Weaning and milestones at 6+ months

**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 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 maker every week to make the most of that first year of your little one's life. And now meet your host.

**Meg**: Welcome back mums and dads. Always good to be here with you. I'm Meg Faurer, I'm an occupational therapist and infant specialist. I've been working with babies for over 25 years in my private practice, predominantly with sleep problems and feeding problems. But my passion is really, are typically developing little ones and how we can actually parent in a way that prevents and short circuits difficulties later. And it optimizes our little one’s development along the way. And so, each week, I'm joined by somebody who helps me along that journey. So sometimes, it's an expert who'll talk to us about a topic like we've recently had Kath McGraw speaking about weening or we might have Sammy Davies speaking about choking. So, we have specialists who come on alongside me. And then of course, we have our regular mums who come alongside me too. And for any of you who've been following Cassidy's journey, you'll know that the person we speak to most is Cass. She has a little 28-week-old baby boy Max, who is this robust, gorgeous little fellow. And his little challenges and the joys and delights he brings become our story. And that's the story we talk about each week where Cass talks about what's happened in Max's week. And I then give the input on what that means or what you can, how you can interpret it. And so, I'm really, really delighted to welcome back 28 with Mum Cassidy, mum of Max. Welcome Cass.

**Cass**: Thank you. Hi Meg.

**Meg**: Hi. It's always good to have you back on Cass. And how was our big boy this week?

**Cass**: Yeah, I feel like we've started to settle into a really nice routine now. I think when you start to introduce three meals a day, I certainly have mentioned before this, it can feel a bit overwhelming and you think, oh my gosh, how am I going to have the time for that and what am I going to do? And I mentioned last week we were in France and you know, during that it's not the first time I've noticed when you go away, sometimes things become even easier. You feel like they're going to be harder, but you are forced to see what your baby is actually capable of. And so, I'm now much more relaxed around meals and things like that. He's eating really well now. We've had problems with his solids in the past. But things like when we were away, we'd go out for lunch and you're sort of thinking, oh I've got to take all of his food and what's he going to have? And I just have started taking things from our food and putting them on his highchair while we're all sitting around the table at a restaurant. And we were able to have three course meals with my family while we were in France while he sat. And he was fascinated by all these different things. Cucumber is an absolute fave

**Meg**: Brilliant.

**Cass**: I think it probably also helps the teething, but you know, bits of baguettes that he could sort of suck on.

**Meg**: Love that.

**Cass**: And tend to stand broccoli, all those sorts of things. And I was just picking things off and giving them to him. Also taking his purees with us and giving him some of that before I did the picking off and giving. But it just helped me become a lot more relaxed around his mealtimes. And as a result, we've actually moved now towards, I was doing the meal plans for next week and we're going to be doing a thing of where I'm going to and taking recipes from his weaning books and then we will eat that as well.

**Meg**: Lovely.

**Cass**: And so rather than having to think, okay, what is Max going to have and what are we going to have, I feel we're now at a stage where I'm comfortable to all be sharing the same foods.

**Meg**: You have got the weaning sense book, haven't you?

**Cass**: Yes, I have. Yeah.

**Meg**: So, I can just tell you that in that recipe book, there are the most incredible recipes. And there's a risotto that is, you know, it’s adult food. It's gorgeous.

**Cass**: I think it's a gift. Mushroom risotto.

**Meg**: Yeah. It's properly yummy. And I mean that's how we designed that book is because we wanted children to have mature flavors right from the get-go. And so right from the start, his weaning journey would've been more flavorful than if you were following a jarred diet as it were. But it's quite interesting when you talk about weaning and I think there's so many different theories on weaning and for those of you who are interested, please do go back, and listen to my episode with Kath McGraw. It was unbelievably informative when it came to looking at weaning. And so, there's been theories on when to introduce and what to introduce and then they became a fad. It was in the early noughties, there was a fad to do baby led weaning. And the theory behind classic baby led weaning and stripped baby led weaning is that your baby has absolutely no mushed food at all. And so right from the get-go, they actually have whole food, whole steamed food in their hands.

