**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 moms 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 moms and dads, awesome to have you with us again this week. We have such fun chatting to real moms as well as some experts along the way. But this week we are speaking to a real mom again and it's actually Cassidy who, if any of you have been listening to the podcast since inception, you'll know that we've been tracking the life of Max all the way through from when he was a newborn in neonates. He had a tricky start for about a week, although that's all faded into complete insignificance now because he is a very robust, extremely healthy and gorgeous little boy. And so, each week his mom, Cass joins us and we just talk about what's going on in his week at the time. And it's quite interesting because so often everything that we talk about is stuff that can be replicated in your life with your little ones. So you'll find the same highs and lows, the same challenges, the same ones. And that's what we focus on each week with Cass. So, Cass, welcome again and how many weeks old is Max this week?

Cass: He's 23 weeks. So yeah, time flies.

Meg: I know he's coming up for the six-month mark in a few weeks’ time. It's incredible.

Cass: Yeah, I know. And he's, I mean there's a lot going on. I feel like I had no idea how easy it was. Really didn't take advantage of that time. Yeah, I think, because there's so many times I heard that don't worry, the newborn stage is really tough, but it gets easier. I really disagree with this. There's so much to think about now. Before it was just a case, especially breastfeeding, it was just a case of he either slept or I've put him on the boob. Now I've got his milk to think of, we're adding solids in the mix. I've got timings with sleeps and the big challenge we're finding at the moment is managing adding solids in and finding the time in the day that's not clashing with sleeps and not, you know, trying to fit in a milk feed and a solid feed and the sleep, they all seem to need to happen at the same time.

Meg: It's so true and it is a juggle, and you feel like you're actually feeding all the time. Which actually at this age, and trust me, it does change in a month's time. But at this age you actually are feeding all the time because he's probably having three solid meals a day, plus at least four milks. And so that ends up being too early feeding.

Cass: Yeah, I mean it's interesting. At first I was really think, I think I mentioned before, I make notes as the week goes on of things to talk about. And quite often, at the start of the week, I'll write something down and by the end of, by the time we speak, I've kind of worked through it or worked it out, but what I was really trying to sort of work out this week was his solids. Quite often it's been the case that his mid-morning or late morning feed clashes with his sleep. So we've had to kind of work that out and either he feeds a little bit before the four hours or he sleeps a little in an hour and a half rather than two hours or depending on his signals and what's going on. But now you add in another thing of after that milk, he's having solids. And it's funny how my brain just stopped working. I was like, I've got to fit milk and solids in now before he goes to sleep and there's got to be a half an hour gap. And I didn't even think that I could do…It didn't even enter my mind that I could do the milk. Then he could have a sleep and then he could have his solids. I was like, I've got to do the feeding as one and the sleep as another. That's what we've started doing. But it, yeah, so

Meg: In fact, around about the time that they start solids, they only have one solid feed, which will be usually around about between 11 and 1 and that kind of late morning solid feed. And depending on when he started solids and I think, he started, I know he started and you paused and then you went back to, did he start at about 21 weeks in earnest?

Cass: Yeah.

Meg: About weeks ago. Yeah, I thought so. So probably after two weeks of being into solids now and bearing in mind that he actually started solids closer to five months, he probably is now having three meals a day. Is he up to three meals yet, Cass?

Cass: I mean I would use that term very loosely. There is three occasions during the day that food is present. How much of that is actually a meal for him?

Meg: Well, of course, that's the perfect attitude because, and I know I've said this to you before is that under six months food is all about experimentation and exposure and the priority is milk. So what would be the right way to handle this? And I'm sure it sounds like you've navigated it well anyway, but the right way to handle it would be to put in his milk feeds first. And I think, you know, at this age, most of the ones as they're starting solids and they're not really taking a lot from solids, it's normally three and a half to four hourly gaps between milk feeds. And so you can kind of work out if he wakes up at six in the morning, you know, approximately when those milk feeds are going to be. And then because milk is the priority until six months, you can slot that solid meal in any time after that milk. It can be immediately after or it can be up to an hour and a half or even two hours after. More than two hours after, we prefer not to do because then it takes away the appetite for the milk.

So, it’s a little bit of a juggle and especially because at this age they are usually having still three or four day sleeps as well. So as you say there it’s a juggle. But my suggestion is to start with the milk feeds and then pop those solids in as and when they can.

