Gentle sleep coaching & co-regulation

**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 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. It is always my pleasure to have you join me here on the Sense by Meg Faure, a podcast where each week we are either joined by an expert or by an expert mom, A mom who has had a little one and is at the rock face. And we kind of explore all of those little niggles and the joys and the delights and the journey of early parenting. So, this week we are joined by Christina Masureik and I'm super excited to have her on here with me. Christina and I have worked together kind of probably over about the last four years, maybe a little longer than that. Christina, welcome today.

**Christina:** Thank you. I'm so excited to be here as well. I think you're right. I think it is about four years. I think I met you when my middle child was about one year old.

**Meg:** Excellent. Okay, so you've now alluded to the fact that you have three little ones.

**Christina:** Yes.

**Meg:** Christina has three little boys. She lives in the South Peninsula of the Western Cape, which is actually where I raised my little ones when they were tiny. So I was thinking about you in Kommetjie. I lived in Noordhoek when my babies were born and absolutely loved being in that South Peninsula area while my kids were little. It's divine.

**Meg:** It really is fabulous. Christina's also has the Honest Hour Podcast, and this podcast is absolutely amazing. It's a really a space where people are honest, convincing each other of their discovered truth about something, is the way that Christina encapsulates it. It's around people's work, their story, their relationships, their experiences, and their worldview. And it's a wonderful podcast to listen to. So if you haven't hopped over there, do go and have a proper listen to Christina's podcast. It really is fabulous. And you can also find her at the Honest Hour Podcast on Instagram as well. So, today I'm really, really excited because Christina is going to be exploring her journey with her new baby. And Christina, I think by way of introduction, can you just let us know how old your little ones are and actually where you are in your journey?

**Christina:** Yeah, sure. Thank you so much for that introduction. I really appreciate it. I'm so grateful to be here with you again today. It's always such an honor to get your wisdom and your knowledge. So, for myself and the listeners, we're all blessed to hear from you. Where I am now; so, I have three little boys, as you said. My youngest was born on the 15th of July as quite a bit of an early surprise with a bit of a drama entrance. I'm sure we'll have a little bit of time to go into that. He is going on almost 16 weeks old now. My middle child is five years old and then my oldest is seven years old. So, seven, five, and three months.

**Meg:** And so, I remember when you and I last spoke, I said to you, that is my gap to the letter. I mean, I literally had a seven-year-old, a five year old and a newborn. So I was dealing with somebody trying to learn to read in grade one, the juggle of preschool as well, and then of course a newborn baby. So, the juggle is real in your life.

**Christina:** The juggle is real. There are a lot of moving parts. Life is very interesting. There's not a dull moment, but there's so much joy. I can't say that enough. I feel very blessed. I love being a mama to three boys of these ages.

**Meg:** Yeah. It's very, very precious. And I mean three boys, I can remember because I had a boy and then I had a girl and a girl. So, I found my boy to be incredibly busy and completely frenetic. And life with him was never dull. I mean there was always a trip to the ER for stitches or you know, there was always something going on with James. I mean, he once painted his sister's cheeks with red nail polished. I mean he just…If there was something to be done, he was doing it. And so, I've always thought this has got to be a boy thing. But then on the other hand, I know that we have sensory personalities that make children different. Are your little ones very different? I mean when you gauge them now kind of at the 17 weeks, 16, 17-week age, are they very different?

**Christina:** Yeah. So, that's a really good question and it's one I get a lot. I think parents are always discussing these boys versus girls or child versus child. And having three boys myself, in my opinion, I think it has to do with their sensory profile and the just sort of their own genetic makeup; the personality that they're born with. My oldest child is incredibly sensitive. He's so sweet and kind. He's a people pleaser of absolute note almost to his own detriment. So that's something we're working on, is building his confidence in many ways. And the younger one than him, so my middle child, he is full of beans. He's so funny. He sounds similar to your James as you described. And what's interesting is that he has a lot in common with his female cousin who is just a year younger than him. So, she's also full of beam.

