

Ep #25: Sleep Like a Baby: Adult Sleep Training Secrets Revealed



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

[Parenthood Prep](#) with Devon Clement

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A question I often get asked when I say I'm a sleep trainer is, "Oh, can you sleep train me?" And the answer is, yes, you absolutely can sleep train yourself. And I'm going to tell you how. 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, or as I found out this weekend, you can listen to even when your kids are grown and potentially have kids of their own.

I went to Burning Man, obviously, which I've talked about. It was great. Lots of kids there. In fact, I saw a woman and I was about to compliment her outfit, which was gorgeous. It was like this corset and ballroom skirt, and she looked amazing. I tapped her on the shoulder, she turned and she was holding the tiniest baby, like maybe eight weeks or two months.

I was like, "God bless you for coming here with this tiny baby. Not because I think the baby can't handle it, babies can handle anything. A baby can certainly handle Burning Man. But to try to be parenting a newborn and dealing with all of the challenges of Burning Man at the same time...

I assume she gave birth to the baby, being however many weeks postpartum, so just physically dealing with those challenges, that is not the standard that you should hold yourself to when you have a baby. That is crazy. She was doing amazing, but not everyone has that whatever. She was doing great.

Lots of families with little kids. One family had a five-year-old, a two-year-old, and a baby. I was like, "Okay, cool. You guys are living the life." Probably not something I would choose to do, because each of those things individually is challenging enough.

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There were certainly times during the week where I just needed to go take a break, rest in my tent, get some extra sleep or just escape the heat. And if I had to be caring for babies and kids, I mean, I'm barely feeding myself when I'm there. I think you just kind of relax though and use a lot of convenience options like food pouches and easy things to feed them, because that's what we do with ourselves, right?

Our camp provides a really wonderful dinner every night that we all take turns helping to cook. But during the day, we're eating protein bars and granola bars and dry cereal and pretty much whatever we can get our hands on, plus whatever other camps are providing.

So to think about doing all that while also trying to feed three children, my hat is tipped to every single one of these parents who brings a baby to Burning Man. After Burning Man, we went to my partner's brother's wedding, which was beautiful, in this apple orchard in Michigan. And while I was there, of course, I saw some of his family members and his family friends.

A couple of them actually mentioned the podcast. So hi to everyone out there who's listening in Chicago and Michigan, and Ann Arbor and all of those places. I'm so happy to hear that it is something that you're enjoying, even if the topic isn't something that's always applicable.

However, today we're going to take a departure from talking about babies, and I want to talk about you. I want to talk about grownup sleep, because it is so critically important and we overlook it so much.

If you look at the big health gurus out there, especially those manly man podcasters talking about workouts and clean eating and all this stuff, what are they doing? They're waking up at four in the morning and they're not going to bed at 6pm or 7pm. Everyone I know who's a workout fiend does not focus enough on sleep. And it is as important as diet. It is as important as exercise.

In fact, I would say it is more important than those things. Because you know what? When you're tired, you're not going to do a great job exercising. You're not going to be feeding yourself nutritious foods. You're going to be reaching for those convenience foods and things like that. I see it with myself.

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I also know that when you're tired, your body tends to crave different things. I don't like to say anything about good foods or bad foods because I think all food is just food, and you eat what you eat. But for instance, if you're trying to eat less sugar, you're going to eat a lot of sugar if you're very tired. So all of those things, I think it's just so important.

And there are a few sleep scientists that are coming out now talking about how important it is for adults to get a full night's sleep, but it's just not enough. I want to see so many of these wellness influencers instead of talking about getting up at 5am so that you can have peace and quiet, talk about sleeping until 8am, sleeping until 9am, getting your whole family on a later schedule, or whatever it takes for you to get enough sleep because it's just so, so, so, so critical.

I have always been really fortunate to be a good sleeper and not have too much trouble sleeping, even from when I was a baby. Which, as I've mentioned before, my mother thought made her the queen of motherhood. Actually, as it turns out, it was just her having a unicorn baby who was a good sleeper right from the start.