Now, the reality is that babies are only able to do that at around about this age. So, as they're purchased seven months because they don't have the fine motor dexterity to get the food to their mouth and they also don't have the gag reflex integration to be able to tolerate highly textured foods. And so, you could not have a four, five or six-month-old baby doing baby-led weaning or starting their weaning journey on baby-led weaning. And so that's why in weaning sense, we talk about modified baby-led weaning, which is starting off with the mush, which is exactly how you did start. And then transitioning onto the baby-led weaning. And actually, by the time he's about nine months old, you'll probably be doing 75% of his intake would be from himself and only 25 from yourself. And that’s the beautiful, I call it the dance. You know, where right now it's you who has the main responsibility, which is why you're taking in your moshed food and you're offering that and he's just doing maybe 10% of what he's taking in and a whole meal is what he's self-feeding. But it's going to switch. And that's the beauty of it. That's how he'll take independence. So, I absolutely love that he's done it and it's a classic time in which any baby, not just a kid who's on holiday with his phones, but any baby should be having, being exposed to baby laid weening. It's perfect edge for it.

**Cass**: Yeah. It also kept him entertained. He was fascinated by what was going on and how to pick it up. And if he dropped it, that took quite a lot of concentration to pick it up again. And with the bread, for example, if he was, because he didn't actually consume any of the bread because he didn't, didn't have the power to bite off pieces of the baguette.

**Meg**: Yes.

**Cass**: But he was… and the other thing I was doing is sometimes dipping the bread into his puree because if we were eating or he wasn't really interested in his puree because he was thinking, Hmm, you look like you've got something a bit more interesting. I was dipping the bread in and he would be sucking that. So, he was getting his bits in

**Meg**: And that's actually one of the perfect things that we talk about, which is using food as utensils because he doesn't have the dexterity to use a spoon and he won't have that dexterity for a while. But to use chunks of food to actually have him dip into, and I mean lovely ideas is to like use that cucumber and dip it into homo as an example or into mashed avo. And both homos and mashed avo are incredible when it comes to fats and proteins. So, you really do want them to be doing that kind of smuggles board of dipping. It's a really fabulous way to get it in.

**Cass**: Yeah. It's funny you mentioned about the spoon because he is quite a determined. Sometimes, not so much for breakfast but for lunch and dinner, I will think he's not hungry. And then, I'll remember to give him an opportunity where I just put the bowl and the spoon in front of him and then suddenly he's really hungry and I have to put a little bit on the spoon but leave it in the bowl. I can't take it to his mouth. And then he will pick up the spoon, it will do a bit of a tour from the back of his head to his mouth but leaving, leaving some remnants in his hair and alongside of his face. But it will eventually make it to his mouth and then he'll finish that spoon.

**Meg**: So cute.

**Cass**: And then I have to take it off him again, put a bit more on, leave it in the bowl and that's how and then he will eat.

**Meg**: Yes. That's incredible. I mean that's incredible and that's classic learning for him. He really is practicing so that's really good to hear. Really amazing.

**Cass**: Yeah. And the other thing actually that he loves, although he is not good at doing it by himself, but he absolutely goes mad for his water after his meal. He's got a little beaker and I'm trying to teach him to hold the handles to tilt it to kind of put, but I mean it's chaos.

**Meg**: Yes.

**Cass**: But when I do it for him and tilt in his mouth, he has learned how to drink it out the beaker and he is…it's like he lives in a desert the way he responds to the water, he can't get enough of it. He absolutely loves it. I have to pull it away because I think, oh my gosh we don't have enough nappies in the world to deal with the other water that you are.

**Meg**: Well that's, I mean that's another really good point that you bring up because I'm often asked when we introduce water and particularly for moms of younger babies. So, let me first preface it by saying, if a little one is on solids at… and at four months old is on solids and breast milk, there's no need for water because breast milk is so incredibly intuitive. It actually will be more dilutive if that's what your baby needs. So, you don't need to do that. But from four months old, if you are in a combination of formula and solids, you actually do want to start to introduce water after a feed. And how you're doing it is exactly right. So, 30 to 60 mils of water after a feed is exactly how to do it. And because you did that right from the get-go, it's now something he expects and loves.

