



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Devon Clement**

## Ep #20: The Toddler Sleep Survival Guide: Why Toddlers Rise Early and What To Do About It

Do you have a toddler who wakes up super early in the morning? Stay tuned for how to get them to stop doing that, and why this also has to do with Ryan Gosling making you brownies.

Welcome to *Parenthood Prep*, the only show that helps sleep-deprived parents and overwhelmed parents-to-be 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 *Parenthood Prep*, the podcast that prepares you for parenthood. I'm so excited about the responses we've been getting to the Enneagram episode. We are going to be doing a follow-up episode, where Liz and I answer some of your Enneagram and parenting questions.

So if you have any Enneagram parenting questions, you can send them to us on Instagram @happyfamilyafter. You know, things about how your Enneagram type affects things your kids do, or things you're worried about as a new parent or becoming a parent, and what your type is, or what you suspect your type is. We will help you figure out what to do about that.

I'm very excited to do that. Maybe we'll make it a regular feature, that would be amazing.

So today we're keeping with the theme of sleep. And something that I was thinking about when I was recording the four-month sleep regression episode is that a lot of the stuff I was talking about can also be used on toddler sleep, older kids sleep. Where they're not just a baby laying in the crib in the middle of the night, where they're standing up, where they're talking, where they're calling for you and different things.

I used the example of Ryan Gosling's brownies. Which, I'll just remind you, is that if you woke up in the middle of the night and went to your kitchen and Ryan Gosling was there making you brownies, you would love that. You would be so excited.

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And if night after night that kept happening, on a night that Ryan Gosling was not there making you brownies, you would still get up. You would still go to the kitchen. You would still look around, check in the oven. You would sit at the table and drum your fingers and wait for Ryan Gosling to arrive to make you brownies.

That's the thing that happens a lot of the time with kids. We create these associations where something is so great, they love it, and they're not going to give that up by choice. Even if it is drastically affecting your daytime, your tiredness, your performance at work, kids don't give a shit about how you feel at work. They only care about themselves, frankly, because that's all they know to care about.

So when they wake up in the middle of the night and you go in, and it becomes this lovely time in the middle of the night to hang out together, then you are going to end up stuck in that pattern, stuck in that loop.

One of my coaches, one of my sleep coaches had a client a few years ago who sleep trained the baby. She was doing great. She was a little over a year old or something like that, and a few weeks later, the client reached out to her and said, "We're sliding into a bad situation and I don't know what to do. She's throwing her pacifiers out of the crib, and when I go in to get them, she's just staying awake."

And my coach, my colleague said, "Okay, well, what are you doing when she throws the pacifiers?" "Well, I go in and I get them. I give them back to her. Then I read her another book. I tuck her back in, and then she goes to sleep." And we were all like, "Do you not see the problem here?"

If I throw my pacifier and you come in and read me a book, why on earth would I stop throwing my pacifiers? I just figured out that I have trained you to come read me a book when I throw my pacifier. That's great. I want to do that all the time. If I throw a pacifier right now, will that lady come in here and read to me? Amazing. I would love that.

So, I hate the idea... and I talked about this in the other episode. I'm sorry if you just listened to it and I'm boring you... but I hate the idea that kids are manipulating us. I also hate the idea that they're not. What they are doing is

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learning by association. So if their association is 'I throw my pacifier and you come read me a book,' I'm not manipulating you into reading me a book by throwing my pacifier, but I am training you, like I said, into doing what I want you to do.

If you have an older baby, toddlers especially tend to do this... at two, two and a half, I start hearing this a lot from people. They get up super early in the morning, like 5 a.m., maybe 5.30 a.m., 6 a.m., it's just intolerably early. And friends and clients and people are always asking me, "What do I do? She's waking up so early."

Not clients who are sleep trained, their babies sleep great. But clients that are calling us for sleep training help with their toddler, or friends or whatever always say, "Oh my gosh, she's waking up so early and I don't know how to get them to stop." The first question I ask is, "What happens when they wake up?"

Invariably, the answer is something like, "I go in there. I pick them up. I bring them his milk, I nurse. Then we go downstairs and I make breakfast. We watch a show." A lot of the time it's like, "I'm so tired. I'm such a zombie that we go downstairs and I sit him in front of the television."

I had a client, I worked with her older daughter. She loved the sleep training we did with her baby so much, she had us come back for her older daughter. She and her husband both had big jobs, demanding work schedules, and their daughter would wake up. And I said, "What do you do when she wakes up in the morning so early?"