It doesn't hurt that I was born close to 10 pounds and almost two weeks late. So I was basically born two weeks old and already ready to get into some good routines. But just a side note, a funny thing is that a few years ago, I came across my baby book and I posted a picture of the page of me being two months old on social media.

And a lot of my very lovely, well-meaning doula and lactation consultant friends saw that at two months old, I was taking four 7oz. bottles a day and sleeping from 8pm-8am and were horrified. Like, "Oh my gosh, a baby shouldn't be eating that much. You should be eating during the night at two months old." And I was like, "Yeah, but guys, listen, I'm 36 and I'm fine and great."

And I've been a great sleeper my whole life. I feel like trying to give my mom a hard time for the parenting that she did in the early 80's, which worked out beautifully, maybe is not where we want to be focusing our energy. And maybe we shouldn't be critiquing other people's parenting at all. Since, clearly, the way

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that you think things should be happening, or not what was happening there, and it turned out great.

I'm not saying that that was a fluke. I'm saying that that is a normal thing. Some babies want to eat a lot and want to sleep a lot. And you're very lucky if you have one of those. All babies want to sleep a lot. They just can't usually as much. Anyway, like I said, we're not talking about babies. That was just a side note about me as a baby.

So now I'm going to get focused back on the topic, which is how can you as an adult get more sleep? How can you sleep train yourself? Something that happens often is I'll be sleep training a baby, or I'll be talking about sleep training, and some adult, the dad or the grandpa or the friend or whatever is like, "Oh, can you sleep train me?"

And I always say, "I sure can, but you're not going to like it." And I'm going to tell you, you're probably not going to like what I have to say. But if you're not getting good sleep, you need to do it. You need to just get better with it. Honestly, I have to re-sleep train myself probably once or twice a year because I will fall into some really bad habits. I'll start staying up way too late when I have to get up early in the morning.

The biggest thing that I'm guilty of is waking up super early in the morning, like six or seven, and maybe I have to pee or whatever, or a cat wakes me up or something, and then instead of going straight back to sleep, like I should, I pick up my phone. I start looking at texts. I start scrolling Instagram, checking email, looking at the news, and all the things that you do in the day.

And the next thing you know, my brain is totally stimulated. I've been looking at my phone for an hour, and now it's almost time to get up and there's no way I'm going to be able to fall back asleep. Meanwhile, I'm now exhausted and it's time to start the day.

So every six months or so, when I get into those bad habits, I have to really tell myself, "No, we have to stop doing this." I'm going to talk to you about what some things are that will really help you with these things. A lot of the advice I'm

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going to give you seems super dumb, but I want you to look hard at what you are actually doing in the evening, in the nighttime.

And tell me if you're actually doing these things that I'm telling you to do, because I'll bet you're not. If you're doing everything perfectly, your sleep hygiene is great, and all these things are true and you're still struggling, it's absolutely time to see a doctor or a sleep specialist. Or talk to your therapist about it because there's something bigger going on here.

But I think for the most part, a lot of adults just have a major sleep hygiene issue. And we all know a big part of that problem, right? It's the phone, it's the iPad, it's the TV, it's the blue light, it's the stimulation. But don't worry, I'm not going to tell you that you're not allowed to look at your phone for 12 hours or whatever.

So we want to actually go to bed, right? What is better than, when you are tired, being in your comfy pajamas or whatever you wear to bed, getting under the covers of your cozy, cozy, wonderful bed, and just laying your head on the pillow, snuggling up, and going to sleep. It is the best feeling in the world. It's my favorite thing.

But we create so many obstacles. There are so many obstacles between us and that beautiful drift off to sleep.

So step one: Look at your bed. Is it nice? Do you like getting into it? Are your sheets soft enough or crisp enough or whatever? Are they dirty? Are they saggy? Do you hate them? Get new sheets. Don't get into a bed that you hate. Make it a wonderful oasis.