And then obviously as soon as they're over six months of age, water becomes increasingly more important. And so just a couple of principles here. The reason why water is important is partly because there's less hydration when they move off a milk diet into a solids diet. And so, we want to prevent constipation. And constipation actually is quite common with little ones. We've moved on to solids. So that's where the water comes in. And then the second thing is, which I just learned recently was as soon as we into protein intake with our little ones, we need to protect their kidneys. So, they actually do need quite high doses of water to move through to flush their kidneys and particularly if they're on high protein diets. So little ones where parents are focusing in on proteins, which of course we are because it's important, proteins break down into those kinds of essential, there's essential amino acids that are needed for brain development.

So, you know, you do want high protein diet but you also actually want to then have water afterwards. So, it’s spot on that he's doing that. And just while we are on the subject of water, I just want to point out to moms that the one thing you should not be offering your little one at all is fruit juice. And so little ones need to eat their fruit and even if that's in one of those little sacks where they're sucking the juice up, that's fine because they're getting the fiber but they do need to not be having any fruit juice in their diet and water then is the preference.

**Cass**: Yeah. He has his little once a day frozen berry in his teething sucky thing that he absolutely loves. Sometimes because one of the weaning sense recipes is beetroot and berries. So, what I've been doing, if that's in his meal, I don't give him the frozen berry. Can I still give him the frozen berries? Is that probably too much berry?

**Meg**: No, definitely. No, there's no problem with too much berry, lots of vitamin c very, very much needed. And remember vitamin c is so critically important for the absorption of calcium and lots of other reasons. So, you definitely do want lots of vitamin c in their diet

**Cass**: So, for example, I mean this morning he had carrot cake porridge so there was no fruit in it but that his, one of his favorites, there's apple pie porridge that I sort of said about where it's pure esteemed apple, a pincher cinnamon, and a little drop of vanilla essence in his porridge.

**Meg**: I love it.

**Cass**: Yeah, it's absolutely delicious

**Meg**: But that is delicious.

**Cass**: Well, I have so much fun now because I’m comfortable with putting the spices and things, I sort of make things up as I go along.

**Meg**: I love it. Yeah.

**Cass**: But if he had apple and then he wants to have a berry, I sort of worry. Obviously, fruit has got the fructose in it. So, is there apple, if he's had a fruit puree for lunch, jam dinner, should I avoid?

**Meg**: No problem.

**Cass**: It's okay?

**Meg**: Yeah. Absolutely, no problem. I would be giving him as much fruit as he wants and as he enjoys. And then just on that, I don’t know if you've noticed one of the recipes in the app is a pear and cardamom porridge

**Cass**: Yes. Yeah.

**Meg**: And cardamom. Oh, my goodness. It's such a fabulous flavor and such an advanced mature flavor that little ones can get used to. Have you tried that one?

**Cass**: No, I actually need to buy some ground cardamom because I've only…I just don't have time to grasp. I need to get some more cardamom So but I'm really looking for… I've got the pear purees in there.

**Meg**: It’s true.

**Cass**: And actually, I need to start using… I've been using the book a lot for the recipes because I go through with a meal plan with my book in front of me and I have got some ideas like the, I can't remember what it's actually called, but it's like greens with cream cheese and things like the green mix from the app.

**Meg**: Yeah.

**Cass**: And a lot of recipes like that. But I need to go and review them again to get new ideas because I'm starting to look for new things. But the other thing, because there's one recipe, I think it's cake and sweet potato, something else.

**Meg**: Mm-hmm.

**Cass**:

I did sea bass for him the other day but I didn't actually break down the sea bass. He had mash soup potato, he had one of those compartment plate things. And I had the soup potato on one side and flakes of the sea bass so that he actually fed himself with it.

