**How to deal with toddler temper tantrums**

**Intro**

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 are 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 are 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.

**Bailey:** Hello, and welcome to another episode of Sense by Meg Faure. I'm Bailey Georgiades, media personality, podcaster, mum of two little boys. And I am here with our very own parenting and baby expert, Meg Faure. As always, a delight to join you. How are you today?

**Meg:** Really, really well, Bailey, thank you so much for being on with me again today. It's always a pleasure to chat with you. You've got two little boys that bring real relevance to everything that we talk about.

**Bailey:** Absolutely, and I feel like I've become a better mum dare I save after these chats, I love how valuable they are to me. And I'm just so glad that we're sharing this, you are sharing this with parents who are taking the time to listen, because I know for a fact that our parenting is just going to get stronger and stronger and it takes off the pressure of having to be these perfect parents. And actually just knowing that we're we are being enough.

**Meg:** Absolutely. And I think it's so important, you know, inside each of us as parents, we do have all the answers. It's just often we can't hear those…We can't hear that voice. And there's, so much information. We are stressed, our little ones are pushing all the buttons, we're tired. And we just can't kind of find that wisdom or that sense. And I think one of the best things that people have often said to me about my work through, across the eight books and the podcasts and the app, is that it just makes sense it's almost like it’s common sense. And it's the best thing because actually deep inside each of us, we know all of this and it just takes maybe a voice to say, just remember that wisdom and remember, try and listen to your inner voice.

**Bailey:** Well, you said touch buttons. Well, we are going to be talking a lot, one of those hot and touchy topics today, and that is toddler behavior. I'm definitely not the parenting expert here, but I can guarantee that almost every parent goes through a stage of wondering what happened to their little cutie pie angel that has now become an absolute little gremlin, also known as a willful toddler who loves nothing more than pushing those buttons and those boundaries.

**Meg:** Yeah.

**Bailey:** I remember before being a mum, oh, was I not a know-it-all? And my unborn child, my child-to-be, one day would never, ever, ever dream of having a meltdown or a tantrum, not my children. Well, fast forward to the years where I am a mum right in the thick of the toddler years, and oh my gosh, having a meltdown in public and you suddenly feel the heat of a hundred people staring at you. It could actually just be two, but it feels like an army of people around you, the way you're going. I wonder what they're thinking. You're immediately thinking that they're judging you. It's just the most stressful, awful situation to be in. And I know that for first time parents listening, you're probably mortified already going, “What?” But it does happen. And the reality is knowing that it happens is how to actually then deal with it when you are in that hot stickiness of it. So I don't want this episode to scare you. This is really to help you, but let's get into it. I mean, why are toddlers so prone to these tantrums? What can we do about it? This is what we are going to unpack today. So Meg, how would you define a toddler tantrum?

**Meg:** Yeah. So I mean, toddler tantrums are as you've described them. I mean, when a little one becomes very, very dis-regulated…Now that's a word we're going to talk about a lot today; where they're not able to regulate either their very big emotions or they're very willful behavior, and in those two events, emotions and behavior kind of override reason. And so you have this complete awful dawn of a toddler temper tantrum. And they do tend to exist mainly in the toddler years, kind of two to four years old is when we classically see them, not really the terrible twos or the other words for the threes and fours . So it can happen at any time, the twos, threes, or fours, but what's interesting is that's mums of even of a nine-months-olds, and recently I chatted to somebody on the podcast who had seven-month-old, said that when she takes a watering can away in the bath from her little boy, Max, he has a complete meltdown. And so we actually can see these tantrums coming all the way through from when they are even younger. And of course, when they're seven months old, it's not so much that they're trying to manipulate a situation, but that they are emotionally dis-regulated. And so toddler tantrums or tantrums of any age happen because little ones are very, very dis-regulated and cannot regulate either their emotions or their behavior.

**Bailey:** All right. So it's not toddlers being naughty just to be naughty it's dis-regulation?

**Meg:** Correct. And I think that's a very important message that will come across today is when we talk about naughtiness or bad or, you know, bad behavior naughtiness, it's a really hard label. And in actual fact there is so much going on for toddlers and for young babies. One of the most important things in being a reflective parent is to reflect on why they're doing what they're doing. That doesn't mean you're going to let the ones get away with it. So let's separate out two things. The one piece is why are they doing it? And the other one is what we are going to do about it. But the reality is that little ones in the toddler years are working very hard on two very specific things that are the reasons behind tantrums.

