

Ep #1: How to Get More Sleep as a New Parent



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

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Are you a new or expecting parent and you're just terrified of the sleep deprivation that everybody warns you about? Today, I'm going to give you some really simple tips and strategies to avoid that and get a lot more sleep when you have a new baby. Stay tuned.

Welcome to Parenthood Prep, the only show that helps sleep-deprived parents and overwhelmed parents-to-be to successfully navigate those all-important early years with their baby, toddler, and child. If you are ready to provide the best care for your newborn, manage those toddler tantrums, and grow with your child, you're in the right place. Now here's your host, baby, and parenting expert, Devon Clement.

Hello, and welcome to *Parenthood Prep*, a new podcast for parents and people preparing to be parents, to help make the journey more delightful and way less miserable. I'm Devon Clement. I'm the founder and CEO of a company called Happy Family After.

We have been providing newborn care and baby sleep training for over 12 years to clients in the New York City, New Jersey, Philadelphia area. But I personally have been providing care to children and families for over 30 years.

And in that time, I have seen so much and learned so much. I kind of consider myself the Jane Goodall of parents because I have been in their homes, watching them close up, helping them, supporting them, following their lead, sometimes giving advice and recommendations, learning from them, teaching them, for so long.

In that time, I have seen so many trends come and go. But I've also seen what sticks around. I've seen what really makes some parents just have such a calm, positive experience, and what makes others really miserable.

A big topic we're going to be talking about a lot is sleep. You hear that so much, especially with a new baby. "Are they sleeping? Are they a good sleeper? Are you sleeping? Oh, the sleep deprivation is going to be terrible. Oh, you better

Ep #1: How to Get More Sleep as a New Parent

get your sleep now, because once that baby comes you're never sleeping again." Helpful. Right? Thanks, guys.

What I'm going to talk to you about today is how to get more sleep when you have a brand new baby. First and foremost, something that I think a lot of new parents, especially first time parents, really struggle with and take a while to understand is that your life is very different now. I know that sounds really obvious. Like, of course, your life is different, you have a baby now.

But there's so many other aspects of your life that are going to change that you don't even think about. For instance, your schedule. Prior to this baby, you were maybe going to bed at 11 o'clock, waking up at 7am, getting ready for work, going to the gym, having your coffee, doing whatever.

That's not what your life is going to look like now. You're going to be getting up multiple times a night to feed the baby, to take care of the baby, to soothe the baby, to take care of yourself, your physical needs, especially if you're the parent that gave birth. And that takes up a lot of time.

So, it takes 12 hours to get 7-8 hours of sleep. Sometimes, to get even 6 hours of sleep. That can be really hard to wrap our heads around. Especially because as a society, we put all this emphasis on getting up early and being the early bird. There's this like moral judgment that comes along with it if you sleep late. Trust me, I've been a night owl my whole life, and I have dealt with this judgment.

Also on the flip side, that if you go to bed early, you feel like people are judging you for not having fun, not watching television, not making the most of your evening. And that can be really difficult.

So, what does that look like? How do we get the amount of sleep that we need in the amount of time that we have available? Well, there's two ends of the night, right? There's the front end, the evening. And then, there's the back end, the morning.

Ep #1: How to Get More Sleep as a New Parent

When we work with our clients doing overnights, one thing that I see just tremendously is that they're not used to winding down as early as you're going to start needing to wind down. Now, does this mean you need to wind down at six o'clock? No. You can wind down at whatever time you want for yourself and for the baby.

But think about that 12 hour window. If your goal to start the day is 7am, you want to get that baby started winding down by 7pm in the evening. What we see all the time in my industry, when we're helping our newborn care clients with their overnight support, is that we walk in for a shift, maybe it's 9, maybe it's 10, and every light in the house is on.

The baby's fussy, maybe they're half dressed in a diaper. The parents are absolutely ragged passing the baby back and forth, so stressed out. Dinner's on the table, either half eaten or not eaten at all. The television's on, and everybody's just really frazzled.

