

**Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom:
Helpful or Totally Outdated?**

PARENTHOOD PREP

with

Devon Clement



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom: Helpful or Totally Outdated?

Do you ever wonder about all the pearls of wisdom you get from family members or possibly complete strangers? I'm going to talk about a few of them—sleep when the baby sleeps, never wake a sleeping baby—and tell you if they're true or not. Also, share some exciting personal news. 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, hello, and welcome back to *Parenthood Prep*. It has been a minute since I recorded. I was supposed to have this episode out two weeks ago, and that did not happen. There has been a lot going on in my life lately, both good and bad. So I'm just going to give you guys a little update on what's been happening over here at Shay Devon. And the reason why I wasn't able to record is because my other beloved senior cat passed away. Her name was Tess, and we're really sad about that. She was a little sick for a while, and then she got a lot sick really quickly, and so I was just really fully focused on that for a bit.

I don't know if I talked about it, but we lost our other senior cat in October. They were both 14. I got them at the same time. So it's been a big change and a big transition. We did adopt one of our fosters that we'd had for a while, Pearl. She's wonderful, and she's young, so hopefully, we'll have her for a very long time and get to enjoy her into her old age the same way we did with Nico and Tess. So, that's that.

And then the good news and the exciting news, I don't know if you guys saw on Instagram, is that I got engaged. So that's really fun. My fiancé planned this amazing day. Our friends threw this amazing party for us after. I'll talk about it more. I could do a whole episode about it. Maybe I will, just to tell the story because it was so amazing and special and perfect, and I loved it. And I am very excited to get married.

Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom: Helpful or Totally Outdated?

Something that was interesting was that you get engaged, and you start thinking about wedding planning. And of course, I think a lot of people, especially people who are socialized as women are sort of taught to think, "Oh, your wedding is going to be the most magical day of your life." And you think about what I would want to have. We've been to a lot of weddings over the last few years. So we're like, "Would we like this? Would we like that?" But when the rubber meets the road and you're like, "Oh shit, now I have to plan a wedding," you don't really know anything. You really don't.

And in that moment, I felt so much like a first-time parent, like someone who just found out they're having a baby. They've envisioned what it would be like to have kids. Maybe they were trying to get pregnant, maybe they were trying for a while. And then suddenly, it's real and in some amount of time, you are going to have to take care of a newborn baby, and it's so much bigger and more challenging, and there's so many more decisions and stuff you didn't know about and so much more expensive than you were expecting it to be.

And so I've really been finding it interesting to be in this space of having to become an expert in something pretty quickly that I will then not really need the expertise of ever again. It's kind of weird. As a parent, you get so good at taking care of your baby for the first few months, and then they become a different person, and you never use that expertise again. So, in my field, we take it from one baby to the next, and we carry over a lot of what we've learned and really get to use that knowledge.

So actually, the very first thing I did was I started reaching out to wedding planners because I was like, I need an expert on deck. I cannot preach the gospel of hiring an expert to help you with your baby and then not be a person who hires an expert to help me with this massive project of a wedding that I am going to be throwing.

That's what's going on over here. We fell in love with a venue, so that's cool. And that, I think, will inform a lot of decisions. It's really hard to pick a date. I don't want to wait forever, and also, people who are very important to us already

Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom: Helpful or Totally Outdated?

have stuff booked, like other weddings and things like that. So we'll see when that ends up being. But I'm kind of going through that, and it's an interesting change of pace to feel like the person who doesn't know what's going on instead of working with a client and being the most knowledgeable person in the room. So more about that to come.

So those are my life updates. I hope everyone is doing well and staying warm. It has been so cold in New York, but it gives me an excuse to stay inside and catch up on some crafting and some organizing and do wedding planning stuff.

Yeah, so let's get into the topic. The topic that I want to talk about today is pearls of wisdom, right? These phrases that we hear, these pieces of advice that have been passed down for generations. Maybe you heard them from your mom or your grandma or your mother-in-law or your father, probably less so because men didn't really take a lot of responsibility for taking care of kids in the previous generations. But if your dad is giving you advice, then that's great. I love that for you. Are they true? Are they not true? Where do they come from? Should you listen or not? Are they outdated? Are they just wrong?

Certainly, there are ones that we're like, "Okay, we're not doing that anymore," like putting the baby down on their stomach. They sure do sleep better, but it's not safe. Putting whiskey on the baby's gums to help with teething. I'm sure some people still do that. Your pediatrician will tell you not to, where 50 years ago, they probably would have been all for it. I can't actually tell you if it works or not. I just think it's probably not the best idea to be giving your baby alcohol. Although I will say, there are some situations where they do that. Like if you have a bris circumcision, some of the mohels will give the baby a little bit of wine on a cloth to help with the pain. So anyway, I didn't mean to go off on a tangent about that. I don't know whether you should give your baby whiskey or not.

I do know, however, whether you should never wake a sleeping baby. That's one we always hear, right? Never wake a sleeping baby. If you actually get them down to sleep, do not wake them up. Is this a good piece of advice? I mean, I think my answer for a lot of these is going to be it depends.

Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom: Helpful or Totally Outdated?

Generally, I would say no, there's no reason to wake a baby that's asleep. You should enjoy that time where they're down, especially if they're not sleeping on you and they're sleeping independently in their own crib. But I think there are some situations where you really want to wake a sleeping baby. And one, for instance, is if it's during the day and they're taking a super long nap. I do not cap naps because of the length of time that they are. I don't care if a baby takes a three-hour nap, but if they are going so far past a feeding time that they are now doing their one long sleep stretch of the day in the daytime—and by "of the day," I mean of a 24-hour period—in the daytime, you have a baby under three months, four months, and they sleep four or five hours during the day, you're going to be up every two hours overnight feeding that baby.

Whereas if they're capable of doing a four- or five-hour stretch, let's get that stretch in the nighttime when ideally, when you would like to be sleeping. So, if it's during the day and your newborn is still asleep at the three-hour mark, I would say go ahead and wake them up and feed them. Honestly, you don't even have to wake them up. Just feed them. I have been with many a young baby where I've been like, "Okay, it's feeding time," got them up, fed them, and they go right back to sleep. That's totally fine. But don't let them go so far past their feeding time that they're skipping a feed, which they're then going to have to make up for overnight. You know, very straightforward.

Same thing, if they're sleeping, if your bedtime is seven and they're still asleep for a nap at 6:30, they're not going to wake up from that nap at 6:30 and want to go back to bed at seven. So when they're a little older, like three months, four months plus, and they need a stretch of awake time, like say 90 minutes, even an hour, you're going to want to make sure they're awake for that so that they will go down to bedtime.

So if you put your baby down for a nap at 5 p.m. and their bedtime is seven, I would wake them up at like 5:45, 6 o'clock. I would maybe not even put them down for a nap at five. I would put them down for a nap at 4:30 to 5:30 so that they have that awake time. And if they're trying to sleep until 6:30, you can let them sleep, but just know that it's very unlikely they're going to be awake for 30

Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom: Helpful or Totally Outdated?

minutes and want to go back down for their bedtime. So it's really more about schedule maintenance than saying, "Oh, if they take a three-hour nap, that's bad for some reason."

Which leads me into the next one. God, I hear this all the time. "We try to keep them up so that they'll sleep better at night." For a baby under two, this does not work. This is not a thing, especially under a year. This is not a thing. It is a thing for us. If you take a huge nap during the day, you're going to have a harder time falling asleep at night. But this is not true for babies. In fact, it's the opposite. The less they sleep, the more overtired they get, and the worse their sleep becomes.

So, you should actually get them more sleep during the day so that they will sleep better. Keeping them up is not going to help, especially the younger they are. There is no reason on earth that a month-old, three-week-old, even a six-week-old, two-month-old baby should be kept awake for longer than an hour or not even at a time. Again, making sure they're eating enough, we're not going to let them sleep five hours and skip a feed in the daytime, but we are not worried about them getting too much sleep during the day. It is not a concern.

When they get a little older, two, two and a half, three, you have your three-year-old, you probably, if you have an older child or you've heard people with older kids say this, "Oh my God, she fell asleep in the car for six minutes at 5 p.m. on the way home from daycare, and I know I'm in for it tonight." They are fueled by those tiny amounts of sleep, and they will absolutely be terrors and not want to go to bed. So when they're older kids, toddlers, preschoolers, etc., yes, don't let them sleep during the day. Keep them up so that they will sleep at night.

A common problem I see with that toddler, preschooler age range, two, two and a half, people say to me, "Oh, they get up so early in the morning. They're raring to go at 5 a.m., and then they crash, and they take this huge nap in the afternoon." And I'm like, "Okay, so they're fueling those early morning wake-ups with that big nap."

Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom: Helpful or Totally Outdated?

And that doesn't help you. I don't know what your life is like, but most adults are not able to take a three-hour nap in the middle of the afternoon, whether because your schedule doesn't allow it or because your body doesn't allow it. So when you're letting your kid make up for lost sleep by taking a monster nap, unfortunately, you have to make some choices, and you have to trade off. "Oh, but they're so tired. They need the nap." I'm like, "Yeah, they're so tired because they woke up at 5 a.m." If they were not getting to make up that lost sleep in the afternoon, they would sleep in later in the morning. Will it happen the first day? If you cut your three-year-old's three-hour afternoon nap, will they not wake up at 5 a.m. the next day? They probably still will. They'll probably be pretty tired for a couple of days. But keep not letting them do that.

I mean, same thing when they're babies. I see this, six months, seven months, whatever. They start waking up super early, and then they go down for a nap at like 7 a.m., and they pull the whole schedule up so that now suddenly they want to go to bed at five or six p.m. for the night. You just can't let them do that. So if they wake up super early and they won't go back to sleep, hold them off from that nap. But again, that's an older baby. We're not talking about newborns, young babies, where keeping them up will get them to sleep better. So no, that is terrible advice. Don't do that.

