

# foreword

when my first child, Michael, was born just over fifty years ago in Topeka, Kansas, I had two “baby books” to provide instructions and support: *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1957) by Dr. Benjamin Spock and *Mother and Child* by Dr. D. W. Winnicott (1957). I was living in a new city with my graduate-student husband. My mother lived a thousand miles away—a longer distance than a thousand miles is now with cell phones. I’d been an only child in a post-Depression era in which people had few children. The first diaper I changed in my whole life was the one I put on Michael when I dressed him to take him home from the hospital. And we used pins to fasten cloth diapers. “Be careful not to stick him,” the nurse said to me as she watched me struggle a too-bunched-up cloth diaper onto Michael’s less-than-six-pounds-altogether body.

I consulted my Dr. Spock book regularly for advice about what relieves colic, what varieties of color or consistency poop can be and still be within the limits of normal, or when to suspect that my baby had an ear infection. But I read the Winnicott book often, perhaps daily, to keep my courage intact. The book is now long out of print, having been incorporated into *The Child, the Family and The Outside World* (1992). I gave my copy away long ago, but the first passage, as I remember it, is something close to, “I don’t know how to take care of your baby, because it is your baby and you are the baby’s mother and you will know. You’ll know *because* you are the baby’s mother, and you are tied together

by a natural bond of love. Mothers, for time immemorial, have known how to take care of their babies without advice books from other people." Perhaps not those exact words, but words just like those. I was more than encouraged. I was consoled. Even, perhaps especially, on difficult days. On days when I tried this or that in response to Michael's distress and nothing seemed to be effective and I'd be feeling, "Eeeeeek!"—I'd think, "I'm his mother. I love him. We'll work this out."

How I wish I'd had *Mindful Motherhood* with me then. This superb presentation of basic techniques for steadying the mind, keeping it sane and buoyant and confident in the midst of pregnancy and new-baby care sounds to me like the reassurance of Winnicott—"You are the parent; you can do it because you love naturally"—and the wisdom of the Buddha—"You are not your thoughts, or your moods, that all pass; you are, in your essence, benevolence"—spoken in the idiom of a modern woman who is also a mother.

Had I had *Mindful Motherhood* with me fifty years ago, I would have thought of Cassi Vieten as my friend.

—Sylvia Boorstein