And to that point, don't put stuff all over it. If you are trying to go to bed at your bedtime, or ideally 30 minutes to an hour before your bedtime, don't have the bed covered in laundry. Don't have the bed covered in papers and stuff that you've been throwing on there all day because you don't want to give yourself chores to do when you're tired and you want to go to sleep.

Because here's what happens. We're sitting on the couch, maybe watching TV, maybe we're still in our clothes for the day, we start to get tired and we're like,

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“Oh, I should go to bed.” Maybe it's like, I don't know, nine o'clock or 10 o'clock, “We should go to bed. Oh, but there's stuff all over the bed. I don't want to clear that off. Oh, I'm still in my clothes from work. I don't want to change into my pajamas. I'm just going to stay here and watch another hour of television.”

Are you going to get more motivated to clean your bed off and change into your pajamas during that hour of watching television? Of course not. You're already exhausted.

So what you want to do is get ahead of it. I'm not saying you can't use your bed to fold laundry during the day or whatever you're doing, but get the bed cleared off well, well, well, well, well before your bedtime. Get that bed ready to just slide into.

Your nightly routine, whether that's washing your face, brushing your teeth, doing some skincare, whatever you're doing... changing into your comfy bedclothes, changing into your pajamas or whatever... do those things early so that when you finally get tired, you can say, “Oh, all I have to do is go down to my bed and get into it.”

Feed your pets. Do all the things that are going to keep you from getting into bed. Because it's not conscious. We don't say, “Oh, I'm not going to sleep because I don't want to do the laundry.” Our brain just tells us, “Watch one more episode of *The Bear*. Watch one more episode of *House of Dragons*.” And the next thing you know, you're dozing off on the couch with the TV on blasting blue light into your eyeballs. And that's not great.

So figure out, what are the obstacles between that moment where you can just slide under the covers and be so cozy with your head on the pillow? Do you hate your pillows? Do you have the right blankets? Is it too hot in your room? Is it too cold in your room? Really do an audit of your sleep situation and say, “I need to fix these things.”

Do you have a baby that's maybe sleeping in a bassinet on your side of the bed and their every little noise and snuffle wakes you up? And maybe if you switch them over to the other side by your partner, that would be better. What are the

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things? Maybe you have a pet that's taking up the whole bed and you want to get them moved off.

If you're sharing a bed with someone, recruit that person to help. "Hey, can you take the dog out for the last walk while I get ready for bed? Because you fall asleep so much faster than I do. So you can do that last chore and just easily get into bed once I'm already winding down."

Like I said, you don't have to put your phone away two hours before you go to sleep, that's impossible. No one's going to be able to do that. But I do want you to put your phone down maybe 15 minutes before you go to sleep; 30 minutes before you go to sleep.

When you get in bed, you can still be looking at your phone, but say, "Okay, now at this time," whatever time that is, "I'm going to put it down and I'm not going to pick it up again." You can read a book. You can read a magazine. You can listen to a meditation track or a calming track or something like that. Something that's going to help you wind down but it's going to shut off by itself.

Something I really like is there are different apps that will kind of keep you from using your phone. I like one called Forest, where you grow a tree over the amount of time that you don't want to mess with your phone. And if you open it up and look at your phone again, you kill the tree. I have never once killed a tree.

Now do I sometimes not turn Forest on just because I know I'm going to want to look back? Of course. But maybe you put it on the other side of the room. I know a lot of people do that. That's up to you. I think that's great, because then it's not right by your face. It's not lighting up.

Speaking of things that light up... the baby monitor. If you have children and you are using a video baby monitor, first of all, if it's on your phone or on your iPad, definitely turn that screen off. You do not need to be watching your kid sleep in the middle of night while blue light glows into your face.

If you need to wake up and you want to check on the baby, great. Do that. But please try as hard as you can not to have it glowing in your face. You will be

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fine. Your baby will be fine if you are not asleep with blue light glowing into your eyeballs. So make your sleep environment really cozy, really nice.

