

Ep #3: How To Make Time for Yourself With a Baby



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With Your Host

Devon Clement

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Welcome back to *Parenthood Prep*, the podcast. Today, we are going to be talking about how to manage your time when you have a baby, so that you can get more stuff done and have so much more time for yourself to do things that you really want to be doing. So, 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 back to the *Parenthood Prep* podcast, the podcast that prepares you for parenthood. Whether you're planning to become a parent expecting a baby, or already there, we have everything you need.

Today, I am in my apartment, and it's become a bit of a cat hotel. I do volunteer work with some rescue organizations, and we have a few cats that are sort of in the process of moving to foster homes or being fixed and returned to their colonies. They're all sort of staying in various rooms and spaces in my house. So, that's interesting. I'm a little bit of a cat hotelier for the weekend.

Today, we're going to be talking about how to get things done when you have a baby. Time management is so important, and it becomes so, so difficult when you have a little person who just does not want to wait for anything. They do not have patience. You can't punt their needs to tomorrow, the way you can with business calls or emails or whatever. You just have to do what they need, when they need it, at least in those early days.

So, I always think that this is something that is so hard to understand before you have a baby. Yes, you think, "Oh, well, yeah, I'm going to be spending time doing things for my baby, feeding them, changing their diaper. But really, they're going to be sleeping most of the time or just hanging out." A lot of the time, that's not true.

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They just need things constantly, and there's also a lot more stuff that you have to take care of. They have clothes and food and things that you need to clean and deal with. Something that always makes me laugh, I'll be talking to a potential sleep training client and I'm like, "Okay, what would be different about your life, what would be improved if your baby was sleeping well, napping well, doing this stuff?"

I have to tell you, half the time they say, "I would be able to do the laundry. I just want some peace so I can cook and clean." And I'm like, "Wow, those are lofty goals." I mean, it's great. I love people feeling like they're staying on top of their to-do list and feeling productive. But it's also kind of a bummer that your life is so difficult that doing the laundry would be a treat for you, or it's so challenging that you can't even get the most basic chores done.

And I want to help you guys. I want to help you make that easier. To find the time not only to do the things that you need to do, like the laundry and the dishes, but also the things that you want to do, like spend time with your partner or go back to your hobbies or read a book or scroll on your phone. What the hell, that's what I do half the time anyway. Watch a TV show uninterrupted.

So, there are a couple of simple tips I'm going to give you that I want you to really retain and hold on to. They sound so simple, but they actually can just make such a tremendous difference for you.

The first one is based on a piece of advice that's sort of famous love and relationship advice from columnist and podcaster Dan Savage Gibbs. Now, I have very mixed feelings about a lot of the advice he gives; some of it's good, some of it's not so good. But this thing in particular, I think is really, really valuable and does not just apply to sex and relationships.

The way that he phrases this advice is, "Fuck first." We're not going to keep saying that, even though I'm from New Jersey, and I love an F word. We're going to say, "First things first." Meaning, don't wait. Just go ahead and do it.

If it's a date night, and you're going out to dinner, you're going to be eating a lot of food, you're going to be drinking wine, and you're really looking forward to

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getting romantic at the end of the night... But then it actually reaches the end of the night, and you're tired, you're a little drunk, and you're overly full from dinner, you're not going to do it. So, fuck first. Do it before you go out.

If it's your wedding day, do it in between the ceremony and the reception. Just do it when you want to do it, instead of putting it off to a future point where it's going to be sort of ideal circumstances. Now, we know that nothing in life ever has ideal circumstances, right?

So, I'm going to expand this advice a little bit and we're going to change it to “do it first.” And what that means, is whatever you want to do, do it first. Whether it's take a shower, make a meal, do the laundry. When you have that moment of freedom, whether it's because your baby is playing by themselves peacefully, or because you've gotten them down for a nap, or because someone else is there, do it first. Just do the thing that you want to do.

And what that means, is that before you get that lovely, rare window of free time, you need to decide what the thing is that you want to do. So, you're like, “Okay, at the next nap, the first thing I'm going to do is hop in the shower. I'm really tired, I'm going to try to take a nap. I'm really hungry, I want to eat something.”

Because, as we all know, when you finally get that free moment, you're going to spend it going, “Umph.” And then you're going to start looking at your phone, or you're going to get distracted, or you're going to start doing the dishes, when the dishes are not the thing that you've chosen for yourself to do. So, do it first. What is the thing that you want to do? Just do it.

