

Ep #67: How to Hire a Nanny Without Losing Your Mind with Shenandoah Davis



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

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Shenandoah Davis: Parents aren't thinking about a nanny agency or if it exists or why or a doula agency or any of these services until like five seconds after they realize that they need one. But it's a type of business that really nobody thinks about until they're in that exact, very specific circumstance where they need one, that there's no baseline knowledge on how they work.

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.

Devon Clement: Hello and welcome to the *Parenthood Prep* podcast. Today we have an amazing guest, someone I'm so excited to talk to, Shenandoah Davis. She runs Adventure Nannies, which is a nanny agency that places nannies with families. And we're going to dive into kind of all things nanny hiring, what to look for, what it's like to have a nanny, and hear about some of her experience as well. We've known each other for a long time, so I'm really excited to be having this conversation. Hi, Shenandoah.

Shenandoah Davis: Hi, I'm so excited, too.

Devon Clement: Good. Why don't you tell us a little bit about Adventure Nannies?

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, so Adventure Nannies has a very fun origin story. I actually don't know if I've told it to you before.

Devon Clement: I don't know if I do know it.

Shenandoah Davis: So the founder, Brandy Schultz, was a nanny and a wilderness first responder and a kayak instructor in Colorado. And so, she was going on all of these trips with entrepreneurial, outdoorsy families in Colorado whose idea of a fun spring break is backpacking the Canadian wilderness or

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doing a bike trip through Europe. And so she had kind of been getting a lot of these off-the-beaten-path requests for, we need a nanny, and they need to be able to bike for 50 miles a day. And it would be cool if they could speak French or relocate a dislocated toddler shoulder during our backpacking trip. And she was like, wow, these are really interesting requests. It just so happens that I can do all of those things.

And so a few years went by, you know, as often happens with newborn care specialists, eventually there were too many families who wanted to work with her and she couldn't work with all of them. And so she started referring jobs out to other folks that she knew. And then she decided to try to turn this into a business because she fell in love with this sad, poor musician. She was like, "My life will be hard. Here I am in love with an artist. I need to make a lot of money to support him for the rest of my life." Which she did. She started Adventure Nannies and then a couple years later, her boyfriend's band, The Lumineers.

Devon Clement: Oh, sure.

Shenandoah Davis: Became very, very famous.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, they just had this song called Ho Hey that they had written like ten years before Brandy and Wes had started dating, and then it kind of blew up out of nowhere.

Devon Clement: That is incredible. I love that.

Shenandoah Davis: And so I had been a musician for a long time as well as a nanny, but I knew her husband from playing very quiet little house shows together.

Devon Clement: Sure.

Shenandoah Davis: She kind of hit this point in her life where she realized she no longer needed to try to build a business to support her family, and instead

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she could go travel the world. And I had reached a point in my life where I was sick of traveling the world and I really wanted to work in a business. And I picked this one and it was almost 10 years ago and I've just never looked back.

Devon Clement: That's amazing. That's so funny. I mean, no major rock stars in my story, but very similar. I was doing the postpartum doula, newborn care specialist thing, living with families, traveling with them, and there just got to be too much demand. And so then I started my company, Happy Family After. And then, I was traveling and doing that whole thing for a while, and then I was like, it might be fun to stay in one place for a little bit.

So now, a lot of my friends are, you know, doing all this like crazy traveling and this and that. And I'm like, oh, well, you know, we've got the cats and the kittens and I've got the thing. And I feel like such a, you know, I'm like, but I used to be cool and fun, but I still I love my life. Like I'm so happy now. We do still travel and stuff, but I'm like, I just wanted to stay put and like have some houseplants, you know?

Shenandoah Davis: A thousand percent.

Devon Clement: And you know, when you live in New York City, it's an adventure every day. But that is wild. So, obviously you guys have expanded from just placing nannies who can bike 15 miles a day and backpack and stuff like that, but it is still pretty focused on families with kind of unique needs, right?

Shenandoah Davis: It's a little bit of both. You know, we end up working with a lot of families who our friend Amber calls regular degular families.

Devon Clement: Sure. Just normal people. Every day people.

Shenandoah Davis: Which is a blessing and a curse with the names that a lot of phone calls start out with. Yeah, I saw your Adventure Nannies and we're regular. Like we're just normal and we just need someone to come help us with our children. Is that a possibility here?

Devon Clement: Is that something you could do?

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Shenandoah Davis: Do they have to have a black belt in karate and do they have to play the French horn? We're like, yes. We know many fantastic and "normal" nannies and work with all different kinds of families. Yeah, but we do attract the Montessori speaking fluent in Japanese Master's degree families as well.

Devon Clement: Yeah. I mean, that's really who we're speaking to with this podcast. You know, the normal people, you know, they might not even be considering a nanny. Maybe they're considering daycare, but I think some of the - first of all, I think people are just curious about it. You know, it's our field. We know so much and we're so familiar with it, but the questions I get from friends and stuff like that, about nannies and stuff, I'm like, oh, this is not common knowledge for people. So when someone hires you for a nanny placement, how does that work? What do you do? What's your process?

Shenandoah Davis: We have a lot of resources and education on our website for families that like to learn a lot. We love working with families who are kind of lifelong learners and come to us saying, we don't know what we're doing. We don't know if it's a nanny or an au pair or daycare or grandma or... And in those kind of early planning phases, it really is like, there are 100 different things we could do. And each one of our 100 friends is giving us advice on exactly which thing they did and why it was the best or why it wasn't.

Devon Clement: I was going to say, or why it didn't work out and... Yeah, that's the advice you should you should really tune into, I think.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, I really, I always try to lean more on, I will share my experience. This is this was my thought process and here's where it went for me because I just don't want the responsibility on my shoulders of making important decisions for other people because I'll never know them as well as they know themselves. I hope.

Devon Clement: I think too, hearing like, oh, well we tried this like crazy idea that we had and it actually didn't work out too great. Or like, we thought we could get

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a really cheap nanny and make her do a lot more work than is normal. And guess what? That didn't work out.

