

Ep #96: Parent Like You're Divorced



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

Ep #96: Parent Like You're Divorced

Devon Clement: Today we're going to take a few lessons from divorced couples and find out how we can make our married or partnered lives that much easier.

Welcome to *Parenthood Prep*, the only show that helps sleep-deprived parents and overwhelmed parents-to-be to 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 back to the *Parenthood Prep* podcast. Guess who's back with us? Our favorite, I mean, she's really just the part-time co-host at this point. Miss Margaret Mason Tate.

Margaret Mason Tate: Hi.

Devon Clement: We were just talking before we got on, before we started recording, about a video about how New Jersey and South Carolina are spiritual sisters. And before you're like, wait, what are you talking about? Big hair, shore culture, and as we've added, a notable accent that people try to imitate and do a bad job.

Margaret Mason Tate: Correct.

Devon Clement: So, this is where our energy is today.

Margaret Mason Tate: We always should have expected our paths to cross. We are star-crossed lovers, Annie, you and me.

Devon Clement: We are. I mean, the apple and the peach and the South Carolina of it all.

Margaret Mason Tate: Here we go.

Devon Clement: So what are we talking about today, Margaret?

Margaret Mason Tate: We, it's interesting that we talk about our star-crossed love affair because we all know that those typically go south. And so what they

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often end in is divorce. And we, because I am divorced, we have talked about this a lot. But...

Devon Clement: We have and you know what, we have other divorced friends. I have other divorced friends. I have clients who've gotten divorced.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Devon Clement: And something that I have realized, because this episode is for you if you are not divorced. This is not an episode about divorce. Believe it or not. We are going to talk a lot about divorce, but it is not about being divorced. It is about the way that getting divorced changes your parenting relationship dynamic, changes the way you manage your family's life, and there are lessons there that you can bring into your partnered or married parenting that will dramatically improve it.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, when you said, you said once in a conversation, I think people should, I think everybody should parent like they're divorced. And let me tell you, I'm pretty sure we were at the crab place at the Juicy Crab here in Atlanta, Georgia. And I think we might have gotten a shitty look because that sounds, that sounds kind of nuts when you're on the surface of it, but we don't do surface level around here, partner.

Devon Clement: Correct.

Margaret Mason Tate: We're going to do a deep dive about what it would look like to parent your kids in a partnership as if you were divorced. Devon, let's start with who is the responsible parent 100% of the time. How do we fix it? What do we do?

Devon Clement: This is the biggest thing that I have observed from my divorced parents, from my divorced friends, when you split up and the other parent is forced to be 100% responsible for the children on their custody time, or as I said yesterday we were talking about this, when they are in custody.

Margaret Mason Tate: When they're in custody.

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Devon Clement: When they're in custody. They have to step up. They have to step up to the plate and figure out what to feed these kids. And they have to do their homework with them and take them to their activities. And the other parent who is typically the default parent doing things 100% of the time, let's just say the mom because, you know what, a lot of the time that's the case. As we talk about on this podcast, we are gender neutral, gender affirming, but there are things, ways that female, children identified female at birth, people are raised in this society that makes a difference when you are an adult regardless of what your gender identity is or isn't.

Margaret Mason Tate: For sure.

Devon Clement: But whatever, this is true of any kind of pairing, any kind of partnership. One parent has generally been taking the lion's share of the work and then suddenly every other weekend and Wednesday afternoons, they are not involved anymore. They are not dictating everything their kid does. They are not wiping their ex-husband's ass anymore. And honestly, something that I've seen is that that other person really steps up and you're like, wow, where was this when we were married?

Margaret Mason Tate: Look at that capability.

Devon Clement: They did suddenly have this capability, but it's like where was this when we were married? They didn't have to. Because you were doing it all the time.

Margaret Mason Tate: So your suggestion, and this is like what we, like what got us started talking about this whole episode, outlining this episode is your suggestion is, don't be the responsible parent 100% of the time, even if you're doing things together.

Devon Clement: Exactly. So, does parenting like you're divorced mean that on Wednesday afternoons, you're not allowed to see your kids because the other parent is in charge? No. It just means that on those times, in those situations where the other parent is in charge, like what I am suggesting is to basically

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have a joint custody agreement with the person you are still married to and still live with and still want to spend time with.

