



Happy Chaos: From Punky to Parenting and My Perfectly Imperfect Adventures in Between

Soleil Moon Frye

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From Punky to parenting, Soleil Moon Frye shares insightful, realistic, in-the-trenches parenting advice, inspiration, and fun.

Enthusiastic, spunky, and positive, Punky Brewster was the quintessential eighties kid. Nearly thirty years later, Soleil Moon Frye-the adorable girl who played her on TV-is all grown up. Now she's a married mom of two, an entrepreneur who parlayed her successful kids' clothing line into a partnership with Target, and a social media whiz with millions of followers. Many of the same girls who watched Soleil on television are now grown up with children of their own, too, and they look to her as a go-to source for realistic, in-the-trenches parenting advice, inspiration, and fun. *Happy Chaos* invites those women into Soleil's world, and makes them revel in the chaos of their own lives, too.

Soleil believes that "happy chaos" is the sign of a family operating at its best-when parents accept that they'll make mistakes, that there will be messes, tears and skinned knees. She learned to love a jumbled life during her own childhood, when her own mom created an atmosphere that was thoroughly unconventional. Their house in Los Angeles was a haven for many young stars of Soleil's generation, often far from home and looking for a safe place to hang out. In this book, she shows how her happy but chaotic childhood informed her parenting: Each chapter begins with a telling reminiscence before moving into insightful advice and fun stories about life with her husband and two adorable daughters.

Happy Chaos: From Punky to Parenting and My Perfectly Imperfect Adventures in Between Details

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Author : Soleil Moon Frye

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Jamie White says

Punky Brewster was one of my favorite shows when I was a kid- I even dressed as Punky one year for Halloween. Naturally, when I heard she had a book coming out I wanted to read it. I'll be frank... there's some TMI about the delivery of her children and a couple of stories I thought didn't exactly need to be shared. Still, I enjoyed the book and there were some great stories from her childhood.

One of my favorite stories was about her being found hiding in Johnny Carson's personal office after having a problem with one of the kids of the set of Punky. There was also a time when Soleil was attending the easter egg hunt at the White House and she got seperated from her mom. She ended up being found in the Oval office eating Popeye's chicken.

Stories like that are sprinkled through the book, but it's more parenting guide than biography. She talks frankly about fears she's had and issues that she's faced while raising her two kids, Poet and Jagger. (And yes, one has been people's reactions to the kids' names!) She talks about all the typical stuff like making time to be a grown up, dealing with temper tantrums and the feeling she got the first time her six-year-old rolled her eyes at her like an annoyed teenager. She talks about people she's known and lost and what they have taught her.

One of the more touching parts of the book are the sections that deal with her father, Virgil. He was always a bit eccentric (like most of her family) but he took it to a level that eventually proved to be the beginnings of Alzheimer's Disease. She discusses the slow loss of her father mentally and the trip they took together which eventually became the documentary Sonny Boy. She wanted to be able to share that trip with him and document as much of her dad's memories and accomplishments as possible to preserve his amazing history. She also includes her fans and twitter followers in the book by adding her "questions of the day" and "sentence to finish" posts along with some of the responses. Each one directly relates to the chapter following it (and sometimes the one right before).

If you're a fan, I think you'll enjoy it. If you're an 80's/early 90's kid/teen? You'll definintely get some flashbacks to your own childhood in the proces.

Noa says

Oh, Soleil, Soleil... You never cease to leave great marks in my heart.

WARNING! I'm basing this review on my own reception being an early fan of Soleil. If you don't like her, this review is not suited for you.

First of all, it is very important to state that from what I can remember, Punky Brewster has been my first and all-time favourite TV show. Years later, when Sabrina, the teen witch, went to university, I fell in love with one new character, Roxie. How bad I wanted to be just like her! And I didn't relate her to my dear Punky until one day I decided to watch the end credits and read her name. I guess I would just look up to her even if covered with green paint.

With that said, this has been MY FAVOURITE BOOK OF THE YEAR. Yes, an autobiography with advice for parents. But let me tell you that this is not just that. This book made me travel to my first years of life because there is so much of Punky in me, in my personality. And let me tell you the truth...It made want to become a mommy (quite) soon. Not that I can afford it yet, though.

