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## BOOK REVIEW

### Title: Brain development - Milestones and learning

Author: Melodie de Jager

#### Book information:

Publisher: Mind Moves Institute  
 Publication date: 2011  
 ISBN number: 978-0 -620-50338-9  
 Paperback: 233 pages  
 Price: R240 (including postage)

This book is aimed at new parents or caregivers and it provides general information on various aspects such as pregnancy, birth, childhood development and milestones. It is written in an easy-to-understand-language and there are interesting snippets of information throughout the book. These relate to specific questions parents might have, relevant facts, research, advice for parents or explanations of specific medical terminology. The focus of the book is on the 'reflex brain', the 'thinking brain' and the 'feeling brain' and on how stimulation helps with the 'wiring' of the baby's brain as well as the role parents can play in this process. The book is divided into 3 parts: part one focuses on the development of the baby's



brain, part two on the development of the central nervous system and the body map and part three focuses on motor milestones.

### **Brief summary of the content of each chapter:**

**Part one (Chapter 1- 6):** The first six chapters focus on how babies learn and develop and what parents can do to promote this learning and development, even in the womb. It acknowledges that parenting is hard but assures parents that they are able to provide what the baby needs. These chapters provide basic information on health, nutrition, fitness, the management of stress as well as the effect of environmental pollutants and lifestyle factors while being pregnant. It also refers to the 'unseen parent' i.e. the baby's reflex system which is described in some detail throughout the book. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of reflexes and how these can affect a child's development if the reflexes do not become integrated. The impact of birth on the baby as well as the development inside and outside the womb is briefly discussed.

**Part two (Chapter 7 - 11):** These chapters highlight the development of each individual sense: touch, vestibular sense, proprioception, smell, taste, hearing and sight. Basic guidelines and activities are provided on how to stimulate the baby's senses. Reference is then also made to specific 'SOS signals' in babies as well as 'SOS signals' in children older than 3 years of age indicating when the various senses are not developing properly. Both 'BabyGym Moves' (movements that are done by the parent) and the 'Mind Moves' exercises (movements that are done by the child him/herself) are included to equip the parent with some practical ideas on how to deal with the baby or child when he/she is displaying specific stress signals.

**Part three (Chapter 12 - 18):** These chapters describe the importance of motor milestones in the development of babies and

children. The focus is on rooting and sucking; rolling over; sitting; crawling; standing, cruising and walking; and walking and stopping. The development of socialising and play is also briefly discussed. Each chapter again describes how the specific milestones develop, identifies specific problems related to the various milestones not being met and gives general advice to parents on how to stimulate or support the reaching of these milestones. 'BabyGym Moves' and 'Mind Moves' exercises are again included to further guide parents in terms of practical activity ideas.

### **Relevance to South Africa:**

There are so many books available these days on childhood and development and parents are often overwhelmed by the daunting task of deciding which book to buy and which book to read. This book is almost simplistic in the way it is written but makes for an easy, manageable read with practical guidelines for parents and/or caregivers. It does not claim to provide all the answers to all the questions new parents might have but it is a good starting point. It has enough valuable information to set new parents on the right course in terms of stimulation of their new baby and make them aware of signs to look out for in terms of delayed development. The author refers to the 'BabyGym Moves' and the 'Mind Moves' to promote development but also makes it clear that these are not intended to replace therapies, if they are needed, but rather to enhance and complement them.

### **Reviewer:**

Lizelle Jacobs, MSc (Occupational Therapy),  
Lecturer Occupational Therapy, University of Witwatersrand

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