Cass: Yeah, and that's exactly I think is always the case, certainly for me when something new comes into the mix, I have sort of been, and I haven't learned, you think I'd have learned by now, but every time something new comes into the mix, I sort of think, oh this has got to happen in this way. There's a certain way that you're supposed to introduce this or there's a certain way that this has got to happen and then it takes me a little bit of time and then I just suddenly go, no, it's all actually alright. It can be around and about that and it doesn't matter. And so this still not a set time every day that he has to have his solids, it's when it works. And as you say, we are just kind of doing it, but trying to make sure that it still falls in that period where it's after a milk feed, not before the next one because I feel, as you say, two hours after is after, whereas two and a bit hours after is actually before.

Meg: Yeah, I know what you’re saying. No, exactly. So, you’re easy one of the days, your morning feed, of course, because he'll have milk as he wakes. So call it 6-6:30, but what time does he wake in the morning at the moment, Cass?

Cass: He's waking at about 6:40 Yeah.

Meg: Okay. So he wakes up it's called it 6:30 for the purposes and we know that he's going to need another sleep at about 8:45. So kind of just more than two hours later. And that gives you quite a nice stretch in which you can put in the milk and put in breakfast, and so that's quite an easy one.

Cass: Hmm.

Meg: Are we not getting that one right?

Cass: So I don’t know, I think I've need before that I seem to have an intermittent faster as my child. He does not like morning milk. So, we don't even try, we wait for him to cry for it. And usually that is about 45 minutes after he's woken up. Okay. If we try and gives him milk before that 45 minutes, more like ends up on his face and then his mouth.

Meg: So guess how many milk feeds is he still having at night?

Cass: One.

Meg: Okay. And what is that about? 4?

Cass: No, it's at about, but it can vary between one to three.

Meg: Okay, all right. Okay. And then he doesn't want that milk first thing in the morning?

Cass: No, and it doesn't matter if he fed at one o'clock or if he fed at three o'clock, he will not want any milk at all until at least 7:30 if he's woke up at 6:40.

Meg: So, that's interesting because I mean, I've just said that most babies are doing quite a bit of the same things. That's quite unusual. So, most babies will wake up in the morning regardless of the fact that they had milk at about, you know, at three o'clock and they'll act as if they haven't had milk for three years. So that is unusual. So you are waiting then a little bit to give him his milk and then giving him his solids after that, before the sleep.

Cass: Sometimes, but actually what I have, yes, but sometimes it's got too close to sleep, so I'm giving him solids when he wakes up from sleep. But yeah, I didn't think it was normal this morning thing, but it's been a thing for quite a while and he just will not feed in the mornings. And it makes no sense because if he's fed at one o'clock, sometimes it can be six hours since his last feed and he's just not interested at all.

Meg: It's unusual. Okay. All but that's fine. I mean you're just going to find your groove with that then.

Cass: Yeah, we do. That's what we're having to do. You does have it, if we get the timing right, he will wolf it down, if we try any earlier, he will not touch it and maybe ounce.

Meg: Yeah. And you know, it's so interesting because it kind of speaks to the whole thing about suggested routines and how that can actually create anxiety for moms as well. Because very often with babies, things just don't go according to plan. So, you know, there's the theory that all babies are hungry first thing in the morning and then there's the reality and I think that's what you're experiencing. Part of parenthood, and we've spoken about this since your very first chat we ever had part of parenthood is being able to let go and just go, okay, so this is not exactly going according to my plan or my routine. And that's okay. And I think that's where your rigid routines can become quite frustrating for moms because they don't allow for flexibility. And flexibility is the name of the game.

Cass: I think that's absolutely right. But I also think it's so easy to say in your head that, okay, he's not eating, that's fine. But it feels, I think as well eating is one of the things, especially at this age. We can talk probably all the time. And you think, my God, this is so important, why are you not eating? And because we've had weight concerns with Matt and even though I'm saying to myself in my head, It's okay, he'll eat when he's hungry and he does eat well during the day and things like that. You still do feel, I feel a real sense of frustration and sometimes I can feel really frustrated with Max, which then comes with a huge guilt because I know it's not his fault. There's nothing he can do. Yeah. But you're just thinking, Oh my God, please can you just eat? I need you to eat. Why are you not getting that? Yeah.

Meg: Yeah.

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 of parenting.

Meg: There are two reasons why we put so much pressure on ourselves around meal times. Well actually maybe three reasons. One is that there's a huge amount of effort that goes into preparing baby food. And so it's frustrating. It's like expressing breast milk, throwing expressed breast milk out is like painful. Well, it was for me. And it was the same with when I'd made food. The second thing is that we measure a lot of our success on, well there's very few measures of success when you're a mother. Like, you know, it's, it's not like any other role in the world where you can actually have these KPIs. There are no KPIs; key performance indicators for motherhood. And one of them we kind of take on ourselves, it's not really a KPI, but we do take it on that, you know, I'm going to have a baby who eats really, really well, finishes his bottle, does the meals, you know, whatever it is.

