



# Parenting for Primates

*Harriet J. Smith*

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## **Parenting for Primates** Harriet J. Smith

What parent hasn't wondered "What do I do now?" as a baby cries or a teenager glares? Making babies may come naturally, but knowing how to raise them doesn't. As primatologist-turned-psychologist Harriet J. Smith shows in this lively safari through the world of primates, parenting by primates isn't instinctive, and that's just as true for monkeys and apes as it is for humans.

In this natural history of primate parenting, Smith compares parenting by nonhuman and human primates. In a narrative rich with vivid anecdotes derived from interviews with primatologists, from her own experience breeding cottontop tamarin monkeys for over thirty years, and from her clinical psychology practice, Smith describes the thousand and one ways that primate mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, and even babysitters care for their offspring, from infancy through young adulthood.

Smith learned the hard way that hand-raised cottontop tamarins often mature into incompetent parents. Her observation of inadequate parenting by cottontops plus her clinical work with troubled human families sparked her interest in the process of how primates become "good-enough" parents. The story of how she trained her tamarins to become adequate parents lays the foundation for discussions about the crucial role of early experience on parenting in primates, and how certain types of experiences, such as anxiety and social isolation, can trigger neglectful or abusive parenting.

Smith reveals diverse strategies for parenting by primates, but she also identifies parenting behaviors crucial to the survival and development of primate youngsters that have stood the test of time.

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