**Meg**: Perfect.

**Cass**: And he seemed to really enjoy that. Sometimes, the fish would spend quite a long time just in his mouth and then it would fall out because I think he’s super unsure. But he got there eventually. He seemed to love it.

**Commercial Break**

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**Meg**: And Cass, when you talk about him eating whole food, because this will give a lot of moms like the complete heebie-jeebies thinking about their baby taking in whole pieces of sea bass as an example. So, was there a time at which he would gag a lot? Have you ever worried about choking? Is this something that's ever been on your radar?

**Cass**: Yeah, so he still does gag at times and he'll sort of give a bit of a retch or something.

**Meg**: Yeah.

**Cass:** And his eyes will kind of fill with water and go a bit red and I'm always right there and if I need to give him a little tap on the back to help. But before he was born, I did a first aid course for choking with babies and toddlers because I wanted to just know that I had the confidence; should anything happen, I knew what to do. But I also had done a lot of reading about how gagging was fine and actually not necessarily a bad thing.

**Meg:** Yeah. It's a good thing. Mm-hmm.

**Cass:** Yeah. And that they will do that a lot mm-hmm. But it's obviously, they're choking and looking out for the differences between the two. And I am very careful on choking hazards and looking at how to cut up certain foods that are choking hazards. For example, I'll never give them a grape or something like that. There have been times as well where something has come off a bit bigger. I can't even think out what something might be, but it's come off a bit bigger, it's broken in a certain way and I just sort of cook it out, if that does happen. But it's quite rare usually I'm either the chopping things up very small or making sure that anything that is going into his mouth is, I call it melty.

**Meg:** Like pushable.

**Cass**: Exactly. Yeah.

**Meg:** Yeah. Absolutely. Well, you've certainly covered all the bases that I would've mentioned. I think it is important for moms to recognize the difference between choking and gagging. We actually have just loaded in a course into the app on choking. It's run by nursing system out of Australia. It is absolutely the most exceptional course on choking. It is part of a CPR course, but you can just do this choking piece. So, it's actually loaded as choking on the app. And what's very interesting is when I was going through it, because obviously, I review every course that goes onto the app very carefully and I was going through it and one of the videos that Sammy puts into the course is this video on YouTube of a baby gagging. And my blood pressure rose immediately just watching it. I mean it was like, oh my goodness, is this baby going to be okay? But it was just a gag and you know, gagging can be look terrifying because as you say, eyes are watering. They've got this ha, ha, ha sound going on and it really can freak you out, but it's actually not a bad thing.

And gagging is really, really important because it is one of the precursors that actually prevents a little one from choking. And so, we do think that gagging is important. Obviously choking is not important. Choking is something that we want to avoid and that involves a complete abstraction. And babies are silent when that happens. And I had a very scary incident with my own son, with my eldest who choked on marshmallows. He was two years old. I was 9-months pregnant with his sister who was born a week later and he got to a birthday party and stuffed three marshmallows into his mouth. I don’t know if you knew this, but marshmallows are one of the highest risk products on the market if you can imagine for choking. And the reason why is that as it goes down it expands with moisture. And so, there's just no way to get it out, you know, and that you can slam out. But when you've got to choke with a marshmallow doesn't. So, a baby should not have marshmallows ever. And thank goodness somebody at this birthday party had knew CPR, knew infant CPR, and literally saved James' life. So yeah, it is scary when you have a choking incident. But for that one choking incident I had with James, I probably had 2000 gagging incidents and they are totally nothing to worry about.

**Cass**: Well again, my slightly nutty son seems to really enjoy gagging because of this. This smile comes across, he's got these watering eyes and he’s looking at you being like, ah, isn't this funny? But he is always found coughing and sneezing really funny.

**Meg**: But you know, it's quite interesting Cass and you know, little one’s reference everything off their parents' emotions. So, if you were standing there while he was gagging looking utterly panic stricken and screaming, Alex come and help me. You know, if you did a bit of that, he wouldn't be having a smiley face. He would have a panic stricken face every time it happened. And that's one of the things that I often say to moms is just be careful about what your facial expression is doing during a mealtime because if your little one is eating something that you don't like and you're pulling your face about it, then no wonder they're going to end up being fussy. And likewise, with gagging, if your pudding all these faces and panicking all the time, it creates an anxiety around meal terms, which is not needed.