**Meg:** Yeah.

**Christina:** And so that's why I also think it's just so much to do with their personality and who they are. And then obviously my littlest one, we are just still getting to know his personality. It's going to unfold in the coming years. But he's a really good baby. They were actually all really good babies. Yeah, I think that answers your question about the differences in personality and behavior and what we deal with with each one. It's a different journey completely.

**Meg:** It is, absolutely. And those sensory personalities are, it's just such a key thing. And for those who are listening, if you haven't listened to my podcast and the sensory personalities do go and look it up, it really is, it's actually our most downloaded podcast. I think people are absolutely fascinated with finding out who their little one is and what kind of drives their behavior. Certainly, James was that live wire that, you know, kind of busy one what I call now social butterfly. And he still is a sensory seeker, doesn't self-regulate very well, pushes himself over the age because he is always seeking stimulation. Wow. You know, all it's all in the package and, and he's in his twenties now. So, that certainly is much more around their genetics and their wiring I think than we give it credit for.

**Christina:** Yeah, that's very interesting.

**Meg:** Yeah, and you said that your journey… and your little one, what is his name?

**Christina:** Connor.

**Meg:** Connor.

**Christina:** Connor Francis, yes.

**Meg:** Precious boy, sounds very Irish. Is there Irish in the family?

**Christina:** Absolutely not. It's so funny. My oldest boy is Everett, my middle one is Lincoln and then my youngest is Connor. And they actually—so many people say, oh they're all very American names which is funny because the most American of the lot is Lincoln. And my South African husband chose that name. I have never met a Lincoln or an Everett in my life. And then Connor sounds very Irish as them. It's a very stereotypical Irish name. And no, neither one of us are Irish. No Irish family, never been there, but I just love the name.

**Meg:** It's a gorgeous name for a gorgeous boy. And he is a settled baby it sounds like. I mean the fact that he's already settling into a routine, and he is doing so well?

**Christina:** It's amazing. But I mean where he is now compared to where he was about four weeks ago is absolute chalk and cheese. I would say between weeks nine and eleven, even maybe eight and eleven, it was really difficult. I just felt like I couldn't understand what he needed; he was never finishing a bottle. He sort of always seemed hungry, then always seemed full. He wasn't sleeping well at night. I didn't know what his routine should be. I didn't know how long he's supposed to be awake or when he should be sleeping. And then I would say it was like the day before, he was exactly 12 weeks, so the last day of the 11th week we had a really, really bad night where he woke up on the hour every hour. And I just thought to myself like first of all, this is definitely not sustainable and second of all, I think there is probably an easy solution here.

So, I just first of all wished that our podcast was right at that time so we could chat about it. And then second of all, I started to do a ton of research and spoke to a lot of friends and yeah, we sort of got ourselves together and helped him regulate. I understood a lot more about awake windows and feeding times and you know, what his days are supposed to look like at that stage. And within two days he was waking up twice a night for a feed within a week. It was once a night and in the last 10 days he sleeps through the night.

**Meg:** Wow. That's incredible.

**Christina:** Uh, amazing, and that's very similar to my other baby.

**Meg:** How many weeks did you say he was exactly?

**Christina:** He's almost 16 weeks.

**Meg:** Almost 16 weeks, okay.

**Christina:** The last 10 days, he goes to bed anywhere between 6:00 and 7:30 in the evening and then he wakes up anywhere between 5:30 and 7:00 in the morning. That’s usually about 11 hours.

**Meg:** Yeah, it really is amazing. But you actually alluded to some very interesting things there. So first of all, and you've know this, the first three months is the patch of dis-regulation where little ones are just feeling a little bit more fussy often because they're overstimulated. And what often happens and might have happened at that time for you, and you mean you can let me know if this is what was going on, is that little one is niggly, we are not sure if they're hungry or full. And so we feed and we start to feed and we can end up actually in a cycle of feeding like every two, two and a half hours because we're not really sure what's going on. And what that does is that when we are producing milk in that way and feeding our little ones in that way, we are giving them a lot of fore milk. So, a lot of that kind of really watery milk.

