

# Parenting PEOPLES

## Spock Talk

### The doctor is still in

Since his original hardcover edition of *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* was published in 1945, Dr. Benjamin Spock has been the undisputed king of parenting pundits. I asked Spock, now 88 years old, how parenting styles have changed during his reign. “Not a great deal,” he replied. The most common problem then *and* now is parents’ hesitancy in guiding their children, says the renowned pediatrician.

“So many parents are afraid to be definite when they set a rule,” he says. For example, if bedtime is 8:30, then it’s the parent’s *job* to see that the child goes to bed then. If he doesn’t budge, stop what you’re doing and lead him by the hand while, at the same time, talking about something pleasant. “Children are extremely ingenious at seeing what they can get away with,” says Spock. This doesn’t mean parents should be “arbitrary or grim. Just be consistent and show you mean it.”

The sixth revised edition of *Dr. Spock’s Baby and Child Care*, co-written with Michael B. Rothenberg, M.D. (Pocket Books), is now available. (According to the publisher, the book has sold more than 40-million copies in total—making it the best-selling American paperback in history.)

—Vivien Santana Hughes

