Dr. Spock:
Turning the Road in Parenting

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I spent a few days last August skimming sources about influential people in history. Initially I was interested in either the revolutionary ideas of great thinkers and psychologists, or the groundbreaking discoveries in medicine. Eventually, I found Dr. Spock and his revolutionary book, *Baby* and *Child Care*. Dr. Spock was the first to synthesize pediatrics and psychology. When I read quotes such as, "first in his field," "father of behavioral pediatrics" and "changed the paradigm," I knew I had a fitting and interesting topic.

After researching local libraries, I went to the Allen Medical Library at Case Western Reserve University because Spock had taught there. In order to establish a research trail, my primary goal was to discover when and where Spock was educated. I sent out letters to medical schools, pediatricians, and historians. I formulated a survey that I sent to pediatricians and mothers in the 1950's. Helpful information came from the Mayo Clinic and Case archives (he worked at both places) and from Syracuse University, which contains the Spock special collection. I interviewed several of his colleagues as well as his son. I spent much time at the Cleveland Library viewing microfilms of periodicals.

After the research stage I categorized the key information that would be essential to my script and made an outline. With a twenty-page outline, I assessed which information was crucial, would best illustrate the turn, and would show a balance between the negative and positive aspects of this turn.

I had large amounts of research on Spock, the histories of pediatrics and psychology, and society's need. The task was to fine focus and hone this information into a well-formed and poignant ten minutes.

I spent car rides to and from school memorizing, and grabbed any spare time at home to choreograph the performance. During this time I brainstormed different ideas for a set. I wanted it to illustrate clearly Dr. Spock bringing together tow roads, Pediatrics and Psychology that met society's need at a point in time. I wanted to portray the information in a creative way. I toyed with the idea of a mother telling the story, but I decided a baby would work well and would add pizzazz to my performance.

On the pediatric road, it wasn't until the end of World War II that critical issues in childhood diseases and nutrition were solved. The profession could re-direct its energies to psychological aspects. Dr. Spock was at this turning point as the catalyst. The ideas of psychologists and thinkers needed to be synthesized and turned tot he healthy emotional and mental growth of children. Spock stepped in at this point to join the two fields. Concurrently, with a move away from the extended family and advancements in medicine, parents looked for professional help in raising their children. They turned to Spock's book and called it their "Bible." Parenting turned from a rigid uniform approach to a commonsense, intuitive, individualized approach.
Dr. Spock changed parenting.