

# THE HILL

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## Roadkill toys

Introducing  
Notting Hill's  
vilest new craze

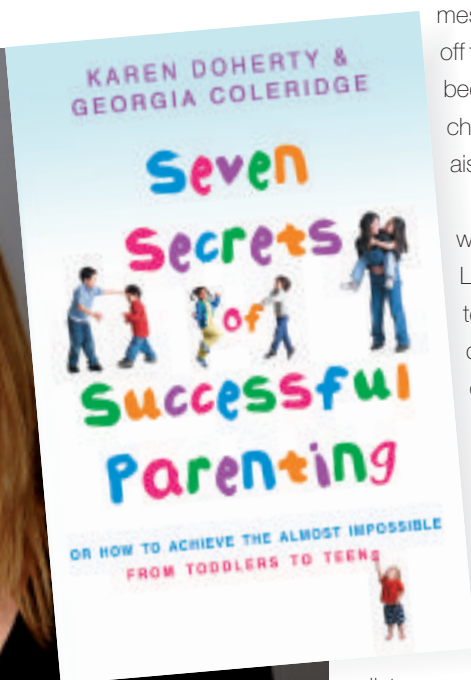
Rag trade  
60 years of fashion  
at Royal College of Art

In the  
garden  
Rachel Johnson's  
W11 world

PLUS: ALL THE LOCAL FOOD NEWS AND WIN GOODIES FROM COCO RIBBON!

# Mother courage

W11's Karen Doherty and Georgia Coleridge have just published a book on bringing up children. Here they explain how it all came about



**WE MET WHEN WE BOTH MOVED** onto a communal garden in Notting Hill, and we became firm friends when we banded together to install a playground. Our children were busy breaking all the garden rules by hiding in the shrubs, climbing trees and playing ball games. The ramshackle splintery slide wasn't enough to keep them, or the other 30 children who lived on the garden, out of trouble. So we took it upon ourselves to solve the problem. After galvanising support from our neighbours, getting our local architect Malcolm Pawley on board, and packing a room full of enthusiastic parents for a planning meeting with Kensington and Chelsea, we got the permissions and the playground was built. In the process, we found we made a pretty good team.

We also discovered our neighbours were facing many of the same issue with their children that we were. We wanted to find answers to all sorts of questions. How do you get homework done when your children would much rather play? How do you get them to eat the fresh fruit and vegetables you've lugged back from Portobello? How do you get them to help around the house instead of leaving a perpetual trail of

mess? How do you get them to turn off the damn television and go to bed? And what do you do when your child has a tantrum in the sweets aisle at Sainsbury's?

With four small children each, we were desperate for solutions. Luckily, living in W11 where people tend to read widely and think deeply, we were surrounded by creative parents who were happy to pass on their ideas. Wherever we went, Kensington Gardens, Bramleys or the playgroup at St Peter's Church, we kept bumping into people and asking questions. All our children went to school within walking

distance, and we gathered some of the best advice on the daily school run.

The stories we heard were remarkable. Our friends had come up with so many groundbreaking solutions to some of life's most irritating problems that we wanted to share them. We realised we had more than enough material for a book. So every day for years we sat at Karen's kitchen table looking out at that communal garden, bringing together all these wonderful ideas.

We backed up our research with information from parent classes, workshops, interviews with experts, and dozens of parenting and psychology books. But time and time again we found that it was our neighbour's stories that were the most inspiring. One mother told us how she coped when her son turned into a sulky pre-teen and refused to do anything she asked. Another's little boy needed very little sleep. She'd spend hours trying to get him to bed, and then find him up in the middle of the night, turning on the taps and fiddling with the knobs on the gas cooker. A third, who had been in despair because her daughter would only eat white food, sliced white bread, pasta and grated cheese, explained how she'd been able to solve it.

More than anything we were struck by how different their approaches were. It's well-known that Notting Hill is a very mixed area, and the same is true of its parents. Some are laid-back and Bohemian, others efficient and organised. Some are calm and cerebral, others are high-energy, in-charge doers. They are all different, and they all do what works for them and their families. We wanted to reflect this diversity in our book by showing parents there is a range of options open to them. The more strategies you have, the more chance you'll find something that feels right and comfortable, and works for your family.

“How do you get them to eat the fresh fruit and vegetables you've lugged back from Portobello?”

We did this by focusing on seven parent types. There are Pause Parents who stay cool in a crisis; Cheerleaders who try to praise, not criticise; Tuned-In Parents who understand feelings; and Physical Parents who know children behave better when they feel well. Then there are the organised Sorted Parents, the authoritative Commandos, and lastly the Laid-Back Parents who encourage their children to think for themselves.

We knew we were on to something when everyone who read our material immediately recognised themselves. They said it was the first parenting book that didn't make them feel guilty, and showed them how much they were doing right already. Best of all, they saw that if they used the parent types together, they could solve even the most complicated parenting problems, from picky eating, homework and bedtime, to bullying and dealing with a difficult child. ●

***Seven Secrets of Successful Parenting* by Karen Doherty and Georgia Coleridge is published by Bantam Press, £12.99.**

**For details of local parent talks, see  
[www.KarenAndGeorgia.com](http://www.KarenAndGeorgia.com)**

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