

## Features

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### **Alex McCord** and Simon van Kempen interview

**The polarizing Real Housewives couple chats about romance, reality fame and their new parenting book.**



When Season 2 of *The Real Housewives of New York City* premieres on Bravo on February 17, social climbing Brooklynite Alex McCord and her Aussie-accented hubby Simon van Kempen--who's been called the sixth housewife--will continue to be attached at the hip. And that's the way they're going to stay, no matter what the blogs say. Despite snarky comments about their relationship and their child-rearing techniques, the couple's eagerly shopping around an in-progress parenting book and, judging by their interview, they've got a lot to say. Take that, blogosphere!

**With your TV show, your jobs and your two little boys, where do you find the time to write a book?**

**Alex McCord:** We wrote most of it while we were away in St. Barts this past summer.

**Simon van Kempen:** We just had to be incredibly disciplined and get up at 6am to do it before the boys got up.

**Alex:** It's something we had always wanted to do. We thought of the concept in 2004, way before the *Real Housewives of New York* existed. I'd written essays on parenting, and suddenly we found ourselves on a show that involved our family, and it just kind of organically happened.

**How is your book different from the zillions of other parenting books already out there?**

**Alex:** We didn't want to write a how-to book. You don't need to read a book in order to parent. Ours is a collection of experiences and what we gleaned from raising our children.

**Simon:** It's a fun read. It's not some PhD dissertation. We have about 100 pages written, and the synopses of the rest of the chapters. We'll start shopping it around when Season 2 starts.

**Did you use a ghostwriter?**

**Alex:** We would never use a ghostwriter!

**Simon:** There would be no point. If I can't write my words down then I don't have anything worth saying.

**Who are your parenting role models?**

**Alex:** I don't think anyone out there is a parenting expert. Nobody's got all the answers and it's silly to pretend that anyone does.

**Simon:** You do the best you can. My father died when I was Francois's age so I want to be around for my children, and taking Francois to school three times a week is just one way I do that.

**Do you espouse togetherness in the book?**

**Alex:** Yes. We make every moment count. When Simon and I met on matchmaker.com, neither of us was looking for a soul mate. We found each other by accident and it's really been amazing. We have something a lot of people don't have and it was just dumb luck.

**What got you two in the most trouble during Season 1?**

**Alex:** Last season Simon said how Francois was in his 15th choice school and it got picked up online. But by the time the series aired, he was in a different school, but no one knew that, so local Cobble Hill blogs said that people were upset. Blogs thrive on scandal. We learned to take all the things that get published with a grain of salt.

**Alex, how do you feel about those naked pictures that surfaced?**

**Alex:** I'm one of millions of people out there with such photos.

**Simon:** We didn't necessarily want them to get out there, nor were we complicit in getting them out there. But once a website gets them, you can't shut them down. So we said, "big deal," and moved on.

**Do you follow the blogs?**

**Alex:** We have Google alerts [on our names]. So much was being written we couldn't keep up!

**What do your fans say to you when they recognize you on the street?**

**Alex:** When the show's airing, it takes time to get through crowds. People say, "I wish I had a relationship like yours" and they ask about the kids.

**Simon:** People are usually very nice. But with the hits, you grow a thicker skin. The barbs that really hurt were the ones about the boys. We definitely learned to filter what we read. Someone said online, "I hope the kids get cancer and die." People say stupid things.

**But you still came back for Season 2.**

**Alex:** Once you commit to doing something you have to fully commit and apply the lessons learned. There's nowhere to go but up, but maybe I'm being overly positive here.