

**Ep #85: Listener Q&A:
Baby Routines and Big Kid Night Wakings**

PARENTHOOD PREP

with

Devon Clement



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

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Today we are answering some listener questions about baby scheduling and older kids' sleep. 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.

Margaret: Hey, hey, party people. So excited to be here in Atlanta with Devon. We are recording a very exciting episode because it is direct from the DMs. We've got some Q's, so we wanted to give some A's. The first question came through our inbox on Instagram, and I don't know if you know this, but when you send DMs to that inbox, I'm the one who gets to respond to them, and I love it. So, drop me a hello, please and thank you, @HappyFamilyAfter.

So Ashley got in touch, and she had this to ask the team at HFA, specifically Devon. "I was listening to your episode on strategies for older kids with sleep issues, and I was wondering if you have any information anywhere about older kids waking in the night. The one I saw was episode 50, I think, and was mostly about bedtime and getting them to fall asleep independently. My four and six-year-olds fall asleep on their own at bedtime. Yay. But they are such light sleepers and keep coming and waking us up in the night. They even have their own rooms, too."

Thank you so much, Ashley. We are excited to answer your question here. We will also link that episode in the notes, the episode that Ashley mentioned in her question, episode 50, in case you are wondering about that. Okay, I'm going to throw to Devon, and she can get us answered.

Devon Clement: Yes, I love this question. This was in response to a post that we made about bookend scheduling, which there's also a great episode about. So, go back and listen to that if you hadn't already. But the gist of it is that when you have a baby and you're trying to establish a routine, establish a schedule, and

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start to work toward longer sleep stretches at night, you want to bookend your day. So, every morning at the same time, feed them, get the day started. Every night at the same time, feed them, put them to bed. These things should be about 12 hours apart. So 7 a.m., 7 p.m., 8 a.m., 8 p.m., whatever time you want. Obviously, there's a little bit of leeway on the timing, but I would try to keep it pretty specific, especially for the bedtime feed.

And then that's your 12 hours of daytime, and then you have your 12 hours of nighttime. And during the 12 hours of daytime, you want to make sure that they are eating enough. So, feeding at least every three hours when they're younger. Once they're four months, five months plus, taking bigger feeds, you can go to a three-and-a-half to four-hour schedule. But during the day, I would either stick to a three-hour schedule or feed on demand and just don't let them go longer than three hours.

So, when is a good time to start this schedule? Honestly, I like to start it early. Pretty much, once you get the okay from the pediatrician that you don't have to wake them up every two hours or whatever, I would start bookend scheduling. I would start establishing a routine because what that means is that when you do that bedtime feed, now you're in the night mode, you are not waking them to feed. You are not feeding them every three hours. In fact, you are trying to extend as long as possible between the feeds, especially that first stretch.

So, if they wake up at the three-hour mark and you can kind of soothe them back to sleep without feeding them, awesome. But during the day, we don't want to do that. We want to make sure that they're eating enough. So, I would start really any time. You know, the first couple weeks are chaotic, but say three-week, four-week mark, go ahead and start giving yourself a routine. Start doing a bedtime, which is just so fabulous.

It's very easy with a newborn to get in the habit of just kind of keeping them out in the living room, keeping them in your room. You're watching TV, they're there, they're feeding, they're sleeping. The day kind of looks like the night. But once you start getting into a routine where you're like, okay, now it's bedtime. We're

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changing you into your PJs. We're, you know, putting lots of diaper cream on because we're not going to be changing you as frequently once you're asleep. We're swaddling you up. We're putting you in the bedroom with the darkness and the white noise, and you're in your bassinet or whatever.