And then the third reason why we get quite frustrated around meal times is that we have this kind of loose association in our mind that if babies feed well in the day, they'll sleep better at night. And so we get quite distressed that if they're not feeding well in the day, they're going to wake up more at night. And those three things, kind of come together to form this perfect storm around meal times. It's particularly bad for A-type mums, which I certainly was when I was a new mum, and particularly with my first born. With James, mealtimes became a battle.

And what's quite interesting Cass, is that well quite a few years ago now, probably over 20 years ago, there was research that was done that looked at the three main kind of, if I call them niggles of early parenting.
The one was having a very fussy baby, the one was having a baby who worked at night, and the third one was having a baby who didn't eat well. And what they wanted to do is they wanted to measure which one of those three things had the longest term repercussions negatively on babies. And they wanted to see like if a baby woke up a lot at night, did that mean they'd have developmental delay with their autism? They were thinking about all sorts of things and they did the same for the fussy babies. And then they did it for the feeding problems. And what they found quite interestingly was that feeding problems had the longest repercussions. And the reason that it did, it was be not because the baby had actually anything going on, it's because the mother freaked out and then try to control the situation.

And so what often happened then was that, mum started to have, we call them mealtime battles, where she was kind of force feeding the baby and there've been some really horrific videos that have gone viral of showing people force feed babies and then the baby eventually crying and vomiting and it's a terrible picture to put in our heads. And I know I didn't do that and neither did you do that with Max. But I did get into battles with James. I did. I mean, you know, just one more mouthful, one more mouthful, because this is how much I've prepared. This is what the guide says you should be taking and this is the time it, you know. And so it really is for me, and it was a big realization to know that I had to let go.

Later on when I wrote Weaning Sense, which is my eighth book, which is available globally, we now wrote that book. We actually wrote a chapter on co-regulation; on letting little ones learn to self-regulate. And what we did there was we said that there's things that sit in mom's domain that moms have to control and there are things that they have to let go of. And the things that moms control when it comes to weaning are the what, where and when. So what am I going to offer? I'm not going to offer pro processed foods or I'm not going to offer highly sweetened foods or whatever or I'm not going to offer too much formula, whatever it is. The when, which is the timing and then the where, which is the high chair. And when you get those things right, if you're feeding a baby the right stuff and if you are spacing the feeds, you can actually let your baby control the how much. And for control freak, like I was, that was a massive thing. Like why on earth James, who's only six months old, control the how much, But because babies intuitive eaters, they will actually guide us.

And so, you know, I think that for moms is quite an important reason when you do start to feel that temptation to engage in the food battles that that's not something you should be doing.

Cass: Yeah, definitely. And I think that's why with his morning feed we got to the point where we’re like, okay, we'll wait for him to shout for it because otherwise it was going to become a battle. And so now we put him down on his play mats and sometimes we might, you know, time's ticking and he hasn't started shouting and acting hungry. So we just think, okay, we'll try and sometimes he has it, sometimes he doesn't, there's nothing we can do about it, but he'll then feed well for the rest of the day.

Meg: Rest of the day, yeah. Very interesting.

Cass: We've just kind of surrendered to that. He's from day one, Max has been an independent soul so we'll we just let him do what he wants when he wants. Not when he starts, you know, getting in certain things. We'll let him do what he wants when he wants.

Meg: Yeah. But certainly, with that feeding, early morning feeding, that makes sense.

Cass: Yeah, exactly. So, but it's interesting as well talking about going up to three meals a day and we were talking earlier about that balancing when it was just a case of he needed to sleep or have milk. I remember when I was looking at the app and it start, I saw it coming that there were going to be three meals a day and I was already thinking, oh my gosh, how am I going to find the time to prepare three meals a day? I'm already struggling to find the time, I'm working as well. So, I was already struggling and that first moment that I saw those three meals, I did feel quite sort of overwhelmed. And I ended up sitting down on a Sunday going…I went through, I've got two sort of weaning recipe books, Weaning Sense being one of them. And I just went through and I selected different recipes that I was going to use and then I got my recipe books out and looked at key ingredients from the Weaning Sense recipe for example, and looked in the index of my recipe books to find a recipe that we could have that kind of made sense and did full shopping list.

