

Ep #23: The Four C's Every Parent Needs To Know for Stress-Free Sleep Training



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

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Hello, again. On the podcast today, we are going to talk about the four C's of sleep training, which also apply in many other areas of your life. And we're going to talk about how to saber a champagne bottle, because why not? You know, when your baby's all sleep trained and sleeping through the night, maybe that's something you want to do? Stay tuned.

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. We are now in the middle of September or I guess, still kind of the beginning of September, and it is one of my favorite months. And it's not because, "Oh, it's fall, I love fall." I actually hate fall. But September is still summer, and it's the most wonderful part of the summer.

It's not as crazy hot, it's not as crazy humid, and everything's just really beautiful out. All the beach and summery activities that I love are less crowded because kids are back at school. There is nothing better than going to the beach on a September day and just having an amazing time.

So I hope you guys are all really enjoying the tail end of this wonderful season and enjoying September because it's so great. I also really love the back-to-school energy, even though I don't have kids and I don't go to school anymore. It's just so fun, fresh notebooks and fresh outfits and all that kind of stuff. So happy September, everyone.

Today, I want to talk about something that I brought up on the last episode when I was interviewing Brittany Preneau about labor and delivery, what to expect in the early days before your baby's born, as your baby's being born, and all that. It's so crazy what happens. The baby comes out of someone's body, that's wild. It's in there and then it's out, it's wild. Anyway, I have actually never been to a birth, but I have watched a cat give birth several times, which is very interesting.

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I mentioned something that I call “The Four C's of Sleep Training”. And I think it's really important. It's not just applicable to sleep training, it's applicable to all areas of parenting, partnership, and really all areas of life. I love these four C's.

The first one is Confidence. You want to feel confident when you are sleep training your baby or teaching your baby any new skill. And that's really hard to do because you don't know that it's going to work. You're feeling worried, you're feeling anxious, but your baby picks up on your mood and your anxiety so much. You are their thermostat, so they set themselves by you.

So say you're putting your baby down awake, they're going to learn how to put themselves to sleep, and you want to feel confident. You want to pass that along to them. “You are going to do such a good job. I'm so proud of you. You're such a big boy/big girl/big person. You're growing up so much. You're so smart and capable.” Even if they're three or four months old, you want to pass that along.

And you want to know that it's going to go well because it is. Having that confidence is going to make such a huge difference for you in how the process goes, as well.

A few years ago, a friend of ours, she famously loves to saber open a champagne bottle. And if you've never seen anybody do this... They'll do it sometimes at fancy restaurants or just for show. People usually have this special sword that they do it with.

You're not actually slicing off the top of the bottle. The contents of a champagne bottle are pressurized so you're hitting the bottle with the sword, or just a basic kitchen knife, in a certain way that it's causing the top to basically burst off and leave a very clean edge. It looks really cool. You can look it up on YouTube or TikTok or Instagram or whatever, “Saberling a champagne bottle.”

So she was teaching us how to do this. You hold the bottle a certain way, and you put the knife a certain way, and then she said you must proceed forward with confidence because you have to hit it pretty hard. And if you're a wuss about it, it's not going to work or you're going to just knock it out of your hand or it's going to be ridiculous. So she just said that so casually, talking about teaching us how to do this very silly thing.

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It stuck with me so much. I have said it in so many contexts and in so many ways, "Proceed forward with confidence." You know, it's the same thing with catching a crazy kitten in your house when they're running and hiding because they don't want to go in the carrier, or they don't want to get medicine, or they're just newly trapped and shy.

If you're trying to catch a kitten, you cannot be wishy-washy about it. You have to just grab them by the scruff and that's it, proceed forward with confidence. So you want to do the same thing with sleep training. And this is such a cliché term, but, "Fake it till you make it." And if you're not feeling confident, say words of confidence. Tell your baby they're going to do great.

If you're putting them down in the crib awake like you're sending them off to war, or like they're getting a shot or something like that, you're just like, "Okay, I'm so sorry I have to do this to you, but the pediatrician said we had to. I'm so miserable not getting enough sleep, and I just can't handle it. I'm just a weak person and I have to torture my baby." Don't do that. Be confident.

They're learning a new skill. If they were learning how to tie their shoes, you wouldn't be sobbing next to them saying, "I'm so sorry, I have to teach you how to tie your shoes." You would just be saying, "Great, you're doing a great job. You're learning. Okay, we make the loop and then we wrap the other lace around; the bunny goes around the tree. You're doing it."