**Cass**: We're actually trying to do the same because he's sitting now, but every now and again he will sort of talk to one side or behind, we're working on not reacting. If he starts actually crying, then of course a burn

**Meg:** Lots of love and cuddles. Yeah.

**Cass:** Yeah. But not going, oh my gosh, are you okay? Or you know, just going, oh dear, you're fine. You know, sort of that sort thing because I think from what I've learned, if you can try and avoid reacting from the offset, then they’re sort of more likely to get us brush themselves off later down the line.

**Meg**: Exactly. Completely. Yeah. And Cass, I mean we’ve talked quite a bit about his feeding this week. What's going on for him developmentally,28 weeks? So, what's going on?

**Cass**: Yeah. So, I mentioned last week he always wants to be doing the next thing. So, he rolls onto his front and he now push himself up. So, he is on his hands and his knees or sometimes even just his feet and he'd like really holds himself headphones quite long time.

**Meg:** It's incredible.

**Cass:** But it's like he's going, okay guys, there’d ought to do

**Meg**: That’s amazing.

**Cass**: And then he does sort of collapses. So, he looks like he is about to start crawling and my mom keeps saying, oh Cassie is so close to crawling. And I think it's quite a big leap from that to moving his body independently and that sort of thing. So, he's pushing himself up and I mean he looks really strong when he's doing it. And we used also talked about night sleeps last week. He kind of regressed and was had gone back to one or two, then we came back from France. Obviously, that messed everything because the hour changed did not work in our favor. So, when it was two o'clock in France it was now one o'clock here. So, we've had a couple of nights of him waking up at about half 12, which was really early. But last night, he woke up half two and then I actually got up, made his milk and then we spoke as well about the monitor last week. I looked at the monitor and he was just kind of rolling around and I listened to the noise and he wasn't crying. So, I left him and he fell back asleep and then woke up again at four. And so, what I've decided to start doing is actually taking one full feed prepped and one-half seed prep to bed and if he wakes up before three, he'll get the full feed and if he wakes up after three, he gets the half seed and then doing the other half seed, because otherwise it does really throw his routine.

**Meg**: Or what you could do is you could give him the full feed regardless and then just drop that morning bottle. And then bring breakfast forward, which we also spoke about last week, which would get him into a routine of a breakfast mid-morning bottle and the lunchtime.

**Cass**: Yeah. And actually, I think that is probably a really good idea because even this morning, I mean he'd had his full feed at 4:00 AM and he just wasn't interested in his milk. And he is loving breakfast at the moment. I mean the other day because I always put a little bit in a bowl for me to have as well with him.

**Meg**: I love that. That's social eating, which we've spoken about, which is so important.

**Cass**: Yeah. But the other day, I couldn't eat mine because he wanted mine as well. He finished his and then was still leaning toward with his mouth. So, in fact that was the apple ply porridge. So, sleeping wise things are great. He's pushing himself up. We've also, I've started playing with bubbles with him, which he absolutely loves.

**Meg:** I love it.

**Cass:** And he's just mesmerized by them. But the possibly, I think we're starting to see the first signs of separation anxiety. He is a little bit harder, which I've never, and not been able to leave him in a room to entertain himself. And he is now just shouting a little bit. He's just a bit like, hello. Not sure how feel about this. So, when I'm pottering in the kitchen, I actually now am putting his bouncy chair in the kitchen with me rather than leaving him to play with his toys.

**Meg**: That's lovely.

**Cass:** I could always see him in the sitting room but now he's… honestly, I don't know if he's weirdly strong, but he will lie with his head up watching wherever it is. And then he has to let his head go back to rest a bit. He's doing like these full-on sit-ups; it's incredible. And then watches. So, he just wants to be able to see. So, I just let him and he just loves watching. He will watch you potter. I can do the washing, I can do cooking now. Just loves watching as long as he can see. But I think possibly that …is that the start of separation of time?