And even if we're doing formula, we are giving them a lot of lactose basically because fore milk is made up of a lot of milk sugars as obviously as formula as well has milk sugars. And when you're feeding frequently those milk sugars kind of buildup and they just quite simply do not have enough lactase, which is the enzyme that sits inside the tummy to break down that lactose. And it actually makes them a little more niggly because they end up with these slightly more lactose and intolerant looking poos. So there's kind of fluffy poos, that kind of very explosive poos. And so, they end up almost looking like they're lactose intolerant. Now of course this isn't that they're lactose intolerant because this is just really lactose overload and so it makes them more niggly.

**Meg:** And so of course what do we do? We then think they must be hungry and you've expressed it. Are they hungry? Are they full? And so we…

**Christina:** It's a frenzy cycle.

**Meg:** It's a frenzy. We don't know whether or not we should be feeding. So that's the first thing. The second thing is because they are feeding so frequently and because they are a little bit less comfortable because they've got all of that lactose, they then end up not sleeping very well in the day. And then if they're not sleeping well in the day, they don't sleep well at night. And we tend to see very frequent night wakings. So two hourly night wakings, linked with the two hourly day wakings. And so the babies of that age, so these are babies who passed the six week age going into, but in the last six weeks of that first trimester after birth, so six to 12 weeks old, quite a good thing to do is actually exactly what you did, which is number one, start to stretch those feeds out and make sure that you're giving them those nice little stretches where first of all, if you're breastfeeding, your body can build up the nice hind milk and if you're bottle feeding that you're not giving them too much milk for that lactose overload.

And then secondly, to start watching those awake times and yes that is, you know, very important. And on the Parent Sense App, that's actually what we do. We have the awake times on the top left widget, like the most central point in the, on the home dashboard. There's your awake time for that period, which at that age is around about an hour to a little bit over an hour. Um, and if you start watching those awake times, they settle more easily. And if you start stretching their feeds according to the suggested routine, you'll then also start to see that they actually start to feed more, feed better and well, not more frequently, but feed better at a feed and therefore have more of that hind milk and therefore stretch longer. And so that is, you know, you've kind of alluded to exactly what happens to many moms just before the little ones hit 12 weeks and you clearly handled it really, really well.

**Christina:** Well thank you. I still have so many questions and it's so fascinating what you said because when he was about six to eight weeks old, I actually started to think he had lactose intolerance because he had those frothy poos, and I did everything under the sun. I switched around all the different formulas. I put him on lactose free formula for ages. I took away the probiotics, I added back in the probiotics, I switched the probiotics. I learned all about different probiotics. I took him to the GP, the pediatrician, we've had an absolute journey. And then it was only when I started to regulate his awake windows and sleep times that everything started to come right. And that leads me to a really important question I have, and I think a lot of parents might have this and I'm still confused by it myself, even though we found a good rhythm here, is we hear people talking about awake windows, we hear people talk about sleep schedule and then we also hear about the feeding times. Then we also hear about the routine, which is the eat, play, sleep.

 Now for a baby my baby's age, they're supposed to be a wake round about 90 minutes, or that's what we've been doing, you can correct me. But when he wakes up we feed, that's what we've been programmed to do; wake up and then feed and then he is 90 minutes later going back to sleep again. And then he'll sleep anywhere between 45 and 120 minutes. So that means the time between each feed is not always the same. Sometimes I'm introducing a bottle again two hours later because I want him to understand that routine of eat, play, sleep and not getting into the habit of associating milk with going to sleep. Because then obviously it's going to make it difficult to sink his sleep cycles at night. So sometimes, often of the times, we don't have an exact day every day and we don't ever have a perfect day, if that makes any sense.

With my other two babies, I feel like they were a lot more self-regulated. Like I never had to analyze all of these things like I am now. With my first two babies, all I knew, I had an amazing clinic nurse, I still see her for this baby. And it's interesting because she and I are both observing how Connor is so different than my other two. But with my first two babies, all she did was write down for me a feeding schedule every time I saw her. And as long as I followed that three hourly-feed-schedule or four hourly-feed-schedule, the sleep and playtime in between and it worked itself out and they still slept all night long.

