

# COTSWOLD BOOKS

Travel and children don't always mix. So if you need help this summer holiday, take a tip from *Seven Secrets of Successful Parenting*:

## Try being a **PAUSE PARENT**

Expect to be wound up. You're going to stand a much better chance of enjoying yourself on a plane journey if you are mentally prepared for the onslaught. Instead of thinking of it as your time, think of it as theirs.

"If I go with the assumption that I'll be looking after my children the whole time, jumping up and down fetching drinks, going back and forth to the loo, reading stories and wandering up and down the aisle with a fretful baby, I'm in a much better frame of mind."

## Try being a **COMMANDO PARENT**

Express your feelings. Telling your children in a clear matter-of-fact way how you feel often gets results: "I find travelling with everyone stressful. I get especially worried when you start running around the airport and I can't see you."

## Try being a **SORTED PARENT**

Sort your systems. Everyone will be much happier while travelling if there's a snack bag packed, the Game Boys are charged, you've brought audiotapes or music, and you've got a series of songs you can sing or games you can play along the way.

## Try being a **PHYSICAL PARENT**

Feed them well: Do yourself a favour and pack things like fruit, pretzels, organic crisps and biscuits, natural fruit juice and water.

## Try being a **LAID-BACK PARENT**

Ask for solutions. You get extra points if, instead of organizing everything yourself, you enlist the entire family to help. Ask them for solutions on how to make the journey better for everyone.

## Try being a **CHEERLEADER PARENT**

When they are behaving well, remember to tell your children how lovely it is to travel with them

## Try being a **TUNED-IN PARENT**

Listen to their feelings. Travelling is hard and no matter how much preparation you do your child may have the occasional melt-down... Your best chance of rescuing the situation is to listen and try to understand your child's feelings: "I know you're fed up. So am I. This is so boring. I wish we were there already."

# Practical parenting

Katie Jarvis meets the women who know just what to do when your child refuses to put his shoes on in the morning

"I don't believe it!" says Georgia Coleridge, looking at her friend and co-author Karen Doherty in surprise. "We're wearing the same top!"

It's true. Though the styles are different, the rather fetching swirly pink pattern is identical. They may have come from houses 100 miles apart – one in the Cotswolds and one in London – and they may have completely different backgrounds (Karen was brought up in California while Georgia epitomises Englishness); but there's no doubt these two friends think in similar fashion. And not just when choosing what to wear.

For their approach to the rigours of family life is so similar that the two of them got together to write a book: *Seven Secrets of Successful Parenting* (or how to achieve the almost impossible).

Don't imagine for a moment that these are two bossy experts, casting words of wisdom like pearls before the rest of us. With four children apiece, aged from eight to 17, they're the first to admit they've learned the hard way.

"Can I tell you how prepared I was for parenthood?" laughs Karen, looking heavenwards in disbelief. "I had never changed a nappy before my first daughter was born. I remember asking a friend of mine: Can I come and see how to change a diaper? I got there and she'd already done it and I just thought, 'How am I supposed to learn?'"

The two women met when their children were at nursery school and have been through the usual traumas together. "One day there was a call from the headmistress. One of our daughters had stuck paper towels in all the sinks in the bathroom, turned on the taps and flooded her office downstairs.

"Then there was the time our boys were caught throwing sand at other children at school..."

It's hardly surprising then, that five years ago they realised they had a wodge of material between them just crying out to be turned into a practical guide for parents going through similar crises.

"We decided we wanted to write a book that tells you what it actually feels like when your child won't revise for exams or put his shoes on in the morning; when he sticks his fingers in his ears and hums as you're trying to talk to him. Or – the

really big one – when he won't eat," Georgia says.

The book is different from the usual self-help bibles. For one, it divides parents into seven categories, each representing a different approach to child-rearing. There's the Pause Parent, who doesn't overreact in a crisis; the Cheerleader, who motivates with praise; and the Tuned-In Parent who is good at helping their children cope with difficult feelings. The Physical Parent is into healthy food, plenty of sleep and a game of football rather than a night in front of the telly; Sorted Parents think ahead and get everyone organised; Commandos take control of stressful situations; and there are the Laid-Back Parents who let children do things for themselves.

For every problem – from children who won't eat to those who are being bullied – there are solutions for each type of parent.