So the first thing that they are working on is their developmental stage. Now, anybody who has read any psychology will be very familiar with the name Erickson. He was a developmental psychologist and he spoke about, as we go through life stages, we enter a crisis in every single life stage all the way through until our death and in each life stage that crisis either manifests in us accomplishing or moving through that crisis and actually moving through to the positive or moving into the negative. So an example in the toddler years is that the developmental crisis of that age is autonomy versus doubt. And so it's very important for any parent who is in tune and conscious that we want our little ones to emerge from the years feeling autonomous. Autonomy is very, very important. It gives you power. It gives you leverage in the world. So we want our little ones to feel autonomous, and we don't want our little ones to emerge from the years doubting themselves.

So a big question that comes up, and this is what obviously behind toddler temper tantrums very often is that they are asserting themselves because they want their word to be heard and they want to get their way because they want to be autonomous. Autonomy is something that is important, and we don't want the little ones to doubt themselves. And we know that doubt comes up usually in parenting, it's either extremely permissive; so when you are very, very permissive with your little ones, they don't want to be the king of the castle, they almost have toddler imposter syndrome. CEOs can have imposter syndrome, but they don't want to be the boss. They want you to be the boss. And so highly permissive parenting is one of the ways that we can develop doubt.

 Another way that toddlers develop doubt is if they have very, very punitive and highly criticized parenting. So you are bad, you are naughty and labeling the child instead of labeling the behavior, and that can emerge in doubt. And of course that's something that we really don't want. And so what we do want is for little ones to develop autonomy, but that doesn't mean that we're going to let them get away with everything or be completely permissive as I've already mentioned. But it does mean that we have to expect that they are going to push the boundaries, and it's what we do with that, that allows them to develop this autonomy.

**Bailey:** Well, that is a really important thing because if it is part of their developmental stage, then how as parents do we manage tantrums in the best way possible?

**Meg:** So there's a couple of things; first line of defense for anything in life is prevention. So we have got to go in with the prevention is better than cure. So with toddlers, when we start to speak about preventing toddler temper tantrums, we need to be watching their tiredness and their hunger. You know, a hungry child is going to have a temper tantrum.

**Bailey:** I'm hungry as an adult and I kind of know how to regulate.

**Meg:** So exactly. So if they are hungry, they will become angry. And if they're overtired, they'll also become likely to throw temper tantrums. So the first thing is with toddlers, make sure that they are having those day sleeps. Toddlers tend to drop their day sleeps between about two and four years old. But what I always say is that even if they've dropped their day sleep, they still have to have a day rest. And that is a period of time in which they can defrag just like a computer has to defrag. We're going to give them a period in the day, an hour where they can defrag, and in that rest, they can sleep or they can rest. So that's the first thing, make sure they're having a rest.

Second thing is don't push bedtime too late because very often those temper tantrums happen after seven o'clock at night. You know, that's when they start to push the boundaries and ask for that extra apple, or scream about that extra story, or you mustn't leave my room. And of course they're doing that because they're actually overtired. So a very important one, we want our little ones to not be overtired and to have regular rests and reasonable bed times. And then of course, with the hunger side of things, we need to make sure that we are feeding our little ones regularly and what we are feeding them has to be wholesome. So if you're giving your little one, a packet of sweets and whatever, and two hours later, they're having a temper tantrum, well, those sweets spike their sugar levels as the sugar levels drop, they haven't got the sustained energy, and so they'll also have a temper tantrum. So, your first line of defense, as I said, is of course prevention.

 The second thing to do with toddlers is the one that a lot of people recommend and works really well, and I'm sure you've used it and that's distraction.
So sometimes it's just something that they are insisting on, and if you show them something that's slightly more interesting, those tiny little attention spans will switch across, and instead of having to punish them, shout them, scream at them, whatever you've actually then moved them through the temper tantrum onto something else. So, second line of defense, distraction.

Third thing you're going to do is you're then going to try and reason with them. And a lot of people will say, well, there ain't no reasoning with that toddler. So I know that, but I'm still going to put it in there that you need to reason with them. So it'll be using my ABC approach, which is acknowledging what they want, giving them the boundary and then giving them the choice. So I know that you want to play with my mobile phone, that's the acknowledging—A, I know. B there's a boundary; you can't play with my phone right now for whatever reason. And C is the choice, so you can play with the toy phone or you can play with the TV remote or whatever it is, or you can have some juice, whatever it is that works for you. So go in and try and be rational, that's the next line of defense. And of course, 80% of mums are sitting there going, that's definitely not going to work.