Maybe it is fucking. Maybe you and your partner want to get romantic after you put the baby to bed. By all means, go for it, you guys. We're going to have a future episode all about that, probably several. Do it first. Do it first. Okay? I know that advice sounds really simple, but it is going to change your life.

Now, you have this list a mile long, your breaks from the baby are pretty minimal, and you don't know how you're ever going to get it done. Well, guess what? You can do it when the baby is awake. You can do it when the baby is fussy or hanging out or playing or whatever.

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If you have a newborn and they're not wanting to be put down, they're needing to be held, put them in a baby carrier, do the laundry, go for a walk. Do the things that you want to do while the baby is awake. There's no law that says you are not allowed to do anything because you have to be fully focused on your baby.

In fact, I think this is something culturally that we've really started doing so much more, and I hate it so much. We think the baby deserves all of our focus and all of our attention when they are awake. Like, we want to sit with them, we want to play with them, we want to engage with them. We don't want to be looking on our phones, they really need attention.

I have met stay-at-home parents who hire a nanny just so that someone can be with the baby all day, whether it's the parent or the nanny switching off, and that is not doing babies any good. First of all, they need way less stimulation than we are constantly giving them. They want to be way more chilled out. They don't need us shaking toys in their face. Especially in the first two months, don't be shaking toys in their face.

Don't be showing them videos and playing kid's music super loud, when it's annoying and you hate it. Listen to stuff that you want to listen to. Let them watch you, let them observe you living your life, let them observe their older siblings or the other people that are around. They do not need constant, focused attention.

Now, does that mean you should never talk to your baby, or never make eye contact, or just throw them in their crib all day like they did in the 1930s? Of course not. But getting them used to being a part of the family structure. Waiting, when there needs to be patience. Watching, when you're doing something that they can't be involved with. You are allowed to do all of those things.

I see parents all the time sitting with their baby, playing on the floor, and not even really doing anything because the baby's just lying there doing tummy time or whatever, and then as soon as the baby goes to sleep, you clean up the toys, you start the laundry, you start the dishes. You use this whole naptime running

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around like a crazy person, and you never get to just sit and relax, do something for yourself, eat, shower, any of those things.

So, really take advantage of the time that your baby is awake. And when they get a little older... Honestly not that much older. I mean, even four months, six months. But especially like nine months, 10 months, a year, toddlers... get them involved.

“Let's put the toys away together. I am not going to let you make a huge mess while you're awake, then I put you down and I run around cleaning up your mess.” That is teaching them the absolute wrong lessons. We want them to be responsible for their own messes. And yes, of course, at first a toddler or little baby is not going to be very helpful. But the more we introduce them to it, the more we involve them, the more helpful they're going to become.

So, it's really worth putting the time in with them to start building those skills and get them to that place. I promise you; it is totally doable, and it is worth it. Same thing with your own chores; doing laundry, making food loading the dishwasher. Let them be involved. Let them be part of it. Let them watch you and play and have fun, but also really see what goes into taking care of a family, taking care of a house in the course of a day.

Same thing if you have a nanny, tell the nanny, any extra stuff she's doing, or they're doing, to do while the kids are awake. This way, naptime becomes a blissful break for you, where you can rest or you can do something that feels fulfilling to you, or something that would be challenging for you to do when you have the baby at your feet. That can really be your time, so don't be afraid to use the time when your baby is awake to do some of the things that you want to take care of.

Another time you really want to employ the “do it first” strategy, is when you're going to sleep at night. Especially if you have a tough sleeper, or bedtime takes a long time. I mean, these are all topics that we're going to cover on the podcast. But if that's something that you're dealing with... You finally get the kids down, you're still in your clothes from the day, then you're so exhausted you end up sitting on the couch scrolling or watching mindless television for an hour.

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And then, you have to eat dinner, you have to take a shower, you have to get in your pajamas, and you have to do all those things. Do those things beforehand. Do them before bedtime. Figure out how to make it work, so that you and the kids are getting ready for bed at the same time. Be in your pajamas when you're putting them to sleep.

If you have a baby that's not eating at the table with you and you want to eat dinner after the baby goes to bed, start thinking about it before bedtime. If you're going to make food, if you're going to order food, get that ready to go so that as soon as the baby is down you can eat, you can get ready and get in bed, or just do things that feel good to you in your pajamas. Don't waste time that you could be spending doing something better.

So, those are my tips. I told you they were really simple, but they are so important, and they will absolutely be life changing. Do things while your baby or your kids are awake and do it first. Figure out what your priority is, what you want to get done, and do it as soon as you have the opportunity.

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 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.