It's also user-friendly. Chapters are packed with tried and tested solutions from other parents, such as the eminently comforting: "Some children won't eat anything except mashed potatoes... Don't worry about it. This phase won't last for ever."

"One of the mothers quoted in our book had an argument with her daughter and ended up dropping her off at school in tears," Karen says. "The guilt was horrendous; she said she spent the whole day feeling horrible."

"There is an answer to that," chips in Georgia, "which is to go back and say sorry. You always get another chance to try again."

"Absolutely," Karen agrees. "But that's a funny one because I think, even now, some of the more old-fashioned parents have a real problem saying sorry to their children; but it is a relief to be able to say: 'I could have done that better, actually'. And it teaches your child to say the same."

Both Karen and Georgia are ably qualified to write a book such as this. Karen has an MPhil in management from Oxford, and worked as a television news journalist before becoming a mum full time.

Georgia studied politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford and is children's book editor of the *Daily Mail*; she's also training to be a healer. She and husband, Nicholas – managing director of Condé Nast magazines such as *Vogue* and *Tatler* –

Karen Doherty and Georgia Coleridge among the 'dreaming spires'.



spend their weeks in London but decamp for weekends and holidays to their 18th century Queen Anne house overlooking Bredon Hill. Their children, who are all at boarding school, thrive on the freedom they find in the Cotswolds, away from city life.

It sounds a pretty idyllic existence – but, as Oscar Wilde pointed out, 'Children begin by loving their parents; after a time they judge them; rarely, if ever, do they forgive them'. "What will mine never forgive me for? Oh, that's easy. They will look back and blame me for my forgetfulness," admits Karen. "I did it again this weekend. My daughter was meant to be at a birthday party: I didn't look at my diary and forgot again."

"Ironically with me, they wanted more rules," says Georgia. "I've tried to treat my children like adults, find out what they thought about things, negotiate with them. But when my oldest son went off to Summer Fields (an

Oxford prep school), I told him on his first weekend home: 'If you don't like it, you can leave'. He said, 'MUM! Don't be weird; it's really fun at school. What's really good is that we have these very strict rules and we don't waste time talking about things.'" She laughs at the memory.

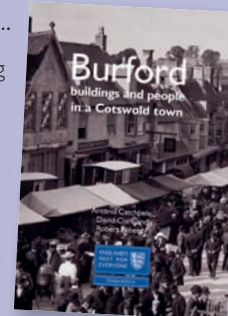
"We want to empower parents," says Karen. "The premise to our book is that there are seven simple solutions to every parenting problem. And everyone who has read it so far has found at least one approach that feels right and comfortable for them. Lots of parents worry so much, but we feel it is time to ditch the guilt. None of us is perfect, but most parents do their best and we should all give ourselves credit for what we're doing right. "

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

## Bill Bryson's Burford

BILL Bryson is backing a new history of Burford that explores the town's stunning buildings and the rich history behind them.

*Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town*



begins with the medieval planners who created it, and follows it through the wool trade to its later history as a small market town.

Travel writer Bill Bryson, who wrote a foreword for the book, told *Cotswold Life*, "What struck me about reading this terrific book is how much really good local history you've got. It's so interesting to see how a general period, that you've read about in history books all your life, affected somewhere like Burford in terms of architecture – what kind of buildings they could afford to build at different periods."

Never before have the buildings been studied in such depth and, for the first time, several have been scientifically tree-ring dated.

The book is the fifth in a series being produced by the Victoria County History as part of its *England's Past for Everyone (EPE)* project. Further research from the project can be found at: [www.ExploreEnglandsPast.org.uk/](http://www.ExploreEnglandsPast.org.uk/) Oxfordshire.

## Publishing deal for Cheltenham poets

Three Cheltenham-based poets who are studying creative writing at the University of Gloucestershire are to see their work in print.

Masters students Angela France and Sonia Hendy-Isaac and undergraduate Ian Morgan have had their poetry collections chosen from over 300 manuscripts submitted to the Bristol-based publishing house, Bluechrome.

Anthony Delgado, director of the press said, "Neither of the poetry editors had any idea that they were looking at work from students, they were given the bare manuscripts. It's just one of those coincidences that three very talented poets were picked for the list for 2009 and they just happened to attend the same university."

The three poets will join a strong list of writers such as Catherine Smith, Matthew Francis, DM Thomas, Susan Wicks and James Kirkup, who have all recently signed up with the press.