Becoming a mum of 2

I think for me, what I've really enjoyed is just her little hand reaching for us a little bit more and like swiping things. And also I've seen her use her legs a bit more. So she's bringing it towards her tummy. So this time around, I've just been a bit more aware of it and just have taken it in, and so tried to provide activities based on that for her. But I guess just in terms of development, just knowing that it's going to be really good in terms of her crawling and her motor development, and then obviously with her eye-hand coordination and yeah, for the hand use later on. So, it's, yeah, very exciting to see her starting to do that a bit more.—**Marguerite**

**Intro**

 That's Marguerite, a fellow occupational therapist based in Australia and mum to two-and-a-half-year-old Genevieve and 12-week-old Hazel. She joins me this week to talk about the changes that come along with bringing a new baby home, including the sleep changes that have to come up for her toddler. We also talk about ways to link baby Hazel sleep cycles and how to manage the 17 week sleep progression that may come up. We also spend some time talking about development as Marguerite shares the way that Hazel has been working her little hands and little legs and why that's so important for her to develop. So join Marguerite and I for a candid chat about sleep milestones and activities that you can do with your own baby to encourage their development.

Welcome to Sense by Meg Faure the podcast that's brought to you by Parent Sense, the app that takes guesswork out of parenting. If you're a new parent, then you are a good company. Your host Meg Faure is a well-known OT Infant specialist and the author of eight parenting books each week. We're going to spend time with new mums and dads, just like you to chat about the week’s wins, the challenges, and the questions of the moment. Subscribe to the podcast, download the Parent Sense App and catch Meg here every week to make the most of that first year of your little one's life. And now meet your host.

**Meg:** Welcome back everybody. I'm your host Meg Faure, and as usual, it is my absolute pleasure to join you as we journey along the highs and lows of parenting with a mum. And this week, the mum that we are going to be chatting to is Marguerite. And Marguerite is an occupational therapist based in Brisbane, Australia, and her and I have been watching each other on Instagram. Her Instagram's called @mumsinspocorner and I love to see the things she's been doing with her little ones in her journey. She recently had a new newborn Hazel, her second little one, and I'm really excited to just chat to Marguerite today about the highs and lows of parenting, and also a couple of insights as an occupational therapist into her life as a new mum. So, Marguerite welcome.

**Marguerite:** Thank you so much, Meg, for having me. It's such a pleasure to be here.

**Meg:** Yeah, it is super. So I think before we kick off, wouldn't you tell us a little bit about your practice and your life before you had kiddies. What type of OT are you, what is your special interest?

**Marguerite:** So I work in a private practice in a multidisciplinary team and the practice is basically, work focusing on pediatrics for me. And yeah, I've been working there for 10 years now and just having a little break on maternity leave.

**Meg:** Okay, excellent. So 10 years working as an OT and predominantly with children. And so from there, you end up going to have your own children. So tell us about your little ones.

**Marguerite:** That's right. So I've got a toddler who is two and a half years old, her name's Genevieve, and then I've got my 12 week old little girl, Hazel as well.

**Meg:** So that's amazing. So you’re right at the rock face, that first trimester after birth?

**Marguerite:** Oh yes, very interesting times.

**Meg:** And tell us a little bit about your girls.

**Marguerite:** So little Hazel is very placid little girl it's been, I must say I've really enjoyed this time more so, I think the newborn stage, I found the adjustment to being a mom the first time, quite challenging. So she's been really lovely to just take it in a little bit more this time round, and then I've got Genevieve who's, like I said, two and a half and she is just such a joy as well, full of life and makes us laugh a lot. So I must say though, like in this time she's been so wonderful adjusting to being a sister. She absolutely adores little Hazel.

**Meg:** That's amazing. So what was your actual age gap?

**Marguerite:** So I think it's about 24 months.

**Meg:** Okay, so almost two years to the day?

**Marguerite**: Yeah. Two years of have passed.

Meg: Okay.

**Marguerite:** Yeah.

**Meg:** It's an interesting thing. You know, when I was deciding to have my babies and I have got three, you know, always that kind of conversation in your head about what's that perfect gap between, you know, little ones. And I can remember hearing that, I think it was three years, three months was the perfect gap because the little one was old enough to know it was going on and we'd recovered properly. But of course I did exactly what you'd done, which is kind of almost, I had 27 months between mine and it's probably juggling the early days, isn't it?

