

Ep #97: What 2006 Me Got Wrong About Parenting



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

Ep #97: What 2006 Me Got Wrong About Parenting

Your whole goal as a parent should not be to make your kid happy all the time because that's not a great way to parent. That's how you end up with a kid that is not self-sufficient at all and doesn't know how to handle any kind of emotion or any kind of adversity in their life.

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've been having a great summer over here. Lots of pool time, beach time, just hanging out, enjoying the weather, getting outside as much as possible. We've been sitting out in our yard a lot. I just love it. It's my favorite season and I am already sad that it is going to end, and it's barely the beginning of August. I need to really appreciate, live for the moment.

So, just thinking about that, I'm in the thick of wedding planning, which I'm sure a lot of you out there have been through. So, yeah, it's so funny because I really thought it was going to be so stressful every step of the way and I was kind of dreading it. But I have to be honest and say, I actually am really enjoying it for the most part. And the big decisions have been the easiest. Venue, I literally looked at two, and the second one, I was like, this is it. And then we looked at a third one and I was like, nope, that's the one. That's it. Like have not thought about anything else. My dress, I tried on a couple and then she came out with the one I ended up picking and I was like, that's it. That's the one. So easy. All the big things are booked.

We are getting so hung up on the stupidest little small decisions. We're sending out save the dates and we're agonizing over which ones to send and what pictures to put on them and the wedding website. All the template sites are so stupid and boring, but how can we make it our own? Do we want to do a full custom? And then that's silly because if I'm going to spend extra money on

Ep #97: What 2006 Me Got Wrong About Parenting

something, I want to spend it on something that's going to really enhance the experience for our guests, like getting the raw bar or something like that, not something that nobody really even cares about because people just go to the website to RSVP and get the information. And no one is going to agonize over it as much as I am. So I need to keep reminding myself of that.

So that's how that's going. I will, of course, keep everyone posted as we go along and stay tuned for lots of wedding content that you will be so sick of come next June. So, that's where we are with that.

I had an idea a while ago for a series of episodes that I wanted to do that are about how things that I would judge myself for. Things that in the past, if I had seen myself doing certain things, that I would have judged myself for. And I had this moment in 2015 when I was with a client. Well, let's backtrack. Let's backtrack and then we'll get to the 2015 moment.

Let's get in the way back machine. 20 years ago to the ripe old year of 2006. Do you remember that? Good lord. So long ago. What sweet summer children we were then.

I was in my 20s and I was a teacher. And what I really wanted more than anything else was to get married and have a baby and be a mom and have a million kids and just take care of my kids. A girlfriend of mine had a baby in college and so, you know, I was pretty involved with that. I was obviously teaching, I was babysitting and nannying a lot. I had a boyfriend through college that I thought I was going to marry. Thank God I didn't. Hello, bullet dodged. But you have this mentality that, okay, I'm going to come out of college, I'm going to get married, and I'm going to start having babies. And I love babies, in case that was unclear. So for me, it was like, I want to be around babies all the time. How am I going to do that? I should have lots of them.

So anyway, here I am living in this world where I'm surrounded by babies and kids all the time. And I got really into it, like birth and pregnancy and breastfeeding and everything. Knitting, cloth diapers. I mean, I was already knitting. I had been knitting for years, but getting into knitting baby stuff and cloth diaper covers and all that stuff.

Ep #97: What 2006 Me Got Wrong About Parenting

And I got really involved in a message board about parenting, and this message board, I love message boards. I always have. Facebook groups were so amazing for a while, and now that's not really a thing anymore. So I miss the days of message boards. I know Reddit exists, but I just feel kind of, ugh, what am I going to find there, you know?

Anyway, this was a message board for a magazine, and it was all about attachment parenting and gentle parenting and some really pretty fringe beliefs, but a lot of beliefs that also were and still are very legit. Like having a home birth if you have a low risk pregnancy, although they wanted people to have home births regardless of the level of risk. Breastfeeding as long as you want to. And this was in the days when most people didn't breastfeed and there was a lot of pressure to not breastfeed and not a lot of support for breastfeeding. So encouraging that, encouraging a gentle approach to discipline, so not hitting your kids or yelling at your kids.

And again, the pendulum swung way too far on a lot of these issues, but it was something that I was very heavily invested in. And through this message board, I became friends with this group of women and we spun off and had our own little message board group. And I am still very good friends with some of them to this day, and they're all wonderful.

