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Kemptville author and art therapist publishes book about helping kids deal with new baby

News Jun 16, 2016 by [Jennifer Westendorp \(/ottawavalley-author/jennifer-westendorp/da99325a-4af1-414d-b406-11b991357dff/\)](/ottawavalley-author/jennifer-westendorp/da99325a-4af1-414d-b406-11b991357dff/) [_mailto:jwestendorp@metroland.com\)](mailto:jwestendorp@metroland.com) Kemptville Advance



Anne Walsh, local author and art therapist, publishes new book titled The Story of Poobum and Pompom. - Jennifer Westendorp

Adjusting to a new baby is something every parent, and sibling, struggles with.

Anne Walsh, local author and art therapist, recently published a book to help families cope with the transition.

The Story of Poobum and Pompom walks kids through the process of accepting a new addition to the family.

Poobum the dog is happy with his family and gets all their attention. Then one day, Poobum's owners bring home a cat named Pompom, who now gets the attention. Poobum decides to act out, by chewing on shoes, and gets punished by his owners. Eventually, Poobum realizes that Pompom is fun to play with and they become friends rather than rivals.

"A lot of parents bring me their kids and say they want me to fix them," said Walsh, who runs Art & Soul art therapy in Kemptville. "The kid is acting out. I start working with the child and what comes up is that they have a sibling. They're angry. What is this wrinkly, smelly, loud thing that is taking up all my parents' time? And here's me, cute as can be, and no one notices. They start misbehaving because they're angry and sad. Initially, the parents will give the kid some leeway because they're adjusting. But eventually they get punished."

She explained a child's anger has to go somewhere and when they misbehave, they get attention.

"It may not be the hugs they're looking for, but its attention," said Walsh.

She said a hole is created when a new addition is introduced to a family and a new pattern forms.

"A crater has been created; parents react to the child's anger, yell at them and then feel terrible," said Walsh. "We've got to fill that hole because when a child is happy, they're not acting out."

Walsh will be holding a book launch at the North Grenville Public Library on June 18, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

"We're going to do an art activity at the launch," she said. "I'm going to have parents sit with their child and decorate a little generic box. You can paint it, write words, use decorative tape – all sorts of stuff. It becomes their wish box. When the parents are helping their kid decorate this box, they are bonding – the kids are happy and relaxed. Kids get attached to their art. Then, I'm going to have them talk about the things they would like to do together when they have time – write down ideas. It's really simple. And this is where I screwed up with my daughter."

She explained when she moved out to Kemptville, around the time her second daughter was born, her oldest daughter was very angry about the new baby.

"My daughter was used to having me all to herself," said Walsh. "You feel guilty as a parent because your child is in pain and you created that."

So you plan big things to do together, like going to see Disney on Ice, she explained. You spend the big bucks and get your child all wound up about it that by the time they get there, they throw a tantrum.

"When you ask a child what they want to do, it's often something simple like watch me draw or making pancakes together," she said. "They just want to do something with you that they used to do before the new baby."

Once the wish box is filled with ideas, parents will have them on hand for precious free moments.

"When you have them written down, you think I can actually do this – this is doable. I didn't know that when I had my second daughter – I thought it had to be something big."

When she was adjusting her own daughter to the new addition to the family, all the books that were out there talked about being a good big sister.

"She didn't want to be my little helper – she didn't want to be okay with it," said Walsh. "This book allows kids to project themselves upon the puppy and ask why was Poobum acting up? What would make him feel better? How could Poobum and Pompom become friends sooner? They can talk about it freely because it's about the dog, not them."

The book is a good tool to open the door for those discussions, she said.

"Parents need to spend the time acknowledging that they are sad and angry."

In the back of the book, there is a note to parents that guides them through addressing the new addition with their child.

“One thing you can do is go through milestone pictures with your child and show them the progress they made from being a baby,” said Walsh. “It brings them into the loop so they are not just an observer in the home.”

The illustrations for the book were done by talented local artist Meredith Luce. To purchase a copy of *Poobum and Pompom*, email Walsh directly at info@artnsoul.org (<mailto:info@artnsoul.org>). For more information about Art & Soul, visit www.artnsoul.org (<http://www.artnsoul.org>).

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