"Put the baby down drowsy but awake." This is a popular one. I think that this again is a mixed bag. I say no. I don't like it. I think it's a unicorn. It's supposed to be early sleep training, starting good sleep habits, don't get the baby fully to sleep before you put them down. That is good advice. I do not think you should be getting the baby fully to sleep, but I think that finding that magical window of drowsy leads to people putting their baby down when they are 90% asleep, sometimes fully asleep. I'll ask a parent who may be interested in sleep training or is having trouble with sleep, and they'll say, "Do you put the baby down awake?" "Oh yeah, her eyes are closed when she's nursing, but then when I put her down in the crib, she opens them and then closes them again." I'm like, "That baby is not awake. That baby is asleep."

Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom: Helpful or Totally Outdated?

So finding that magical window of just drowsy enough to fall asleep without any crying or any fussing or any noise or any activity whatsoever, you're either getting them so close to sleep that they're basically asleep, or you're trying to catch a unicorn of that perfect moment of laying down in bed. Think about when you go to bed at night. I am assuming here that you are an independent sleeper and you don't need your partner or your mother to pat you on the back or rock you to sleep until you fall asleep.

Sometimes when you get into bed, you're tired, and your head hits the pillow, and you pass out right away. Sometimes you get into bed, and you're not that tired, and you need to read or you need to listen to a hypnosis tape or you need to listen to a podcast. Notice I am not saying you need to scroll your phone because you never need to scroll your phone right before bed. I know we all do it. We're all guilty of it, but stop. Read a book, read a Kindle, listen to something relaxing.

But anyway, you don't always fall asleep right away. You don't wait until you are the perfect amount of drowsy to then get into bed and fall straight to sleep. You just get into bed, and eventually, you fall asleep. Sometimes it's right away, sometimes it's not. I would encourage you to start putting your baby down when they are more awake, quite awake, tired, ready for sleep, at the time where they should be going to sleep, but not sleepy, not like eyes closing, tired, and ready for bed. And then you put them in the bed, and you see what they do.

They might roll around, they might fuss. If they start really crying and you're not doing a sleep training and you're not letting them feel their feelings, not letting them figure it out, then fine. Respond to them, get them, pat them, offer different options. But you may find, especially when they're on the younger side, that you put down a baby that is pretty wide awake but content. Needs are met, fed, everything, especially in the middle of the night, they just fall asleep. They just fall asleep on their own, and you didn't have to rock them until their eyes were closing and try to catch this magical unicorn of drowsiness. So I would say err on the side of more awake. Don't look for drowsy because it is too difficult to find, and you end up going too far into they're asleep.

Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom: Helpful or Totally Outdated?

And then the last one is sleep when the baby sleeps. Everybody tells you to do that. Wouldn't that be a perfect world if the minute your baby fell asleep, you could just lay your head down on your bed or on the couch and take a nap for the exact length of their naps? It's impractical. You have stuff to do. I preach getting as much stuff done while your baby is awake as you can because nap time should be your break time, not your work time. But there's certain things you certainly can't do when your baby's awake that you want to do while they're napping. And also sometimes our bodies just don't wind down for sleep once we've gotten started, especially if you drink coffee or have caffeine. You are going to have a hard time falling asleep.

So when you're a brand new parent and you're up all night with the baby, and you need to get sleep, and people say, "Well, just sleep when the baby sleeps," and you want to punch them in the face, that's understandable. What I encourage in that situation is a form of sleeping when the baby sleeps, but it's not in the middle of the day. It is going back to sleep in the morning. So even if you're used to waking up at seven, having your coffee, having your shower, getting ready to go to work or whatever, now you're on parental leave. Hopefully, you have some time off of work. You don't have to be up and out the door so early. When you do that early a.m. feed, six or seven, go back to bed. Treat it like the nighttime. Don't drink your coffee. Don't even open the blinds. It is still nighttime until you have had enough sleep that you feel ready to start the day.

And you are not lazy. There is nothing wrong with you if you are not getting out of bed until 9 or 10 in the morning because you were awake a million times during the night. Don't give yourself a hard time for sleeping in when it's the best way for you to get sleep. Also, your body still has those sleep chemicals. As soon as you get up and start walking around and starting your day, your body starts producing awake chemicals, adrenaline, cortisol, that kind of stuff. At night, when you're getting ready for sleep, you're producing melatonin, you're producing these chemicals that help you stay sleepy. So if you stay sleepy, you can sleep later and take advantage of that early morning time to get some extra sleep.

Ep #84: Parenting Pearls of Wisdom: Helpful or Totally Outdated?

So never wake a sleeping baby. Not true. Sometimes you do have to wake a sleeping baby, but it's not often. Sleep when the baby sleeps, that's ridiculous. Go back to sleep in the morning. But if you're not a person who can take a nap during the day, don't try to take a nap during the day. If you are, I mean, do it. I am a person who can nap. I'm a good napper. It takes me longer to fall asleep for a nap than it does for me to go back to sleep in the morning. Put the baby down drowsy but awake. No, that's a unicorn. Put the baby down awake. See what happens. And finally, keep them up so they'll sleep better at night. No, no, no, no, no. Not until they are two and a half or three.

Have a great week. I'll talk to you soon.

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. 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.