being attentive and learning patience instead of instant gratification.. She admits that not all of the methods were easily incorporated into her own family's structure, but she insightfully recognizes that American parenting has gone beyond the pale in trying to be a 'buddy' to and to accommodate every whim of a young child to the extent that they have lost control of their own adult lives and position in the family unit. Overindulgence in both the material and emotional sense is just one of the many differences that she highlights. French parents are loving parents but their children are raised to understand discipline and limits of behavior. If just a few of her observations (her husband is French so they naturally associate with other French natives in Brooklyn) could be incorporated into American parenting we would all be the better for it. Children who interrupt conversations, noisily demand attention, have melt-downs at the drop of a hat ? Her French advice?" Do not get up if there is no blood !" This is a very entertaining read even if you're beyond being a young parent. It's written in a casual; lighthearted, amusing style, but without a doubt her advice has significant value that will benefit any young parent and provide the rest of us with tons of a-ha moments. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Recommended for intelligent, sensible childrearing

By Paula carter This text is cleverly written, clear but highly intelligent writing explaining a necessary thought base in rearing children which would help our entire society. Crawford provides an authentic, humble perspective to advise parents, grandparents, everyone, the French perspective of child rearing which enriches children's growth and maturity. She gently, humorously compares and contrasts French habits to some American habits, thus proving her points. I have recommended this book to everyone including my husband and son who are physicians so they can advise young parents with their children which will help them. I grew up with these family ways so I reared my children this way; plus, I have witnessed the sweet, intelligent behavior of French children in France in school trips, in parks, restaurants, so I believe in Crawford's advice. She has laid her tips out clearly with details and examples. I have texted and emailed friends about this book and highly recommend to everyone. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Nothing groundbreaking BUT so satisfying

By M. Hart I loved this book. The writer is funny and charming and I laughed often during this read. The content is also good but I admit I didn't learn any NEW methods here. Where this book really grabbed me is that it finally made me feel I wasn't a terrible parent! I have found myself caving to the societal expectations that I cater to my child's every whimper and need (even as I would be telling myself in my head that I didn't think I needed to do this or that). No more! This book helped me recover my backbone to raise my children the way I believe they should be raised. I just needed to hear this clear voice amongst all the marketing nonsense and expert "guides". Thank you.

Adventures in Franco-inspired American parenting—a winning mix of witty cross-cultural observation, hilariously blunt French wisdom, and one American mom's journey to create her own hybrid parenting approach “If there is no blood, don't get up.” This single nugget of parenting gold, offered by a French friend at the end of a long dinner party, changed everything for writer Catherine Crawford, her husband, and, especially, the couple's two young daughters. Crawford immediately began to see that while the United States had become the land of too-involved parents forever wanting to talk through their kids' feelings about, well, everything, France employed a far more laissez-faire attitude toward raising *les enfants*. Learning to sleep through the night? A few tears never hurt anyone. Food? Let them eat cake, sure, but only after they've sampled lamb chops, broccoli rabe, and the stinkiest of cheeses. Short of shipping her daughters off to Paris for these—and many other—invaluable early-life lessons, Crawford did the next best thing: She brought Old World-style parenting to Brooklyn. In the process, she discovered that her kids could actually hold a thought silently for two minutes without interrupting adult conversation, and that she didn't, in fact, need to buy out half the toy store to make their birthdays special. She even found out how much her kids like lamb chops! While combining the best attributes of the approach *français* with what she saw as American qualities worth preserving, Crawford found a way to save her household and her sanity. Hilarious and insightful, *French Twist* reveals how Crawford and her family survived *le grand experiment*—and why they aren't ever going back to the way things were.

Advance praise for *French Twist* “Presented with a touch of humor and spot-on descriptions of childhood (mis)behavior, the advice, which touches on such topics as breastfeeding and school participation, is practical and useful. A refreshing approach to raising children.”—Kirkus Reviews “[A] charming and clever parenting chronicle . . . Though some may prefer their naughty kids just the way they are, this breezy, entertaining study of parenting à la Paris may prompt others to pour a *café au lait* and rethink their strategies.”—Publishers Weekly “*French Twist* describes an open-minded experiment in French-style parenting (though apparently there's not even a French word for parenting!) and reveals itself as an honest examination of the author's own missteps and prejudices—which we all can relate to—and the whole overparenting trend in this country. Are Catherine Crawford's conclusions ‘French’? Who cares? They're immensely logical and rational, and delivered with an abundance of love.”—Muffy Mead-Ferro, author of