And I wrote down a plan for his meals and then our meals and how that was all going to tie. And I'm the type of person where I needed to write it down and have a plan. And I felt much better about it, but it was quite overwhelming initially; I thought, how am I going to do three meals a day for him, our meals, my work and look after him and the cost of him and make sure he's…Because we mentioned before, he's sort of fascinated by other kids and seeing other kids. So, it is a tricky time I think as they're awake more, they need more and it's quite overwhelming.

Meg: Yeah, and I think how you're feeling as well is also linked to the fact that you are working again. And I would say that more than 80% of the moms who are probably listening to this on the same boat as you. When you look back at kind of female emancipation that kind of we can have it all; we can have the big career and we can have the children. It's a huge amount of pressure because the reality is that if you were at home and this was your fulltime job looking after Max, which I in fact did have with my first born, it's still challenging, but it's all you have to think about. So you can plan the meals and you can get through it and it makes more sense. When you are working like you do Cass and like many of our moms do, and you're trying to juggle kids and feeding, it’s really is rough, it's hard. And that's where convenience meals come in, you know, and that's where there is a place for that because you can't always get it right. You can't always juggle it completely.

Cass: Absolutely. And I mean I've done a lot of prep now and I've got a draw full of different vegetables in ice cube form.

Meg: Brilliant, that’s exactly it.

Cass: That has taken the pressure off hugely. But yeah, it's certainly introducing solids. I was really, really looking forward to weaning.

Meg: I remember.

Cass: Yeah. And it's still great, but I think I massively underestimated that side of it.

Meg: Yeah. It's very interesting. And in about six weeks’ time, you and I will be chatting about baby lead weaning, because we'll move on to that, which we do with little ones after six months, between six and seven months. And that then we can actually start to use what we are all eating from the family table. So it does get a little easier. But this particular stage and you know, it's so interesting what you said at the beginning that you're finding this stage more hectic than the initial stage. And almost if you break down your…into chunks, that first three months for me was a complete indoctrination by fire. It was like, oh my gosh, like baptism of fire, shall I say? It was just absolutely crazy. I felt totally out of my depth, I second guessed myself. I felt low sometimes, you know, it was really, really hard.

Then you get into the weaning phase, which as you say is just like a million moving parts. Like how do you make these million moving parts work? And then you are coming up, and I hate to say this for my trickiest part, which comes after nine months because after nine months they start moving and Max will start crawling and then it's a nightmare because you can't sit still not for one minute. You can't take your eye off him. He's dangerous. And that lasts in my mind from nine months to 18 months. So, you kind of go through each…

Cass: I thought you're going to say nine months to 18 then.

Meg: No, no. Then the other issues that come up then, which I'm dealing with is my teenager at the moment. But no it really…Each stage has great delight. You know, that newborn smell, the gorgeousness of that; of that cuddly little newborn came with the insecurity of being a new mom. The stage now, which is, I just think one of the cutest stages. And I actually think in many ways one of the easiest stages because they're just sitting, from the time they start to sit, they've got a new take on the world.

Cass: Well Meg, Max is sitting for a total of three seconds at a time at the moment.

Meg: Wow, at 23 weeks. That's quite early Cass, because we typically have little ones sit, I suppose 24- 25 weeks is when they start to sit independently. But he's doing well if he's sitting for three seconds. That's amazing.

Cass: Three seconds is so far the record.

Meg: That's amazing. And tell me some of the activities you're doing while he is in that sitting position.

Cass: So first of all, there is an abundance of cushions at all times now.

Meg: Yes. Good.

Cass: And we've been doing a lot of…I don't know, I think there is a song to it, but I've ended up, I couldn't remember the words. I've ended up just kind of making things up every time. But where we're jiggling him, sitting him on our knees and going up and down like a click-clock, click-clock, the horse, then the legs…

Meg: It's actually in the app, that particular one. This is the way the lady rides.

Cass: It is. And the trouble is I've tried to do it with the words because the words are in the app as well, and then I just end up having to make up…

Meg: Making up your own. I love it, it’s good. Perfect.

Cass: But you mentioned about doing the clip and then opening the legs and he falls through. So we've been doing that.

Meg: And that's so fabulous on two counts. I mean, on a number of counts. First of all socially, it's great, language, it's great. And then it's really great for the vestibular input; so that movement input that when he was a newborn we talked about doing airplanes to build up his muscle tone and this is the same, and then of course, sitting balance, so that's really a fabulous activity to do.

