

Was 'What to Expect' what they were expecting?

By **LESLIE GRAY STREETER**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 6:26 p.m. Friday, May 18, 2012

Posted: 5:32 p.m. Friday, May 18, 2012

When Elizabeth Dashiell was given a copy of *What To Expect When You're Expecting*, before she ever had kids, she literally used the thick volume "as a paperweight."

But when the West Palm Beach public relations specialist became a mom for the first time almost four years ago, that book, and especially some of its sequels, became an essential source of answers for the questions that abound on that unknown journey known as parenting.

"I found them (to be) a joy," says Dashiell, mother of Rowan, 3, and Regan, 2, with husband Lee. "They were very comforting."

With the release Friday of a big-budget fictionalized movie based on the books starring Elizabeth Mitchell, Chris Rock, Brooklyn Decker, Jennifer Lopez, Cameron Diaz, Dennis Quaid and others, locals say that Heidi Murkoff's original 1986 *What To Expect When You're Expecting* and its subsequent advice series are incredibly valuable.

Although critics have accused the book of encouraging panic in skittish would-be parents, fans say that as long as its information is paired with a physician's specialized advice and one's own experiences, it's a winner.

"Some of the critics of the book think it's too facile. Well, this is a book that doesn't pretend it's written by or for members of the Mayo Clinic," says April Masini, of the advice website AskApril.com, based in Naples. "It's a down-the-middle, easy-to-read, easy-to-understand, easy-to-absorb advice book that takes the anxiety and guesswork out of monumental changes to a woman's body and life - and that kind of work takes a lot of smarts, more than are obvious on first read."

Dr. Samuel Lederman, chief of obstetrics and gynecology at Good Samaritan Medical Center and managing partner of Palm Beach Obstetrics and Gynecology, laughs when considering that the series has long been a massive hit in parent circles yet is unknown to others.

A single colleague "had never heard of it, which was the funniest thing, because everybody who has kids knows about it," he says.

"When I first started my practice in the early '90s, it was a very common book. When I became a parent myself I remember walking into a baby superstore seeing a whole wall of them, in English and Spanish. There's such a remarkable penetration of that title."

He says that *What To Expect* does "a really good job (as a) middle-of-the-road guidebook, with good advice. It's been well updated. In pregnancy, it's easy to become a little obsessed, because the stakes are very high: What can be higher stakes than having a baby? The book does a good job of keeping (parents) centered. Sometimes, a headache is a headache."

Marie Chapman, 41, of Boynton Beach, says that her OB/GYN office liked the books so much, they gave the first two to parents. As "an older mom" who was 38 when she became a first-time parent with the birth of daughter Jillian, now 3: "Knowing that it's normal to be sick, to not be able to sleep, was helpful."

Chapman, who with her doctor husband, Glenn, also has a 7-month-old son named Finn, says she liked that the book is broken into segments corresponding with each week of pregnancy, detailing literally "what you'll be experiencing now, and what you'll be experiencing the next week. You can say 'My ankles might swell.' And when bad things didn't happen, you think 'I'm better than that!' " she says, laughing.

And it's not like advice isn't flying at expectant mothers from every quarter, solicited and otherwise: "When you're pregnant, that's all people talk to you about," Chapman says. "You hear advice from everybody. So having a book like that can give you some answers."

For Dashiell, she found the sequels *What To Expect The First Year* and *What To Expect In The Toddler Years* almost eerily on target.

"We followed along in (*The First Year*) week to week," she said. "(Rowan) was three weeks early, and we realized that she was almost exactly three weeks behind in the developments they described. You know how some people have a baby book (to chart their kids' progress)? We left those milestones marked in that book. And we're never getting rid of it."

Experts say that with all things, it's best to temper the advice of *What To Expect* or any pregnancy guide with specific guidance from your physician.

But since they're going to be up anyway, they might as well read it.

"You don't sleep when you're pregnant, and you're not gonna sleep for another year, either," Chapman says. "When you're up in the middle of the night, it's like 'Oh, look! I've got some reading material!'"

Find this article at:

[Print this page](#)

[Close](#)

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/health/was-what-to-expect-what-they-were-expecting-2363805.html>

MALTZ JUPITER THEATRE
PAUL & SANDRA GOLDSTEIN
CONSERVATORY
OF PERFORMING ARTS
www.jupitertheatre.org/education

2012 SUMMER CAMPS
FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES K - 12

SENIOR AND JUNIOR CONSERVATORY! • MAGIC THEMED CAMP! • IMPROV AND SKETCH COMEDY!
UNDER THE SEA THEMED CAMP! • DANCE INTENSIVE - BALLET, JAZZ AND TAP • AND MORE!

JUNE 11 - AUGUST 10
9AM - 3PM
(561) 575-2672

1001 East Indiantown Road,
Jupiter, FL 33477