So the next line of defense is love and a cuddle. So say, because now by this time your little one is throwing themselves on the floor, beating their hands and their head on the floor. And you're going to go in and try and give them a love and a cuddle and that'll sometimes work. But another 80% of the mums who’re still around are saying that definitely doesn't work because now they start to hit me.

**Bailey:** I'm just thinking, I'm just thinking of my little one going, “No, no kissing. No…”

**Meg:** Exactly. And it can actually put more fuel on the fire when you try and love and cuddle them, and so that temper tantrums gets worse. And so then we land where at the very last point, and that is that you're going to just let your little one, you're going to let that fire blaze and you're not going to put any fuel on it, but you're just going to let them go with it, but you're not going to engage. And what that means is that you can do one of two things. One is you can just sit next to them and, and observe them, and I've seen a wonderful video on TikTok went viral recently of a daddy who sat next to his little one and this little one was having that temper tantrum, very contained, not angry, just present. So you can do that. My personal favorite is to actually just gently say to them, stay there on the floor and then step over them and keep walking away.
And when you do that, it's kind of everything that they want from a temper tantrum, which is more attention to get their own way is they're not happening. And what'll often happen is if you step over them and you keep walking, you just gently saying, okay, my love just stay there until you feel better. Then they'll come running after you and throw themselves just in front of your feet again, because they want to make sure that you really know that they're having temper tantrum. And you’re say to, would you like a love and a cuddle. And if they spitting and shouting and screaming, you say, okay, well then just stay there for a little bit and step over them and keep walking. And it's actually what I used to use in my therapy and very often that is sufficient to completely take the wind out of their sails.

And one of the things that I often tell mums and dads is don't do this in the shops, because you probably going to be put up for abuse, even though you're not because you have done everything by the book before that, practice this at home. And I can tell you that once you've done it once or twice at home, it takes all the wind out of their sails. They don't do temper tantrums and it solves it for that moment when you're standing in the queue in the shops and you have to say no, because they know that with temper tantrums, they don't get their own way, and actually you're not really going to respond.
And it goes to distraction, doesn't it? Because now they've watched you step over them and now they're distracted from their temper tantrum just a slight little distraction of that, that's quite fascinating. Actually, and it's just a different and what they predicted you’ll do, you didn't do. And so now they can come after you and then of course, the minute that they settle a little bit, take that deep breath, pick them up, give them love and a cuddle because the important thing is that you want to help them emotionally regulate and you can't do that until they've taken that little breath.

So, you know, it's kind of a chain and I've talked you through it all the way through, from prevention through to distraction, through to the ABC approach, and then eventually into extinguishing it by just ignoring it.

**Bailey:** I remember reading somewhere that trying to get a toddler to stop a tantrum is like asking a car to just get out of a tunnel. They actually have to go through the tunnel and get through it and get out of it, and then we can all move on.

**Meg:** Yeah. I mean, it would be wonderful and really romantic. And you know, very often you get these parenting theories that are thrown out there, very useful on social media, that where there's this romantic picture of always give your little one, lots of loves and cuddles and don't leave them alone when they're having a temper tantrum and support them through it. But the reality, the hard reality when you're at the rock face is that that usually just pours fuel on the fire and makes it worse. And sometimes all they need is a little bit of kind of a gap to do it on their own, and then they'll regulate and come back.

**Interlude**
This episode is brought to us by parents 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 of parenting.

**Bailey:** So make what about pushing boundaries? I mean, we know constantly that we're repeating rules over and over and over. I mean, we don't want them just to run amok, there needs to be those boundaries in place, but how do we approach constant boundary pushing?