**Marguerite:** Oh, it absolutely is. She's been, yeah, I think it's the logistics that I'm finding a little bit tricky, like trying to put Hazel down for a nap while trying to make sure that Geneva's being occupied and she is so excited that she just wants to come in the whole time as well. So she's adjusting with that a little bit. And then I think as well, so she's been struggling a little bit with her sleep. Again, this is Genevieve, so just being able to juggle that a little bit as well has been a bit trying, but that's okay.

**Meg:** So how many times is she waking up at night now?

**Marguerite:** So it's more so that she's just starting to fight her naps. So she's fighting her naps and then also the night sleep as well. So we're just trying to work out whether we need to actually reduce the nap time.

**Meg:** Is she just having the one day nap is or she having to

**Marguerite:** Yes, she's just having the one day nap.

**Meg:** Yeah. And what time is that?

**Marguerite:** So normally I try and get her down by 11: 30, but she just sometimes doesn't want to go down and then she can be really tired and then want to fall asleep at like three by herself. And then obviously that makes it a very challenging at nighttime, but we have been trying to make sure, I tried because I listened to your other podcast with Cass and trying to put the time slot to 12 o'clock and see if we can do that. And today we just had books in her bedroom because she didn't want to go down for a sleep.

**Meg:** Which is absolutely perfect, you know, I always talk about these cusp ages. The one is at about nine months old, the other one is at 12 to 14 months and the next one is between two to four years old. And those cusp ages is when they go from having the sleep they actually need down to one less sleep. And so at this age, it's her dropping that midday sleep completely. And I always say that until they're five years old, they have to have a day rest. And often if you kind of put a pile of books on her bed, she might fall asleep, she might not, but at least she's having rest time. And then as you say, just making sure she doesn't get that 3:30 sleep because otherwise you're just never going to get it done in the evenings.

**Marguerite:** Oh, it's awful. And then sometimes it's just that she just doesn't want to go down. So it just feels like we have and had a lot of break because she'll sometimes only go down at, at 9:30, but sometimes, you know, she will fall asleep, like reading her books, which has been really good.

**Meg:** Yeah. It's a real juggle and they tend to kind of do some days on, some days off. So some days they'll do the sleep and then some days they drop it and it's just kind of a process through. But yeah, it's interesting and of course you kind of hang for those midday sleeps for her because it gives you a little bit of respite.

**Marguerite:** Oh, absolutely. I think that's been the hardest. And then I think, you know, sometimes she'll go down and I'm so tired. I just don't want go wake her up after an hour.

**Meg:** Yeah. And you have to. I know the feeling well.

**Marguerite:** Oh, so hard.

**Meg:** Are you managing to sleep when the girls sleep or you just beavering around and trying to get things done?

**Marguerite:** For day naps?

Meg: Yeah.

**Marguerite:** Well, no. In the early days it was beautiful, like when I got Genevieve down and Hazel was sleeping, I would go down for a little sleep. But at the moment that's not happening and also because a little miss Hazel is having her cat naps. It's a bit tricky for me to go down because I don't know, you know, is it going to be worth it to go down or, you know.

**Meg:** We know that very well. So tell us about Hazel. You talked about cat naps, which are 12 weeks are very common. Tell us about that.

**Marguerite:** Yeah. So she's actually doing 45 minutes to 50 minutes. I'm trying to keep the awake-windows between the 60 to 80 minutes, which has been really helpful seeing that in your app. And then, but I just find that at the moment, it seems like she takes a while to go down to get to that sleepy stage, to put her down for a nap. And then she'll only stay down for the 50 minutes. I try and wait to hear if she will link that cycle, but then sometimes like most of the time she doesn't.

**Meg:** Yeah. So it's very interesting that that kind of 45 minutes sleep cycle that you can pretty much actually set your clock by it. I mean, it's just crazy.