Confessions of a Slacker Mom “Ever seen a French child throw a tantrum in a restaurant or talk back to his parents? Neither has Catherine Crawford. In *French Twist* she uncovers the secrets of French child-rearing—and then tries them out on her own family, with remarkable results. Part memoir, part instruction manual, *French Twist* is hilarious, honest, and incredibly useful.”—Lori Leibovich, executive lifestyle editor of *The Huffington Post* “Catherine Crawford has written a great parenting book. I can’t wait to have kids and apply all I have learned here. Wait—hold on. I’m being told I already have two kids. This is incredible news! I will begin applying immediately.”—Adam Scott, actor, *Parks and Recreation*

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About the Author Catherine Crawford is a contributor to *Droolicious* on *Babble.com*, and the parenting website *What They Play*, where she conceived of and has written the *Mothership* column. She has appeared on CBS and Fox to discuss issues related to balancing work and motherhood. She lives with her husband, writer Mac Montandon, and their two children in Brooklyn.

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Chapter One *Voici la Situation or The Mess We’re In* As a mother with two young daughters in a trendy urban neighborhood, hedged in by hordes of other trendy urban families, I often feel a keen sense of bafflement at what I see going on with the procreators in my midst. So, at the risk of being a traitor to my generation, I have to say: I don’t know when or how it happened, but it’s clear to me that, even as we have tried harder than any of our ancestors to mentor, please, and encourage our kids, we have completely lost control of them, and in the process we’ve lost control of our own lives as well. And it isn’t pretty. How ugly is it? Three words: baby yoga pants. I live in Park Slope, Brooklyn, quite possibly the world headquarters of helicopter parents, but I’ve seen similar abdication in Manhattan, San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Portland, Oregon. These are just the cities I visit regularly; I have a pretty good hunch it’s happening in nearly every middle-class neighborhood nationwide, urban or otherwise. How can I be so sure? Here are a couple of the many ways: I’d be willing to wager that you know—all too well?—parents who live in fear of their toddler, or that you’re aware that a Bugaboo is not merely a synonym for “hobgoblin.” I have absolute certainty that, thirty-some-odd years ago, my mother didn’t pick me up from school laden with four snack choices to ensure my satisfaction (and avoid a meltdown) and that she didn’t put in a lot of time worrying that she wasn’t being the best mom she could possibly be. But now these are the types of thoughts that pack the days of every parent I know. I count myself very much among them (sorry, Ma!). I’m ready for change. Although the familiar dictum “children should be seen and not heard” may be a bit harsh—and the truth is, I enjoy hearing my kids much of the time—I’m afraid that the new trend of seeing, hearing, pondering, analyzing, cogitating, working through, and giving in to our children is no better. And it may even be worse: New research suggests that kids who are too often encouraged to share every last scrap of a thought, and then praised for whatever they share, tend to suffer later in life when teachers, bosses, and other mentor figures are less inclined to adore each effort. I love my kids dearly, but sometimes I honestly don’t give a crap about how they feel after a harmless skirmish on the playground or what their concerns are when they do something wrong and are punished. I yearn (but have yet) to steal the phrase my dad employed often during my own upbringing: “I don’t care what you think! I’ll do the thinking for all of us!” About seven years ago, when I was new to the mothering game, I’d watch parents in the same overwhelmed boat as me with the hope that I’d learn secrets to child-rearing in this exciting, challenging, and liberated age. Ah, that mother is now massaging her son who threw sand in the eyes of a baby. Was he just too tense? Is that why he acted up? Note to self: Keep baby relaxed. In my neighborhood, I see a lot of “talking it out.” It is not uncommon to overhear parents encourage their children to express their feelings while, say, in restaurants. Why do you want to jump on the table, Liam? Coco, please try to explain your anger toward the green beans. There’s a mindset in these parts that children should be treated like adults, with all of their tastes and distastes respected. Having grown up with twelve siblings and roughly zero of my tastes and distastes even acknowledged—“respect” was generally uttered only in the context of what the small residents of the

