



Mama Tried: Dispatches from the Seamy Underbelly of Modern Parenting

Emily Flake

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New Yorker cartoonist Emily Flake relates the hilarious horrors of pregnancy, birth, and early parenting in this funny, poignant, and beautifully illustrated book.

For most people, having a child doesn't go exactly as planned. Not many are willing to admit that not only did they dislike the early days of parenting, they sometimes *hated* it. MAMA TRIED is a relatable collection of cartoons and essays pertaining to the good, bad, and (very) ugly parenting experiences we all face. Subjects range from "are you ready for children?" to "baby gear class-warfare." With incredible honesty, Flake tackles everything from morning sickness to sleep training, shedding much needed light on the gnarly realities of breastfeeding, child proofing, mommy groups, and every unrealistic expectation in between. MAMA TRIED will be an indispensable companion for sleepless parents and a fond reminder for those already out of the woods.

Mama Tried: Dispatches from the Seamy Underbelly of Modern Parenting Details

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From Reader Review Mama Tried: Dispatches from the Seamy Underbelly of Modern Parenting for online ebook

Malissa says

This was funny but not as funny as I had hoped from reviews. A fast read for sure, but not a lot of depth. Still, a fun read for a parent of a young child/children who enjoys an irreverent look at the trial-by-fire shit show that can be parenting :)

Julia says

Entertaining and more illuminating than I would have thought. Though not something I would normally probably be inclined towards, I was drawn in by Emily Flake's colorful illustrations and stayed for her acerbic wit.

Robbins Library says

"A tendency toward glibness can be a gift; it keeps you from panicking too quickly and can help leaven a heavy situation."

A fun, quick read about pregnancy, childbirth, and newborn care, with a coda about toddlers. The author lives in/near Park Slope, Brooklyn, a.k.a. Ground Zero of the yuppie/hipster parenting wars. She's an excellent observer of this environment and about early parenthood in general: Mama Tried is laugh-out-loud funny, sprinkled with gross, graphic, entirely true bits. Pages of narrative are interspersed with illustrations and pages of cartoons (e.g. Why is my baby crying?). A great gift book (depending on the receiver's sense of humor) for expectant parents, new parents, veteran parents.

See also: Welcome to the Club by Raquel D'Apice, Someone Could Get Hurt by Drew Magary

Rachel Kramer Bussel says

Mama Tried made me laugh out loud many, many times. No, I don't have kids yet, but am hoping to soon, and this book was both informative and a little disturbing. Let's just say, I'm glad I won't be raising kids in Brooklyn. But what I most appreciate about Flake's approach is that she's able to laugh at both herself and the parenting world around her and the chaos that having kids can bring to your life. Her essays are heartfelt and honest and spare very little about the sometimes harsh, sometimes wondrous reality of her experience of motherhood, and the cartoons are a delight (my favorite is the one about why your baby is crying, which I won't spoil, save for say that one made me snort with laughter). This isn't just a "look at all the ridiculous things hipster moms do" book, although there's some of that. Flake also explores how her thoughts, feelings and everyday life changed once she got pregnant, how unprepared she was for those changes, and what those have meant for her relationship. I'm giving this is a gift to a new mom, who I hope appreciates it as much as I did.

Whitney says

Both cynical and sweet. Too crude for my taste, and I wasn't a fan of the art. Some of the essays/comics made me laugh, but the last essay was a huge bummer.

Elizabeth says

review to follow.

Alex Templeton says

A not-so-guilty pleasure of mine, now two years into motherhood, is to read accounts by other mothers who are not afraid to admit that pregnancy and those early days of parenting were kind of hilarious but in other ways really kind of sucked. I thoroughly enjoyed Flake's mini-essays and especially the cartoons that illustrated them. (The last one, about how you become aware of mortality after becoming a parent in a way that you never could at any other time in your life, was particularly you're-putting-into-words-something-I-didn't-know-how-to-put-into-words good, and her drawing of the monster teething tooth made me laugh out loud.) Recommended for both moms and those who might want a little window into our addled brains.

Theresa says

It's comforting to know that parenting challenges haven't changed all that much since 1985. The newest factor to make parents feel inadequate is the ubiquitous presence of social media in which everyone else feels free to judge while hiding behind carefully curated photos and clever quips. This combination graphic novel/short essay book explores parenting from pre-conception woes through toddler tantrums. My favorite sections include Baby Registries of the 1%, Baby Shower Activities, and Stroller Accessories. The Kinchester Montessori Preschool Evaluation for Branwyn Z. Adams-Wright hits many current parenting targets with sharply barbed arrows. This book would probably not be a good choice for the idealistic, "I'm going to do it perfectly" first-time mother. It would be a great choice for the second or third time mother who has a wicked sense of humor.