Replace things that you need to replace. If that's not something that's financially accessible to you, wait for sales. Maybe see if any of your friends are getting rid of anything. My mattress that we sleep on is a hand-me-down from my friend that I used to nanny for. Because when I lived with her as a nanny, I loved it so much. And she said, "I'm getting rid of the guest bed." And I said, "Oh, wow, I'm moving, and I could really use a new mattress. I loved sleeping on that. Can I have it?" So our mattress is a hand-me-down from 10 years ago. It was old when we got it, but it's so comfortable and it's so great.

So whatever it takes to make that bed comfortable. Now you've heard of weighted blankets. I think they're great. I think they're a little impractical because sometimes they're so heavy that you feel like you can't even move under them. I find that I sleep really well if my blanket is a normal blanket, but it has some weight to it. Like a big fluffy comforter or a down duvet, or something that just gives me that little bit of extra pressure without being so heavy that it weighs me down.

I've been at clients or staying places where all they had was a very light blanket, and I did not sleep as well as I normally sleep. I know for myself that I need a big fluffy blanket that is just a little bit heavier, and that makes a big difference for me. So if that's something that makes a big difference for you, get something like that.

Figure out the temperature in the room. Are you too hot? Are you too cold? Do you want a fan? Do you want maybe even a space heater? Do you want a hot water bottle or a heating pad under the covers before you get into bed, that you will then turn off because you can't sleep with an electric heating pad on? We have this amazing thing called the BedJet. This is not an advertisement for them, but I do love it so much.

It has the silliest commercial on YouTube. Just look it up; BedJet. There's this woman and her husband is the Devil. He likes things really hot, and she likes things really cold. It's just so funny. But it's basically this little mini-air conditioner

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and heater. Well, it's not that little, but it's smaller than an air conditioner unit. And it has this tube that goes up under the covers and blows hot and cold air under the covers, whatever you want.

You control it from your phone, or from a remote if you don't want to use your phone, and it is the best thing ever. In the winter, I preheat the bed. Even in the summer, when we're blasting the air conditioning, it can be nice to get the bed a little warm before we get in. During the night, when you get too hot, you can blow the cold. It's so good.

Again, think about all those things. What is it going to take to make your bed a place that you are absolutely dying to get into at that time of the night? Do your routine early. Get in your pajamas, get ready so that at that point when you're like, "Okay, I'm tired. I want to go to bed," you don't have 30 minutes of work in front of you that it's going to take to get you into bed. In the sleep sense, not in the other sense. Yes, I'm trying to get everyone into bed.

So change into your pajamas, do your routine, wash your face, brush your teeth, etc. That's, honestly, some advice I myself need to take, because I feel like I'm always like, "Oh, we just have to feed the cats. And we have to do this. And we have to do that." I want to do those things earlier so that I can get ready to get into bed.

Now, I don't necessarily think you should be watching TV right up until the moment that you're about to fall asleep, but you can if you want to. Again, it's not going to be a deal breaker. I'm not going to tell you that the only way you can get sleep is if you have two hours of nothing but listening to gong sounds on an old time Discman CD player before you try to go to sleep.

I know that's not practical, but do wind down. I've talked about this before. Turn out the lights, turn down the lights, dim the lights, get the environment calmer. If you have kids that are going to bed early, you should be doing this before their bedtime anyway, and that should be helping you wind down as well.

Don't go blazing the lights back up after the kids go to sleep. Try, if you can, to eliminate, at least, stressful things that you're doing. Don't look at your work email right before you fall asleep for that hour or so before bed. Just do

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something enjoyable. Don't read the news. Don't watch the news. Give that a break. It is going to fire your mind up. It's going to get your brain going.

You are allowed to be uninformed for one hour before you fall asleep, because you're going to be uninformed all night unless you wake up in the middle of the night and start looking and reading the news again. Which I know some of you are doing. Stop it. Don't do it. If that temptation is too strong, then maybe you do need to put your phone on the other side of the room.