Margaret Mason Tate: Mhm. That's exactly what we're suggesting.

Devon Clement: Say that agreement is every other weekend. This is my weekend, next weekend's your weekend. Guess what you get to do when it's not your weekend? You get to choose. You get to pick. You know, your kids are invited to Timmy's birthday party on Saturday, and it's his Saturday. He has to get Timmy a birthday present. He has to take them to the party. He has to stay with them if staying with them is the done thing. Now, or drop them off and pick them up or whatever. Do you like Timmy's parents? Is it one of those birthday parties where all the parents go and hang out? You're allowed to come too.

Margaret Mason Tate: Great.

Devon Clement: Great, enjoy. You know, when your kid gets pizza all over their shirt at Timmy's birthday party, he's the one that's got to pull out the backup shirt out of his bag and put it on. That's not on you.

Margaret Mason Tate: Mhm. Oh, no backup shirt? Oh, fucking well.

Devon Clement: Oh, well.

Margaret Mason Tate: And that is a great exercise. We're doing this really fun digital product call that's, we're teasing right now. It's called Finding Time. This is inside, this is insider information if you're listening to this. You know, we haven't gotten this detailed about this thing that we're making, but we're creating that right now, right? And one of the kind of points that we're making in a coaching perspective is how to help people be able to be at a birthday party, choosing not to be the default parent, and sitting with the emotions that that brings, the fear of judgment.

Oh my God, my kid doesn't have a clean shirt. He got pizza on his shirt and my husband didn't bring a clean shirt and I would have, and if I had just been in control, then nobody would know that my kid ever had got pizza on his shirt. We're getting you over the hump that that causes because a lot of the parenting

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like you're divorced, a lot of it can't happen because people won't let go of the image.

Devon Clement: And that's part of it. When you are actually divorced and that other parent has custody on the weekends or every other weekend or 50/50, whatever the arrangement is, you don't get to dictate what happens when they're there. As much as you might try or as much as you might want to. You are not in charge of what they're doing. And so you need to take that energy into your partnered parenting life.

Margaret Mason Tate: So, I want to, before we start talking about the hows of this, like the, the ways to actually execute it, I want you to read the quote that we were talking about from The League. And I want you to read it because I want this to piss people off so badly that it causes them to fully commit to the process that we're recommending. Okay, The League is a television show from FX.

Devon Clement: The League is a television show about dudes who play fantasy football or something. I've never actually seen it, but I have heard this quote. A girlfriend of mine actually told it to me and I was like, that is true and it's fucking annoying.

Margaret Mason Tate: That's true and fuck that.

Devon Clement: It was, I believe Nick Kroll's character, his friend said, oh, have you ever thought about divorce? And he said, nah, if Sophia and I split up, 50% of my time, I would have to spend 100% of my time with my kid. Right now, I'm rocking like 50% coverage, 30% of the time. You cannot beat those numbers.

Margaret Mason Tate: Well, we're here to teach you how to beat those fucking numbers. Okay?

Devon Clement: I mean, those are excellent numbers. And you don't want that to be the case when you're together. When my parents split up, both of my parents were working a lot. They both had like several jobs. And my father was off, he finished work on Saturday evening, you know, 5:00 p. m. or whatever, and then he was off Sunday. And so he would pick us up on Saturday evenings

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after he was done work, and he would have us all day Sunday and he would drop us back off on Sunday nights.

And during that time, I was 14, my sister was 10 and up. My mother was like, whatever is happening in that time, that's your responsibility. If they're invited to a birthday party, if they want to go to a friend's house, if they want to have a play date, if Devon is babysitting, if you're, you know, you guys have family, a family thing, whatever, or if there's nothing to do, you are responsible for keeping them alive, safe, entertained, feeding them, etc.