Shenandoah Davis: I really hear a lot of it on both sides, you know. I hear families talking about hiring a nanny for the first year and then the plan being, as soon as our newborn is 12 months old, we're going to send them to daycare because we really want them to hang out with other kids and socialize. And we say that's great, but also a nanny can, part of a nanny's job is planning activities and going on adventures with your kid and taking them to activities and events where they can be social. It's not sitting on the floor all day watching a baby try to figure out how to roll over while you scroll Instagram. Like that is not, especially if you're working with most nanny agencies, that is not really the type of nanny setup that you're looking for.

Devon Clement: Well, or doing it for them, you know, rolling them over all day long and not letting them learn how to do things for themselves. It's funny that you say that because I actually am often advising people like to just leave their baby alone. Like just let them, just put them on the floor and go do your own thing and let them figure out how to roll over and don't sit there and stare at them.

Whether you're scrolling Instagram or not, like give them that space. But yeah, I mean having those activities and those, you know, getting out of the house and stuff like that is so great. And I know, especially, I mean, obviously in a city, it's easy because you can like walk everywhere. But even when I was a nanny in the suburbs, we were going to Gymboree and music class and I was making friends with the moms and setting up play dates and yeah, it was great. So there's a lot that you can do.

I think too, sometimes people fall into this trap, like not necessarily with like a daycare situation because that's pretty full time, but like, oh, my kid's starting preschool part-time, so I don't need a nanny anymore. And you're like, okay, there's tons of days off school. They're going to get sick. Like there's, you know,

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pickup and drop off and all that stuff. Like it doesn't really take that much time out of the day when they're in even like a part-time program.

Okay, so I'm hiring you to find me a nanny. We think we're going to use somebody for a year, but then we end up keeping them for ten years. So what do you do?

Shenandoah Davis: So, we spend a lot of time trying to get to know the family, especially if it's the first time that they're hiring a nanny. Because at that point, it becomes a lot less about, you know, like a lot of times families come to us and they are really concerned that their expectations are too high. But their expectations are like, can we ask for someone, you know, who's done this before? Or, can we ask someone who's, you know, taken a college class, which are all, you know, like very far kind of below the baseline of any of the candidates that we're talking about.

And so, unless there are special circumstances or the family kind of has a high bar in terms of we need someone with a bachelor's degree, we need someone who's fluent in this second language, of really just trying to understand their personalities and their vibe and what their household dynamic is like. Because the piece of this, especially for first time parents, that they may be are not considering is what does it feel like to have a stranger adult in your house all day? Especially now with so many more people working from home or having flexible work schedules, like parents have never gotten to spend so much time with their nannies or their household employees before.

And so we spend a lot of time there. We spend a lot of time reaching out to nannies, trying to recruit them, trying to write a really beautiful job description that is honest but also makes people read it and really feel like I have a sense of the family and I can see myself working for them and I can't wait to meet them. And then at the point where we've, the vetting process that we do on nannies, many nannies have said both positively and negatively that it takes a really long time and that it's a lot of work. But we are checking references on the resume.

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We're interviewing them. We're doing kind of a deep dive on their social media and their online presence.

Devon Clement: Oh, really? That's interesting.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, it used to just be social media, but social media has kind of exploded. And so, I can remember it was a couple years ago now, but there was a very sweet, kind person who we had interviewed and then we found one of her Yelp reviews and it was so...

Devon Clement: Like a Yelp review that she left?

Shenandoah Davis: Yes, it was a one-star Yelp review that she had left and there were so many obscenities in it and she just, nothing terrible had happened, but she was like, you're like, idiot bartender, Angela, like can't even like. And we're like, oh, okay, very strong opinion to have of a, you know, bad night out at a bar.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Shenandoah Davis: If we found it, someone else can find it. And now we found it and so we know about it. And so that's not really going to fly with most families.

Devon Clement: I always kind of laugh and roll my eyes when we get an application either for a doula or if we're like helping a family, sometimes we'll like advise families when they're looking for nannies. The email addresses. I'm like, how are you applying for a professional job with like sexybitch69@aol.com as your email address? Like what are you doing?

There was a woman, I literally made her create a new email address in order to be introduced to this family because she was great and her email address was like badge bunny or something. And then her picture was like her in a bikini with like a confederate flag. I was just like, this is not, no, this is a professional job. You need to be professional.

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Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, well, and also, I mean, I am concerned when I see things like that because also just how uncomfortable and painful for someone to kind of be like living a double life within their own life. Like some of the like most professional, like most dry, like even before ChatGPT emails we've gotten of like, I have fifteen years of experience and I need \$140,000 a year and I need to know this, come from like champagnebaby420 where I'm like, which one are you? Like, who are you? Like, either one's fine, but we need you to decide.

Devon Clement: Oh, that's funny. I feel like I threaded the needle when I was a nanny with my, I mean, I wouldn't say anything on my online presence was like a major red flag, but, you know, I definitely had a party lifestyle on the weekends and when I was not, when I was not at work and I was still, you know, still managed to pull it together at work, but not everyone can do that.

Shenandoah Davis: I feel lucky because I'm forty and I went to college a little bit early and so Facebook hit my college campus six weeks before I graduated so my online presence, I think is mostly fine, but if it had existed three years earlier...

Devon Clement: Oh yeah. I think my lucky stars every day that I'm older and all the like crappy poetry I wrote in high school is just in notebooks that have been thrown in the garbage and not living forever on live journal or something like that.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, my now that you say that, I'm like, wait, my crappy poetry is on a dead journal, which was the one I used is much more emo than live journal. Basic, Devon.

Devon Clement: Even better, even better. So, I'm curious about that. So what sort of things are you looking for? Obviously, this Yelp review would be certainly a red flag if they can't control themselves or their feelings about, like you said, a bad night out, but is there anything in particular that you look for or things that maybe you see that you don't consider a big deal? Because I know certainly people might be, you know, oh my god, she posted a picture on July 4th of her drinking a beer. Like, is she going to be safe around my kids?

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Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, it's, it's changed so much in the last 10 years. You know, and the Yelp example is like a silly small one, but ten years ago at the agency, it really was like no pictures of you drinking alcohol and no pictures of this and like we don't, like, it's like not that cool to talk about politics that much and obviously that changed pretty quickly at the end of 2016.

