Tips to sleep through the night

Sense by Meg Faure Podcast 50

**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're a new parent, then you are in 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, I am Meg Faure. I'm an occupational therapist and am absolutely passionate about helping parents. People often think that I work with babies, which of course I do, but all the work that I do with babies is done through their parents because essentially that's the way that it happens. And so I've always worked with babies with sleep problems, feeding problems, and more recently have developed an app called The Parent Sense App. And every week on this podcast, which is Sense by Meg Faure, I'm joined by a guest, and that guest is sometimes a baby expert or somebody who has something to share with us. And in other times it is a new mom. And we have been tracking for the last nearly seven months, Cassidy and Max. So last year Cass had just had baby Max and we went through the drama of a little ill baby who at the time was in high care, and he is now a really robust, I think six and a half month old. Cass, welcome, and how old is Max now?

 **Cass:** He's 27 weeks.

**Meg:** That's incredible.

**Cass:** And he is very robust.

 **Meg:** He really is. He's a stocky little chap. When I see pictures of him, I'm just blown away by…You know he's very upright, he's sitting beautifully just past six months. In fact, he's sat just before six months, didn't he?

 **Cass:** Yeah, he did. And I mean the thing about Max is I feel he's always, as soon as he establishes one skill, he then is always straight onto the next one. I'm very frustrated that he can't do it.

 **Meg:** He's in a rush.

 **Cass:** Yeah, he's really is in a rush. So, one day I'll tell him, slow down.

 **Meg:** So how has your week with the 27 week old been?

 **Cass:** Yeah, it's been really good. So we’ve been in France; my husband was running the marathon, so we've been traveling a bit. We got the ferry over and drove, it was the first time we've done a long drive, it was just over four hours, which with the amount Max is eating and how regularly he has to eat at the moment. And actually the ferry was very early in the morning, so we decided we were actually going to wake Max a couple of hours before we had to leave for the ferry. So we had to leave at 7:00 AM, so we woke him at 5:00 AM so that he was hitting his two hour wake window on our drive to the ferry with the view that we then have to sit in queues waiting toward the ferry and that sort of thing. So we thought at least then he'll get that sleep and then that would allow him to be awake for the, it was only an hour ferry and we could feed him on that and he could sort of get stimulated; he loves people so he could look at all the people and things like that. And then hopefully the plan was that as we were arriving in France, he would then be ready for his next sleep, because he'll have done two hours awake time once we'd woke him up.

 **Meg:** Mm-Hmm, how did it work?

 **Cass:** It all went perfectly.

 **Meg:** Oh, well, amazing.

 **Cass:** Yeah, he fell asleep as we got in the car. This is the journey there, I will tell you about the journey back later, which is a very different experience, but not really because of Maxwell, because of his parents. And so then we stopped halfway and gave him his bottle, which he was due, and then we carried on and we got to France. We got to Paris sort of early evening time where he could have his dinner, and then we set about doing the bath routine. But as you have said several times, because there's an hour change, I was working with that and making sure when he woke I was sort of doing the maths and that sort of thing. So we were quite strict with the awake times. But one of the things that I actually noticed through the whole week, and there seems to be a bit of a habit, is shorter sleeps; even in the car seat I thought he would do a long stretch in the car seat, but he's waking up after 40 minutes, even in the car seat.

 **Meg:** For midday sleep as well? For all of his sleeps?

 **Cass:** All of his sleeps, whether he's in a pram, in a car seat. What I think the reason he is waking up is because he seems to be pooing a lot. He's doing a lot of small poos throughout the day, which he used to do one big one in the morning and then that would be it. And I don’t know if that's something to do with teething.

 **Meg:** It can be, it certainly can. Are they there kind of acid smelling poos?

 **Cass:** I mean, I'll be honest with you I'm trying not to really smell them.

 **Meg:** Okay, fair enough. But a really acid smelling teething poo, you can't help, you've got to like put a pig on your nose if you’re not going to smell it.