There are so many good books. Read a book. Get a Kindle. I have the Kindle Paperwhite. It's still light, but it's not anywhere near as bright and just brain melting as a phone light or iPad light. Do that.

Here's another piece of advice you're going to hate. Cut out caffeine, or at least cut it down. I know so many people think they can just drink coffee all day and it doesn't affect them at all. But if you're having trouble sleeping, just try it. And try it for a while, because it takes a while to really adjust.

You can wean off. You can not drink coffee, or whatever your caffeine of choice is after a certain time in the morning, but it absolutely has an impact on your sleep quality. I don't drink a lot of caffeine, but when I do, I absolutely see a huge difference in my quality of sleep. I love that for you. I love that you're enjoying that, but you have to figure out how to not let it have a major impact on your sleep and your life. Cut back on caffeine.

I know it's such a vicious cycle. Because you're not getting enough sleep, you're tired, so you need the caffeine to wake you up. And then that affects your sleep, so then you sleep worse, so then you need caffeine and so on and so on. But try to pick a time period that's maybe not so busy at work, or on the weekend or something like that, and just see if you can start weaning down a little bit.

A big thing that happens with my clients when we sleep train their babies, which is pretty much the biggest instant change that can happen in your ability to get sleep, you go from getting woken up 6-10 times a night by your baby, or even two or three times a night by your baby, to suddenly that's not happening anymore.

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A lot of times the parents tell us that they are now not sleeping well, and it's because it takes a little while to adjust to all of the chemicals in your body behaving differently. When you're tired, just like your baby, you're pumping adrenaline and cortisol, and it's really hard to wind down from that.

And when your body's used to having that all the time, and suddenly it doesn't, because suddenly you are sleeping, you can actually feel a lot worse for a little bit. Just a little bit. Just like a week or even just a few days before you start to feel better. So if you start cutting out coffee, and you start sleeping a little better, and you start feeling worse, that's normal, and that's part of the process.

A lot of times parents tell me the first time they themselves sleep through the night after we sleep train the baby, they feel crappy. And that's because your brain and your body just doesn't even know what to do with itself. And your baby too. They can start acting more fussy and weird for a little while after they start sleeping because your brain and your body is just adjusting to this massive, massive change that has just gone through, where suddenly you're getting healthy amounts of sleep again, and your body doesn't know what to do with it.

It's like freaking out, "Where's all of our adrenaline and cortisol?" You don't need it, babe. You don't need it, body. We're doing great. We're getting sleep. Get in, loser. We're going sleeping.

So that is something you may want to watch out for. As you start sleeping better, you might start noticing that you're feeling a little bit worse. That is temporary. It will pass. Just keep up the good work. Keep sleeping.

I'm not a physician. I'm not a doctor. I can't speak to supplements and things like that. That's something you should definitely talk to your doctor about, what's going to be the most effective. I do know that there are some things that keep you awake that you should maybe, in addition to caffeine, maybe not be taking.

I had a period of time where I was drinking a lot of Emergen-C powder, I would have it at night, and then I was sleeping really poorly. The reason I was taking the powder was because I was having a terrible eczema flare, and somebody suggested it to me as a way to calm that down. So I thought I just wasn't sleeping because my whole body was covered in eczema.

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I looked into it, and it has a ton of a certain B vitamin, I don't even remember which it is, that actually stimulates you and keeps you awake. It was basically like I was drinking a big cup of coffee right before bed. Of course I wasn't sleeping. And when I cut that out, I started sleeping better. So pay attention to what you're putting in your body at night, for better or for worse, and in the later part of the day.

You may want white noise. It works great for babies. It could work great for you too. If you're going to do white noise, I suggest using a little white noise machine. I love the LectroFan. Or the Dohm is a good one; just different ones that people like.

I would ideally not like you to use your phone. If you have to, you have to. Ideally, get a little white noise machine, or use a fan or something like that that feels good for you.