Whereas with Connor, when I've gone away from the eat, play, sleep and I've tried to stretch out his feeding time to make him feed more sufficiently and have more space between the feeds, I t messes up his sleep.

**Commercial Break**

This episode is brought to us by Parent 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:** Couple of things there; first of all, I'm always a fan of doing what works. So okay, if something's working for you then don't try and read the book, change it, you know, do anything. So if for instance the eat, play, sleep is something that you find works for you with shorter windows between feeds and he sleeps better at night, then just don't rock that boat, like that for me is very important. If it's not broke don't fix it. , I,

**Christina:** I agree.

**Meg:** Yeah, so that's the first principle. However, you bring up something really interesting. So we've got awake times which focus on sleep rhythms. We have got feed times which focus on feed rhythms and then we've got this thing of eat, play sleep. So let's start with the eat play sleep piece. But the eat play sleep piece came about for exactly the reason that you said is that we are trying not to associate feed with sleep. And so therefore if we feed and then we've got a gap of play, then our little ones won't actually be falling asleep on the breast or associating sleep with feeds. So, that's the principle.

The reality is actually that I think following a eat, play sleep rhythm or, and there's millions of other ideas on it, you know, kind of play, eat, sleep and all sorts of things, I think it's counterproductive. I don't think that you should necessarily be following that. The only principle in that which is correct is that don't feed too sleep. So in other words, if you are going to feed and a feed time does fall just be before sleep time, which can happen. And that, in fact, I personally do like that because there's an Afrikaans phrase that says ‘magie vol, ogies toe**,’** which means my tummy's full, my eyes will go down, you know, my eyes will sleep.

And so, it there is that kind of having a full tummy helps baby sleep and I don't therefore have a problem with feeds before sleeps as long as they are not associated with it. And by what I mean there is that as long as your baby's not falling asleep on the bottle or the breast. And I think that's the important principle with eat play sleep more than actually a full playtime just before they go to sleep. In fact, a full playtime just before they go to sleep when they're very little, it's not necessarily best thing because it's stimulating just before. So, I think the principle is if you are going to feed just before sleep time, like for instance in the evening you're going to be doing a 6:30 feed, and then they're going to be going down at seven and that's okay. There's nothing wrong with that. So, that's part of the reason why I do not like the eat, play, sleep theory. I don't think it works for babies. I think exactly what has happened for you becomes a conundrum. Like now it's time for a feed, but now it's just before the sleep. What am I going to do with this? I'll bring my feed earlier, which actually is counterproductive. And we've spoken about what that can do in terms of lactose intolerance and all sorts of things. Also very frequent day feeds do lead to frequent night feeds. So, I would throw, of the three things which is following awake windows, following feed routines, and following eat, play, sleep. I would throw that one out unless of course it's working for you, which I preface the whole conversation with.

The second principle, which is your feed times is important. So when your little ones are very small, so I'm talking under six weeks of age, demand feeding is important and so we don't have feed times. But certainly by the age that your little on is now, by 15 weeks, we are saying yes we must have feed times, regular feed times and at this age it would be three to four hour and I wouldn't be feeding him more frequently than that during the day. So it is saying right, it's going to be three to four hours, but let's say, let's come back to how we move that if it coincides with the sleep. Because the third thing that you mentioned is, of course, the awake time, which is incredibly, incredibly important because when you…

**Christina:** I found that the most important. Absolutely.

**Meg:** It's critically important. And the reason it's so important is that when you work with the neurotransmitters in the brain, you're going to be able to settle your baby to sleep much easier, or in fact they'll settle independently. So when you say that it's a 90 minute awake time right now, that means that after 80 minutes your little one's brain is starting to release the neurotransmitters that say I need to go to sleep because his kind of diurnal rhythms or his daily kind of dips in alertness are coinciding with exactly that time. Definitely follow the awake times. But now let's say your awake time happens to coincide with her feed time. And this is really interesting that we are having this conversation because we are about to, and actually by the time this podcast releases, it will be actually live on the app release what's called our responsive routine.
And that means that if a mom tracks her baby's data, her baby's sleep time and her feed time, the app will actually work out a daily routine for you.