But a lot of those beliefs that I had at that time based on what I was reading and what I was seeing and what people were posting about are very different from my beliefs now. And these beliefs have changed a lot over the years because I have seen in person with my own eyes many, many, many, many, many times how there's no one right way to do anything really. And that sometimes when you get very dogmatic about something and very attached to a certain belief, it can be really damaging to you and your baby and to that relationship and to everything else.

So a great example of this, and I'll do a whole episode about this, but a great example is sleep training. I used to be anti-sleep training. It's mean, it's traumatic, it's horrible. It's abusive. It's the worst thing you could possibly do. You should just co-sleep with your baby attached to your boob all night. And it's

Ep #97: What 2006 Me Got Wrong About Parenting

perfectly safe. Forget what the American Academy of Pediatrics says. It's totally fine to have a baby in an adult bed surrounded by blankets and pillows and cozy mattress covers and whatever else. Just don't listen to the experts, listen to the parents who are telling you that this is perfectly safe.

If that me back then knew that I was now not only okay with sleep training, but an actual advocate for it, that most of my job is around sleep training babies. And I mean, listen, I'm going to tell you guys, if you've listened to me talk about sleep training, this is, they're crying. They're crying. They just are because it's how they express feelings and we want to allow them to have their feelings when we make changes in their life. And your whole goal as a parent should not be to make your kid happy all the time because that's not a great way to parent. That's how you end up with a kid that is not self-sufficient at all and doesn't know how to handle any kind of emotion or any kind of adversity in their life. And that's ridiculous.

So I had all these beliefs and sometimes I think back on that person who was very well-meaning but was getting fed a lot of information not from the family she was actually working with, but from people she was talking to on the internet, articles she was reading in magazines, articles she was reading on the internet, and forming a lot of beliefs that were really not based in any kind of reality.

And something I will say is that a lot of these women and people on this site were so incredibly sleep deprived that it was like downright dangerous. Some of the stories that they told while patting themselves on the back for being such good mothers and such good parents that they hardly slept at all to the point that some of them were physically ill, physically suffering, certainly not safe behind the wheel of a car, and yet were driving all day, every day, all so that their kid did not have to cry or be unhappy for 30 minutes a night for three nights. And I just, I just look back on that. And even at that time, some of these good, close, dear friends that I loved and saw just being so miserable. When I look back at that time and I'm like, okay, I didn't know what the answer was because it wasn't sleep training, but something definitely had to change with these people.

Ep #97: What 2006 Me Got Wrong About Parenting

So, yeah, I was super anti-sleep training and now I'm super pro-sleep training and that's all there is to it. It is a wonderful gift to give a baby, to give a family, to give your spouse, to give yourself, because sleep is so critically important. And your baby can handle a little bit of adversity. Your baby can handle having a tough time. Your baby can handle learning a new skill in an environment where they have already been so supported and so loved and so cared for that they know that you are there supporting them and cheering them on and feeling confident in their abilities. And the more I see sleep-trained kids thriving, the more clear it is to me that there is absolutely nothing wrong with doing what you need to do to get everyone in your family more sleep. That just, there is nothing wrong with that and it is incredible and wonderful and it is a gift.

And frankly, in the interim, I explored a lot of and experimented with a lot of "quote-unquote gentle" sleep training approaches. And I put it in air quotes because they're not gentle. They're not, because what happens is that your baby still cries. Maybe they cry less because you're going in faster and you're picking them up and you're saving them, or maybe they cry with you sitting there next to them night after night, patting them or trying to take steps backward in, now I'm going to rock the baby 'til they're almost asleep and put them down. Now I'm going to rock them until they're half asleep and put them.

Every step of the way, you're torturing yourself, you're torturing your baby, and they're still crying. They're just crying a lot more and a lot longer because they're confused and you're introducing a new variable every night or every few nights. And it's just, I know in the moment it feels like it's more gentle because they're not crying alone in their crib, but you have to trust your baby's skills and abilities and you have to trust your love for them and your confidence in them and that they can feel that and that they can believe that because there's a lot of, I won't even call them studies, there's a lot of reports out there that people love to trot out and say, oh, well, this has proved that sleep training is damaging.

And what a lot of these reports are either very flawed studies done on a small sample size that draw pretty outlandish conclusions, like that Australian study that everybody loves to talk about how the baby's still had cortisol even when they were quiet. I have a lot of issues with that. There's a million other factors

Ep #97: What 2006 Me Got Wrong About Parenting

going on and it was a very small sample size and the parents didn't even put the baby to bed. A total stranger put the baby down in the crib. So yeah, my cortisol would be pretty elevated too.