Now the main thing that we are looking for is just is just people being kind. You know, like people, people have a lot of opinions and views to express and that is wonderful if you're a person who's comfortable doing that, as long as you're not doing it in a way that takes down other people.

This year, like with the conflict happening in Gaza between Israel and Palestine, like we work with a lot of families who are Jewish and have family in Israel. And it actually is harmful for them to meet someone who's on Facebook saying like, the people in Israel are like and all of these bad things.

Devon Clement: We've had a few requests from for newborn care from families who are like, we have Israeli family or my husband is from Israel or whatever. And we just want someone who's not who's going to be okay with that and is not going to be, you know, uncomfortable with that. And I would hope that everyone would be professional, but certainly there are people out there who are very outspoken and I would not match them with a family where I thought there was going to be some kind of clash.

And that, you know, in certain situations, like certainly I let someone go from my team who said something very negative about trans people. I was like, no, I'm not going to place you with anybody if your views are hateful and bigoted. But there are some things that are genuinely, you know, kind of nuanced and that doesn't necessarily exclude them from working with us or being a client of ours.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, and we try to have a lot of grace, you know, on both sides because we have these conversations with families as well over small things like a family just saying in their first call, like, yeah, and it would be great if she could... to say, okay, so it sounds like you're assuming the person you hire

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is going to be a woman. Like, you know, actually, like we have nannies from all different genders. Is that something that you're open to?

Devon Clement: Yeah. Oh, I had a family a few years ago. We found them a great candidate, a male candidate. And I loved him, the mom loved him, and the dad was like, no. They later got divorced. Thank God. And it's been like eight years and every time she moves to a new city, which is like every two years, we help her find a new nanny. But just, yeah, I was like, I can't believe you are just like discarding this amazing, experienced, wonderful candidate because of your own weird hang-ups about it.

Shenandoah Davis: Which I, on one hand, completely understand, but I also will be devil's advocate a little bit and be like, it's your house, it's your family.

Devon Clement: Yeah. Really, I don't blame people because while there are a lot more men and non-binary and people in child care, it is still predominantly female profession. But, you know, we have a couple of male caregivers on our newborn care team and I've even just noticed in the last few years, like I used to like kind of tiptoe around it and be like, would you be okay with like a male doula? And people were like, yes, you know, yes or no, which like is fine. Especially, I think in, you know, when you're going to be like having your breasts out and stuff like that, you just might not feel comfortable with that. But now it's like I don't even ask. People it's just like, oh, we're going to send you, you know, Bob, it's going to be great. They're like, cool, can't wait to meet him. You know?

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, but the industry, I feel like has come a really long way.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Shenandoah Davis: Just in the last few years. And what families are open to. I think in a lot of ways everyone is a little bit more open-minded and less closed off, which is positive.

Devon Clement: Totally, yeah.

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Shenandoah Davis: This is the most roundabout answer to your question of like...

Devon Clement: No, no, but I love that because I think I think it's important to clarify because like you wouldn't necessarily flag someone who is drinking a beer at a 4th of July barbecue, but if that person was saying unkind things, that's something that you want to be aware of.

Shenandoah Davis: Absolutely.

Devon Clement: Okay, so you do this whole process of vetting the candidates and then you they apply for the jobs that look interesting to them.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah. We have candidates fill out a separate job application for each job because each family usually has a few specific questions that either they've written or we've written to really make sure that anyone we're going to introduce really understands the role and they're excited about it. And from there, we start introducing the candidates to clients and saying, all right, here's so and so, here's where they check every single box that you asked for and here are a few other cool things about them that we found out during this process. Here are transcripts of their references, here's their resume, here are, you know, some long form questions that we've talked about. You know, we really share as much as we can up front.

And then we coordinate interviews between the family and the candidates. Because we're nationwide, a lot of times families are meeting candidates from all over the country and so then we're helping families through the logistics of hiring someone to fly out for a few days and stay at their house and meet the rest of the team and meet the kids and figure out everything and have that opportunity to see actually how the dynamic is in the house and how do you communicate in person and how do you respond to feedback? And then we walk families through, once they found the person they're excited about, getting an offer letter and an employment agreement together and kind of sorting out all the logistics that come after that. And then we keep talking to them forever.

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Devon Clement: Yeah, I could see that. I could see that. We do that with our newborn care clients and our sleep training clients as well, you know, reaching out every few months like, this is an issue we're having or this is a question that we have or whatever. And obviously, when you're looking at these national candidates that are maybe living in and moving around, that's a lot more dramatic. But even if you're just looking for someone local for live out, it's a good idea to have them come and do some like trial time with you, right? Like you're not just going to hire someone from the interview. So I think in a typical situation or like a more local situation, you would still recommend they do some test out time, right?

Shenandoah Davis: Oh, absolutely. I mean, it's the same rules as hiring somebody in a company where if you, you know, if you're hiring a new employee, you could tell them to just follow you around and listen to everything that you do and watch what you do for a month. And if you don't actually ask them to do anything during that month, all of your sense of, is this person, like was this a good hire? Is this person capable of doing the job is all just based off of your gut instinct or like, yeah, they're doing a great job. They're so good at listening to me and watching me do all my work.

So I think, you know, giving some opportunities early on to be like, okay, welcome to my house. Like, here's the kitchen. Like, oh, the dishwasher isn't unloaded. Like, let's unload it together and I'll show you where some of these things go. Like, oh, when you're done in the playroom, you know, let's hang out up there for an hour and then we'll clean it up together.

It's kind of like when you have someone coming over to clean your apartment and you pre-clean it, you're like, I have to do this and then before the cleaner comes, you're like, this is actually like the cleanest it's been since the last time the cleaner was here.

Devon Clement: I actually don't do that. My cleaner has been with me for so long and she's so wonderful. Actually, I think it's we're coming up on our 10 year anniversary. I should get her a gift.

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Shenandoah Davis: Oh, where are you going to dinner?