 **Cass:** I mean it’s not pleasant.

 **Meg:** Okay. So look, I mean it's actually very unusual and it's one of those things that parents often ask about is, how long can I expect my baby to sleep for? And it is a fairly classic trajectory that goes for the first kind of naught to six weeks-old, babies tend to do quite long stretches of sleep. So they're actually can fall asleep and sleep from one feed to the next feed. And you know, I guess it lets us in easily as new mums. And then, of course it all changes when they start to become more social at around six weeks, and then they start to do these classic 45 minute sleeps every single day sleep. And then at about six months it is supposed to be the other way around. It is supposed to be actually that they start to stretch one of those sleeps, which is usually that midday sleep. So he did start to stretch one of those sleeps, what? At around about five months, I think.

 **Cass:** Yeah, he was doing, especially if he was in the pram, sometimes we'd have to wake him because he was due a feed, he could go two and a half hours even. And he was doing, he was managing even an hour and 20 minutes in the cot, which was very exciting.

 **Meg:** Which is two sleep circles, correct.

 **Cass:** Yeah, but it doesn't matter where he is, you can almost set your clock by him.

 **Meg:** Yeah. So, first a couple of things at six months old we are, we can, or we would like to expect three sleeps a day and in order to get those three sleeps a day, you need to have two short and one long. And so the ideal for his age is to have that one short being in the morning. So usually between 8 and 10 in the morning will be our first sleep, watching the awake time. So depending on time you wake in the morning, if you wake up at seven it'll be then at nine, and you'll go down for a really nice 45 minute sleep. And that sleep typically is the one that they wake up from and that's perfect. Likewise with the late afternoon sleep, which we rewind two hours from bedtime. So if bedtime is seven, that can be finished by five. So usually at about four there'll be another sleep which will then take 45 minutes. In the ideal world, if you're going to have those two, you've then got to have quite a long sleep over midday, otherwise your wake times become just too long. And so a couple of tips to kind of link that midday sleep cycle; so the first thing is he'll need some really good protein and fats in his lunch before he has that sleep. So, pop in the proteins and fats. Is he on full protein now?

 **Cass:** Yeah.

 **Meg:** So eggs, dairy, fish, nuts, brilliant. Okay, so that's important and really good for him. So definitely I would make sure that that lunch is really nice and hearty. The next thing I would suggest is to pop a little bottle in after that lunch. And it's a little trick I use, I know it's not time for the bottle feed because the bottle feeds and usually mid-morning, mid-afternoon but just pop a little 60 ml, maybe two ounce bottle in just after that lunch, just before sleep time. So, you're wanting to make sure that that lunch is happening before sleep and that sleep is then obviously after lunch, which means that sometimes lunch will be at like 11 in the morning and or 11:30. So you're going to move that lunch around so that it falls just before when that day sleep is due. So if he slept, for instance, from 9 to 10 in the morning, and his next sleep is due let's say at 12 because it's a two hour stretch, then half past 11, give him his lunch and give him a nice little bottle after that as well, a little top-up bottle.

 **Cass:** So, at the moment the schedule sort of tends to be, he is waking up at around, well don't forget Max is an intermittent faster so he doesn't have his break breakfast

**Meg**: Yes, we know, goes away.

**Cass**: So he's usually having his first bottle between 7 and 7:30, so his second bottle is usually due between 11 and 11:30.

 **Meg:** Yes, okay. And when is he having breakfast?

 **Cass:** At about 9, or just before, or depending on when his sleep is due. It's just before or just after his wake.

 **Meg:** Okay, so this is going to work quite well. So first of all, on a nutritional level, a reminder to everybody that everything changes at six months and up to six months. Your absolute living priority in terms of nutrition's milk, whether that is breast milk or formula milk, that is the priority; so you never want to jeopardize your baby's appetite for milk by putting solids before milk. However, come six months, everything switches around and that's because milk and particularly breast milk doesn't have sufficient iron in it. Formulas do have iron because they're fortified, but there's a lot of other things that are in solid food that now becomes more important after six months.