And then another one that people love to talk about is studies done on neglect, kids who are actually neglected. And I don't mean left in the crib for 45 minutes to cry until they fell asleep. I mean kids in an orphanage, kids who were one of dozens of kids being cared for by a small number of staff members, kids who from birth were not loved and cared for by a loving parent or caregiver or grandparent or whatever. And that is just not the case with sleep training. That's not what's happening with your baby.

So 2006 me would judge me today so hard for being a sleep trainer, but I got to say, I am thrilled with the direction my life has gone and the amount of families that I have been able to give the gift of sleep to. So, that's how I changed about sleep training, and maybe you have too, or maybe you can too, if you're feeling weird about it. Reach out to me, tell me where your concerns are, tell me what you're thinking about. I would love to hear from you.

Oh, and then the little story that I teased at the beginning of this podcast, which I said wasn't going to be about sleep training and then was, is that there was a day. So 2015, I had a client. She was a single mom by choice. She was amazing. She had her baby in the dead of winter, actually on Christmas Eve, which is also my fiance's birthday. Those poor things. Had her baby in the dead of winter and she had friends in New York, but she didn't have family close and she didn't have an amazing support system of close family and friends that could help her. So she had me and my team. And she had some complications after the birth.

So about a week after the birth, she had some complications and she had to go back into the hospital. Again, it was the dead of winter. It was freezing cold. I was there with her. She had a friend take her to the hospital, but she did not want to bring the baby, which is understandable. You don't want to bring a baby to a hospital in the dead of winter if they don't have to go, full of germs and God knows what else. And she didn't know what was going on with her and she

Ep #97: What 2006 Me Got Wrong About Parenting

wanted to know that he was safe and cared for at home with me. So she left me with the baby for about 24 hours while she went back to the hospital to have her complications dealt with. Everything worked out perfectly. She's happy and healthy. I spoke to her recently. They're doing amazing.

But I sort of very unexpectedly was thrust into being the solo caregiver for this newborn. I didn't have any belongings with me. I didn't have whatever. So she trusted me. I was like, I'm going to put him in my car. I'm going to take him back to my apartment. We're going to get my stuff. We're going to figure stuff out, whatever. And at a certain point in this process, he got hungry. And I just wanted to feed him as quickly as possible to get on with back to getting him home and getting him situated and all that. So I got out the bottle of formula and I was feeding it to him in the car. I had the car running, I had the heat on. He's in the car seat. He was a week old. I did not want to take him out of the car seat and do a whole rigmarole. I just wanted to get a little food into him so that we could finish up what we were doing and then go have a nice bottle at home and whatever.

And I just had this thought, I just had this moment of clarity where I was like, if 2006 me were walking by my car right now and they saw me feeding a newborn formula, first of all, oh my God, how dare? Feeding him formula while strapped into a car seat in the back of a car. And don't you want to love your baby? If you can't breastfeed, I guess that's understandable. Sometimes people can't, but oh, oh, you should just try, mama, because everyone can, really. Anyway, and if you're going to bottle feed, then you should do bottle nursing where you're holding and cuddling your baby every single time. Blah, blah, blah.

I needed to get this baby home. And this baby needed to eat. And it was the dead of winter and I did not want to take the baby out of the car seat and then wrestle the baby back into the car seat, et cetera, et cetera. So I fed him the bottle while he was sitting in the car seat. And he was fine. And it was fine. And everyone was fine. And you know what? Most of his feeds were breastmilk. She was nursing, she was pumping. She was in the hospital. I did not have any breast milk to feed him. I was not his mother. Every other of his feeds, I held him

Ep #97: What 2006 Me Got Wrong About Parenting

and I cuddled him and I loved him and all those wonderful things. But that particular feed, I didn't because we needed to get back home.

So that has really changed the way I think about when I feel myself getting ready to judge somebody, especially somebody that I have no idea what their circumstances are. I see them on the street and I'm like, wow, they're doing X, Y, Z. I'm like, yeah, who knows why? They have all their own reasons for that. And also, you know what? Kids are fine when they're formula fed. Kids are fine when you feed them in a car seat occasionally because you're driving somewhere and you're sitting in the back seat with them and you have to do it or for whatever reason. And it just really made me want to give everybody so much more grace.

So yeah, that's how I used to be. And are you surprised? I bet you are because now I'm like, put that little fucker in his crib and don't go in until the morning. Yeah. So anyway, have a great day and stay tuned for more things I would have judged myself for in 2006.

—

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.