**Meg:** So the first thing is that you need to be a hundred percent consistent. And I think this is where we often fail as parents, and of course I never talk about parent failures because that's not constructive. But the reality is that there are one or two things that you really do have to try and be mindful of. And one of them is at a consistency. Now, if I had to tell you to be absolutely consistent about every single boundary and you said to me, well, it's just not possible. And I said to you, why? When are you not consistent? It's usually when you've chased so many things down and it's the end of the day and you just can't anymore. So you're just given because the path of least resistance is just too attractive in that moment. Now, the reason that that happens is that your little one has been able to wear you down because you've instilled potentially too many boundaries. And so I think boundaries are very, very important, but I think having too many boundaries is a recipe for disaster because your little one is going to wear you down. And there's a great quote around that that kind of says, “Pick your battles.” Because if you pick them all, you're going to find that you're not going to be able to win the ones that are really important. You need to pick the ones that are important, now when picking boundaries and deciding what's important. I love to default to what I call the whole health and safety regulations. So if you can think about a behavior that you don't enjoy the little one doing, and let's say that was jumping on the couch, or maybe it's eating out of the dog's bowl. You know, these are the type of things that toddlers will get up to. Now, if I say to you, think about the health and safety implications of it, like, is this going to harm your toddler? Could they kill themselves or harm themselves and they'd land up in hospital? Is it going to harm or kill somebody else? And is it rude or ugly emotionally? And those three kinds of parameters can become wonderful parameters for choosing your boundaries.

So as an example, your toddler hates having their seatbelt put on. So every time you put them in the seat, they arch their back, they push their bum forward. So you can't get the car seat belt over, I mean, every single mother everybody has had that scenario happen to them.

**Bailey:** I have a theory as to why mums are always on active wear. It's not for any other reason than the amount of sweat that you go through in trying to get children into car seats or pick them up off the ground, or…

**Meg:** That's true.

**Bailey:** That's the real reason for active wear

**Meg:** It's a full on workout. Now that particular boundary is a very important one. It's a health and safety boundary. There’s no gray there; you can't have a toddler on the back seat of a car driving without a seatbelt on, it's not going to happen, they've got to be in their car seat. So that's an example of a very, very clear boundary. A slightly less clear boundary would be lie with me at bedtime. Okay. So lie with me at bedtime's, in fact, it’s not really a health and safety thing, it's just maybe a nice to have. And so when it comes to those type of boundaries, you need to think really carefully, like, is this going to be something that I want to chase on every single night? Or is this something that I'm actually going to do? I'm just going to lie next to my toddler and that's going to be fine.

And of course you might find for your marriage's sake, for instance, you want to be out of the room once they're down. And so you need to go and you know, go in to say goodnight and they must go to sleep and that's fine. But my point is that you're going to pick your boundaries and you are not going to pick them all. You're going to let some things go. So they want to go to school in their pajamas, fabulous, no problem. What's that going to do? There's going to be nothing wrong there. Are they going to swim without arm bands, or water wings? No, they can't do that. It's a health and safety. So I think the important steps, when you talk about instilling boundaries, the first one is that you've got to be consistent. And the second one is, if you're going to be consistent, you've got to pick the ones that are important. And that's the place to start with boundaries.

**Bailey:** I think that is valuable information. Now I know that you spoke about the, the words like naughty and good and bad and things like that. How do we mindfully choose our words when trying to instill those positive boundaries?

**Meg:** So I think that there are behaviors that are bad and naughty, and I think that's the most important principle here never, ever, ever label the child. And, you know, I think that that's where we go wrong. You know, you're unkind. Well, you are unkind is a life sentence, it's not something you want to be telling your child. You're naughty, you're bad, these type of words are words that can really break spirit and shouldn't be used around children. Biting your brother is a naughty behavior. It is not a nice behavior. It's an unkind behavior. And so the first thing is the first principle is always label the behavior, not the child. And that should be in all circumstances, even in your marriage, you want to label a behavior, not the person. The second thing is that you need to put the word at the moment or today in it, because when you start to label a situation, as you are always doing that to the dog, or, you kind of add that word always, it's again a life sentence, and it's not like that. And you know, this happens in our marriage as well, like you always do that when I do that. And, the fact they don't always do that when you do that. So the word always must come out. So using the word today and putting a timeframe on it is also useful. So today that was a really unkind thing to do with your brother, you know, so that you try and bring it around to the moment that they're in and then to try and use words that are positive words, way more than you use negative words. And I do not know a single toddler who isn't absolutely desperate to please. There really isn't one, every single toddler thrives on praise. And if you get into the habit of praising behaviors, you will find that you extinguish bad behaviors without even having to address them. So things like, I love it when you share your toys, because you're the kindest boy, when you do that. And you know, that immediately is just, it's such a massive thing, as opposed to he shares his toys 80% of the time on the 20%, he doesn't, you tell him that it's an naughty behavior or that he's an naughty child, even worse. So I think words and affirmations are very, very important. They need to be 80% positive, 20% teaching. And in that 20% teaching you're teaching about the behavior, you're not teaching about the person or labeling them.