house should have for the taller inhabitants—this sounded sweet to me. Kids are people too, after all—short, often totally unreasonable people, but people nonetheless. In practice, however, this notion was a lot less quaint. I remember my older daughter, Oona, two years old at the time, telling me that my “words were hurting” her. My grievous offense? I’d asked her to bring me her shoes. I also remember thinking, a little to my horror, Oh, I’ll show you something that hurts. Thankfully, I only laughed and walked out of the room, leaving her utterly outraged. But early on I had my doubts about this new sort of level playing field between parent and child. After all, until about seven or eight years of age (if you are lucky), kids are, by nature, irrational. My suspicions were realized on an early fall evening when my French friend Lucie came to dinner with her husband and two children. The Durand kids were obedient, respectful, and, when told to be, quiet. They didn’t seem to require cajoling or lengthy explanations when asked to set the table. They simply did what they were told. If they didn’t want a certain dish at dinner, they didn’t eat it, but they also were not offered a myriad of other choices. Not a single cheese stick was proffered. After dinner, we parents were sitting around the dining room table, finishing a bottle of wine, while the kids played in the living room. A mom could get used to this, I thought, reclining—reclining!—in my chair. But the sweet, slightly inebriated reverie did not last long. Soon enough, my younger daughter, Daphne, wanted my attention, so she did as she usually does: Namely, she started to act bananas, screaming and yelling for me. (This was back when Daph would dive to the ground at the slightest provocation in order to better express her tantrums, pounding and kicking the floor with such exuberance that we referred to this move as “pulling a McEnroe”; more on this later.) By this point, I’d been exposed to the well-oiled Durand machine for about four hours, more than enough time to soak up some deep wisdom. So instead of doing what I usually did—tending immediately to Daphne’s (loud) calls—I looked to Lucie for advice. Here I should note that Lucie and her husband both appeared blissfully unaware of the three-foot raving maniac in the other room. Perhaps it was the wine? Mais non! Lucie must have sensed my hunger for advice, for she leaned across the table, put a strong, steady hand on my arm, and offered an adage she told me her Parisian mother had often employed: “If there is no blood, don’t get up.” If there is no blood, don’t get up. So simple—and so excellent. Of course! That’s how they do it. No blood, no foul! Parenting as a pickup basketball—or, rather, footie—match. I didn’t get up. Things were loud for a little bit, and Daphne was irate at my lack of bustle on her behalf. And then, as fast as her wails had started, they stopped, and she resumed playing with the other kids. After that night I began to watch my friend very closely for additional clues on how she handled her children. For a while I thought I was just being charmed by that thing that always gets me—little kids fluent in French. Maybe, in their perfect French, they were telling their mother to eat merde and die. But I knew that wasn’t the case. There was no eye-rolling, no door-slamming, no stomping, no banging on walls, floors, or ceilings, no food throwing, no pleading—you get the picture. In fact, there didn’t appear to be a whole lot of resistance at all to the words coming down from on high. That is, from Mom and Dad. Unfortunately, my French was très rusty, and I missed much of the invaluable wisdom to be gathered like precious parenting stones when Lucie spoke with her children. Still, I was convinced that there was very little negotiating or back talk going on. When I cornered Lucie later—cornered her gently, politely, if perhaps in a slightly wild-eyed frenzy what with the sleep-deprived desperation and all—she confirmed that this was the case. Soon, whenever things spun out of hand in my own home, I found myself wondering: What Would Lucie Durand Do? Swallowing my pride, along with plenty of the kids’ uneaten dinners, I took things a bit further and started asking Lucie, point-blank, for advice. For instance, when Daphne decorated the length of our rather long hallway with crayon (oh, McEnroe), my husband and I were unsure how to react. Most of the parenting books we owned cautioned against drawing too much attention to a specific incident when disciplining a child. The theory was that if you make a big fuss over a single act, the child will remember its effects and likely repeat the offense for a moment in the spotlight at a later date. Next time, we were afraid, Daphne might paint the whole apartment! We didn’t know what to do with her. Time-out? Stern warning? Daph was just shy of three years old, so taking away privileges or toys wouldn’t really register much with her. When I asked Lucie what they might do in France with this type of toddler misdemeanor, she didn’t hesitate: “You go to the kitchen and get a sponge with soap and water. Sit her on a stool and have her scrub.” I was incredulous. Scrub it all off? My husband had tried and couldn’t erase so much as a single scrawl. Then Lucie assured me that I only needed to make Daphne wash the wall for a minute so that she had a chance to understand the consequences of her action—and to see how damn hard it is to get crayon off a wall. It seemed so obvious. Yet somehow, in the hyperattentive, must-do-the-right-thing parenting environment in which I’d been marinating, nothing was obvious anymore. For her part, Lucie was always flattered and happy to help, but she was also a bit baffled by my lack of know-how. An expert parent she is, yes, but Lucie is not a parenting expert. Her approach to child-rearing is, in her mind, neither groundbreaking nor new; it’s simply the way things are done in her homeland. Often Lucie has a strategy or phrase that does wonders for any given standoff between my kids and me, but, more than that, she has a refreshing attitude: There shouldn’t be any standoffs. “After all, Catherine,” she often reminds me, “you are the chief.” The chief—has a nice ring to it, no? For me, Lucie is a gold mine of great advice, but she’s made it very clear that her way of parenting is natural for practically everyone in France. Here in the States, we’ve been talking and talking and talking about our kids’ feelings. Meanwhile, over there, French children don’t talk back! It was around this time that I had a major Frenchified epiphany: I could become the chief of my family, with my husband as able-bodied second in command, and together