Cass: Yeah. And the other one, which is also in the app I think is Row, row, row your boat, he a love that, he enjoys that. And then it's just kind of been a case of I had him and I think this is also in the app, sitting in between sitting on the floor, both of us, he's got his back to my tummy and my legs are out open because you know, he's still, after three seconds he's either going side to side or backwards. So it just provides that bit of support. So we do a lot of him sitting in between my legs. And then it was just one day I sort of thought he's not really falling and I just pulled my legs slightly apart and sat a tiny bit further backwards.

Meg: And he sat

Cass: So then, I was like one, two, three…I managed to get a photo. But there’s that, you need to get that first photo.

Meg: Impossible.

**Interlude**
If you enjoy my podcast, I would like to share one of my favorite podcasts with you, The honest Hour. Christina Masuriek is mom to two boys and a third little boy on the way. She's an American expat living in Cape Town, 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 on over to Christina's podcast, The Honest Hour.

Meg: And part of the reason why he's doing so well on that is that you have not got him in things like Bamboo seats and plastic sitters and you take him out of his car seat as soon as he gets home because little ones really do need to have floor time and you can see it now you can imagine that if you still had him in that bamboo seat or that throne…I don’t know if you ever had one, Cass, I can't remember.

Cass: We actually got him one for Christmas and then you and I spoke about it and then I sold it the next day. He’s not getting it for Christmas.

Meg: And I can guarantee you a hundred percent that if you were using it, he would've had a couple of weeks delay on sitting because you can see what happens. It's so easy to put them in that, it's hard work to have to make sure all the cushions around him that you're sitting there and you've got to be on your toes without it. I mean it's a little bit of a, you know, not a cop art, but it makes life easier. But it definitely ends up with delay, there's no questions, so yeah, well done for that.

Cass: Yeah, to be honest, the only thing we've started doing is sort of sit, and place him in his highchair. That's the only time I've had him sitting in something. But other than that, he's either been on his mat or he had a bouncy chair, or he still does have it, but we don't tend to use it so much. But usually he's on a phone, he's rolling, he's doing all of his rolling and that sort of thing, so yeah. But you can see he is desperate to sit up all the time. I mean, he's just desperate. And again, I think in his mind he's one and he's really frustrated. He wants to wave, he wants to do all sorts of things.

Meg: So, and that's interesting. We do find that just before any of the big milestones come, there's a little bit of a patch of frustration. Crawling is a particularly one we see it in and walking where there's a bit of frustration because they know that they can get there, but they don't quite have the stability yet. And so, they do get frustrated and what you might find is in the next couple of weeks he might sit and then he might actually regress. So he might forget about sitting for a little bit and kind of be more top and fall over and lose his balance a little bit. And remember that's the competition of skills. So, you know, and then he'll come back to it and he'll consolidate. So, that is exactly what they do. But he's on the right trajectory, Cass.

Cass: He is, it's very exciting. And I'm looking forward, because it's going to be really nice to, when he can sit probably, to put toys in front of him and he can then sort of choose his toys and play with them rather than sort of to the side of him and he can only anything. I don’t know, it just feels, but it feels very grown up. I feel excited with all of these new milestones, but quite emotional too because you just think, oh my goodness, where is the time going?

Meg: But it's so interesting. I have a page in the Weaning Sense book, and I can't remember the page number now, but I talk about the conundrum of self-regulating for the little ones and co-regulating and teaching them independence. And you know, every time we teach our little one something independent, like for instance, learning to sit, or learning to sleep through the night, or learning to walk or to potty train or weaning them off the breast. Each of these things is a progression towards independence, which is of course what parenting's about. That's actually our ultimate goal. But we want to hold onto that littleness. And we know that every time they have a milestone, it just takes them further away from that newborn and that dependency and eventually it means that they're going to fly the nest at some point. And there's some lovely kind of words on that. Like Khalil Gibran who talks about we are kind of the bow, and our children are the arrow, and they'll go off from us. Early stages to be talking about that, but it does feel like that, it does feel that they just are progressing just too fast and, and slow down because I love the littleness.

Cass: I know, yeah. I have to stop myself when I found myself say, “Oh, I can't wait for when he's doing this.” And I think, oh no, hold on, that will come.

Meg: It’ll come, exactly. Absolutely, Cass, well it's been fabulous catching up today with Max, our little 23-week-old. And yeah, we'll definitely touch base again next week. Thank you for bringing your…Yeah, just the things that are happening in your week with you and Max.

Cass: Thank you. Thank you so much, Meg.

Meg: Excellent. Thanks. Cheers. Bye.

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