One of the things that has worried me since I started growing up was becoming an adult. Would that mean to have to forbid myself to do any specific things or act in any specific way? At first it seemed to. Every single person that I would look up to would have changed so much when becoming adult that he or she would seem another person. They call it "mature". Duh.

With this book, Soleil helped me understanding how important it is to never leave your childhood and never close your mind to learning and exploring new things. Being curious and open is the key to growing up surrounded by happiness. Of course we don't all have her facilities, but why not try to embrace the people that we are and live the life that we want to live despite all the blurs and the negative?

Life is short and chaotic, but make the best out of it and never let anyone let you down. And please, read this book.

Maryjo says

Soleil, although brought up in Hollywood has a genuine sense and desire to be a close-knit family. In her book she tells about the values she was brought up with and is instilling them in her 2 daughters. I love that she seems so 'normal'. Not anything like the majority of the Hollywood parents out there.

Meredith Spidel says

Oh gosh, I guess I'm the only one who didn't like this book. Chaos for sure, but I'm not so sure about the Happy part for me...At least 50% of it was her name-dropping celebrities from her childhood and ones she still runs with. All over the place with (duh-obvious) parenting tips--really, it's a cute idea to put a note in your kids' lunchboxes?? I never thought of that before--stories about her quirky mother, throw-backs to life as Punky, and her current beliefs about only using organic clothing. Just because one was an amazing childhood star, does not make one a skilled adult author...sorry, Punky :(

Jeannette says

It's really a 2.5, but who can give Punky Brewster a 2? Mainly a book of parenting advice from a novice. A lot of the advice was hippy-ish & unlikely to work for parents who work. All in all, it was entertaining.

Jenn says

I would give the book a 3.5. I really loved the book to begin with and if I'd had the time I probably would

have finished it in one sitting. It has a lot of humor, especially at the beginning. As a first time parent, it is nice to have someone to relate to, someone who doesn't know it all or have all the answers, someone who makes you feel like you are doing okay just being you.

Toward the middle, the book seemed to spend too much time talking about Soliel as a tween/teen and focusing on a lot of Hollywood name dropping. Because her kids are still young, the chapters on older kids didn't seem as relate able, again maybe because my guy is only 14m old.

I really enjoyed the chapter about dads... making sure you include them and don't stifle their 50% of parenting, one of the issues I struggle with. Your way isn't the only way.

Melody says

Absolutely wonderful. I had an inkling it wouldn't be the "what it was like to be Punky" book I'd perhaps prefer but the subject matter (parenting) didn't put me off as I've grown to love her voice and attitude on Twitter and would read anything she wished to write about in long form. This contains a lot of eye-opening information about parenting (an adventure I've yet to embark on), much of it surprisingly hope-inducing (she comes from free-thinking stock and continues in the same spirit with her own children - lots to learn here for today's burgeoning bubble wrap mums and dads). There's a couple of chapters and vignettes about her life as a young actress (and filmmaker - I had no idea) if that's what you're looking for, too. The most impressive thing for me about this book though was how little it assumed its readership - it's as much for fathers, single parents, and even those like me who don't even have kids, who are just plain interested, as it is for mothers.

Brad Carter says

This was boring to me. I was kind of expecting a biography thing about Punky Brewster in the 80's, but it was more about her boring adventures in parenting. I read the entire book in an hour, because I skimmed over all the boring parts. I'm sure it's an okay book, but reading about someone else's mom adventures is really boring, even if she is Punky Brewster.

The one cool part to read about was her evening with Michael Jackson when she was 8 or 9. As all parents seem to somehow do, they left Punky alone with Michael at his house for the evening. After the parents left, Michael suggested, of course, that they get into the hot tub. Punky didn't have a swimming suit, but Michael Jackson just happens to have a closet full of every possible size of child's swim suit. Because that's perfectly normal. Another creepy part of the evening was when she was alone in a hallway and Michael's voice suddenly comes from an intercom saying, "I see you." and she sees a camera watching her. WTF, Michael. Innocent or not, it's easy to see why everyone thought he was a perv.