Did we get pizza or McDonald's every Saturday? Yes, obviously. And then he had for those 24 hours every week, that was his time that he had to manage whatever we were doing. Now, did that mean that he always did the things that we wanted to do? Like if I wanted to get driven to my friend's house 30 minutes away that was like 45 minutes from his house because he lived further away from my mom's house. No, and sometimes he said no and I was disappointed and guess what? Like that's life. Like it actually drives me a little bit crazy when people when like my female friends who are divorced or single parenting, they're like, oh, well my kids didn't want to go to their dad's, so I'm not sending them.

Like, unless that man is abusing you, like they should be going. He should be taking that responsibility. Because it's not just your own disappointment that your kid has pizza on their shirt and you didn't have a fresh shirt for them. It might also be that they don't want to go to dad's house. They don't want to leave their toys and stuff like that. But in this case, they don't have to go to dad's house. They still have their same house. You know, they may be disappointed because you're not driving them to soccer practice or you're not going to the soccer game.

Margaret Mason Tate: God forbid.

Devon Clement: Not go to the soccer game? What?

Margaret Mason Tate: Not go to a single soccer game?

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Devon Clement: You can go. You can show up there with your, a freaking Aperol Spritz in a coffee cup and, you know, cheer them on for a little while and then leave when you want to leave. I will never forget, obviously this is not a divorced parent situation, but this is just an auntie situation. I was visiting a friend and it was wintertime and she was taking her kids sledding. And I was like, oh, that would be fun. Let's go sledding.

She gets the kids all bundled up in their snow gear. Like her, it was a weekend, her husband was home too, so they didn't need my help. I put my coat on, rocked up to the snow hill, went down in a sled a couple times, cheered for the kids, took a couple pictures. Then I was like, you know what, I'm wet, I'm cold. Peaced out back to the house, took a hot shower, got my hot cocoa, was like waiting for them when they got back with everybody wet and snowy. I was just like, hi guys, how was the rest of sledding? Was it fun? Like, you don't have to take 100% responsibility 100% of the time.

Margaret Mason Tate: For sure.

Devon Clement: You know, you don't have to take 70% of the responsibility most of the, like whatever it was, 50% of the responsibility 70% of the time.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Devon Clement: You can take 50% of the responsibility 50% of the time.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yes, and it's a lot easier to do that when you practice really letting go. I know that you absolutely hated the guy Dave that I dated right after I got divorced, but he did give me one great piece of parenting advice, which is your co-parent has the right to fuck up.

Devon Clement: Ooh, I love that.

Margaret Mason Tate: They have the right to fuck their relationship up with their kids. If that's what they want to do and that's who they want to be, they have the right. Like, you don't get to interfere in that necessarily unless somebody is actively being harmed or neglected.

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Devon Clement: Well, and I think more innocently, you have the right to fuck up by forgetting the soccer cleats.

Margaret Mason Tate: Oh, for sure.

Devon Clement: They have the right to fuck up by taking them to McDonald's for dinner instead of feeding them a healthy meal.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, like they have the right to make whatever kind of parenting decisions they're going to make. And like, you know, I think, I mean, that really changed how I moved forward after that. Because, you know what? That's your right. That's your right.

Devon Clement: And it's not your responsibility to fix them. I mean, you know, this is a whole other thing, but we talk about this, like when you have that brand new baby, let them do stuff wrong.

Margaret Mason Tate: Please.

Devon Clement: Let them actually figure out how to calm the baby down when they're crying instead of you swooping in and taking the baby and calming them down. Because all that's doing is teaching them to hand the baby off whenever they're crying. And then it turns into, you know, handing the newborn off whenever they're crying, turns into handing the toddler off whenever they're annoying. And that's not what anybody wants.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, exactly. I think that like, we want to encourage people to get clear about the vision of labor. And I think that a good place to kind of dig in is like, what are two options for sharing like a weekend or a month or whatever? Like, what are two options for that that you think?

Devon Clement: Yeah, I mean, I think you can figure out what your custody arrangement is. Is it, you know, you have a traditional Monday to Friday schedule, so the weekends are a big, you know, family time. Is it one of you takes Saturday and one of you takes Sunday? Is it you each do the full weekend every other weekend?

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Margaret Mason Tate: Mhm.

