

MOTHER OF ALL PARENTING AUTHOR FLOURISHED IN CLARKSON'S SOIL

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**ANN DOUGLAS IS
THE TRUSTED GP OF
PARENT COUNSEL,
SAYS JOHN STEWART**



**JOHN
STEWART**
Column

Ann Douglas loves being asked to autograph her books, especially if they have been defaced.

The telltale scrawl of a crayon-wielding toddler across the pages of one of the volumes in her Mother of All Books series - which include "Mother of All Pregnancy Books," "Mother of All Baby Books" and "Mother of All Toddler Books" - positively lights her up.

"That means they're being used," beams the prolific author, who has created a canon of parent-friendly counselling resources in her many books, articles and visits to schools across Canada. Her 30-odd books, much like her, are down-to-earth, practical, and humorous, dripping with 3 a.m. "will this kid ever stop crying?" authenticity.

It all started in Marjorie Whitson's Grade 6 class at Green Glade Senior Public School. "She encouraged my writing and made it OK to be the quiet kid with the social conscience who cried easily."

In Grade 10 at Clarkson Secondary School, she launched a student survey on suicidal thoughts, then wrote a letter to The

Mississauga Times. The paper did a story, initiating her lifelong symbiotic relationship with media.

She's a serial talk show guest, reassuring parents and previewing her latest work, be it "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Canadian History," or a curling reference book (co-written with her broom-obsessed Dad Rod who still lives here). She's written extensively on child care, genealogy, nutrition, baby science, body image, mental health and dieting, to name a few.

She has a current entry on fellow Mississaugan and fellow IndEC South student Silken Laumann's blog about losing 60 kilograms. (<https://weareunsinkable.com/health-transformation-journey/>) Douglas, a Peterborough resident, wrote the book "The Incredible Shrinking Woman" years before becoming her.

Reading her books is like chatting with a skilled GP who demonstrates, through gently-skilled conversation, that mom actually knows best.

Success might feel good if Douglas had time to consider it. She never minimizes the tough climb. Her first book was rejected 15 times before a bidding war broke out between publishers. The reward: a \$250 signing bonus.

She inherited her mother's bipolar disorder. During a multi-year depression in the 80s, she missed book deadlines. Her four adult children all have Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder. "You can have mental illness and still have a great life," she says, channeling her book title "Parenting Through the Storm."

She'd be much richer had she abandoned her unequivocal support of breastfeeding for lucrative endorsements from formula companies.

She's been called a "brandable" commodity. "People meant that as a compliment. I felt I'd been slimed."

Her new book "Happy Parents Happy Kids" is the culmination of all things parent and child. Douglas interviewed 65 parents, read 100 books, consulted 10 experts, scoured 1,000 research papers and covered every horizontal surface in her Peterborough home with 750 pages of handwritten notes. "I think this is the best book I'm capable of writing."

She'll present a two-part workshop May 15 and 29 at Archbishop Romero Catholic Secondary School on Credit Valley Road.

"I feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility to make things better for parents and kids," says Douglas. "The village needs to do a better job of supporting parents, better social, economic and political policies that make parenting easier."

Miss Whitson would be proud.

John Stewart is a retired longtime journalist with the Mississauga News. His column, My Back Pages, appears each week.