David Schaafsma says

A very funny--and hilariously profane and frank--book about parenting written and drawn by cartoonist Flake who also does cartoons for The New Yorker, The Onion, and so on.

Here's a page she shares on her website:

<http://www.emilyflake.com/mama-tried/>

This is a book written by a woman for women who are pregnant or new mothers, not a middle aged guy, but I have kids. I read this because I read the wonderful Miseryland by Keiler Roberts, which is also in part about becoming a mother, showing it is not so easy, and also sometimes/often laugh out loud and wincingly funny. I saw Mama Tried mentioned on a tweet from Meg Lemke's Mutha Magazine, which I just happened look at because I saw Miseryland reviewed there.

Flake writes about typical topics related to being pregnant and parenting, nothing all that surprising as to topics, and illustrates with cartoons throughout. The way she talks about them is not, shall we say, consistent with the popular *What to Expect When You Are Expecting*. I guess the set up at glance would look like a conventional *How to Be a New Parent* type book, but is at a closer look the Real Person's version. With the laughs a new mother sorely needs.

This just came out October 2015 so it should be up for humor awards in the next year. But I warn you, (or encourage you), Flake has a wild potty mouth. I am in the latter category, relieved to see her talking like a real person and not Dr. Spock. The book can be graphic, which is also fun and refreshing. She's not your church lady grandmother, that's for sure. I strongly recommend it, and especially for new moms who are not easily shocked, who have a sense of humor. The tone is sweet, not harsh, too. You'll like her.

Where did the title come from, kids? An old Merle Haggard song about a guy in prison who failed to follow his mother's advice:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxQbv...>

Raina says

A mix of occasionally-illustrated snarky essays and short comics-style works. Feels like a blog collection, though I'm not sure it is.

Basically, she walks through the process of having a kid -- conception, choosing a name, the actual birth, post-partum sex, breast-feeding, etc. and gives her take and experience (and curses a lot).

I picked it up because I recently became a stepparent, and wondered if any of her reflections would be therapeutic or illuminating. And I have a general interest in comics-adjacent-works, as Followers will know. And I think I saw one of her short pieces somewhere and it amused me. So, yeah. It didn't really speak to my experience at all (my kid was 5 when he moved into my house), but it checked the other two boxes ok.

It's a little goofy, it's a lotta jaded, it's funny at times, it's definitely crass and out-of-the-box. She took her "pregnancy photos" with a gorilla mask on, for example.

Obvs don't read if you're sensitive about any sacred cows in this area.

I like her illustration style (fullcolor!), and would love to read a full-developed graphic novel by the woman.

It didn't break my brain with awesome or anything, but I didn't seriously consider quitting the book, so take that endorsement as you will. :)

Abby says

This one got the fourth star from me because one night while I was reading it, I laughed so hard that I woke Charlie up. A funny li'l snapshot of my reality.

Eileen says

Written and drawn by a comic artist for the New Yorker, I found it to be comical, fun, and heartfelt. Essentially an illustrative memoir about the oddities and emotional rollercoaster mothers go through in pregnancy and early parenthood, it hit a little too close to home. I enjoyed it and have recommended it to friends going through similar experiences and looking for a relatable chuckle.

Shannon says

I picked this up after being impressed by Flake's comics in other publications. Unfortunately, with a few exceptions, the written passages in this book did not showcase Flake's wit and creativity the way her illustrations do. I found most of the chapters to be disappointing, but the included illustrated scenes, graphs, and satirical advertisements were excellent. I'd read a graphic novel by Flake in a heartbeat, but probably never another book of hers that relies on the written passages so much.

Emilia P says

Yep yep yep. Flake, late of the New Yorker cartoonist staff, has a great sense of wanting to be a real good parent and also to be a really authentic version of herself. These things may sound compatible or mutually exclusive, depending on your point of view. Basically, in the upper-middle-class scheme of things, it's hard to maintain a common sense attitude when natural-birth, attachment parenting, mama is always right is one end of the spectrum, and hand-it-over, give-me-the-drugs is the other end. The reality is so much more messy, and hilarious, and Flake chronicles pretty darn well, in an appropriately shaky hand. Well done, and one to watch.

MariNaomi says

I don't have kids, nor do I ever intend to, but this book made me laugh so many times, and empathize with my new-parent friends. I want to buy it for all of them.