Devon Clement: Is it, you know, Wednesdays are this parent and, you know, the other nights are the other, like whatever makes sense for you, but do it and stick to it. Write it down. And you know what, like people who are divorced have amicable relationships and co-parenting, like you can make switches, you know. If he has a basketball game or something that he wants to go to, okay, oh, I want to go to this basketball game on Sunday. Can we switch days this weekend? Or can we swap weekends? Not, can you take over and do more of the parenting.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Devon Clement: But can we switch? Can we switch? Or another thing that you could do is, you know, divide it by activity. Like maybe you handle all the sports and I handle all the birthday parties.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yes.

Devon Clement: And that means full responsibility. Signing them up, paying, scheduling, talking to the coach, getting the uniforms, washing the uniforms, making sure the uniforms are clean. Listen, I do the laundry in my house. I am happy to do that. If Alex needs his kickball shit washed and he wants to throw it in the hamper, I will wash it. That's fine. I am not going to go in his gym bag and dig out his nasty kickball clothes because I know he needs them clean for the next kickball game. You know?

Margaret Mason Tate: Or do the labor of, oh, the kickball game is tomorrow. Does Alex have proper attire?

Devon Clement: Alex, do you need me to wash your kickball socks for tomorrow? No. If the kickball stuff's in the hamper, I will wash it. No problem. I have no mental energy devoted to kickball at all.

Margaret Mason Tate: And sorry, I'm just really excited about it. So like not to be talking about it too much or to divulge too much, but in Finding Time, the product that we're creating, the digital product that we're creating to help people save like five hours a week.

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Devon Clement: A day, I thought.

Margaret Mason Tate: Well, you know. We talk a lot about why after a certain point, those kickball clothes are actually your kids' responsibility. Anyway, we'll get to that.

Devon Clement: But no, but, you know, stuff like communicating with the coach and things like that when you know, when they're younger. A friend of ours did this with her son's hockey. Her husband wanted him to do hockey. She was like, great, you're in charge of hockey. I'll come to the games when I want to. I'll come to the practices if I want to. I don't know what week is our week to bring snack. And guess what? I don't fucking care.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, I didn't buy it either. That kind of stuff just can't be interesting anymore. You've got to let it go. And that's part of it. So I do want to say, the only way this works is if you really, both of you really commit to making each other have full responsibility and taking that responsibility when it's your turn. So like being really good and staunch if your kid comes to you about a kickball thing and kickball's not your, or hockey or whatever, is not your zone, you have to be willing to be consistent and firm when you say, that's not my thing. Like please go ask your other parent.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Margaret Mason Tate: Not my zone, not my world.

Devon Clement: I don't know anything about it. I'm not on the email chain for soccer. I, I'm so sorry, sweetie. I actually have no idea. Let's ask your dad because he's the one that knows about the soccer stuff.

Margaret Mason Tate: Right. And if you're the parent that's in charge of that, remind your kids at the same time, like, hey, that's my thing. Don't ask mom. That's my thing or don't ask dad. That's my thing. Not that it's like you should be like micromanaging and controlling their thing, but helping to establish the routine, helping to ingrain everybody in this kind of agreement.

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Devon Clement: And you know, as simple as maybe dad's not home and you have a question about soccer that I genuinely don't know the answer to. Oh, let me, I'll text dad. I'll ask him, you know, for you.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yes.

Devon Clement: But I'm not going to go dig up that information.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, I don't know.

Devon Clement: You know, oh...

Margaret Mason Tate: I'll help you guys get together to figure that out.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Margaret Mason Tate: So I think that like also not feeling like you have to do everything that they go do. You know, sometimes we were talking about Marine and the hockey, which I think is brilliant. Marine sometimes goes to the games and sometimes she doesn't.

Devon Clement: Yeah. Hockey also is very early.

Margaret Mason Tate: So much of the ice sports have early times.

Devon Clement: I'm not, no. And, you know, it's not like you say to your kid, oh, I hate hockey. I'm never coming to your game ever because I'm a terrible parent. Like...

Margaret Mason Tate: Exactly.

Devon Clement: Wouldn't it be nice to just show up, enjoy it, chat with the other parents and then leave when you want to leave? Like take your own car.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yes.