So now the good news is that solid meals are the priority. So what my suggestion would be is, so you can do one of two things. So scenario A; is you keep it exactly as it is, so you give him his milk bottle at 7, whatever time you're giving him that your breakfast will then be at around about 9 when he wakes up or just before you go sleep, whichever way around it is, but he has that breakfast. And then my suggestion would be to drop that mid-morning bottle and to give him lunch and to follow it with a bottle exactly as I've just suggested, so you kind of get this lunch in at 11. So it's kind of, you can call it a hearty snack or a lunch or whatever, but it's two hours after the breakfast. Give him lunch, give him his bottle after that so he does have the opportunity to have the milk.

 **Cass:** How big should that bottle be?

 **Meg:** In that case, offer a full one and you're offering it after lunch. So he might not have it all, he might not love it all, so that's option one. What he'll then end up with is he'll end up with three milk feeds, which will be, that morning milk, the midday kind of, or in fact it still is four milk feeds; the midday just before that sleep, the two or three in the afternoon milk then and then the evening milk as well. So you've still got your four milk feeds and I think he's still having one, he probably is still having one at about three, three to five in the morning anyway.

 **Cass:** Yeah.

 **Meg:** Okay, so that's, that's scenario one. So now, and we'll come back to those nighttime wakings as well, because I can see that there's something on the tip of your tongue, Cass, I told you it’s going to be different. Option two, and this is also a distinct option, is that if he's having a bottle anywhere between 12 and six in the morning, you drop that 7:00 AM bottle altogether. And so you consider the nighttime feed as feed within 24 hours and you then offer him breakfast at 7 o'clock, then his next milk at 10, then his lunch at 11 or 11:30 just before he goes down for sleep with a little top-up bottle and then you’re back to the normal sequence after that. And my suggestion would be is if you've written down those times or if you can memorize them, is to try one day on, one day off and see what works best for him. Usually by seven months, little ones will start to actually drop either the mid-morning feed or the mid-afternoon feed. So he's moving towards that anyway, which is absolutely fine.

 **Cass:** Okay, because you are correct, there was something a little… So, last week I think I was getting very excited because he was sort of going till 4 and we discussed doing half a feed at kind of 4:00 AM, and half a feed…

**Meg**: Yes we did.

**Cass:** …that was all lovely. And then we went away and I don’t know if it's that he was in an unfamiliar room, or what it was, but he basically has been waking again at around one or two for that feed. So I've been giving him the full feed because yeah that's obviously, and he's been wolfing it down so it's not that he's sort of waking and is hungry, because at first I thought should I maybe just try and resettle him without the milk? But he was absolutely wolfing that, I mean that is the fastest bottle that goes down. It goes in one go, and barely draws breath and I mean ,I am back in bed within 15 minutes.

 **Meg:** But it's an irritation. Yeah, and it's also irritating because we were going towards the morning and now we've gone backwards a bit.

 **Cass:** Exactly.

**Interlude**
This episode is brought to us by Parents Sense, the all in one baby and parenting app that helped 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 a couple of options there. The first one is you can definitely start offering him cooled boiled water at that time. And usually when we have a regression after six months, that's exactly what we do because before six months we're still prioritizing milk and it's tricky after six months just milk is just not a priority. So putting him on two…Offering him water at 1:00 or 2:00 and then only like drawing a line in the sand saying he can only have milk after three, let's say would be absolutely fine to do. It's also fine in the context of all of his feeds to just get that 1 o'clock over, give it to him because he's not generalizing it to other wakings in the night and you know, it's only one and continuing as you are and those your already have two options.