That is so freeing for the adults as well because now you're realizing that your baby is like down for bed. Of course, they're going to wake up. They're going to want to feed this and that, but you're not going to take the baby out of the bedroom at 11:00 at night and go play with them in the living room because that is not what we're doing. From 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., they're in bedtime mode. So just establishing that routine for yourself as well as for the baby, it also, I'm going to give away one of my trade secrets here that I don't tell my clients out loud, it also helps you wind down in the evening because you're dimming the lights, you're playing calming music, you're, you know, helping the baby wind down, you're lowering your voice a little bit, maybe you're turning the TV off, or you're going out of the room with the TV.

And you're just getting into this night mode, whereas before, you know, I don't know about you, I don't have a baby. Every light in our house is on at 9:00 at night. So, winding down and getting everyone into that mode, I think you can start that absolutely early. Is there too late to start? No, it's never too late to start. If you're in no routine and you're just like haphazard and all over the place, start it tonight. Start it tomorrow. Start the routine. You're going to love it. It makes everybody feel really, really good.

Margaret: Yes. I love it. Thank you, Devon. You know, Ashley, if you're listening and I hope that you are, if you want to get back in the DMs, if you want a copy of Transforming Toddlerhood, which we absolutely love, it's a little bit young for four and six, but it also is frankly good for every age, I think. I have an 11, almost 12-year-old, and I think Transforming Toddlerhood is actually pretty applicable there, too. Anyway, if you want a copy, let us know back in the DMs. I will send you one. Thank you so much for the question. We really appreciate it. If you have a question, like I said, let us know @HappyFamilyAfter. Just DM us. I will

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get in touch with Devon, and we might even make an episode about your question.

Okay, so the next one that we have was actually a comment on our Instagram post. Sue asks, "Is there a specific age you recommend starting this schedule?" The schedule that Sue is talking about is Devon's preferred schedule for pretty much everybody, and she's going to tell more about that here. So, if you have questions, you can also put them on the reels, in the posts, in the stories, do them all. We are so excited. All right, I'm going to throw to Devon so that she can talk about what ages you can start doing her preferred scheduling.

Devon Clement: This is a great question, and it is one we get a decent amount. Typically, if your kiddos are falling asleep totally independently, it's going to be quite easy to get rid of those night wakings. Simple, but not easy. Nothing about having kids is easy, right? So, I'm glad you said your kids are falling asleep independently, falling asleep on their own, but I just want to confirm what that means for me is that you are able to tuck them in, leave the room with them fully wide awake, say, "Good night, kids." They say, "Good night, Mom," and then sometime later, not like instantly, because they're probably half asleep if they're falling asleep instantly when you leave, then they're falling asleep.

If you tell me they're falling asleep on their own, but actually you're laying in bed with them and rubbing their back and patting them, and then eventually you sneak out of the bed and they go, "Good night," and then that's it, that is not falling asleep independently. So, we really want kids falling asleep independently at bedtime. And I'm just going to get out my soapbox for a second because I will go to my grave saying this, you are not being more gentle or doing your child any favors by laying in bed with them until they're asleep and then sneaking out. All you are doing in that situation is creating anxiety when they wake up and you are gone. If you sleep with a partner, like most of us do, you wake up in the middle of the night, suddenly your partner's not in bed, you're going to freak out because you are used to them being there through the night.

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Maybe they weren't in the bed with you when you fell asleep because they were still watching TV or doing work or whatever, but generally at 4 in the morning when you wake up, your partner is right there next to you and you're like, where did they go? It's weird. So for your kids, it's the same thing. When they fall asleep in the bed with you there, and then you sneak away, you are basically lying to them and you are creating this situation of anxiety that when they wake up, they want to come find you because they want to fall asleep with you, and that either means climbing into your bed or trying to get you to come back and get in the bed with them.

So, here's where I have to get a little tough love because tough love is love. It is very loving to help your kids learn how to fall asleep on their own, and it is very loving to help them go back to sleep in their beds during the night because you don't want to disrupt everybody's sleep, including theirs, when they have to come into you and get you to come back in with them or, you know, fall asleep in your bed with you. So, if your kids are falling asleep totally independently, truly, then, first of all, if they're not, you need to go back to the drawing board and do that. And you can listen to the other episode about that.