Devon Clement: If you want to.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yes.

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Devon Clement: You know? Make other plans. So one thing we were talking about again with this, with this class was, I had a friend who got divorced. Her kids were little and her ex-husband moved to an apartment and there just wasn't really like space for the kids at the apartment. And it was just easier for him to like do his custody time at their previously shared home and that was fine. She was fine with that. But she didn't want to be there.

So she would actually come to me and stay with me in my apartment, like on those weekends when he had the kids, if she wasn't, you know, doing something else or on a date or seeing her boyfriend or whatever. And we had a great time and we really got to like rekindle our friendship without the kids there, which is so great. So, you know, having these divided either days, weekends, holidays. That was one you talked about. Tell me about that.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, so in custody agreements and parenting plans, they are explicit about who is doing what on what holiday with whom on what year. Like it is, I know three years from now where my kid will be for Christmas because of this like rock solid parenting plan.

And I think that if you can, either agree like, okay, we're going to go to your family's for every Thanksgiving and my family's for every Christmas, or we're going to switch every other year, or, you know, we're going to like kind of figuring out, making that decision and then sticking to it for the duration of your kids' childhood or as long as it makes sense is so beneficial. It takes so much bandwidth every single year to decide where you're going and how you're going to get there and all of this kind of shit. And if you could just not.

Devon Clement: And if you are in charge of the holiday and we're going to your families, you figure out what we're bringing.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Devon Clement: What do they need? Do we need to check in about stopping on the way to pick something up? Do we need to cook something to bring? You know, is it Christmas? Do we need to bring presents for your nieces and nephews? Like you are responsible for that.

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Margaret Mason Tate: That's your people.

Devon Clement: That's your people. That's your responsibility. I'm happy to be delegated to.

Margaret Mason Tate: You are a good soldier.

Devon Clement: We are good foot soldiers. You want me to, you know, get the presents for these people and these are the ideas or these are the links to their wish lists or whatever. Great. I love online shopping. I want to reduce my mental load as much as possible. Oh, we're bringing, you know, a pie. I'll pick one up at the store. You know, whatever. Or, oh, you know, hey, honey, can you be in charge of organizing the pie that we're going to bring? Great. That's easy, no problem.

The sort of not saying anything and me having to reach out to your mother to find out what needs to be brought. You know, figuring out what to bring, reaching out to all your siblings to find out what their kids want for Christmas, what matching pajamas is everybody going to get for the family photo? Like, take that off my plate. Give me specific tests the way that I would do for you.

Margaret Mason Tate: Mhm. Exactly. So making those holiday decisions and just getting that figured out. I just want to say also, not that I would know anything about this being the onliest child that exists, but like, if you have five siblings, instead of it being a shit show every single year and nobody knowing who's coming home and who's going to their in-laws and who's whatever, why not just get together the five of you and say, all right, we're doing Thanksgiving at mom's, even number years, and then the rest you can be at your house or you can be wherever or you can be whatever. And then everybody knows what to expect and how to plan and like all this kind of like it's so good to have these things kind of settled. It feels so nice.

Devon Clement: It does. And the thing is like also it doesn't necessarily have to be on the holiday. I feel like people get very precious about it. I come from an extended family with very non-traditional schedules. Firefighters, cops, hospital workers, nurses, doctors, everything under the sun.

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Margaret Mason Tate: Anybody that Bruce, if Bruce Springsteen has mentioned them or advocated for them, that's that's Devon's family. I mean, that's and that's that is the truth.

Devon Clement: Correct.

Margaret Mason Tate: That's real.

Devon Clement: Correct. Correct. His son is a firefighter in our service area and had a baby and didn't even call us. And I was so mad.

Margaret Mason Tate: Oh my god. Did we do something wrong? I mean, my god.

Devon Clement: Come on.

Margaret Mason Tate: Babe.

Devon Clement: Exactly. And so when you have these people with these different schedules and these different jobs, sometimes you're having Christmas on December 28th. Sometimes you're doing Thanksgiving on the Friday. And it's kind of nice.