 **Cass:** Yeah, because he does then sleep through, you know, he's not then waking for his other feeds.

 **Meg:** See that's not a major thing, you know, and I think moms often get hysterical because we all hear of the mums and I see them every week on my sleep course. The mums who have got a 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock waking, or a 10, 1, 2, so their little ones are waking up for habits, and are needing the milk to get back to sleep. But when you've got one single milk feed and it's really like you said, disruption of 15 minutes and you're back into bed, then sometimes it's easier to just go with that flow and to just meet that need, it will move out. The minute you start to have a second waking, we then go, hold on, hold on, how is he actually falling asleep? And the critical thing is after a milk feed is that he must always go back down awake. And if he does that and settles himself, he's not going to generalize it to “I need the milk to fall asleep.”

 **Cass:** Yeah, I've actually had to start turning the monitor sound off because he chats to himself in his cot for about 15 minutes after that feed before he goes back down to sleep.

**Meg:** That's incredible.

**Cass:** But I would like to go to sleep soon.

 **Meg:** So nothing wrong with that. And you know, it's interesting, I mean you bring up something around baby monitors and I actually saw recently on a TikTok that I was mentioned on where somebody was going, “Well, you know we shouldn't have baby monitors on, or do we want baby monitors?” And you know, there was a whole debate that ensued. It was actually an ill baby, that particular mom who was…The influencer who was talking about it. And her little one really did need it, it was a breathing monitor and so it was imperative that she did have. But there was this debate about whether or not we should have baby monitors and you know, I definitely think that at this age it's actually worth just turning baby monitors off, particularly if your little one's room is close to your room, which I think Max's is, you're not going to not hear him, you're going to wake.

And so I have always really prioritized mom's sleep. I think it's the most important thing because in order to be a good co-regulator in the day, which means you're watching a baby signals, you're in tune with him, you're staying calm, you're doing all that high massive responsibility on an emotional level, you actually need to be rested. And so I don't like it when moms are staying awake for 15 minutes because they're listening to the little ones chatter on the baby monitor. So turning the monitor off is spot on in terms of that. And it's also actually quite interestingly and there's been research that's shown this, that moms who don't have baby monitors with their baby in the other room, they're babies are actually better sleepers because they do wake but they're not distressed and crying. They chatted to themselves, they go back to sleep and therefore mom doesn't get the opportunity to over respond because she doesn't hear them. So you'll hear your baby if they need you, and otherwise, turn it off.

 **Cass:** Yeah, what we also, because what I do sometimes is he might make noises, which wakes me up, but it's useful to see him still on the monitor because I can see if he is just rolling around and making some noise or if he's got himself stuck and wedged in a corner or if he's lost his comforter or something like that. So I don't have to go in to check what the noise is about. But what I actually do is I wear an eye mask over my eyes because it lights up every time he moves.

**Meg**: Oh gosh, to alert you.

**Cass:** And so sometimes that can, yeah. So what I do now is I just sleep with an eye mask and the sound down, and so I'm not waking up every time he moves, but…

 **Meg:** When you wake up you could just look over.

 **Cass:** Yeah, exactly.

 **Meg:** Okay, now that works well. Cassie, you've mentioned something else that's another controversy which I would love to just talk about and that's, he wakes up with a comforter. Can you tell me a little bit about Max's little…I called it a doudou, it's actually a French word—D-O-U-D-O-U, but people call it different names; Lovees, comforters, his doudou. Tell me about his doudou.

 **Cass:** We introduced it quite a while ago, just sort of put, I slept with it for quite a long time and then we introduced it to him. At the moment, he only has it when it's sleep time. So I have read in some places about, you give it to them when they're sad, or they're upset as so it is a comfort thing. He's never really…Well, we're very lucky, Max doesn't really get very sad, so I've never brought it in. So, it's kind of his association when he goes to into his cot, we give it to him and that means okay, you're now going down for his sleep. I have three or four of them.

Meg: Good.