Devon Clement: Right? Like I'll get her whatever the 10th anniversary is, I'll get her I'll get her something. She's like my favorite person. But she knows at this point like I don't clean before she comes. She does that for me and it's great. But you have to, you know, you have to have that relationship with people.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah. So a lot of times families will invite someone over, you know, for a trial or I know in New York, it's really common for them to just invite someone over for a few hours. And everyone is a little nervous, like the parents are also a little nervous. And so they are overexplaining and over-talking and they're like, I'll do that or like, oh, I'll pick this up. And then at the end of the three hours, the parent is sitting there saying, gosh, they like really didn't do anything to help during those three hours. Like I picked that up and they didn't really jump in to be proactive, which some people can do no matter what. But a lot of times, the parents need a little bit of help and coaching on how to make the most out of that time.

Because also, like nannies get jobs very quickly. You know, amazing nannies are not kind of sitting around looking for a job for six months. And so where I see a lot of families get stuck is they have someone come over for three hours and they're like, yeah, I don't really, I didn't really see enough to know if they're the one or not. So I'll have them come over for three hours again next Thursday.

Devon Clement: And you're like, no, they're going to get an offer by then.

Shenandoah Davis: They have a job next Thursday. You know, which is frustrating and disappointing for the families too.

Devon Clement: That's a big one that we deal with when people feel like frustrated that they were maybe talking to some candidates and they like, I'm like, you can't, you know, oh, we'll meet them in two weeks when we get back from vacation. Like that's not a thing that's typically going to happen. They're going to get snapped up by then.

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Shenandoah Davis: Especially at the point you're having people come over to your house and meet your kids because at that point it's not great for your kids either. For them to go to school and say, like, we had seven nannies last week is not, they're going to be confused too.

Devon Clement: We actually have a little bit of a joke behind the scenes in the business because not often, but sometimes we'll get a call from someone who like their baby is born, they're here, they like want a, you know, newborn care specialist right away, a postpartum dealer right away. And they're like, so send over, you know, some resumes for us to review. I'm like, madam, like, you want somebody to start tonight, you're going to get who you're going to get. Everyone on our team is great. But we joke that it's like those old phone sex commercials, like, we're waiting for your call. Like, we're like, hot doulas are waiting for your call. Like, no, we're not. We're busy. We're happy to help you. We'll make it work, but you do not get to dictate the terms in that situation.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, it's so - I feel like in so many ways, you know, because parents aren't thinking about a nanny agency or if it exists or why or a doula agency or any of these services until like five seconds after they realize that they need one. But it's a type of business that really nobody thinks about until they're in that exact, very specific circumstance where they need one, that there's no baseline knowledge on how they work.

You know, and we've for sure over the years had a few calls where it literally felt like the person we were talking to thought that they were on the phone with me and I was standing in a room with a hundred nannies who are all wearing backpacks and waiting for like, Upper West side, all right. Like, Caleb, you're going to Tribeca. Over the train, you'll be there in thirty minutes.

Devon Clement: I could see that. I could see that. They also seem to think that sometimes that the caregivers are not human beings like themselves. Like, oh, I want someone who's going to live in around the clock, the same person for a month. I'm like, why do you want that? That person is going to be a disaster. I would be a disaster if that were me. Like five nights in a row and I'm ready to

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drive off a bridge. So like have some expectations that they have human needs like you do. What are some of the things that have you ever had to, I'm sure you've had to, like sort of temper people's expectations?

Shenandoah Davis: I feel like that's a huge part of our role as agencies.

Devon Clement: Because you mentioned sometimes people have like low expectations, like, could we have someone with experience? Like, well, yes, but...

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, well, and that's always, it's kind of one of my favorite conversations to have actually is with parents with low expectations because it's kind of it's good news, good news for them. And it's good news for me because I just want any family that we're talking to like get something out of the conversation. And so the good news for them is that they can ask for more and they can set the bar higher and they can raise their expectations. And then the other good news for them is that if they don't want to do that, then they can go to Facebook or go to care.com or go hand out some flyers in a park and meet the person who meets their expectations for free. They don't necessarily have to use an agency.

Devon Clement: Right. But then sometimes people have unrealistic expectations.

Shenandoah Davis: Yes. Yeah, sometimes they do. I mean, I honestly, like with the kind of perfect example you just shared of families wanting someone around the clock 24/7, like I am so happy that rota jobs have become so popular.

Devon Clement: Yeah. Can you just tell us what that is? Because not, again, not everyone's, not everyone's in the industry. Oh, you know, rota jobs, everybody knows what those are.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, so families who are looking for care around the clock and just want someone kind of constantly to be there or to be on call. The exact situation you describe, this person's going to live in our house, they're never

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going to leave, they're going to work every day. It's a totally understandable desire from a parenting perspective, right? Especially if it's your first kid or especially if both parents are working or especially if you're traveling a lot. Like it's just too much to manage.

And the idea of taking on not only managing your household, but now managing like an employee during the daytime, an employee on the weekend, an employee on the night, you basically just are paying people to make your job harder. Or just change the work but not really change the amount of time that is going into it.

So rotational schedules are where there are a few different ways to configure it, but typically someone will come in, they will work for one week, they'll be on call for 24 hours a day for seven days, sometimes a little bit longer, sometimes 10 days or 14 days, and then they are off work for an equal amount of days and a second person in the parallel role comes in and works that schedule.

Devon Clement: Yeah. We like that too. We're doing like live in newborn care. People are like, well, if I want around the clock, do I have like a day person and a night person? I'm like, honestly, no, that is so much transitioning, like every day. And it's more difficult for the people. I'll go and I'll do 72 hours around the clock where I'm like, you know, up at night with the baby and doing stuff during the day and then I'll switch off with somebody else. And I mean, obviously, it's a different situation if you're with like older kids and you're actually sleeping at night, you can work a much longer, much longer rota. But yeah, no, I think I think that's great.

I think the scheduling is probably in my experience where people have the most unrealistic expectations. Like, I want someone who's like on call 24/7, but I only need them 40 hours a week, but I'm not going to tell them which 40 hours. Like that's not cool.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah. It's very rare that I talk to a family who it feels like they just don't have good intentions. But there's just there is a huge lack of resources because again, it's one of those industries that no one knows about

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until they need it. And so in those conversations, we have a lot of success with just with encouraging some empathy or ask, you know, or asking the question of like, well, what would you think about that?