Also think about your schedule. I know a lot of us don't really have any flexibility in the time that we can be sleeping, either because of kids, because of work, because of different restrictions, but we all have a natural circadian rhythm that makes the most sense to our body. And it's really hard to fight against that.

I am a night owl. I like to stay up late. It's hard for me to go to bed early, and I like to sleep in in the morning. I don't like waking up early. So I have managed, periodically throughout my life, not always, but to have jobs and demands that allowed me to sleep from, say, 2am-to 10am.

Society and capitalism are going to give us a hard time about that and be like, "Oh, you're lazy if you sleep in." Why are you not lazy if you go to bed at 8 o'clock at night? I have six hours between 8 p.m. and 2 a.m. that I can get stuff done. That's just my little soapbox about that.

Also, when people are like, "Oh, get up early. Get up at 5:00 or 4:30 so that you can have some peace and quiet where no one's bothering you, no one's bothering you between midnight and 2am either. Or between 11 and 1, or whatever. So if you feel like you have to really force yourself to go to sleep super early, then maybe you have a later schedule.

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Or if you feel like you're super tired by 8 o'clock, and you want to sleep from 8-5 or 8-6 or 8-4 or whatever, and that's your natural rhythm, don't let people make you feel guilty for going to bed at 8 o'clock. Figure out what's going to feel really good to you and do that.

If you're able to get your family on that schedule, do that too. Get your pets on the schedule that works for you. We don't feed the cats early in the morning because I like to sleep in during the week, and my partner likes to sleep in on the weekends. They just know that their life is that. They start their day at 10 and get their last feed at 1am. or whatever.

So whatever makes sense to you in your life, work around it. Quick funny story about pets. I was dog sitting for a family I babysat four years ago when I was in college. And they were like, "Oh, Dev, the dogs get up really early. I know you don't like to get up early, but you're going to have to with the dogs." I was like, "Of course, I'll get up whenever they wake me up. That's the job. I don't mind. I'll let them out. I'll feed them, whatever."

The first morning, I woke up with both dogs passed out snoring in bed with me. I looked at my clock, it was like 10:30. I was like, "They only get up so early because you guys get up early." They will sleep on the routine of whoever they are with. It is fine. So all those things. Get into that routine.

If you have a baby and you're doing a dream feed, or you're doing a last feed with your baby, get all ready for bed before you do that so that you can slide right into bed right after.

Just to recap what we've talked about: You want to remove all the obstacles between you and that moment of delicious, cozy, under the covers, falling asleep-ness. You want to wind down in the hour or so before bed. You don't want too much stimulation. You don't want too much light. You don't want too much stress and anxiety and things scurrying around in your brain.

You don't want a lot of blue light, or anything that's going to get you riled up. You want to make your sleep environment really wonderful, really fantastic. If there's something where you're like, "Oh, I don't like my bed because of X, Y, Z,"

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remove that obstacle. Just get rid of it. Do whatever you need to do to improve that for yourself.

Because you deserve it, and your health deserves it, and your kids deserve it, and your pets deserve it, and your coworkers and your friends, and you just deserve it. Think about cutting out caffeine and seeing what else you might be ingesting or taking that could be making you stay awake.

Again, if you do all of these things, you have perfect sleep hygiene, and you still can't sleep, then it's time to talk to the doctor. It might be time to talk to the doctor before this too, but they might also just tell you that you need to be better about going to bed on time.

If you wake up in the middle of the night or you wake up too early in the morning, don't pick up the phone. Don't start stimulating yourself. It is still time to sleep. You can read your book. You can read a magazine. You can lay quietly. You can listen to a meditation track or whatever, but don't start getting your brain all stimulated. Because then the next thing you know, you're not going to have enough sleep overnight.

I can't wait to hear how everyone's journey to sleep training themselves is going. Make sure to follow us on Instagram @happyfamilyafter, and I will talk to you soon. 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.

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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.