

## Ep #70: Sleep Training: Separating Fact from Fiction and Why You Can Start Now



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Devon Clement**

## Ep #70: Sleep Training: Separating Fact from Fiction and Why You Can Start Now

Are you confused about when to sleep train your baby? When is it okay? When will they respond best to it? When should we do it? When can we finally get some sleep again? Stay tuned. I'm going to tell you exactly what to do and when.

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 the *Parenthood Prep* podcast. We are in full Burning Man prep mode. We decided to go again this year because we are apparently gluttons for punishment. I guess this is how people feel when they decide to have another baby after they didn't think they were going to. They're like, "Wow, why are we doing this again?" But we know it's going to be worth it and it's going to be a lot of fun.

If you want to hear more about Burning Man, you can listen to my past episode on how going to Burning Man was a lot like having a baby, or vice versa. I think it's pretty entertaining and gives you a really good insight into both of those things. So, we are packing and buying supplies and all that good stuff, getting our outfits together, which is of course the most important part, just like when you have a new baby, right?

So, I had a call with someone yesterday that we're going to do some sleep training for, and we talked a lot about when is the right time to sleep train. How do you know when your baby is ready? What is like the recommendation? What is the, when is the right time to sleep train? And this is a question I get a lot. Or people will say, like they know, they're becoming a parent or they're a brand new parent and they're like, "Well, I know you can't really sleep train until they're 4 months or 6 months or this or that." And that is false. That is just false.

## **Ep #70: Sleep Training: Separating Fact from Fiction and Why You Can Start Now**

So first of all, what exactly is sleep training? It's so broad. It's such a broad term and there's so many things that are part of it that you can't even identify like when is the age to sleep train until you define what sleep training exactly is. And it does have a lot of component parts. Just like learning to read. Like when I became a teacher, we learned a lot about how kids learn to read. And it's not just understanding, recognizing letters, identifying letter sounds and being able to put them together into words, along with learning sight words and this and that. It's also learning what reading even means. It's learning to move from left to right across the page.

They have to learn a skill that's called how to use a book, like how to even know that you open the book, which way is right side up and which way does the book open and all that kind of stuff. So there's all these skills that are a part of it, the same way there's all these skills that are part of sleep training. So weaning, which means taking less food overnight, not eating during the night, maybe going down to one feed overnight, going down to zero feeds, even just doing a longer stretch between feeds is all part of night weaning.

Learning how to fall asleep on your own with minimal support and then learning how to fall asleep on your own with no support. Learning how to get comfortable once you learn how to put yourself to sleep, learning how to go back to sleep if you wake up during the night. Like, we all wake up during the night. It happens. It's a normal thing. And it's funny to me that some people that are against sleep training say, "Well, it's not natural to sleep all through the night." I know that. I agree that would be weird. What we want is for the babies when they wake up or when they go into a lighter sleep cycle, to just be able to go back to sleep and go back into a deeper sleep without needing to cause a big ruckus and get you to come in there and put them back to sleep. Nobody likes that. The adults don't like that and the kids don't like that, even if it seems like they do. Once they know the alternative, they're like, "This is so much better."

So there's all these different parts, and these parts all happen on a spectrum. It's not like there's one thing that's called sleep training that you do one time and that's it, and it's done and never again. So what I say is you can always do

## **Ep #70: Sleep Training: Separating Fact from Fiction and Why You Can Start Now**

something. In the very, very, very beginning, like first 2 weeks, all you're doing is getting your baby as much sleep as possible to prep them for the next stage. You're feeding them, you're tanking them up, you're getting their weight back up to birth weight and beyond birth weight. That's your job. That's what you're doing to set your baby up for success at that point. You can always do something.