Well, how would you like it if, like, would you take a job where you were working constantly and you never had a single day off? You know? And then it can come into like the, you know, the golden rule of doing to others what, you know, what you want versus the platinum rule of like, no, your job is to figure out what they want and then do that because they're not you. And we're all, you know, we're all special, rainbow, different people, snowflake, magical, like no fingerprint, no two of us are the same.

Even with, you know, with small stuff and with bigger stuff, like, you know, like sending a family, you know, a candidate's information and the mom's saying, okay, like this candidate looks great, but I did notice that they have a child of their own and how will that impact their work and being able to say to use your word that I'm now going to steal like, madam, how would you feel if a potential employer asked that question about you? I happen to know you also have a child because we're doing a nanny search for you and... That's not awesome.

Devon Clement: Yeah. I do, I mean, it can be a little bit tricky because it's such a unique position. It's such a unique job. Like if you're working in an office, your kid has something at school, you can just go to that and like do your work later or whatever. But like when you're a nanny and you call out or you have some other responsibilities, there's not always a backup. There's not always like another person who can step in and do that job. But that's not also necessarily your responsibility to work around that and things like that. But, you know, I would think anyone applying for a job, nanny or otherwise would have reliable child care of their own so that they could manage that.

Shenandoah Davis: Absolutely.

Devon Clement: Yeah, I've had families who are like, I don't know, she's like 24, she might be having a baby in a few years. I don't know if - I'm like that is not something that we are thinking about or guessing about or like going to

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speculate on her behalf about that. If she's saying she can, you know, you want a year commitment and she's saying she'll give that to you, then that's what we're going to go with.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah. There's just there's such a high level of anxiety, I think, and high level of pressure in a lot of these hiring situations that it becomes kind of interesting when you are at an agency and your role is to kind of help guide the family on like, these are totally normal things to be anxious about and these are great questions to bring up. And that's totally rational and that's something that we can follow up on, you know, and here are the things that are not.

Like if you're going to hire someone and they're coming into your home where all of your stuff is, where your children are, where they're going to see you like probably completely at your worst at some point, and you're entrusting them with all of this, like, and that person happens to have a kid, like, don't you think that someone you trust that much is probably like a responsible adult who can figure out their own life and their own life plans and their own child care?

Devon Clement: You know, it's funny, it's almost the same thing I say about people with their kids, like their babies and toddlers. They have such a mix of like expectations that are way too low and expectations that are way too high. Like you think this person can work seven days a week around the clock, but you don't think that they can manage to get child care for themselves. Like that's, no, we're somewhere in the middle.

What are you seeing as far as like trends in the industry? Is there something that people are looking for more or something that people used to look for that they're not really anymore?

Shenandoah Davis: The biggest change that I've been seeing since COVID and since, you know, remote work became more of a thing, is that families are really looking for people in more of a nanny/family assistant role now, especially when their kids get a little bit older. And nannies are a lot more open to that than they used to be. You know, 10 years ago and I'm sure before that, a lot of the nannies

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that we were working with said, "I'm only doing things related to the kids. I won't empty the dishwasher and I won't let the dog go outside and I won't empty the garbage and, you know, I'm a nanny and I'm just there for the kids."

And what has happened more and more as families are working from home more or once they've had a nanny for a few years and their kids starts to go to school or to preschool, like they don't want that person to leave. And as a parent, like you don't have less work to do. The work that you have to do just changes. And so, maybe now you have a kid who's at preschool for four hours a day, but now it's, now there's a uniform and now there's a theme day and now it's snack day and now it's my day to bring cupcakes and now there's a sports team and now there are different bags for every day of the week.

And the other thing I really enjoy about talking to, especially other entrepreneurs about the idea of a nanny who's taking on some of those family assisting duties is that a lot of first time parents don't feel awesome about the idea of hiring a nanny while they're looking at all of these alternatives because they don't want to spend less time with their kids. Or they don't want to spend 40 less hours a week with their kids. And so it becomes a lot less about kind of having this perception of I'm hiring someone to replace me of, you know what, like bringing in a nanny is actually going to make you have better quality time with your kids because when you get home from work, your time with your kids isn't going to be doing homework with them and then doing all of your chores around the house. Like you can actually, you can both be the fun parent. Someone else has done all of the non-fun parent parts of the day already.

Devon Clement: I love that. I think about it. Well, first of all, I have a part-time assistant that comes at home like not related to the business, like helps me out around the house and I call her my nanny for myself. Because she like makes me snacks and like puts my clothes away and does all these things that like I don't want to do because I would rather be working on my business or playing with my foster kittens or going out and doing stuff.

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Even like I do stuff for my partner because he's at an office all day and I work from home. I'm like, yeah, I'll wash all the laundry. I don't care. I'm not going to like leave your laundry for you because I can do that when I'm on a phone call or like in between meetings or whatever or just on a day that I have a lighter day. I don't want you to tell me like, oh, sorry, I can't like go to brunch on Sunday because I have to do all my laundry for the week. Like, that's so silly. I'd rather have your company.

So it's kind of the same thing with kids. And that's also so funny to me because when I was a nanny, like of course I unloaded the dishwasher and took the garbage out and did all the, I mean, I had fairly easy, you know, jobs, but it just feels to me like such a part of like being part of the family is like doing that stuff. But I have definitely encountered some nannies who are like, no, I'm here for the kids. Like, if there's, you know, or like, I'll put the kids' dishes in the dishwasher, but not like yours if you're, I don't know, that's a little...

Shenandoah Davis: We don't leave this one work in here next to this. That's your fork.

Devon Clement: Yeah, exactly, exactly. Yeah, I keep joking. We're casually talking about maybe having a baby someday and I'm like, ooh, then I could have a full-time nanny for me and the baby. It'll be great. I really do think I would hire someone who's like mostly like an organizer, you know, who likes babies, because I know what to do with a baby. Like I don't, you know, but I just want that extra hands to kind of do it all and of course we'll pay them appropriately.