**Marguerite:** It's amazing.

**Meg:** And so when you talk about cat naps, you're talking about the 45 minutes. You're not talking about like a really short 15, so no, I think it's worth just chatting about that for other mom's purposes. So that 45 minutes that they do, which you're calling a cat nap is actually the whole sleep cycle of a baby of her age. So it's literally 45 minutes. They're go into a light sleep state going into a deep sleep state from their back into a light sleep state, and that's 45 minutes and then they wake themselves up. And it's very common because until usually about six weeks or a little bit earlier, they kind of do these long stretches, you know, like kind of three hours sleeps. And then we could actually get things done and have a sleep while they slept.

**Marguerite:** That’s right.

**Meg:** And then of course it all changes and they start to wake up literally straight after, you know, 45 minutes. And what a lot of moms ask me is how do we get this back to an hour and a half or two hours? Because then I can get something done. There are a couple of tips there. Well, the first one is that it'll happen naturally at about six months. And that happened naturally when they're on full solids. So they just go quite naturally into, you know, they're having full solids, they're having their protein, they're having you know, really lovey healthy fats. And then what I often say to moms is in the feed just before sleep time around midday, so let’s say they have lunch at half past 11, I would actually give a little top-up milk feed after that lunch, even though it's not necessary time for more feed because it just kind of, it makes them a little bit more drowsy because of course milk has got tryptophan which helps us to sleep better. And then they start to link their sleep cycles for one sleep of the day to make an hour and a half over midday.

But until then at this age, I mean you can try a couple of things. You can try swaddling her because then her little startle reflexes won't wake her after 45 minutes. You can try and make the room really dark so that she doesn't wake up with the light. You can definitely try white noise, which will help keep her in a deeper state. And if she does startle, it's just going in and placing your hands on her with deep pressure, I call it still-touch. And then just holding her and see if she'll resettle. And you can even try a dummy at that point where you just pop a dummy back in and see if she'll resettle. And that sometimes gets them through to do a second steep cycle to give you 90 minutes. But it often does happen that it actually just doesn't and, and that's, you know, they wake up then and you have to watch the awake times, like you say.

**Marguerite:** Yeah. And what would you say, Meg with, so she takes about 10 to 20 minutes to go down for her nap? So I'm just asking whether you think it's necessary to maybe adjust that wake window.

**Meg:** No, I would keep the awake-window. So you watching it for 60 to 80 minutes at this stage and I would keep it exactly as that. Sometimes it does take them 10 minutes, you know, it's an interesting thing that you raise because a lot of moms, a lot of us think that as soon as we put our babies down, they should just fall asleep automatically. But actually that isn't the reality for a lot of babies and it's not the realities for us either. It takes us time to fall asleep. And so that babies are just the same; they just take a little bit of time to fall asleep. It doesn't mean that you must adjust anyway awake-windows. What you do remember always that the awake-windows are taken from the time she wakes up. So whenever she wakes up from the next sleep, she will then actually be in, you know, you you'll then watch the awake window for 60 to 80 minutes.

**Marguerite:** Yes. I found the awake-windows so helpful to keep in mind because I didn't do that really with Genevieve. And I think a lot of the time she was just over tired then. Yeah. So this time it's been really helpful to keep that in mind.

**Meg:** Yeah. So the idea with the awake-windows is that if you overshoot it, so if you take her to like 120 minutes, so two hours, what you'll find is that she actually will really battle to fall asleep because she will be very alert. And that is very, very typical because they have this release of neurotransmitters, like cortisol and adrenaline and it just keeps them very wild and that's why they actually really battle to fall asleep.

**Marguerite:** Okay. That's good to keep that in mind.

**Meg:** Yeah. So tell me a little bit about, I mean, other than the, the cat naps, is there anything else that has been challenging you over this period?

**Marguerite:** I think it's more just the, the logistics of when I'm trying to put Hazel down, like I said, and then trying to make sure that Genevieve is occupied, that can be a little bit challenging for me. And then also the other thing is I'm absolutely dreading the four month regression. So I don’t know if you've got any tips for that.

**Meg:** Yeah. So that four months sleep regression is something that we really do get very anxious about because we just can't face going backwards in sleep. So before we talk about that, she's around about 12 weeks old, isn't she? Yes. So she will be, tell me how she's sleeping at the moment. What time does she go down in the evening?

