

Ep #87: Speak Second: The Parenting Trick That Changes Everything with Margaret Mason Tate



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

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Do you want to learn a cool trick to train your brain, help your kids, and make your life a lot easier? We have Margaret Mason Tate today to show you how to do just that.

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.

Hi gang, it's Margaret Mason Tate back with you for a solo episode of the *Parenthood Prep* podcast. I'm so happy to be here again. Today, we're going to talk about something that I've been doing for a long time that works to help bring both egalitarian parenting practices into your house and also to help bolster your brain health, if you can believe it. This thing is called speaking second.

Now, if you've been listening for a minute, you know that I am Appalachian. I am from Greenville, South Carolina, in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, and I find it very challenging to say things that tend to prop up like intense patriarchal values and stuff like that. So telling people who are often women or socialized as women to speak second is a little triggering to me and to a lot of people. I don't want you to hear it in that way. Let me cook, as the kids are saying these days. Let me cook.

This is the suggestion that I'm making. Speak second is an imperative to not be the first person to respond in a room full of adults when your child expresses a need, a desire, asks a question, etc. So, let's say a very common occurrence would be you and your partner are in a room together, and you are trying to shift from being what we're calling default parent. If your kid comes in and asks you where their socks are, you are not the only qualified person to answer that question in that room. And so my suggestion and my idea, the thing that I do, is speak second. Be the second person to respond. Let somebody else step in and answer that question.

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But also, it gives kids an opportunity to do the thing that happened to me a million times, and I bet it happened to you too. When you have a question in school and you go up to the teacher's desk to ask the question, and by the time you get up there, you've answered your own question. Your brain has worked it out. You get up there and you go, "Never mind." And then you go and sit back down, and you answer the question on your test or your quiz or whatever.

Kids learn so much from that, and they can't do that if your response is immediate. They can't have any type of lingering refresher understanding if there's no silence to be found in that. So, waiting a beat, even if you're the only adult in the room, waiting a beat before responding can help them answer their own questions, which is not only empowering, but it improves concentration.

I have a book that I absolutely love called Buddha's Brain, and it is the practical neuroscience of happiness, love, and wisdom. This is by MDs and PhDs, and I adore it. I'd like to share with you that concentration is something that can be improved and built over time. This is almost unfailingly true with human beings, and concentration occurs in five facets or factors. The very first one is applied attention. They go applied attention, sustained attention, rapture, joy, and singleness of mind.

Even if we're just working on that top one, applied attention, having the pause and allowing their brains to figure things out on their own terms without your input is so invaluable to their sense of independence and to their curiosity later on. It's really very cool to watch super curious kids. My kid is 11 now, almost 12, and I've been doing this for a hot minute. As a single parent, it can be challenging to build a community that you trust and that you like and that your values align with. And so any chance I get when I'm around other adults, when my child says something into a room of us, I love taking an opportunity to not be the one to respond. It's like a little vacation.

And Devon and I were talking about this recently, talking about there's a little vacation that you get when you close your child's car door and walk around to your car door to get in and drive. There's a tiny little vacation there. And I

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genuinely do view it as a little pause paradise that I get to just be in and then experience other people responding to my kid, seeing them build relationships and expand that community. It's really cool.

The way that this is helping with egalitarian parenting is probably why I was asked by Devon to do this particular episode. People who are socialized as women in my experience, both socially and professionally as a coach, is that we tend to jump in to solve problems, to meet needs, to anticipate needs that aren't even stated. How often are we filling in the blanks for our children when realistically it would behoove them to actually fully express the need? A lot of times we're answering for our kids when they, I hate "use your words." It's an overplayed phrase. But having someone fully ask for, "Yes, I would like apple juice, please," rather than stepping in and saying, "Oh, he wants apple juice."

Let people express themselves. It's really lovely to be able to do that and to be able to allow them to do that. So much of this comes from a tendency to want to be good and to put out any perceived fire. And oftentimes we allow any need that anybody has anywhere to be a fire, and they're not. So, speak second is going to help realign your understanding of other people's needs, of other people's senses of urgency that might not necessarily be yours to borrow.

Speak second is a little bit of a precursor. I will say it's a little tiny bit of an Easter egg, a spoiler. I don't really know which. But Devon and I are creating this solution to never having any time and nobody ever helping you. And we are together right now in Atlanta as we're creating that, and I'm really excited. But if this resonates with you, if speak second lights something up in your brain, ooh, are we speaking to you, are we creating this solution for you. You are exactly who we want to be hearing from.

So, if that's you, we would love to hear from you at @happyfamilyafter on Instagram. And I don't know if you know this, but when you do send messages to that inbox, I'm the one who responds. So I would love to hear from you, bestie, especially if this is scratching an itch for you, if speak second makes you go, "Ooh, that seems like something that I could actually do. And she's saying

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that it's good for my brain and my kid's brain. Hmm, sounds good." Yeah, we're talking to you.

All right, I'm going to hop off of here and go do more of that creating like I was saying, but I am really excited to be speaking with you more over the next several weeks. All right, have a good one, and we'll look forward to seeing you around the net. Bye-bye.

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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.