She said, "Well, one or the other of us will bring her into the guest room, we'll lay in bed with her and we go back to sleep, and she watches videos on her phone." Which I don't blame them for, they had to go to work and be lawyers. But do you not see that that is obviously the reason why she keeps waking up early? Why would she stay in her bed?

We all know that that early morning hour, that 4am, 5am, 6am, we're more restless. We have less sleep pressure than we had earlier in the night. Kids have kind of slept just enough that they can be awake and they're excited to be

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awake, but not enough that they've actually gotten a full night's sleep. So then they're going to start getting cranky after a little bit.

And that leads to something else that I'm going to talk about. But let's still talk about what's happening when they wake up early. So the person asks me, "What do I do about these early wakeups?" I say, "What are you currently doing about them?" And then they're telling me about this baby bonanza that's happening at 5:15 in the morning. And I'm like, "Of course your kid is waking up at five in the morning. Of course they are. Who wouldn't if they got that kind of treatment? I mean, that sounds amazing."

So is the answer to just leave them, not go in and let them scream and cry for two hours until it's seven and you're ready to get them up? I mean, yeah, you could do that. That is absolutely an option. And if you can and want to, you have my blessing, go for it.

A lot of the time, with a two, two-and-a-half-year-old, it's hard. They're in a bed and they're actually getting up and coming into your room, they're screaming for their mommy, daddy, or they're just so sad and pathetic that you can't even bear it, your heart's breaking and you want to go in. And I get that.

So a way to kind of ease off of that, make that morning process a little bit easier for everyone, and work towards sleeping later and have a better morning is think about what you're doing that's essentially rewarding them for waking up at 5am. and stop doing those things.

If they're waking up super early in the morning, fine, I'll come into your room. I'll get you out of the crib. I'll change your diaper. You can play with toys quietly by yourself. I'm going to sit over here and look at my phone or rest on the floor... if your room is safe and you're playing, whatever. I mean, yes, I know that sounds rewarding too, but playing alone in your bedroom is nowhere near as rewarding as having a great morning with dad, watching television and eating breakfast and doing all this fun stuff.

You are still, essentially, asleep. You are a robot who is programmed to just keep them from crying and nothing else. We are not, "Hi, good morning, sunshine. I love you so much." You do that at wake-up time, at 7am, at 8am, whatever. At

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5am, at 5.30am, at 4.30am, God forbid? I mean, not early, depending on your schedule, you should really be trying to get them back to sleep.

But if you're in the routine, if your kid is in the routine where they're waking up super early, stop making it so rewarding to them to get up early. You get nothing rewarding until it is time to wake up. If they have one of those color changing clocks, great. The clock's changed, it's green now. "Good morning, sunshine. I'm so happy to see you. I can't wait to take you downstairs and have breakfast and start our day."

That's step one of taking Ryan Gosling and his brownies away from your child who's waking up too early in the morning.

Step two is don't let them change their whole schedule based on these early wake-ups. Because what happens a lot of the time, especially if they're on the younger side, is they wake up at five in the morning and then they're exhausted by eight.

If this is a two-year-old who's taking one nap a day in the middle of the day, if they go down for a nap at eight in the morning, they're essentially going back to sleep at that point and making up their night's sleep. Great. Good for them. Are you able to do that? Because if you are, awesome. Good for you too.

Hang out with your kid from five to eight and then you both go back to sleep for two hours. God bless. Move forward. Love that for you.

But most adults do not get to have that. So your kid's back to sleep, sleeping off the three hours of playing he just did, and you're about to go into work or about to start your day and you're a zombie. So then the nap is pulled super early. Maybe they'll even take a second nap because really, they were just making up for their lost night's sleep.

And then the bedtime gets pulled up earlier because they're super exhausted by 6 p.m. or whatever, or seven instead of eight or whatever. And then they start going to bed super early. So now their schedule has become that they do get enough sleep by 5 a.m., that they're up for the day, they're raring to go.



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So unless you want to change your whole schedule to start going to bed much, much earlier, don't let them do that. If they wake up at five, great. I'm sorry, you have to stay awake until your normal nap time, even if you're super tired, because that will help their body clock shift back to the schedule they were on before.

Now, if they've never been on this kind of a schedule, it's a different situation. But if they were on a great schedule or a schedule at least that you liked, and now they're pulling everything up earlier. Don't let them pull that whole day up. If you have to be tired from five to eight in the morning, then they have to be tired from eight to 11, or whatever time their nap normally is.