**Bailey:** We have got a lot of questions that have come in. It's definitely our hot topic. I have a question here from Catherine. Her little boy is two and a half years old and she says, she's really struggling to get him to do the things she asks him to. Everything from breakfast to bedtime is an absolute struggle, what advice do you have for her?

**Meg:** So Bailey a few episodes ago, you and I spoke about sensory personalities and for any parent who hasn't heard the personality episode, do go back and listen to it. It's really is useful to understand your children's behavior. But very often these little ones who completely obstinate, who won't do what they are being asked to do might be slow to warm up because they like to control their world. They like to have predictability and they want to be the one who's in charge. So, those mums will find that when they're telling their little one to put on their shoes, it's no, or to get into the car it's no. And so they become kind of ‘no’ children and they love to say no and one of my little ones was like that still is like that, a slow to warm up with the one.

And there's a couple of things that you can do for that. The first is you can create predictability. So that's just a little bit of warning. So we are going to be having, we are going be getting dressed for school in five minutes, so finish with your Legos, and then we're going to get dressed for school in five minutes and then walk out the room and come back in three to seven minutes, you know, when, whatever it is. And that often helps a little bit. Another thing that helps is to have little chats up that tell them what's coming next, so that they start to know, and this is particularly for your older children. They start to know that, okay, we've done that now we do that. So little kind of routine chats or for a younger baby keeping routines, very, very regular; so for example, if your little one fights bedtime every night, well, if bedtime' are moving target and sometimes they can watch TV before, and sometimes it happens at seven and other nights, it happens at nine.
It becomes something that you can push up against. Whereas if something is absolutely consistent and it's just always the way it's done, it becomes something that they often don't push up against. So one of the best ways to manage that is; to actually have absolute, really, really hard and fast routines with little ones, and particularly with your slow to warm up little ones. And then finally, lots of rewards. And I think star charts have a wonderful place. I really do. You know, I love the idea of just giving little stickers onto their hands when they're little or onto star chart, when they get a little bit older and then having a reward when they have finished the whole line of the star chart, for instance. And we certainly use those with our kids when they were little and they could choose something that was, I used to call it their currency. And some children's currency is time with you like an outing to the farm petting zoo. And for other kids, it's hard material goods. That was my oldest child. And then it'll be like a Lego that he seen in the shop. But in order to get that, they've got to build up the number of stars or the number of stickers. And so star charts and rewards actually work really, really well. So I know that you don't want to have breakfast right now, we have to have breakfast before we go to school. If you have your breakfast, we can get a little star in the star chart. It's that type of behavior that helps.

**Bailey:** Brilliant. I love that. Now Laura wants to know what it means to spoil a child. How would a parent enable behavior that would lead to problems in primary school, years and up? She says she really struggles with consistency when it comes to rewards charts. So do you have any tips for her, Meg?

**Meg:** Yeah, I mean, it goes back to what I spoke about very first thing today is that one of the ways in which we developed doubt in our children is by being too permissive. And, you know, permissive parenting is really, really dangerous for children. And it's dangerous on a number of levels. One of the challenges of the early years is to learn, to regulate our emotions and learn to regulate our behavior. Now, the only way that self-regulation develops is in the context of some challenges and of some frustrations, because if everything always goes your way, well, you're not having to self-regulate anything. So children need to have challenges, frustrations, limits, boundaries in order to learn to self-regulate; and it's a very important principle. When you have permissive parenting, there's never an opportunity for them to practice emotional regulation or behavioral regulation, which are the two very important forms of regulation that are developing at this particular age, which means that when they get into the real world, they're going to be faced with those challenges. And they haven't honed those skills of self-regulation.