**Meg**: Yeah. It absolutely could be. So yeah, I mean, just talking to him, look, I mean if he can still see you, it's probably not separation anxiety because separation anxiety is specifically when you're out of sight. So, he's probably more, and you know, he is a bit of a social butterfly. He just doesn't want to massage, you know, a little bit of FOMO, like, hold on, you're going to be packing the washing machine without me. Like, hey that’s fine.

**Cass**: I can't wait until the day, I can say it's okay, you do it.

**Meg**: No, just you wait. All the moms of older babies are now giggling because what he's going to do is put everything in their washing machine and one day, you're going to come and unload the washing machine and you'll take out your cell phone at the end of the washing.

**Cass:** That’s so.

**Meg:** Just watch what he puts into the washing machine.

**Cass**: Oh. A friend of mine wants to put himself when we were babies into the washing machine.

**Meg**: Oh Cass. Well as usual, it's been absolutely wonderful to journey along with Max. He is really, he's a classic baby. He is showing us all the right things to do and all the things that can go wrong as well. And he's been a wonderful sample baby, so thank you for sharing his journey with us. It's a huge privilege for us.

**Cass**: Well, thank you so much for all the words of wisdom and keeping me sane. It's like, I feel like this is like therapy session every week.

**Meg**: Well, you know, it's quite interesting. So many moms email me and say, oh my gosh. Or message me on social media, particularly when I have an Instagram live every Friday and they come on, they go, oh my gosh, I'm pregnant and I'm following Cassidy's journey. So, people really are following it because they want to know exactly what's coming next for their own babies. And what's incredible, I mean, it blows me away every time is that the things that we say in this session are pretty much textbook for most babies of that age. Some of them, you know, he's been a little bit advanced. And some of them, he's also had regressions where other babies haven't, you know. But on the whole, it's really, really quite universal what goes on for babies.

**Cass**: Yeah. And I have to say it is becoming more and more fun. He's really developing into a little person now. And we sat this morning just with singing nursery rhymes and he just, absolutely. You know, no toys, nothing like that, just sitting, facing each other, singing nursery rhymes.

**Meg**: But now, this little boy comes from quite a famous musical family, I think. And so, I think that musical gene is going to possibly… and you know, and that's something, I mean we're coming to the close, but it's something that's important to talk about is that, you know, genetic potential is important. Genetic potential is nothing without exposure. And so, if by any chance Max does actually have this gifted musical gene, which is a distinct possibility from Alex's side of the family, it's very, very important that he's exposed to music, more important than it is for anything else because it could be that that's where he's going to go. So, that's why we need to make sure that there's lots of wonderful exposure to music for him.

**Cass**: Yeah. I think he saw a video of his grandfather playing guitar to him and he was just…

**Meg:** Enthralled?

Cass: … in awe. Yeah. It was fabulous. Yeah.

**Meg**: And babies are wired by music. It's the rhythm, it's the tone that it’s so important. And you know, these researches have been done. It's looked and they've called it the Mozart effect that, you know, if you play Mozart to babies, are they more brilliant? And I think that some of the research has been kind of proven to not, maybe not necessarily be as well found as it should have been. But there are actually other theories that do show that the rhythm of music, and particularly classical music, which has very distinct rhythms, is important for the special awareness that goes into Max actually later on. And so, there is this connection. So, I think it is a very good thing, regardless of whether or not he's going to be musically brilliant, you know, he needs to have the exposure.

**Cass**: Although in the car, he did seem to really enjoy some quite hard rock music.

**Meg: [crosstalk 27:36]**

**Cass:** So, I’m not sure subject that.

**Meg**: Okay, great. Well that's also good for them. So, I definitely do think that playing music regardless of what it is, is important.

**Cass**: That’s great.

**Meg**: That's wonderful. Thank you, Cass. And we'll chat again next week.

**Cass**: Thanks so much, Meg.

**Meg**: All right. Cheers.

**Cass:** Bye

**Meg:** Bye.

**Outro**

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