Put them down for a nap at their normal time. Put them down for bed at their normal time. Really give them the space to fall back asleep in the morning as much as it is humanly possible for you to do so that they start getting back into that routine of sleeping until seven or eight or six or 6.30am or whatever.

I have talked to parents who are like, "Dear God, if she would just sleep past 4.30am, it would be my dream come true." We are not starting the day at 4.30 in the morning. We are not Olympic ice skaters or whatever, we do not have to be at the rink. We can go back to sleep and they can go back to sleep.

Now, if your kid's older and you want to bring them into bed with you or whatever at that point and everybody gets more sleep, great. Again, if you like it, I love it. If it's working for you, do it.

But if what's happening is that they're awake watching videos on your phone while you snore next to them because you're so tired, then you really need to help them get back into the routine of sleeping better.

That little girl, with I think two nights of sleep training, she was sleeping through the night in her bed, doing great, because they really do need the sleep. Especially if you're sticking to the schedule that you want them to be on and they are losing some sleep and they are a little under-slept. They will get back into that routine.

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Consider this your pep talk, your encouragement to stop letting them get away with waking up so early in the morning. Ryan Gosling is not there. We are not having brownies.

Another thing that can happen with toddlers is if they start staying up super late, a lot of the time it's because their nap has gotten thrown off, or maybe they're getting ready to drop the nap. I don't think anybody should be dropping the nap before three years. But for whatever reason, if you feel like your kid at this point is ready to drop the nap, a big sign that they're ready for that is that they start staying up super late at night.

This just happened to a friend of mine. Her toddler started staying up later and later and wanting the parents to be in the room with her and all this different stuff that she didn't used to want. And then the next thing, her bedtime is 10pm or 11pm. She's not falling asleep until then.

She asked me for advice and I said, "What time is she sleeping until in the morning? Is she sleeping in to make up for it?" And she said, "Yeah, this morning she slept till nine or 10am." And I was like, "Look at what she's doing, she's shifting her night later."

So by all means, if that works for you and you want a 9-9 or a 10-10 schedule, which I certainly would go for that, stick with it and just make that her bedtime. Don't fight her from 7-9 on going to sleep if she's not ready to sleep until nine. But if you want her to go back to her seven o'clock bedtime and her whatever time nap... Because of course, when she sleeps in in the morning, the nap shifts later... then you've got to get her up.

Even though she's tired, you've got to get her up at the wake-up time that you want. So if she doesn't fall asleep until 10 or 11pm, she's still waking up at 7am, and taking her nap at 11am or whatever time, and then she's going to bed at 7pm, she's going to be tired enough to actually go to sleep at that time.

Overtiredness is a thing for sure. We don't want it. And sometimes we really want to avoid it by whatever means necessary. But if we are trying to shift a schedule and get a baby onto a better schedule, we do have to use the tiredness to our advantage a little bit.



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And if they're beyond tired by seven and they're hysterical, they will fall asleep. Eventually, you may want to pull the bedtime up even a little earlier than that. If they're super exhausted from having a short night the night before, play around with it a little bit, but don't let them start shifting their schedule to something that's super inconvenient for you.

That's it. So let me know how that goes for you. And if you have any follow-up questions, you know I always want to hear them. @happyfamilyafter on Instagram is the best way to reach us. You can also go to our website, HappyFamilyAfter.com. There's a little tab on the side that says, "leave a voicemail" or you can email, whatever you want to do.

And as always, please, please, please subscribe, rate, and review the podcast because it really helps us. And I like to know what you're thinking. So have a great day. Hopefully tomorrow you will not be up at 5 a.m. Well, maybe tomorrow because you're going to be starting sleep training. But hopefully, a week from now you will not be up at 5 a.m.

Have a great day. Bye.

Alright, listen up, folks. We love to joke around but it's time to get real. And that real talk, it's all about giving your babies the roasting they deserve. Yep, you heard it right. We're calling for an epic Baby Roast.

We want you to drop a voice note on our website and call out your little ones for their adorable crimes. Did your baby spit up on your brand-new dress the second you put it on? Maybe they decided to scream through your sister's wedding vows? We want to hear all the juicy details.

Head over to HappyFamilyAfter.com, or hit the link in the show notes. Every page on the site has a button on the side for you to record straight from your phone. Your story might just make it onto an episode of the *Parenthood Prep* podcast. We can't wait to hear.

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](http://www.HappyFamilyAfter.com).