**Marguerite:** At the moment, I do the 5:30 feed and then she goes down between six and seven. Sometimes she'll go down straight away. Sometimes it can take quite a while and then she will sleep till around, she'll wake after 12 at some point. I don't always know when that is, but just once and then she'll wake again around 5:30.

Meg: Wow.

**Marguerite:** And then at 5:30, she’ll kind of stay awake a little bit before I put her down again.

**Meg:** Yeah. Oh my goodness. So for 12 weeks old, she's doing absolutely textbook, which is fabulous.

**Marguerite:** Oh, I'm very proud of her.

**Meg:** Yeah, no, she's really doing well. So a couple of things, first of all, our babies who sleep as well as that from the early days actually typically can actually move through the 17 week sleep regression without too much hassle. So first of all, don't build it into something that it's not necessarily going to be.

Second thing is that, you know, I think from about four months, about 17 weeks or even a little bit before that start to listen for her before you actually respond to her. And you'll probably find somewhere between now and 17 weeks, she'll give you a night where she wakes up at kind of 10, 11, 1, 4, and you'll be like, oh my gosh, the sleep regression started. And instead of over responding, do a couple of things, first of all, lie in bed and listen to her first. And I actually used to have a little clock next to my bed that was kind of, had lights, and you could actually see the digits lit up so that I didn't have to move. And I just laid their very still and just watched it. And I would give her a good minute or two to actually see if she resettles and listen to what noise she's making, because what times happens is that she kind of makes her cry and then she's quiet and then some more crying. And then, you know, but it's kind of little spurts of crying and what happens in our psychology is we go, oh my gosh, I better get to her quickly because the quicker I get to her, the quicker she'll fall back asleep. I don't want her to wake herself up fully and we actually end up in over responding and it's particularly so for first-time moms.

Second time, we tend to have a little bit more perspective. So the first thing is listen, and really listen, do not respond to her at all if she's not distressed. So let her sort herself out if possible. But let's say she is actually distressed. So now she's started to wake up and she's crying. Then the next thing is to go to her, reposition her, which might be just re-swaddling her, putting your hands deep on her, giving her some deep touch and maybe popping the dummy back in, but just respond without feeding and without picking her up and see whether or not that works and just turning them on their side and holding them still for a while often is enough. And then see if you can push her through like that for all of the feeds until the 1:00am feed, the one after midnight, if she's really distressed and absolutely won't settle, then feed her. But again, do it in the dark, dirt is a business affair. Don't change her nappy. You don't want her to wake up fully unless it's obviously soiled. And then just put her back down swaddled and see if she'll settle back down, but start off with that and see how that works. And then as much as possible, definitely don't feed her more than three hourly.

 So if she's gaining weight and she has been sleeping well prior to this kind of 17 week sleep regression, you can offer cool boiled water for the earlier feeds. So as long as she's gaining weight nicely, if she wakes at 10, 11 or 12, where she used to always only wake at one, let's say then just offer her some cool boiled water and see if she'll resettle that way. But the important thing is actually giving them the opportunity to settle. And that's often what we don't do at that age.

**Marguerite:** That's right. No, thank you so much for that because I think with Genevieve, I would just settle her with a feed then in the middle of the night. And I think that just made everything go pear shape. So I'll definitely keep those things in mind this time around

**Meg:** Excellent.

**Interlude**
This episode is brought to us by Parent Sense, the all-in-one baby and parenting app that help you make the most of your baby’s first year. Don't you wish someone would just tell you everything you need to know about caring for your baby? When to feed them, how to wean them, and why they won't sleep. Parent Sense App is like having a baby expert on your phone, guiding you to parent with confidence, get a flexible routine daily tips, and advice personalized for you and your little one download Parent Sense App now from your app store and take the guesswork out of parenting.

**Meg:** So because you're an OT, whenever I have a therapist on with me and I have had Kristin and I've had various others on with me and I love having my therapist on with me. I'd love to know about the milestone that fascinated you this week and what its significance is for long-term development.

**Marguerite:** Well, I think for me, what I've really enjoyed is just her little hand reaching for us a little bit more and like swiping things. And also I've seen her use her legs a bit more so she's bringing it towards her tummy. So this time around, I've just been a bit more aware of it and just have taken it in and so tried to provide activities based on that for her. But I guess just in terms of development, just knowing that it's going to be really good in terms of her crawling and her motor development. And then, obviously with her eye-hand coordination and for the hand use later on, so it's yeah, very exciting to see her starting to do that a bit more.