So self-regulation is a developmental construct we call it, which means that it starts with being immature and it develops until independence, that's what a developmental construct is. So learning to walk as a developmental construct; at first, you can't do it when you're born, but later on, you can do it independently. So self-regulation is a developmental construct and it needs to have emerged by the time your little one leaves your home and goes into school. And so when that doesn't happen, when everything's gone your way, and you've never had to hone that wonderful skill of self-regulation, you get into primary school and you really are at, at sea. You really, really have problems because other kids are not going to let you get away with things. Other kids are not going to…They are going to frustrate you. And what often happens with these children, these so-called spoiled to children—I don't like the word, because they're not spoiled, I mean, they're not ruined for life type-thing, but it does mean that they have a very, very hard time. And very often we see that those are the children who get bullied at school because they're inflexible. And they think that things have to happen their way and inflexibility and kind of digging your heels in when it comes to another child will be the recipe for bullying. And that's often what will happen. So these children will become victims of bullying or might become bullies themselves. So it really is a situation that you do not want to be too permissive early on, because you are going to end up with a problem later on when your child gets to school going age. So the tips I would say for Laura is that she definitely needs to put in place boundaries.
She needs to be actually consistent and she needs to know why she's doing it. She's doing it because she doesn't want to spoil child.

So if the boundary is for instance, no sweets before supper time, because she's decided that's a health and safety boundary, she needs to make sure that that happens and she's just needs to be consistent with it. One of the things that I often say to parents daily, and I've had to say so many times with mums on in consultations is don't fear your child's anger. It's okay for your little one to be really crossed with you. And to say, I hate you. You know, I don't like you, you’re ugly those sort of things. I mean, it's not okay for them to say, but it's, you must be comfortable with being called that if you are instilling a boundary. So you might respond to that with some time out. If you feel that they're being, if it's really something that you want to draw the line on. But the point is don't fear their anger, children need to express anger. They need to know that they can express anger and you need to feel comfortable with it. So a response when your teenager says to you, I'm so angry with you. I hate you is. Yes, I know that I'm frustrating you right now. I know that you desperately want whatever it is, but because you can't have, it doesn't mean that I'm going to give in, I can't bend that boundary. And then knowing that they might be angry with you, but they will get over it. I think that's where a lot of parents likely are actually come and stuck as they're so scared of their child's anger. They're so scared of their child's kind of rejection over that.

**Interlude**
If you enjoy my podcast, I would like to share one of my favorite podcasts with you. The Honest Hour, Christina Masureik is mum to two boys and a third little boy on the way. She's an American expat living in Cape towns, South Africa, since 2008 and decided to start sharing her experiences in parenting since 2017. Having grown up in a dysfunctional family environment in her own childhood, which led to her adoption at the age of 10 Christina is passionate about finding purpose and presence in parenting, as well as exploring our own opportunity for healing and personal growth. As we navigate the world of parenting our own children, Christina believes in ending the trauma cycle and that in parenting our own children, we can learn how to re-parent ourselves. So pop over to Christina's podcast—The Honest Hour.

**Bailey:** And you have just gone through the ABCs again, when it comes to your teenager, acknowledging the behavior, go through the ABCs again, because I really want parents to remember this.

**Meg:** So the ABCs are probably one of the most important lessons when it comes to behavior and discipline and the A stands for acknowledge, and when we are acknowledging, we are getting into the head of the other person. So we are acknowledging either their emotion or their intent or their desire. So I know that you want whatever it is. I know that you're feeling cross, whatever it is, this is our boundary. I know that, but the boundary doesn't change. The boundary's exactly the same and you can feel secure my darling because this boundary will not shift. You know that type of attitude.

And then the choices, okay. So we going to go and find something else for you to do, or let's try a different solution. And you know, when you put in those sort of hard yards with parenting, and I'm not saying that this is easy, although the ABCs actually do get easy and easier when you use them well, but when you put on those hard yards, you are developing emotional resilience, you're developing grit, you're developing a socialized human being who can self-regulate. You know, there's just so many amazing positives that come out of it and you're doing it in a way that is kind of conscious and mindful.

**Bailey:** I feel like ABC has become aha. Like it's such an aha moment. And I love that so much because it's so helpful. And I think in the beginning, setting those boundaries, no child, no toddler is going to like that. I don't know one. That's going to go, “Okay, mummy. Okay, daddy.” Never, they're going to push back because they don't like it. And that's where the consistency where I speak for my little ones, when the consistency sticks, it actually dissolves pretty quickly because the second time they try, they go, oh, okay, mum really wasn't that serious the first time. And the third time they might try and they go, okay, she's never going to give up. The fourth time, there is no fourth time because now they've realized there's the boundary. So we feel like it's this huge work to put in. It's hard work in the beginning, but stay consistent and that boundary is done and you can move onto the next boundary that is no deal breaker or, you know, you know what, I'm letting it go.