But then once they hit that mark where the pediatrician says you don't have to keep waking them up every 3 hours or every two and a half hours or whatever to feed them, they can go a longer stretch between feeds, then you can start slowly extending those periods between the feeds overnight and getting them sleeping longer and longer stretches, which is part of sleep training. So if you said like, "I'm sleep training my 3-week-old," people would freak out. They would think you were throwing the baby in the crib and shutting the door and not going in until morning and depriving them of food overnight. But that's not actually the case. You are sleep training them incrementally by getting them sleeping longer in between their feeds so that they're not waking up as frequently to eat.

You're getting them to take larger feeds so that they can have a full tummy for longer and be able to sleep longer. So yes, in that sense, you are sleep training your 3-week-old, and I love it. Okay?

What else? Putting your baby down awake. I will do this with a tiny newborn. If they're awake and they're fed and they're changed and they're swaddled and everything else is good, and they're pretty calm. Yes, it is lovely to rock your baby to sleep, to let them fall asleep on your chest, to hold them while you're sleeping. Absolutely do that. It's the loveliest thing in the world. But sometimes, especially in the middle of the night, you don't have to do that. So your baby's awake, they're calm, all their needs have been met. Lay them down in the bassinet or the crib.

See what happens. Honestly, a lot of the time, they just drift off to sleep. And you're like, "Oh, that was easy." You know, instead of you saying, "Oh, let me get you to sleep. I have to rock you, I have to bounce you, I have to walk around, I have to pat you." Don't do that. Just put them down and see what happens. And

## **Ep #70: Sleep Training: Separating Fact from Fiction and Why You Can Start Now**

then you're sleep training them to start learning how to fall asleep on their own and that they can do it, and you're encouraging that behavior. You're encouraging them to be able to fall asleep on their own without a lot of assistance from you.

You know, maybe they have the bassinet or maybe they don't, but you're giving them that opportunity to exercise a skill that they are learning or that really they have naturally because you know what? When they're in someone's tummy and you're pregnant, you're not like patting them and shushing them and like rocking them to sleep. I mean, maybe if they're super active, you're bouncing around a little bit or rubbing your hand on your belly or whatever, but you're not putting your baby to sleep or waking your baby up or doing any of those things on purpose when they're in the womb.

So they have that skill, they have that ability to fall asleep on their own, and we just want to keep encouraging that. So even when they're teeny tiny newborns, you can sleep train them. And I know that's a controversial take, but I'm going to keep saying it. There's, you know, God, there's so much like anti-sleep training rhetoric that is just factually incorrect and it makes me crazy. People are allowed to have different opinions about what to do and when to do it. But when you say stuff that's just scientifically wrong, it drives me crazy.

So a lot of articles that are like, "You shouldn't sleep train your baby," or, "you shouldn't let your baby cry it out," shows a tiny newborn screaming. And no, do not let your tiny newborn scream in the interest of sleep training. Absolutely, you can let them scream. It will not hurt them if you need a break or you need a minute or your other kid fell and hurt themselves and you need to pay attention to them and the baby's screaming. They will be fine, they will live. If you're driving in the car and they hate the car seat and they're screaming in the car seat, don't take them out of the car seat while you're driving just to get them to calm down. But also don't let them scream to put themselves to sleep. And I don't think anyone would recommend that you do that.

## **Ep #70: Sleep Training: Separating Fact from Fiction and Why You Can Start Now**

You can start letting them cry a little more, a little more as they get older. They can handle that part of things because their crying is less about need at that point and it's more about want, it's more about a break in routine, this and that. And that's really up to you. I don't have a time frame or a weight or anything to tell people when it's okay and how much your baby can cry. That's really up to you. There's some babies that are just screamers from day one and they're going to cry whether you're holding them, rocking them, feeding them, anything under the sun, and that's okay. That doesn't mean that they're going to be traumatized.

But we are talking about the functional elements of sleep training, which are night weaning, which means getting them eating less food overnight, and being able to put themselves to sleep. Those elements are going to come together into a sleep-trained baby at some point.