And if the kid was like, "I don't know, I can't do it," you'd say, "You can! You can! I'm so proud of you." And then when they do it, you're like, "Yeah, you did it! Amazing." Or even if they do some of it, you're like, "You're doing so great." So have that confidence going into sleep training or going into giving birth or whatever. Have that confidence.

The second one is Commitment. You need to commit to whatever your plan is. Make a plan and commit to it. The worst thing you can do while you're trying to sleep train your baby is constantly changing the plan, doing something different. "Oh, this didn't work. Okay, they've been crying for 10 minutes. That's too long. I'm going to go in, I'm going to pick them up and put them back down. I'm going

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to just go ahead and feed them to sleep,” or rock them or bounce on the ball or whatever.

You have to commit and you have to see it through, because that leads to something that is not a “C”, which is confusion. You don't want to confuse your baby. They're learning a new skill. You wouldn't start teaching them the ABCs and be like, “Okay, A, B, C, D, E. You know what? Forget it. Let's do numbers instead, those will be easier. One, two, three, four. No, you know what? Let's do Spanish instead. Hola, buenos dias.”

You're not going to do that. You want to commit to the plan. Now that doesn't mean the plan can't ever change, but there needs to be a pretty significant level of commitment to letting your baby fall asleep on their own. So if you are going in and checking on them or whatever, that's fine.

You just don't want to throw in the towel and say, “Oh, forget it. This has been going on for an hour. You've been crying on and off. I can't deal with that anymore. I'm just going to pick you up.” That is the worst thing you can do. You have to commit. You have to see it through.

And if you can't commit, then you need to plan differently. If you have an older child and you're worried the baby's going to wake up the older child and because of that you can't commit to letting them learn how to put themselves to sleep, you need to send your older child to a sleepover at grandma's house for the weekend. Or you need to talk to your older child and say, “Listen, if you hear the baby waking up and crying, that's okay. They're just learning how to go to sleep. Just like you did. You're so big. You're so grown up.”

So you have to be able to commit to the plan. It's not like, “Oh, we'll give this a try and if it doesn't work, oh, well.” It's like, “We are going to commit to this plan.” And that is so, so super important. Confidence, commitment.

That leads us to the next C, which is Consistency. You want to be consistent. You don't want to try a million different things if the first thing doesn't quite work on the first try. Because guess what? It's probably not going to. But babies learn so much faster when you're consistent.

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So if they fall asleep in the beginning of the night, but then during the night they wake up and sometimes you leave them, and sometimes you go in and pick them up and rock them, and sometimes you go in and feed them, they're not going to learn as quickly, or maybe not at all, because they don't know what to expect.

You need to be consistent so that they know what to expect. Babies and kids *love* predictability and routine. They love it. They love it. They love it. Even if it seems like they don't, they do. They love it. They love knowing what's going to happen.

And an example, of course, you don't necessarily want to take away all the night feeds, or night wean, all at once or whatever. So you can still be consistent, even if you are sometimes going in and doing a feed. This is why I love a dream feed during the sleep training process.

If you don't know what a "dream feed" is, it's basically when you go in at a certain time, your baby's asleep and you pick them up and you feed them, either bottle or nurse, and they just eat in their sleep. And then they stay asleep or they wake up and go back to sleep or whatever. It's called a "dream feed".

A lot of times people try it and they think it's going to be this magic bullet. And it's not, because a lot of times your baby's not waking up because they're actually hungry, they're waking up because they don't know how to fall asleep.

But when you do a dream feed, you are still staying consistent. Because if that baby wakes up an hour later, you can say, "Okay, you're going to put yourself back to sleep. Because I know you're not hungry because we gave you a dream feed." The dream feed fills their belly without becoming an inconsistent response.

So that's consistency. That is giving them that predictability and not, "Okay, we're going to let them fuss around and cry for 10 minutes, and then we're going to go in and get them and pick them up." That is inconsistent and it leads to confusion, which is really not what we want.

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So we've got confidence, commitment, and consistency. And then the last C... There used to actually only be three C's, and then I added this fourth one, which is Communication.

You want to communicate with your partner, whoever is helping you with sleep training, whoever is helping you care for the baby, other caregivers, if you have a babysitter or a nanny or grandparents that help out or friends or family. You want to communicate, and you want to tell them what the plan is, how they can support you in the plan.