Marni says

One of the best books I've read in a long time. One part memoir one part child rearing tips wrapped in a whole lot of grace, love, and personal faith. I recommend this to everyone, no matter if your planning a family or have children in their 20's. Soleil is one cool chick!

gina says

A fluffy but enjoyable trip through Frye's take on parenting. I agree with her on most stuff, except she has a very narrow and positive view on how much men do and want to help with children at least in *all* the families I know, it does not match her take on this topic. Her chapter for dads is laughable- assuming that all dads want to do more but poor old dads, the moms just wont let them because moms believe they have to do it all. But she comes from a different world and a different income bracket.

That said, it's the only criticism I can offer. I love her upbeat, quirky, style that allows as much flexibility and freedom as possible. She advocates for being in the moment, creating artistic opportunities, generating lots of love and support. She does it in warm and genuine ways that I aspire to be like.

Of course, I'm not a parent, but I want to be. Hence my indulgence of reading parenting books sans child.

The audio was read by Frye and she did a great job. Hurray for authors who do such a great job reading their own work :)

Jodi says

Okay, I'll admit it - I loved Punky Brewster as a kid so I was interested to see how Soleil Moon Frye is as a mother. I must say for the childhood she wrote about she seems to be a well-grounded, good mother. A little "granola" (aka hippy) but that didn't surprise me for some reason.

Her parenting advice was simple and wise - be present with your children, respect their fears and desires, have fun with them, and create as many memories as possible because they grow too quickly. I also loved that she is so down to earth and talked about swapping clothes with friends and trying to reduce waste for the earth.

About her childhood: What was her father thinking? Boating in a tornado warning? A sixth grade teacher who made drinking alcohol with his class - what?? Her mother accidentally packing a "juice box" that was alcohol? Michael Jackson as a babysitter? French-kissing boys at age 8? Her father taking her and friends to a scary movie in a seedy part of town and leaving them there at 9 years old? Soleil writes lovingly about her parents, but they sound very neglectful to me. For the childhood she writes about, she sounds to be a much better mother with her child.....I hope so anyway!

Janel says

A cute book in an easy to read format divided into short chapters. I really didn't see the "chaos" in Soleil's life though. I thought I'd get more funny, crazy stories about parenting that I could relate to, but it just wasn't in here. If you want to see happy chaos(or sometimes just plain chaos) come on over to my house! Her life sounds a little too perfect for me to relate to. Hasn't she ever shangaied by stepping on a lego in the middle

of the night on the way to the bathroom? Kids ever start mutiny at a restaurant? Anything? Perfect husband, perfect kids and sounds like she has lots of cash to go on lots of vacations to get away. Lots of memoir type stuff in here and LOTS of name dropping....What a joy to here about Demi and Ashton in the delivery room for the birth of Soleil's first child...NOT! Anyways, it's a cute book with nothing upsetting or mean, and at times it was kind of fun to hear about her adventures as Punky, but it didn't have the real life element I could relate to and was looking for.

Lauren says

I'm definitely not at the right point in my life for this book.

Although, might help with the nieces -- But, some cool stories peppered in there.

Plus some fantastic playlists included! I'm now singing "Cool Rider" from Grease 2 to myself.

Libbi says

It was interesting to learn she was as much a wild child as Punky should be. She appears to have a good share of advice for parents, and it was interesting to know this book was more loaded with parenting suggestions and struggles than about her childhood life. I found that she had good relationships with many name drop people. I appreciated the nice things she had to say about Joey Lawrence and did not realize she had developed a crush on Andy Gibb. It was fun to learn her current events and dip into her past.

Holly says

Why does every celebrity who has a couple of kids think they are then qualified to dispense parenting advice to the masses?

This one couldn't decide whether she wanted to write a memoir or a parenting book, so she combined them to disastrous result.

Each chapter starts with quotes from random people solicited from social media sites followed by some name-dropping story about her childhood or family life. Then she somehow tries to relate this to a parenting topic and offers her advice about what to pack to take to the hospital or get your kids to calm down. Her advice ranges from the very obvious to downright bad advice. I expected her to be all organic-earth motherly but I just had no idea how much I would dislike her when it is all over.

I wish I'd never read it, because now I like Punky Brewster a bit less.