We don't want that for you. We don't want that for your baby. We don't want that for you and your partner. We don't want that for anybody. So, we come in and we take the baby. We get the baby dressed in pajamas and swaddled up. And yeah, maybe they're fussy and crying during this process, but the goal is to get them to where they want to be, which is calm and asleep.

So, we get the baby all ready to go. We start turning off lights as we go, we turn off the television. I go into a dark room, a quiet room, maybe the nursery, maybe the bathroom. I get the white noise machine going, put in the pacifier, if they're using a pacifier, and I just get that baby settled.

Without all of this overstimulation that's going on, that the parents didn't even really notice, because it's just constantly on in the background and you can completely lose track of time when you have a newborn. So, once the baby's settled, the parents can eat their dinner, they can take a shower, they can get changed into their pajamas; whatever they want to do.

Ep #1: How to Get More Sleep as a New Parent

I just start to see, over time, as I'm coming in and I'm starting this routine for them, they start getting on board with it. And they start winding things down earlier and earlier, so that when I show up for that shift at 9pm, or even at 7pm, the lights are dim, the TV's off for the moment. That doesn't mean you can't watch Netflix after the baby's down, but just eliminating as much noise and light as possible. Just keeping things calm.

You can just really feel the energy shift. You can feel the parents being calmer. You can feel the baby being calmer. Everyone is just more relaxed. And once that baby gets settled, you guys have time to do whatever you want. You can eat your dinner, you can watch your shows, you can talk to each other, talk about your day, you can really do whatever. They really, really appreciate it.

Listen, this is not just when you have a brand-new newborn. This carries over into toddlerhood, preschoolers, all ages have kids. I worked with a family sleep training a couple of years ago, with their toddler... He was a little over a year, and they also had a four year old. The parents worked together; they had their own business.

They would come in at the same time to relieve the nanny, it would be like 5 - 6 o'clock. The kids would have eaten dinner. Then they would say goodbye to the nanny, throw the kids in the bathtub, get them bathed, take them out, get them dressed. Meanwhile, every light in the house is still on. They're watching television. They're doing this, they're doing that.

It was just really chaotic for everyone. I could see that as the observer. Like I said, I'm like Jane Goodall, I'm observing what's happening. And so, while they were bathing the kids, I started going around and shutting out some of the lights, turning them on dim. I got the kids pajamas laid out in the living room, so that when they were ready to come out, they would have a nice, peaceful environment to come out too.

That was the first step in the sleep training process for the whole family. They got the kids in their pajamas, they had their milk on the couch, they maybe

Ep #1: How to Get More Sleep as a New Parent

watched some videos or listened to some music, and they brought the baby upstairs. Everyone was just so much more calm and peaceful.

Now, of course, we still had to do sleep training, which was a big part of the process. But by the time I was done there, the whole family had just this nice, calm, wonderful bedtime routine that the parents looked forward to, instead of coming home from work in this state of total chaos and continuing the chaos right into bedtime.

It was funny, because the mom said to me on the last day, she said that one of her coworkers had asked her, "How's it going with the sleep trainer?" And she's like, "Oh, it's going so great. He's doing so well. He's going down. He's sleeping through the night." And the coworker was so fascinated, she was like, "What did she do?" And the mom said, "Well, it's going to sound really stupid, but she turned off the lights."

And sometimes it's something that simple. Again, it wasn't the thing that sleep trained this baby, but it just made everything so much calmer and more peaceful for the whole family. Sometimes I feel guilty coming in as the calm, well-rested, confident person with a lot of experience, and taking your baby and getting them calm where you couldn't. But a lot of that is because I am the calm, well-rested person coming onto the scene, and they really pick up on that.

So, if your energy is really tense, and you're stressed and anxious, and you're flustered because the baby won't calm down, you've got to do whatever you can to calm yourself. Because they really pick up on that. They look to you, they look to us adults, but especially to their parents, to tell them how to feel.