With your partner, you want to make sure you guys are on the same page about the plan. Because if one of you is not on board, that person needs to either not be involved or you need to come up with a plan that works for both of you. Because if they're not helping you be consistent or not helping you commit, that's going to be really hard. So you have to have that communication with your partner.

You can also say to your partner, "Listen, I know that this is the right thing to do. I know that I feel really confident about sleep training. I know we're making the right decision, but I also know myself and I know that I'm going to really struggle with the process."

And what that means is that maybe your partner needs to take the lead and you need to be able to come and go. You need to take breaks. You need to go get in the shower. You need to leave the house, go for a walk.

That first bedtime can be really, really difficult. Usually, once you see them fall asleep on their own for the first time, you're pretty blown away. And that really boosts your confidence. But if you know that you're going to have a hard time with it, and that that's not going to help your baby communicate to whoever you're doing this with, that's going to be difficult for you.

Maybe both you and your partner are going to struggle and you want a friend to help, or you want to hire a sleep trainer, or a sleep coach, or you want your nanny, or your postpartum doula, or your babysitter to help you. You want to communicate that with them. What is the plan? What needs to happen? And make sure that you're all on the same page.

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You also need to communicate with your baby. Now, of course, telling a four-month-old, "You're going to be going down in your crib awake. I know you're used to me rocking you to sleep or me nursing you to sleep or giving you a bottle and falling asleep on the bottle," they're not going to understand your words but they are going to understand your tone.

They're going to understand that something is different and it's going to get you in the habit of communicating with your baby, and with your kids, about what's going on all the time. I'll take a brand-new newborn and tell them exactly what's going to happen in their daily care.

"Hi, I'm going to pick you up now. I'm going to take you over to the changing table and we're going to change your diaper." It doesn't have to be matter of fact; it can be fun. You can make up a little song. "Time to change the diaper." I just made that up, isn't it great? Get in the habit of communicating with your baby because, again, they love predictability. They love knowing what's going on.

It's also the early stages of Consent, which is another C that's not one of the four C's here. But letting them know what's happening, even though they don't really have any control over the situation, even though they don't get to say, "I don't want my diaper changed," you're teaching them that they're allowed to know what's happening to them.

Just a side note on that. When they get older, don't give them a choice if they don't have a choice. I noticed this is something parents do, and it drives me crazy. "Do you want to get your diaper changed? No. Well, too bad you have to." You're not giving them a choice. You're giving them this false option that doesn't actually exist.

You can give them two choices, "Do you want to wear the blue shirt or the red shirt?" But you can't say, "Do you want to get dressed" if they have to leave the house to go to the store and they're naked and it's December. Don't ask them yes or no questions if no is not an option. You're not going to say, "Do you want to get your diaper changed?" You're going to say, "It's time to change your diaper," and they're going to know and learn to be aware of that.

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So that was just a side note, a little rant that I have that will make your parenting experience so much easier if you stop doing that. “Oh, do you guys want to go to the grocery store or the Verizon store?” And they're like, “No, I hate that.” “Well, too bad. We're going anyway.” That doesn't give them any agency.

Don't ask them questions or give them choices that are not actually choices. You can figure out ways to make it a choice. “Do you want to get dressed before or after breakfast? Do you want to get dressed first or do you want to eat breakfast first?” Then they'll tell you, and you just do the second thing. So that's just a side note, speaking of consent. But yes, you want to communicate with your baby about what's going to happen.

So those are our four C's. You can apply it to sleep training. You can apply it to labor and delivery. You can apply it to your relationship with your partner. Anything where you need to make a transition, make a change, teach somebody something new, help somebody learn something new.

Proceed forward with Confidence like you are savoring a champagne bottle. Commitment; commit to the bit, “We are doing this plan. And we are sticking with it for at least however long we want to commit to it.” Three nights is usually good with sleep training. You'll usually see a pretty big change by then, depending on what methodology you're doing. I'm going to talk about that in another episode.

Consistency; you want to be consistent. Babies love predictability. And Communication, both with the other adults around you, maybe your other children, and with the baby.

So there's your four C's. If you have any questions, I'd love to hear them. Check us out on Instagram @happyfamilyafter, and I can't wait to talk to you soon.

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

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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.

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