Something I always tell people, especially when I used to do more like nanny searches and stuff like that is, sometimes I think people don't understand what you can get in the same person. Like, I want someone super fun and creative who's going to do art projects with the kids and like make up plays and then like also, you know, clean and organize everything when the kids are napping. I'm like, that's not the same person. Like, of course, you know, it's part of it to like tidy up and do this and that or like, you know, I want someone who's going to be really flexible with the hours and like if we come home late sometimes that's no

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big deal or whatever, but like I also want them to be like hyper punctual all the time and like whatever.

I'm like, you know, it's just a little difficult, I think, to find to find that. Of course there's like magical unicorns out there, but I'm the person who will stay as late as you need me to say, but I'm going to be 15 minutes late half the time. Which, you know, my families that I've nannied and baby sat for understood. And they would tell me like, no, we really, really need you to be here at this time on this day because we have, you know, tickets to something. I'm like, okay, I'll plan to get there 30 minutes before so I'll be there on time or whatever, but, you know, but it was never a deal breaker for them. Like because they loved me and I was great with their kids and stuff and they knew that if they got home late, I wasn't going to give them a hard time about it. It was just like everybody was just on the same page about the time flexibility.

Shenandoah Davis: I think it's hard, you know, something that I talk about to families sometimes is, are you looking for your clone or are you looking for a complement?

Devon Clement: Oh, that's great.

Shenandoah Davis: And I think in business, I don't really like hiring clones. I did it too much for a little while and then there was like a, you know, we had a like a little army of like hard-working robots who like no one would sign off at five and everyone would start before nine and people were emailing on the weekends. I was like, oh, this doesn't feel the best. And so now we have a great balance, but even within that, I think where it can get hard for families is that they might need to kind of adjust some of their behavior or their expectations.

Whether it's, you know, families who are like really laid back and, you know, they're like, we need someone who's, yeah, really like rigid and is going to come in and, you know, like do this corrective guidance and like do this principle that our mother-in-law kept telling us to try and we really don't want a lot of screen time. But then, you know, that person's there for eight or nine hours and then when the parents are back in charge, it's like, here's your screen and, you know,

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and whatever. And we're having jelly beans for dinner and you can stay up until 11:00 because there are fireflies outside. Like that's not really going to work well for the kids or well for anyone else.

Devon Clement: And I think sometimes people want sort of a version of themselves that they envision as like the better. Like, I want exactly me but without my flaws. And like that's not, you know, we're all just humans.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah. Yeah, and if you're...

Devon Clement: I know that's what I wanted in a partner for a long time and had to realize that it was not what I found and I'm so much happier.

Shenandoah Davis: Really? You were just going for like Devon Plus.

Devon Clement: I realized that what I wanted was like the dream of who I actually wanted to be, not who I actually wanted to be with. And then I was like, oh, huh.

Shenandoah Davis: Interesting. Yeah, I don't I don't feel like my partner is very similar to me.

Devon Clement: No, my, well mine is similar to me in very good ways and definitely very different in some other good ways. But I was like, oh, you're not going to fix me and magically turn me into the person I think I should be. And maybe I shouldn't be that person. Maybe I should just be me. And that was great. But anyway, and unless I tell you more about my journey another time.

Shenandoah Davis: Now you can go to brunch whenever you want because you do all of his laundry. It's perfect.

Devon Clement: Right, exactly. I like that clone versus complement. I think that's an important thing to think about.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, and honestly, for some families, clone is better. You know, like on the opposite end, if you're like, if you're like, I'm super type A and

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I'm really driven and I want, you know, like, like you can't really hire someone who's like creative and a free spirit and an artist who's just going to do projects because you're going to come home and your house is going to be messy. Or there's going to be paint on the wall or there's going to be marker on the couch or like the carrots that you were saving for your fancy dinner the next night got used because now we're like trying to grow new carrots outside.

And so a lot of times, just like your story, like what you hypothetically think you need, like when you're actually going a little bit further down the path and seeing it in practice, I think can be a wake up call for a lot of families of like, oh, we weren't thinking about like any of the repercussions of that or we weren't thinking about how that actually might not really get along with what we like very much.

Devon Clement: Yeah, and sometimes I think people want somebody who's going to do things exactly their way, the way that they say. And sometimes they want somebody who's going to take initiative and do things their own way. Especially I know a lot of first-time parents, you know, they don't have experience with a four-month-old, a five-month-old, a six-month-old, and they're going to see all these ages and stages. And sometimes you want someone who's going to almost advise you and say, oh, you know, six months, time to put them on a nap schedule, time to introduce solids or whatever where you wouldn't necessarily know that, but it's also going to be really hard to have someone who's like going to do things exactly the way you want them done and also do them their own way. So I think that's also something to something to think about.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah. Well, and I think, like something that I've seen work out really beautifully, I think especially with newborn care specialists, but also with nanny placements, is when there's a parent who's kind of in the middle where they're saying like, I care about this and I've spent time learning about it and I know like what the kind of ideal or optimal situation is. You know, like I know like this is how many times this should be sanitized and this should always be this temperature and this shirt should always go in these drawers.

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And I also know that like I don't have time to do it 100% of the time. Like when I come home from work, like I might be able to do it 70%. But I can pay someone whose entire job is to come in and do like the absolute, you know, AAP recommended best practice, the thing that every single magazine and mom and blog and podcast all said to do. They can do that because that's their job. And then I can go do my job and I can get home and do the best that I can that day and not feel like shit about it.

Devon Clement: Yeah, I love that. I say that with sleep training. Like I go and stay with families for like three days and nights or four or five. And they're like, well, what do you do when you're here? How can you get it done so quickly and like, why can't we do that? And I'm like, because literally for 72 hours, I am going to be focused on your baby's sleep and nothing else. Like I am not going to be trying to handle other kids. I'm not going to be trying to handle a different job than this one.