**Meg:** So you spoke there about two quite different milestones. And so maybe we can just break it down. So the hand noticing, so is she just noticing her hands or is she starting to stare at them or is she starting to reach things? What are you actually seeing?

**Marguerite:** So she’s reaching, so she is staring definitely. So that was noticed a little bit earlier, but she's now more so swiping things. So I've tried to put like the little mobile above her and with the items and she's actually trying to hit it with, yeah. So it's been really good.

**Meg:** Isn't that incredible. So the progression of that kind of eye-hand motor coordination, eye-hand motor coordination is initially a couple of weeks ago. She just noticed her hand and that was kind of, you know, that wiring of, okay so there's something interesting at the end of my arms, and then from there she would've actually started to gain an awareness that her hands were there. Was she getting them to her mouth at about that time?

**Marguerite:** Yes she did. She did do it a little bit earlier as well.

**Meg:** Yeah. And so they start to actually wire their brain by putting their hands to their mouth. They wire their brain, this is something that they can see, but also something that has a kind of a tactile component. So they build the awareness of that hand and now she's actually starting to reach out. Has she managed to actually hold onto anything as she reached out for it? Or is it more like bating and—?

**Marguerite:** Yes. So a little bit of batting and then like there’s been moments where she's been able to like loosely grasps things as well.

**Meg:** It's amazing. And of course it's going to be a couple of weeks or months before she's actually able to voluntarily release things, but at the moment it's very important that she's just grasping things. So that's amazing, and of course that's the foundation for handwriting and all sorts of things later on. So as an OT, that does excite us.

**Marguerite:** They’re very exciting; it's just so funny how you look at things so differently and knowing that it has an impact on things like handwriting.

**Meg:** Exactly. And then the other milestone that you mentioned was the foundations for crawling. What foundations are you seeing at the moment because crawling is about six months away still? So what are you seeing that you think connects with crawling?

**Marguerite:** Well, I think just working on her core muscles, so bringing her little legs to her tummy and -

**Meg:** Obviously when she's lying on her, sorry, when she's lying on her tummy or when she's lying on her back?

**Marguerite:** When she's lying on her back.

Meg: Okay.

**Marguerite:** So when she's lying on her back, she's bringing her legs more towards her tummy, which is very lovely. And then also she's also moving her leg side-to-side as well. And then when she's lying on her tummy, obviously working on that neck and head muscles to get her ready for crawling.

**Meg:** Yeah. I mean, it's quite amazing because what she's doing now is she's building up those extensor muscle, that’s her back muscles when she's on her tummy and those flexor muscles when she's on her back pulling her knees up

**Marguerite:** That's right.

**Meg:** And you know, I once saw this fabulous video about an adult trying to copy a baby and trying to do like just 45 minutes of what a baby does when they on the floor and the adult, it was kind of like a full blown Pilates or yoga class. And the adult was exhausted because they're really working hard on those tummy muscles at this age.

**Marguerite:** Yeah. You can hear her little noises when she's on her tummy. She's working so hard on keeping that little head up.

**Meg:** It's amazing, very, very special. And you're right, it's the foundations for crawling, which of course goes on to be the foundations for lots of gross motor skills, bilateral motor coordination, running, jumping, motor planning. There's just so many things that crawling is a foundation for. And the miracle is that it starts right at this age. So very, very cool milestones you've watched for this week.

**Marguerite:** Very exciting to see. Yes.

**Meg:** And what is her favorite kind of stimulation activity that you're doing with her this week?

**Marguerite:** Well, I've actually placed her with her tummy time in front of her sister playing with her toys, which she's really loved. And then also, yeah, like I said, batting the toys she's really enjoyed that too. So that's kind of been our focus for this and then we just love being able to have back and forth conversations and the smiles and the connection has been really good, so just trying to make sure that we focus on that as well. So you know, we don't have any like fancy toys or anything like that, but just keeping it really simple and making sure that we are still focused on those developing those skills.