Margaret Mason Tate: Mhm. And especially, it's kind of feels like everybody's getting away with a little something. Like, if we're all going to agree that every year we're going to do Black Friday instead of Thanksgiving, it's kind of like a, like, oh, we don't do that. We do something different and special.

Devon Clement: Oh yeah, we do something different. Yeah.

Margaret Mason Tate: We're very unique and very cool.

Devon Clement: One year, you know, we were doing family Thanksgiving a different night and my mom and I went out to a restaurant on Thanksgiving just the two of us. It was so chic.

Margaret Mason Tate: It's so chic. I have also been to a nice restaurant on Thanksgiving and it is like the chicest shit, that's so good.

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Devon Clement: It was amazing. It was amazing.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Devon Clement: So, you know, make these arrangements, make these agreements.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Devon Clement: And make the other person deal with it. Like, okay, maybe I got, my mom, you know, had a job where she often worked holidays, you know, extra pay, yada yada. She's like, I don't love big giant family gatherings. It's too chaotic. She's like, I'm just going to work. So even before my parents split up, my father pretty much had us every holiday to take us to whatever family event. And she would get our clothes or whatever, but he would be dressing us and getting us ready and dealing with getting the presents in the car and figuring all of that out. Like she was like, bye. Bye guys. Have a good Christmas. I'll see you later.

Margaret Mason Tate: And Joe did great and you have great memories from those holidays.

Devon Clement: He did and I did. And like, you know, was he a perfect parent on those Saturdays and Sundays when he took us? Obviously not, but who is ever? He would take us like apple picking or bowling or like all these things that we just like wouldn't otherwise have done. And honestly, it was it was nice family time with my sister that we weren't like, we were fighting some, but not as much as, you know, whatever, we weren't like there weren't friends there distracting us and everything. And I have really good memories of that time with my sister at our dad's house, like sleeping together in his pull-out sofa bed.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, that's beautiful. I absolutely love that.

Devon Clement: Alex, whose parents are still very much married and like hold hands and everything, it's so cute. I would talk about going to my dad's house and then one day he said to me, what did you do at your mom's house? I was like, normal, like, what did you do at your mom's house?

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Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Devon Clement: Normal stuff. That's your house.

Margaret Mason Tate: Homework.

Devon Clement: I did my homework.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Devon Clement: I watched TV.

Margaret Mason Tate: I painted my nails.

Devon Clement: Like, but at your dad's house, you spend the evening testing all of his giant bin of pens to see which ones work and which ones are bad. This was an ongoing project, Margaret. That man had so many pens, still to this day, so many office supplies, so many pens.

Margaret Mason Tate: He's my paternal soulmate. I really appreciate this very much.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Margaret Mason Tate: All I want to do is test the pens.

Devon Clement: He also had like three VHS movies that we would just watch over and over.

Margaret Mason Tate: That's correct. Divorced men in that era actually legally could only own three. One of them is going to be a sports montage VHS tape. It might be sports bloopers, it might be a highlight reel, it might be a specific championship game, but it's going to be one of those, and then the other two, wild card. I think they apply for a lottery and then get...

Devon Clement: My father was not a sports guy. He's a big comedy guy. So we watched a lot of Three Stooges and Marx Brothers. Yeah.

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Margaret Mason Tate: What is your favorite Marx Brothers film? I love the Marx Brothers.

Devon Clement: Oh, that's a good question. It's been a while. Duck Soup, I guess?

Margaret Mason Tate: Duck Soup is my favorite and it has my favorite, Duck Soup has my favorite line ever in any, you know, I read a lot and I have a degree in writing and I do a lot of reading and writing. And it has my favorite line about friendship ever, which is, I ain't got nothing but you can always have half.

Devon Clement: Aw.

Margaret Mason Tate: I have been saying that since I was four years old. I absolutely love Duck Soup. Everybody, your homework is to go watch Duck Soup.

Devon Clement: Go watch Duck Soup.

Margaret Mason Tate: So, to kind of tie it together, you want to have a united front approach. A great way to do that is to not be divorced, but to parent like you're divorced, which is to say, for one of you to take a certain day, week, weekend, holiday, project, etc. and completely own it.