Like, if your baby's awake in the middle of the night for 90 minutes, I'm not going to be, well, I am going to be thinking about how badly I want to go back to sleep, but I'm not going to be, you know, worried about that because when I get done here, I'm going to go home and live my normal life and you don't get to take that time to focus solely on your baby's sleep for three days and three nights. Like, if I'm like advising a friend on sleep training, I would never say, okay, pick out 72 hours and just go whole hog because it's so unrealistic. But when I'm coming in to do that, obviously my experience and knowledge and expertise and all that is really is a big part of it too, but it's a lot of it is just the focus and the fact that I can be so consistent in that period of time.

And it's the same thing with a nanny. Like, yeah, they'll, it's actually funny too because my mother would laugh if she heard this. I am so organized when I'm at work. Like, I had a client say that her mom knew when I had been there for the overnight because the bottles on the drying rack were like lined up like little soldiers with like the nipples and everything. She's like when we do it, it's a mess and when you do it, it's like all lined up. I'm like, I'm the most messy, disorganized person in my normal life, but when I'm at work, it's like, I love

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folding your laundry, like it'll get, you know, because then it's done and I don't have to think about it. But folding my own laundry, no, I don't do that.

Shenandoah Davis: It's always easier to do things for someone else than it is to do for yourself. I'm the same way with laundry. Laundry is like my kryptonite.

Devon Clement: Yeah. But you can, you know, you can check it off the list and you can feel satisfied. Like I went from a sink full of dirty bottles to a counter top full of clean bottles. And I feel great about that. That like what a sense of accomplishment.

Shenandoah Davis: A thousand percent.

Devon Clement: Okay, so give us a couple quick tips if people are considering a nanny, what are some things they should be thinking about?

Shenandoah Davis: The number one thing, I think if for families who haven't decided yet if a nanny is the right hire or families who are concerned about the cost, which is a very valid cost, is if you are going to hire a nanny, make sure that you can afford to hire a good nanny. Because there is nothing to me that feels kind of more dangerous than bringing someone into your house who you're not paying a living wage to or who's not going to be like comfortable or financially sound based on your job. Like that's not a good scenario for everyone. And someone who's worried about, you know, paying their rent next month or where groceries are going to come from is not going to be able to take care of your child the way that your child deserves.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Shenandoah Davis: And on the flip side of that, I would say, especially if one parent is a stay at home parent, thinking about like how you're valuing your own time. You know, like a lot of the work in the household, including raising children, has historically been kind of unpaid labor for women. And I completely recognize that most families can't afford it, but when I'm talking to, you know, it's typically moms who are saying like, thirty dollars an hour is a lot of money or I'll just do it

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myself. They don't have the mindset of I'll just do it myself because thirty dollars is very expensive, means that you're valuing your own time at less than thirty dollars an hour.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Shenandoah Davis: You know, and I don't think that should be the case really for anyone who is a parent or for anyone who is at a point in life where they're considering bringing on full-time help. Just like your assistant, like I know that you can make your own snacks. Fully capable.

Devon Clement: Fully capable adult. But yeah, no.

Shenandoah Davis: You know, we see that in the newborn care field as well. Like someone will hire, you know, in New York, it's so prominent to have these "baby nurses" that are there seven nights a week for a month and you're underpaying them so much that they have another job during the day. And they're so tired that they're not giving their best to their underpaid nanny job during the day. They're not giving their best to your baby at night. They're, you know, falling asleep, they're not waking up. And I just want everyone to get paid, you know, a wage that allows them to do the job well.

Or, you know, you're looking for someone cheap, so you get someone who's inexperienced or, you know, just not going to be doing things the way they should be done. And I say it all the time, you get what you pay for. So I think that's such a good point and something to think about. And I think it's another thing that people don't kind of put themselves in the situation and think to themselves like, is this something that I would want or that I would be capable of or that I would be good at or that would be, you know, acceptable for me?

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah. People are not where I would start looking at where to cut corners on costs. You know, like the difference of two dollars an hour or three dollars an hour, and it really it seems, I'm not sure if it's still this way. We don't do as many placements in New York as we did before COVID, but I know when I first came into the industry just watching some of the conversations in

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like Park Slope Mom's group where it almost felt like a competition over who had the nanny that they were paying the least amount of money to.

Devon Clement: Oh, my God. It makes me crazy. I say it all the time. It's like, we want the most expensive purse, we want the most expensive house, we want the most expensive schools, but then the cheapest nanny. Make it make sense. I don't understand it at all.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, it's just not, to me it's not the right place. And I'm not just saying that because I own a nanny agency, you know, but it is like, why don't you like wait to replace your car for six months? It's not, it's not hard. You know, like, why don't you like look at which vegetables you actually need to buy organic and you do, I mean, whatever, like everyone has their own things.

Someone who's coming into my house all day and taking care of my kids, especially if I'm not going to be at my house, you know, they have, they have your bank account, they have your credit cards, they have your car keys, they have your house keys, they know who your friends are, they know who your neighbors are. Like, that's not where cost should be getting cut. Like you are setting yourself up for some pretty scary situations if that's the one thing that you're like, how much can I ring out of this human being for as little money as possible? It's like, you're in a very vulnerable position and a very trusting position when someone's in your house and when someone's with your kids. Like save money somewhere else. Get a points credit card. I don't know.

Devon Clement: Yeah, and like I'm saying this from the perspective of like I'm not shitting on people who can't, like actually can't afford it. But like, we've had families where we know they have like multiple homes and this and that and they're like, oh, well your services are too expensive. Like, are they?

And then another thing too, sometimes, you know, what I tell people to think about is maybe it's a different schedule that you need. Like, look at your, you know, if you have X amount per week that you want to spend on a nanny, that doesn't mean you need to cut their hourly rate and have them for 60 hours. Maybe you find someone who wants to work four days a week and one day a

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week they go to daycare or a family member helps out or you change your work schedule a little bit so you don't have to leave so early or, you know, find some way to make it work.