**Meg:** Absolutely. And you know, you mentioned important thing right at the end, there is, let it go. Is that sometimes they'll push a boundary that you haven't decided as a health and safety boundary. It's just something that you really actually do want them not to do. Like for instance, upending the dog's water bowl on the lounge carpet, like maybe you've decided that's an on a mat on the, on the kitchen floor, let's say on the tile. So it's not really a massive health and safety and on those sort of things, you know, it's actually saying, okay, so he really wants to experiment with dogs, water, and pouring it out and whatever it's doing. So let's find a way in which he can do that really constructively. So I'm not going to stop him from appending the dog's water bowl because I'm not going to pick that boundary. I'm going to let him be autonomous, but I'm just going to make sure it happens in a way that’s okay. So let's put the dog's water bowl in the yard, so you can keep doing that. You know, so allowing your little one to be autonomous, to make decisions, things like how they put their clothing together, like really not important, like make them have choices on that and try not to control every single moment of their lives. They, then they will be able to actually develop their autonomy where they can as well.

**Bailey:** All right, this next question is from a dad, and he says he and his wife have different approaches when it comes to letting their little girls avail her independence. So he believes that she should be allowed to explore with the right warnings and consequences. Whereas his wife doesn't want her exposed to any risk, even if it means cutting outing short, because she's melted down in a huge tantrum. This couple needs help.

**Meg:** Yeah. So very interestingly, I had a couple in my therapy rooms a few years ago that had exactly this scenario. It was actually the other way around the dad was an authoritarian and he was in the police force and the mum was the permissive one, but regardless of which way around it happens, the stories exactly the same. It happens so often. So first of all, we must always acknowledge that we have got two human beings that have come from very different upbringings themselves coming into marriage and then parenting. And that alone is a recipe for tension because one of you is very likely to have been parented a little bit more permissively than the other or the other way around in a more authoritarian household. So you're likely to have different parenting attitudes. I think it's important in these contexts to define the health and safety boundaries that you're both comfortable with.

So start off there. So with the black and white things that we know that this is always fine, that one's always a problem. So start there and know what you're going to reinforce and then negotiate the gray areas. You know, so for instance, if saying please, and thank you after every single meal and finishing everything on your plate to something that one of the parents likes and the other one feels that, you know, children need a little bit more freedom there negotiated between yourselves and make sure that ahead of time, you've got that one sorted out. So that's the first thing is just to try and come with it with some sort of consistency, you know, in terms of your parenting style.

**Bailey:** And it's so important to keep that communication between you as a husband and wife first, because you need to get onto the same page.

**Meg:** Absolutely. And you know, and particularly as your little ones get older, you know, young babies don't really manipulate parents as they get older, a child will start to recognize if there's tension between parents and start to play it and get the parent who's going to be on their side to be split from the parent who is on the other side. And, you know, it's quite interesting Bailey, recently I had to say to one of my children, you're splitting us and she looked at me and she said, what do you mean? And I think she thought I meant, I'm splitting up the marriage, you know, we're going to get divorced, which is certainly not on the cards. But it's a psychological term, this kind of splitting people to try and form a more of a chasm between them.

So you need to for form a unified friend, because later in your parenting journey, children will actually start to get shrewd enough to try and split you emotionally. And, and it's a very important principle from the get go that you get onto the same page. And look, I think there is place to recognize that people do have different personalities. I was a much more anxious parent than my husband and specifically about my children's safety. So I wanted there to be much more boundaries about what they were allowed to do in terms of their safety. And in actual fact, I saw psychologist over that because for me it became something that was debilitating for marriage and for my children that I had such a massive level of fear over them actually injuring themselves. It was all around injury. It wasn't around other things. You know, if they were behind on a tube behind a boat, I was very anxious. I couldn't watch because I could only see the worst thing happening. And I had to learn to actually not fear the worst, and that was a whole process for me. So, you know, as parents, A, you’ve got to be consistent, B there is your own journey and you need to acknowledge that as well.

**Bailey:** I love that you shared that. It just keeps everything human and we are learning all together. So Meg, thank you so much. That's all the time we have for today as always, I just adore your knowledge thank you for sharing your expertise with us. And join Sense by Meg Faure again next week for more Parenting with Sense.

**Meg:** Thank you so much, Bailey, goodbye.

**Bailey:** 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.