And I think the reason that a lot of people think that a marker for the time that you can sleep train is like 3 months or 4 months. 4 months is a big one that people like to say. And I'll tell you, I love sleep training a 4-month-old. I think they take to it really well, like between 4 and 7 months. I think that it's quite easy to sleep train them at that point.

So if you're going to do something a little more proactive, like letting them put themselves to sleep, the figure it out method that I talk about, that kind of stuff, 4 or 5 months is a great time to start that, but you can also do it at 3 months. We've had parents who are suffering and struggling and their baby's not sleeping at all at like 8 or 9 weeks and we've sleep trained them and they have been so successful.

But I think a lot of the reason that people will say 4 months is because that is when roughly most babies size-wise can really comfortably take enough during the day that they can go all night without a feed and that they can go through the night without a feed. We use 12 pounds as a little bit of a guideline for that, and a lot of times babies are 12 pounds by about the 12-week, 3-month mark. So you can certainly do it sooner. 4 months, you've hit that brain change that leads



## **Ep #70: Sleep Training: Separating Fact from Fiction and Why You Can Start Now**

to the quote-unquote 4-month sleep regression, where their brains are just handling sleep differently.

People ask, should we bother sleep training before the 4-month sleep regression? Is that just going to set everything back? And I say, absolutely yes, because they're going to learn skills that are going to help you get through that regression really quickly and easily. And I have another whole episode about the 4-month sleep regression, but basically what happens is it starts around 3, three and a half months and it just means that their brains are changing the way that they handle sleep.

And at the same time, they're becoming more alert and engaged and active. So they maybe were previously sleeping really well. Maybe you had them down to one feed overnight or they were night weaned fully, and then suddenly they start waking up. And you go in their room and you're like, "Wait, what's going on? Why are you awake?" And then the baby thinks, "Oh great, party time. Oh, you're going to feed me? That sounds awesome." And then everybody gets into this new routine and new habits of now we're bringing back night feeds, now we're bringing back nighttime party time. And that's just not what we're going for.

Yeah, so listen to that episode. But basically, in those first few weeks, in those first few months, there is always something you can do. So you can slowly start easing your baby off of those night feeds. You can start the practice of putting the baby down awake and seeing what happens. Will they fall asleep on their own? You can try soothing them in different ways. Like if they're always falling asleep feeding on the bottle or nursing, you can try even just like rocking your baby instead of letting them fall asleep feeding. Those things are all sleep training. They are. So, at what point is it possible to sleep train? Honestly, the very beginning, like the first few weeks. It's possible to always do something. It is always possible to do something.

So, when you start thinking about, I want my baby sleeping better, but they're too young to sleep train or this or that, think about what you can do right now to just make things a little easier, to maybe lay the groundwork for the next stages.

## Ep #70: Sleep Training: Separating Fact from Fiction and Why You Can Start Now

And if your baby's a little older, like 4 to 6 months, and you don't have any growth issues and the pediatrician isn't concerned, you always want to get the okay from the pediatrician, especially if your baby has had some health issues, you can just go ahead and pick a stretch of time overnight that you're not going to feed them. And they're going to be fine.

They're going to learn that they can be hungry for a little while. They're going to learn that they can fall asleep without having food in their mouth. All of these things are very, very possible at any age. So in case you're wondering when is the right time to sleep train or when can I sleep train? When is it possible to sleep train? The answer is you can always do something.

---

To be sure you never miss an episode, be sure to follow the show in your favorite podcast app. We'd also love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Instagram @happyfamilyafter or at our website [HappyFamilyAfter.com](http://HappyFamilyAfter.com). On our website you can also leave us a voicemail with any questions or thoughts you might have, and you can roast your baby. Talk to you soon.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Parenthood Prep*. If you want to learn more about the services Devon offers, as well as access her free monthly newborn care webinars, head on over to [www.HappyFamilyAfter.com](http://www.HappyFamilyAfter.com).