Like, you know, people can get somebody seven nights a week that sucks for the same price as getting us four nights a week. And I think you get more value out of having us four nights a week because you're going to get so much more out of that time. So that can be another way to think about it too, is like, do we need this? And that also frustrates me when people are, you know, oh, well, I can't afford that, but all they want is like literally a hundred hours a week and they're trying to, you know, underpay for those hours. So you can certainly find someone who's looking for something a little less and be able to do that or maybe a nanny share or something like that where you're paying a little less but you're trading in for some of the trade-offs there.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, absolutely.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, it's interesting in this industry because we end up getting to talk to families from so many different income brackets of just seeing, and money is hard and it's complicated and everyone has some kind of messed up relationship with money, like whether you have all the money in the world or whether you have no money or whether you've had no money and now you do have money or you did have money and now you don't have money. I never try to fault people for their own their own money issues. But it is so complicated and it is interesting talking to families who will pay a hundred million dollars for a really nice yacht, but they won't pay for health insurance for their nanny because that's, you know, it's just a, it's different priorities.

Devon Clement: Yeah. Yeah, it's crazy. A friend of mine who works out in L.A., she's worked for tons of celebrities and things like that. And there was a very well-known billionaire who wanted to hire her as the relief person for one of their babies and refused to pay for her travel from L.A. to the Bay Area when she was going up there to work for them. So she did not, she declined the job. That's just

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such a weird line to draw in the sand. Like why are you interviewing candidates that aren't local if you're not like willing to transport them, you know. Meanwhile, your PJ is probably going back and forth every week and...

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah. Well, some of those finer, I mean, that's a much bigger example, but some of those finer details too are where I see parents kind of start to overthink or overcomplicate things at the end of their search when they are trying to make a contract or kind of decide with the nanny how it's going to work. For example, like I know in New York, it's very common for a family to buy a metro pass or whatever they're called now for nannies. And like one out of every 20 families is like, well my nanny would have that pass anyways, so why do I have to pay for it? It's like, it's a hundred dollars a month. Like is it a problem? Like instead of paying an extra a hundred dollars a month, do you want to go meet eight other nannies who might want to work for your family and then have this fight again in six weeks? Like I don't know.

Or it's very common for families to have an open kitchen policy and say, hey, while you're here at our house, you know, eat whatever snacks we have around, you know, or like, I put a note on this ribeye, I'm grilling it tonight, like don't eat that. You know, but families are, you know, sometimes families are concerned like, well, like I don't, I don't want them to do that. I want them to bring their own snacks. It's like, okay, cool, they're getting to your house at 8:00 a.m. So like, they're working at your house for 10 hours a day and instead of eating the snacks that are already there, they should like place an Instacart order, but not for your house because you don't want anyone to know where you live.

But so like they should be like at 9 p.m. then like going to Target or wherever to go buy snacks. And then they should be like taking the train the next day with a grocery bag of their snacks. And then they're eating their snacks, but of course your kids are going to want some of the snacks, but those are like the nanny's snacks that they bought with their own money. Like it's the little stuff that people get worried about that at the end of the day doesn't matter at all. And then also you end up starting an employment relationship with this feeling of nickeling and diming from both sides of it that's just not, like it doesn't usually end very well.

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Devon Clement: And you see that in the in some of the parent groups too. Like, my nanny's eating my yogurts. What should I fire her? Like, no, you should buy more yogurts. Ask her what flavor she likes. Like, I don't know. I think it's just such an important relationship. And like, yes, they're your employee. You're allowed to dictate certain things about how they do things, but you got to, you have to treat them well because they're around your kids all day and they're part of your family. And if you're working from home, you're interacting with them a lot and stuff like that.

Shenandoah Davis: A thousand percent.

Devon Clement: Yeah, pick your battles.

Shenandoah Davis: And pick only a few. Pick a few battles.

Devon Clement: Yeah, just a couple. Not that many. And like, it I will never forget one of my friends' parents had one of those books, like, that like everybody had in like the 80s and 90s. It was like one of those little life tips books. I forget what it was called, but I was just flipping through it at their house and it was when I was like a preteen and I think I had already started like babysitting and stuff. And one of the tips was always overpay good babysitters. And I was like, yeah, that is a good tip. Like because you want that babysitter to prioritize, you know, your family and your needs. So if you're paying them a little more, treating them a little better, or keeping food in the house that they like, they're going to be more available to you or whatever. It's not just about full-time nannies, it's about everybody that's working with you. And when you have kids, it's a lot of people.

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, absolutely. I remember, I have not been a babysitter or a nanny for many, many years at this point, but even like 10 years ago, you know, when I had a full-time job, you know, I was working in a corporate gig. There was one family that I kept babysitting for occasionally and I always said yes because the mom always made sure there was a frozen Beecher's mac and cheese in the freezer. And she would get it for me. You know, and it was like, dang, that's like \$13 at Whole Foods. And she always was like, here's your mac

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and cheese. Like, have such a fun night, you know, but that always I was like, yeah, that's the family that I'm going to say yes to every single time. Easy.

Devon Clement: I love it. Exactly. Right?

Shenandoah Davis: Not the one who's like, bring your own snacks.

Devon Clement: Oh my God. And I'm bad at that. Like, I don't, I'm not a lunch packer. I've never have been. I like bought lunch at school. So I'm like, I'll eat whatever you have if you will let me. That's why, you know, when you do like an overnight job and the people, it's not their first baby and they've like a four-year-old and there's like always cheese sticks. I'm like, yes. Cheese sticks and a fruit leather and I'm set.

Well, it was so great to talk to you. Thank you so much. Where can people find you online if they want to know more or this website that has all these resources?

Shenandoah Davis: Yeah, absolutely. So we are Adventure Nannies. And so adventurenannies.com or on Instagram or Facebook or LinkedIn or Blue Sky. I think those are those are the top four these days.

Devon Clement: At Adventure Nannies. I love it.

Shenandoah Davis: At Adventure Nannies.

Devon Clement: Thank you so much for joining us. It was great to see you and uh, try to stay cool. It's actually the heat wave has broken here finally. So hopefully it's coming your way soon.

Shenandoah Davis: There was just a huge crash of thunder outside, so I think it's about to break here too.

Devon Clement: Oh, there you go. Clear out that humidity. I love it. Of course, we're like going to the beach for the weekend and it's going to be, you know, highs in the 70s, but that's fine. Whatever. Well, thank you so much.

Ep #67: How to Hire a Nanny Without Losing Your Mind with Shenandoah Davis

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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.