Cass: I'm terrified that he's going to leave them. And we took a spare to France and that sort of thing. And it's just a little very, very soft material; has a little square and in one corner there's a little elephant and he, his favorite thing to do is to sleep with it over his face, which the first few times was quite terrifying. And I thought, “Oh my God, I have to go move it. But, in fact, I have a picture from his sleep this morning where he was fast asleep on his back with his comforter completely over his face. And you know, I watch him in the night and he will reach for his comforter and really snuggle it up to his face, or he'll put it in his mouth. And it's saved us as parents having to go in because that is his…It's called Kimbo, we call it Kimbo. There's Kimbo and he feels safe and it really is amazing watching him. Even when I think, “Oh God, Kimbo is over there, how's he going to know where Kimbo is when he wakes up and he is going to…But he puts his arm out, he knows exactly where it is at all times, he brings him in, and he really cuddles him, and adores him and it's a blessing.

 **Meg:** I love it, absolutely love it. And the reason I say it's controversy is that, there's this advice that goes out and sleep advice can be quite polarized, but there is advice that you should have absolutely nothing in your cot with your baby at all. And that includes Dockatots, sleep positioners, it includes Nurture One’s sleep positioners, it includes doudou blankies, and cot bumpers and pillows and duvets. And so moms are told to have a very sterile space just with a mattress. My advice, and listening to what you've said, I think probably you and I have spoken about this before because it's certainly the advice that I do give out. The first thing is that babies have to have a comforter object, and that's because when they work out that the object, which is mom or dad, the love object is not part and parcel of them and is sometimes apart from them.
They actually really do need something that they can latch onto and settle themselves with. And it's very important and particularly as they have nine months, which is going to be a sleep regression associated with separation anxiety. Sorry, there are is another one coming.

**Cass:** Yeah.

**Meg:** But when that happens, we want them to have this comfort object. So the first thing is that they're very important, and the second thing is, and I loved what you said, to keep it small. By and large mums, try and keep it, if it's a square piece of fabric, try and keep it to under 15 centimeter square. And the reason for that is exactly what Max is doing is that babies do tend to put them on their face and you want them to be small enough that there's actually, they're never kind of wrapping around their head and down towards their ears and kind of suffocating them, so you want it to be fairly small.

The next principle, which I know that we must have spoken about Cass, because you've done it, is that you have got to have four, and that is a very important rule. And I think I said to you right at the beginning, I said, if somebody gives you that gorgeous, unique, soft toy from Harrod’s; like either go and Red Harrod’s, three backups, or go and get something more simple, and in some ways, the most simple ones are the best ones, because they're things that can be replaced.

The other thing that I love about what you've said, Cass, is that you are rotating them and that you kind of having them, because as you mentioned Max is bringing them to his nose and a lot of the comfort that actually is derived from doudou blankies, is in the smell. And the problem is that after a while, and you'll see this when it's a two-year-old doudou blankie, it'll be a little bit stinky. It does happen. Is it some parents in their wisdom try and take the stinky doudou blankie away and replace it with the identical doudou blankie, but brand new off the shelf and it is immediately rejected because it's just not the same. And so, we want these doudou blankies to be rotated in and we want a backup plan as well, which is exactly what you've mentioned.

 **Cass:** Yeah. And actually while he has one, I have the other one in my bed, so I'm constantly the one he's getting next, I've got my comforter.

 **Meg:** I love it. I really love that, Cass.

**Commercial Break**
If you enjoy my podcast, I would like to share one of my favorite podcasts with you, The Honest Hour. Christina Masureik 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:** That is advice that I usually give to moms of little ones under nine weeks is to sleep with their little ones comforters for a while in their bed, so it smells of them. So by the time their little ones ready to start holding it, which is at about nine weeks, it actually already smells of mum. And so for those of you who are, have newborns who listening a baby under nine weeks can't hold a doudou blankie and there's no point in putting it in the cot with them, but a baby after nine weeks is starting to be able to hold and that's when we start to introduce it.