we could reclaim from the children control of the household, the playground, the supermarket, and more. Our lives! We could have our pre-kid lives back to some extent. Actually, this would be an improved version of that past life. Because, to paraphrase that surprisingly French, filthily hilarious comedian Louis C.K., I love my children more than anything in the world, and sometimes I wish they were never born. Most parents I know, if they were being completely honest, would say the same thing. Put another, more French way, we all very much want to spend time with our children and do everything we can—within reason—to help them have happy, successful lives. But, man oh man, sometimes we just want to be left alone for five minutes—or five days. More than that, we need this time. The paradox I've observed on the playgrounds of several U.S. cities is that even as we work ourselves to dust to ensure that our kids are thrilled beyond a shadow of a sliver of a doubt, we the parents are suffering in the process. Exhausted, dissatisfied parents can't be good for the kids. I've certainly felt myself get sucked into this nasty cycle—contorting every which way to please the kids, only to resent them for making my life so hard. That is why, with the help of many a wise French parent, I finally decided to do something about all that. So I brought my whole family on a bit of an adventure. And, no, I didn't consult Oona and Daphne for their thoughts on the matter. Let me now say to my two sweet, unbelievably wonderful and interesting girls, who will one day read this book: I'm sorry. Am I sorry for trying to make all our lives easier, simpler, more satisfying, and more deeply felt? Not at all. But I am sorry you didn't have a say in being part of this great and ambitious effort. (The truth is that, even early on, it was not uncommon for one or both kids to plead with me as I slipped into chief mode, "But, Mooooooom. We. Are. Not. French!") I am sorry for making you main characters in a narrative you had no chance to approve. Luckily, you are both great kids, so I don't think you will ever be too embarrassed by your portrayal. Whew, glad that's done. Now, here goes: Like most children, our kids were very young when the personalities we saw solidifying several years on began to form. They were both still babies, really, when my husband, Mac, developed shorthand for describing the girls to friends and family members who asked after them: Oona was Edith Wharton; Daphne was John Belushi. What this means is that Oona has always been contemplative about life—a keen observer, a big feeler, a bigger thinker, and, dare I say, oddly introspective for a child. She wrote her first book at three. She started her first blog—reviewing books she liked—at seven. Oona is the kind of kid who will hang out with teachers at school dances. There was even a period when she wrote stories in bed. Hence: Wharton. Daphers is another, wilder story. For clarification, Daphne's McEnroe moments were only when she excelled in the tantrum-throwing arts. The kid, bless her spazzy heart, has one speed—and it is not slow. She falls asleep twitching with energy—for many years she did not fall asleep for hours—and wakes up barreling into our bed. At 7:00 a.m. Or earlier. No matter when she goes to bed. There is a chance that Daphne is a marvel of science: She can crash out at midnight and rise at 6:30 ready for a pro-wrestling cage match, or at least a round of not-very-delicate grappling with her dad. She is bouncy and grabby and loud—and always has been. She will start her share of food fights in life. She's a Belushi. That wrestling match with her dad, by the way, is one she wins, because my husband is more Wharton than Belushi. Mac is a slow waker, who can pound a double espresso after dinner and sleep like a baby that night (provided the baby in question is not Daphne).