If they are truly, truly falling asleep independently and waking up in the middle of the night and coming into your room, you need to just be firm, be consistent, and don't let them get in bed with you, and don't go lay in bed with them. Now, easier said than done, right? So, you can say to them, "Go back to your room." "Well, I don't want to. I want to lay with you." That's fine. But we're not doing that. And that's where you become the robot bus driver, which I also have an episode about.

This is where you are emotionally supportive, but you are emotionally even. You're not getting all amped up and yelling at them, "Just go the fuck back to sleep!" And then you feel guilty. Then they're wound up. You're wound up. Everybody's wound up. You also don't want to go to that like sad place with them where, "Mommy is so sorry that you have to go to sleep by yourself. I feel terrible, but you know that lady on the podcast said you have to, so we have, that's what we have to do." You don't want to get into that with them either. You

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don't want to feel guilt. You don't want to feel these things. You want to just be supportive. "I know you want me to sleep with you, but you do such a great job falling asleep in your bed at the beginning of the night. I want to see you do that again. And I'm going to see you in the morning, and we're all going to wake up and have breakfast and have a nice time together."

So, in the episode about bedtime, I talk about using rewards charts, using a teaching clock, all these things, and how you can really make them work. Actually, I have a whole other episode about reward charts that you should also listen to that talks about how to utilize them effectively because a lot of people try them and say, "Oh, well, it didn't work" because they weren't using them effectively and from a place of how kids and humans, how human beings, adult or child, actually learn. So, you just really need to be consistent and just say no.

If you want to walk them back to their room, you can. Ideally, maybe not the first night, but ideally you will stop at the door. They will get themselves into the room, ideally get themselves into their bed. I don't care if they sleep on the floor. I don't care if they sleep out in the hallway outside your room. They may do that, and they may figure out pretty quickly that's uncomfortable and that they don't want to do that. But I don't care if they're doing it in the short term since it is what we want is for them to fall asleep not in the bed with you. They have a very comfortable bed down the hall. If they are choosing not to sleep there, that's their choice. That's on them. People run marathons. I don't. That's their choice. It's not my choice. So, you know, it's kind of like that.

So, you have to let go of your expectations of exactly perfection of what's going to happen. They're going to get into bed. Okay. This is the tough part. If you walk them back to their rooms, you cannot lift them into the bed, tuck them into bed, give them one last hug and kiss, or I'll just stay with you for five minutes. Nothing. You have to be all business. Now, this doesn't mean yell at them. It doesn't mean ignore them, but they will continue this repetition of this behavior if it means they're going to get more attention from you and more response from you during the night. I'm assuming that you're giving them plenty of attention and plenty of response during the day. You know?

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If you're not, or if you're not seeing them at all, then that's step one. You know, make sure that you're establishing that connection with them, giving them everything, not everything, but giving them a good amount of attention before bed and during the day. I understand sometimes it's not practical. You were just on a trip for work, or you got home from work late, or you were taking care of a - like you were doing stuff, but make sure that you're spending enough time with them. But anyway, yes, if they are putting themselves to sleep independently, they are perfectly capable of going back to sleep independently in the middle of the night.

And what I would also recommend is choosing a time, choosing a night, and saying, this is it. We are re-sleep training starting tonight. It's a weekend, it's a night where you don't have a lot of responsibilities the next day, or you and your partner can switch off on the responsibilities the next day, because it may take a while, and it's very easy to just say, "Okay, fine, we just want to get back to sleep, come in the bed with me," or "I'll go lay in your bed." And nobody would fault you or blame you for doing that. But if you don't want it to perpetuate and you don't want it to continue, you have to be able to have the stamina to stay awake at 2:00 in the morning and say, "You have to go back to your room. You have to go back to your room. You have to go back to your room."

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.