**Meg:** Yeah. And that probably is maybe the best tip is that keeping it really simple and that the best toy in the world are the humans. So, I mean, you mentioned putting her on her tummy in front of her sister. I mean that really motivates a social little one to lift their head, to make eye contact and to connect.

**Marguerite:** Oh, absolutely.

**Meg:** So there you've used probably nothing, maybe just a toweling roll underneath her chest to prop her up, but other than that, you're using her sister to entice her. And then of course what we call serve and return, which is that when she says something, you say something back and it's that kind of backwards and forwards between you and her, which is actually the foundation for language and socialization. So that's really cool.

**Marguerite:** Yeah. It's been really lovely to watch her interactions. And I think just also making sure that I pause as well and not interrupting too quickly or engaging too quickly.

**Meg:** Yeah. And I think that's a huge lesson for all mums and dads who listening that, you know, very often we tend to just jump in and fill the silences with sound and interaction. And in actual fact, the magic often happens in the silence where, you know, you wait for them to say something and you know, obviously it's a coo and a garble, not actual word, but it's their form of communication. And then you repeat it to them once they're finished. So that is a really, really good piece of advice. Don't follow all the silences, let her actually have time to initiate a conversation.

**Marguerite:** That's right.

**Meg:** Yeah. That's really lovely. Yeah. So as we kind of come to the end, it's been so wonderful chatting with you. And I know that you've mentioned that you do use the Parent Sense App and yeah could you tell us a little bit about how you use it or what your favorite features are at the moment?

**Marguerite:** I really love the main menu where you can see the awake windows, like I've mentioned before I find that really helpful. And then I also have really enjoyed the activity suggestions for each day because sometimes, you know, I can't think of activities I need to do. So it's just great to be able to go there and be reminded of what activities we can do. And then also I do enjoy just reading about the developmental milestones again as well. So I've really enjoyed using the app for myself.

**Meg:** That's lovely. Yeah. So for other mums to navigate to that on the homes screen, you'll see the pink widget on the top, right that says play. And if you click on that, you'll see today's activities. And there's an activity for every single day of the year, Margarite those activities, obviously I'm an occupational therapist, so they were developed specifically from an OT perspective. And I had another OT, Beth Rent and she assisted me by just going through and double checking that I had them all at the right moment and that they were, you know, kind of well put together. And what we actually do is we build on each foundation.

So like for instance, right where she is at now, I know that we are moving onto flexor muscles a lot. We looking at a body schema, we are looking at eye-hand coordination and I'm just looking at her activities for the week. So her activities this week will be baby massage, which is I try and give you an activity at least once a month for baby massage, because that builds body schema. We've got light tracking, which is something that will actually build her visual skills, which is a big thing that she's doing at the moment. We’ve got a little hand activity called round and round the garden so that she can develop that eye-hand coordination even better. We've got dancing, which is of course important for her vestibular sense to build up her muscle tone and her vestibular sense. And then we've got engaging as another activity. I've just gone through five for this week. And engaging is exactly what she spoke about that taking turns and so on. So we very carefully build those milestones up. So I'm really glad that you do enjoy them.

**Marguerite:** Yeah, I think it's fabulous because I think so many times as well, moms can be often overwhelmed with the amount of things they feel that they should be doing. And I think it's just nice to bring it back to basics and know that what you are actually doing is building on their skills and it's yeah, in consecutive order as well, which I really appreciate.

**Meg:** Oh, that's wonderful. Well, I'm so glad that you are enjoying the app and obviously it's always wonderful to have a fellow OT on with me. I think the parenting journey is always tricky where especially when you go from one to two and I don't think it gets, it's no easier just because you're an OT or a physio or a pediatrician.

**Marguerite:** That's right.

**Meg:** Yeah. But it really is super to just connect with you and hear about your journey with gorgeous Genevieve, and Hazel, very precious little girls.

**Marguerite:** Thank you so much for your time, Meg. I really appreciate, it's been wonderful to chat with you.

**Meg:** Thank you. Marguerite, it’s been fabulous chatting with you too. Keep, well

**Marguerite:** You too. Bye

**Meg:** Bye.

**Outro**

Thanks to everyone who joined us. We will see you the same time next week, until then download Parent Sense App and take the guesswork out of parenting.