Devon Clement: Well, and you, your custody arrangement for the summer is week on, week off. They could do that.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, you can do week on, week off. That is also a thing that you can do. And then sometimes you're stuck taking two 12-year-olds to the movies and the pool and the hither and the yon and the Zaxby's of it all. And then, you know, the other times you get to rock a week to yourself where you're just caffeinated and writing the whole time.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Margaret Mason Tate: It's a good time. So figure out the agreement, get really, really explicit about it. Consider what makes sense with regard to the division of

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labor, the division of things like holidays, the division of things like finances, if you're bold enough.

Devon Clement: That's a big one.

Margaret Mason Tate: That's a whole other podcast, but I do think it deserves just a little light touch mention of, you know...

Devon Clement: Well, one thing I want to say, I just want to throw in about that is actually not exactly in a divorced way, but you know, Alex and I are talking about having kids and having a baby, and I have a more flexible schedule than he does. And one thing I said to him right off the bat was, just because I have more downtime and more flexibility does not mean that I am going to become the 100% default parent and also still contribute 50% to our household finances or whatever percentage I'm contributing. I am essentially making him pay me to be our child's caregiver.

Margaret Mason Tate: It's aspirational and it's perfect and that's exactly how it should be. The thing is, is that I'm divorced. I could not fucking care less if my child takes music lessons. They're not that into them. Like they're not like super dedicated to them. So I'm not super dedicated to them. I don't really care if they go or not, which is to say, I'm not going to pay half of that activity fee because I don't care if they go or not.

Devon Clement: Correct. Correct. And you don't really organize them or drive them or anything.

Margaret Mason Tate: No, the summer I am, but it doesn't really matter because I, it will go back to, you know, when fall starts, it's a courtesy. I'm not doing as much driving because there's not school. It's fine for me to take them.

Devon Clement: Well, and exactly. As the foot soldier, you'll do it.

Margaret Mason Tate: But I'm not, I don't care. And so if you're the one that's super obsessed with your kid being in lacrosse or whatever, then, you know, it does not actually make a lot of sense for your partner to be paying hundreds of dollars for this thing that is your, like that's your baby, that's your thing that you

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really believe that they should be doing and need to be doing. You foot the bill for that.

Devon Clement: Exactly. So get that explicit arrangement and then stick to it. Don't let it slip. Feel free to switch, but don't just, oh, that's fine. Like you, oh, you were out late last night with the boys, you don't want to get up early with the kids today. I'll do it. No, screw him. But if he says, you know, oh, hey, so and so's birthday bachelor party, whatever is Saturday night, can we swap and so that you have the kids on Sunday? Fine.

Margaret Mason Tate: I just want to end on this. What we're suggesting sounds a little extreme, but this is the way that people train for races.

Devon Clement: Yeah.

Margaret Mason Tate: Think about that. Like if I know that every Sunday I have like my partner is going to be totally on call for all of the stuff, I can do my long runs on Sundays. I know that. I can count on that. That's important to me. It's important to my health, my wellness, everything, my spirituality, all of it. That is the way you do that is on Sunday you're totally off, but on Saturdays, that's your day, baby, and you're doing the whole thing. This is how we stop resenting our golfing husbands who are gone all day Saturday golfing. You don't have to, there's no resentment to build because you know that you're going to get your time if you're brave enough to take your turn. And the thing that I've been saying lately is take your turn with a fucking knife.

Devon Clement: Take your turn and know when your turn is going to be. Know when it's coming up. Don't sit around waiting for that magical hour where your husband is like, oh, let me take the kids to the park.

Margaret Mason Tate: Boom. Boom. This works. If you do this already, we want to hear from you at Happy Family After on Instagram. We would really, really, really love to hear from any listener who is already parenting like this and has anything to contribute. We would love to shout you out in another podcast episode.

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Devon Clement: And I would dare say that if you parent like you're divorced now, you may be less likely to get divorced for real.

Margaret Mason Tate: This is objectively and subjectively true. I could not clap harder for this. We're literally recommending these things so that you can have a happy family after, so that you can have an eternity of bliss.

Devon Clement: Yeah, act like you're divorced now so that you don't have to get divorced later.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, baby.

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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.