And then Cass, just one other thing that you mentioned, which is quite interesting, not a controversy but just different opinions around whether or not little ones carry their duties around with them. It's great that he is not needing it outside of the cot, so you can certainly continue with exactly as you're doing, but I am a real fan of doudou blankies in the toddler years. The toddler years, little ones are going through a lot emotionally and the ability to self-regulate their behavior and their emotions is like at the max; they're really working hard on staying calm, on dealing with separations, on just a whole lot of things. Starting a new playgroup, having a new sibling, whatever it is. I mean there's a list as long as an arm of what a toddler goes through and that comfort object can provide comfort when moms can't. So I'm actually a fan of little ones having them when they're awake if they need them as well. He doesn't need it now, but I think if he does go through a patch where he's just grizzly, and he's just needing you, and he's not well, or whatever it is, having a doudou blankie outside of the cot is also a perfect solution.

 **Cass:** I have tried when he had a cold a few weeks ago, or when he is been teething, because I had read about giving it to them for comfort. I thought, “Oh I'll go and get Kimbo and see what happens and just…” Yeah, I had this image in my head of like cuddling my little boy and he'd have his little comforter and it was such a cute little picture and he just was not interested in Kimbo. He sort of…He was interested with him as he was with any toy, but it wasn't a sort of, “Oh there's my comforter and I love it.” He only seems to have that when he's going to sleep.

 **Meg:** And it brings up such a fascinating thing about little ones is that the way that we train them or what we do with them becomes what they'll expect. And you know, I've often said to moms for instance, they ask, can my little one just always sleep in the pram on the go and can we go out for dinner and let them sleep under the table in the restaurant? You know, does that work? Well, it works when they're little, but the minute they start to have associations, they start to associate things very strongly and actually it can completely disrupt sleep. What's interesting about what Max is doing is that his association is so strong that Kimbo is associated with sleep, that he cannot actually generalize Kimbo into another context, which is really amazing. So, I mean it just shows how as parents, you know, I mean, and if it was feed to sleep, you can imagine that would be the thing that he would associate.

So what we've developed for him, and what you've developed for him is a sleep association that is really healthy critically because it can be used independently. And I think people freak out about sleep associations and they say, I don't want my baby to have a sleep association. And moms, in fact, even you asked me, what about the sleep association for white noise? My opinion on it is that if it's something they can use without you there, go for it. And that includes things like a Kimbo, a doudou blankie, white noise, all of those things are great because they can be used independently and even in the toddler years, bottle of water is an example. People wonder about giving water, just leaving water in the cot. Nothing wrong with that because it's not disrupting their appetite, it's not having an impact on health, but it's an association they can use independently.

 **Cass:** Yeah. Sometimes when he's being looked after by granny, granny does not like the white noise, and so she tells me she forgets to put the white noise on. I'm not sure, but he does and then she's very proud because she'll say he slept absolutely fine. I forgot the white noise, but he didn't seem to have a problem.

 **Meg:** That's funny

 **Cass:** So, I don’t know if the white noise is an association, but I think for me the white noise has become more of a thing for us because we are in a small cottage. You know, it means when I know the white noise is on, I'm a little bit more relaxed about having to sneak around and not make any noise because, and we lock now, you know, even when we're locking the door when he was a baby, we used to like really gently take the one key that we needed and try and not make any noise and turn. Now, we pick up the bunch, we turn the keys, and he doesn't even flinch. But, I don’t know if that's…

 **Meg:** Well, it's interesting. I mean you mentioned that about the white noise and him not needing it at your mom's house and you know, actually that is one of the things with sleep associations that's quite great is that over time little ones stopped needing them specifically. And so if you did decide maybe we don't feel like playing the white noise anymore, you could do an experiment night and see how he sleeps in your home without it. And that's exactly what happens is that we start to remove all the support crutches, which are very important in the early days. We start to remove them as our little ones become better and better at self-regulating their estate. So you can try that, you can see whether or not he doesn't need the white noise, but otherwise leave it.

 **Cass:** Yeah, we're doing the experiment nights whenever he is at his granny’s.

 **Meg:** There you go. There you go. Cass, what an interesting chat today, thank you so much. And I think the next time we speak, he'll be even obviously even closer to seven months old.

 **Cass:** Yes, he'll be indeed.

 **Meg:** Excellent. Great, Cass, thanks for the chat.

 **Cass:** Thanks 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.