

Introduction

Every child is different and so is every day care. *From Babysitter to Business Owner* will help you focus on what makes you unique as a teacher, what makes your family day care a unique school, and how to communicate these qualities through professional business practices. Throughout this book, I provide you with the tools to create more for yourself than just a job—to create a lasting, satisfying, and successful career.

There is no question that this industry needs more quality providers—there are countless families and children who need someone like you. But you also have needs. You need appreciation for your dedication; you need to experience rewards, such as respect, for a job well done; and you need to be reenergized and motivated in order to maintain your dedication over the years.

There is a way to get your needs met as well. In a word, it's *professionalism*. Presenting yourself as a professional in every aspect of your business is the key to gaining the success and respect you deserve.

From Babysitter to Business Owner begins with you, the foundation on which your business is built, and we want it to be strong! This book will guide you in looking at each part of your business, teaching you how to add a professional touch while pulling from your strengths and building on your weaknesses.

Chapter 1 discusses finding a new attitude, one that will sustain you through the hard work and set the tone for communication with parents and business decisions you will be faced with. You'll learn techniques to improve your professional image—inside and out.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 will take a close look at those parts of your business that directly affect the children: your child care space, curriculum, and field trips. High-quality care is the surest sign of a professional, as well as the best marketing tool. These chapters will help you to get organized and make changes that not only benefit

the children but also communicate to their parents your commitment to their care.

Chapter 5 takes you page by page through creating a parent handbook. The handbook will become one of the most valuable tools in running your business. It not only includes information about *what* you and your day care have to offer, but also answers the question of *why* it's important. It also includes the policies and procedures that will help build a successful business relationship between you and the parents.

Clear, honest, and open communication is essential in building a working partnership with parents. Chapter 6 addresses communicating with parents, one of the toughest aspects of this career, and offers a variety of communication tools, beginning with that all-important interview.

There are many ways to get your name out into the community as someone who provides high-quality care through professional business practices. Chapter 7 looks at marketing techniques and discusses the important difference between advertising and marketing. When you are marketing your business successfully, getting the phone to ring will be the least of your worries.

Short-term and long-term goals can help keep your business on track and build your level of professionalism. Chapter 8 helps you formulate a plan for your future, giving you the final tools you need in order to create a lasting and satisfying career.

Throughout this book, I will share stories with you of my experiences in growing as a professional. I started my business in 1988, and believe me, I made every possible mistake in my first two years. I was lucky enough to connect with a fantastic support group with some seasoned professionals to help guide me along. I knew immediately that I wanted to be just like them—to have a successful and respected business. It was a long journey. Today, I have a flourishing business with a good income, a two-year waiting list, incredible families that respect and appreciate me, and countless moments of awe as I spend my days with amazing children who delight and inspire me.

I wrote this book to help you avoid some of the mistakes I made and reach your goals sooner than I reached mine. It took me two years to find the right mentors and information to plan my career. My hope is that this book helps you find them now, and shows you the way to get what you want out of this difficult yet amazing business we call family child care.

I still have those moments when someone calls me a babysitter, but I don't miss a beat as I quickly reply to them, "No, I own a family child care business and I can't imagine a more satisfying and rewarding career." I hope this book gives you the same sense of empowerment, so that together we can let the world know we have made the journey from babysitters to business owners.