If you're frazzled and flustered, they're going to be too. So, just work on getting yourself really calm. Whatever that takes. Remove all of that stimulation, and get everybody settled a little earlier.

Now, we've got the baby down for an early bedtime, you guys are winding down, the lights are dim, you're in your pajamas, you're getting ready to go to bed, and

Ep #1: How to Get More Sleep as a New Parent

the baby's awake. They need to be fed. They need to be changed. They need to be soothed, whatever. Take turns. Switch off. One of you go to bed and let the other one handle it.

Talking about accepting help and how to really help each other is actually going to be a whole other podcast episode, probably several, and a running theme throughout. But think about how you can take shifts to work together during the night. Even if one of you is breastfeeding, body feeding, there's plenty that the other partner can do, or whoever you have helping you, the other person can do to really help and support you during the night.

Now, let's talk about the back end of the night, the morning. How can we get more sleep when we're exhausted from waking up multiple times a night? It's actually really simple. And this is something that is such a game changer for the clients that I work with, that I just wish I could shout it from the rooftops. Go back to sleep in the morning.

It is actually pretty difficult to take a nap, even when you're exhausted. You start your day, you get up, you have your coffee, you start talking, your brain kind of turns on, you start looking at your phone, and then you want to wind down in a hot hour that you have to take a nap.

It's so hard to do. The day is bright, you've started a million tasks and conversations, and you don't know when the baby's going to wake up. It can be really challenging to take a nap.

So, I would so much rather see you, I would so much recommend going back to sleep in the morning. When that baby wakes up for the 6am or 7am, or whatever that early feed is, don't start your day then. You don't have to. You don't have to have your coffee. You don't have to take a shower. You don't have to respond to text messages that you got during the night. You can go back to sleep.

Ep #1: How to Get More Sleep as a New Parent

The added bonus is that babies tend to do a really good stretch in the morning for that first nap. They might be a hot mess between 4am and 6am, but once they've got that 6am or 7am feed, they're usually pretty ready to conk back out.

And yes, your routine might have been to get up at that hour and start your day, but it's not anymore. Your life is different now. So, when I'm with a family and doing 24/7, or staying with them into the morning, we do that first feed and I get everybody packed back off to bed. The baby goes back to sleep. The parents go back to sleep. And I go back to sleep, because I need to catch a couple hours to help them with their day.

It's just so great for everyone. And then, we start our day at 10am. There's no police. There's no early-bird police coming in saying, "Oh, well, you slept past 8 o'clock, so you're not a good mom."

Now, if you have other kids, this can certainly be a lot more challenging. So, that's where I would recommend either getting some additional support in the morning, or doing that real early night bedtime that I suggested before. Get yourself in bed at 7pm or 8pm if you have to get up at 7am or 8am.

But if you are able to sleep in because it's your first baby or whatever, then absolutely take advantage. Go back to sleep in the morning. You will be much more able to do it. Your baby will be much more able to do it. And you will wake up so refreshed and ready to start the day just a little later in the morning, that's all.

It is so hard to feel like we're less capable than we used to be, just because we have a baby now. But especially in those first few months, so much of your physical, mental, and emotional energy is being devoted to this baby, that getting as much sleep as you can to replenish that for yourself and for them is absolutely the best gift you can give to your baby and you.

To celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away a \$100 gift card to bookshop.org to 3 lucky listeners who follow, rate, and review the show on

Ep #1: How to Get More Sleep as a New Parent

Apple Podcasts. It doesn't have to be a 5-star review, although I sure hope you love it. I want your feedback so I can create an awesome show that provides tons of value, and to spread the word so that lots of people can benefit from the podcast.

Visit happyfamilyafter.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. Be quick! You don't have long. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode!

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Parenthood Prep. If you want to learn more about the services Devon offers as well as access her free monthly newborn care webinars, head on over to www.happyfamilyafter.com.