**Christina**: Amazing.

**Meg**: It's an incredible algorithm. It's the biggest kind of development that we've done in the absence we released it. But one of the rules, so when you build an algorithm, you have to put rules into the algorithm. And I've put in a million rules into this because it has to be able to work for every eventuality.

**Christina:** Exactly.

**Meg:** But one of the rules is that if a baby's feed time and sleep time coincide within 15 minutes of each other, which one goes first. And so,

**Christina:** This is my dilemma.

**Meg:** Exactly. So the answer to that question is that if a feed falls within the first 20 minutes of a sleep, move the feed earlier. So bring it before the sleep. So in other words, if your sleep time is a 12 o'clock, let's just say, and your feed time is a 10 past 12:00, you must rather feed at like five to, quarter to, or twenty to 12. So bring it earlier, fit it in before the sleep and, in fact, the app will actually do that for you. So, the app will read that, it'll see what time your next feed is due. It'll actually suggest it to move before that sleep.

**Christina:** Okay.

**Meg:** If however, your feed is due 20 minutes after the sleep has started. So in other words, 20 minutes through until an hour after the sleep has started, then you can actually delay the feed until the sleep is done. And so you can put your little one down and you know they're probably not going to sleep more than 45 minutes then. And so that means your sleep might be feed might be 20 minutes late and that's fine, that doesn't matter. And so, that's kind of the rule of thumb of how we do it. But certainly the piece that you're trying to keep pretty steady is that awake window, you don't really want to shift that but your feed you can bring in a little bit earlier and you can bring in a little bit late.

**Christina:** Absolutely. I mean, since we've implemented, I've sort of done this own customized multi-prong approach to helping him regulate his routine with the feed and the sleep and the awake window and this eat, play, sleep routine since we've done this and most specifically focused on regulating his awake windows and sticking to that we've recognized that it is absolute clockwork. I mean, if we delay the sleep time by 15 minutes, it's way harder to get him to sleep, or if we do it a little bit too early and then he doesn't have a very good quality nap and then that totally derails the rest of the day. Well, not completely, but we just noticed that he seems like a fussier baby when we are not on top of his routine, but once we started to understand his developmental needs, his neurological needs, where he's at in his growth chart and what he needs that day, it's almost like we have to be very in tune with him and when we are, everything goes really well and, and literally, he's a different child; like he's so happy, so satisfied. He drinks nicely, he sleeps nicely, he's smiley, but if we are not on top of what's going on it does tend to snowball, and derail quite quickly.

**Meg:** Yeah. And I think, you know, on a neurotransmitter level, you know, as we get tired, and this goes for all of us, we've all experienced this, when you get tired you kind of hit a window. I mean you've had it on a Saturday afternoon as a new mom with a baby who was working at night, you would've had it where you just hit that moment where you're like, if I just closed my eyes now for five minutes I'll just like fall asleep. But you push through that and you get your second wind and your second wind can take you through for the next three hours or whatever it is as an adult. But there's a cost and that cost is that we need a little bit more adrenaline, a little bit more cortisol. And so we need a little bit more of the neurotransmitters to keep us alert and in preparation for engaging with the world. And that means that if those have been released, that cortisol and adrenaline, it is just that much harder to get to sleep and we've all experienced it. If we get overtime…

**Christina:** We kind of burned out.

**Meg:** Exactly. If your toddler gets overtired, you just can't get them to sleep. So that's why the awake windows we are working with the neurotransmitters and that's why it works so beautifully. What you've also alluded to, which I love in what you're talking about, is this word self-regulation because self-regulation at this time, so from 17 weeks to six months is our key window for developing self-regulation. Like we want to focus in on that because we know that if little ones start to self-regulate their sleep between 17 weeks and 24 weeks, they will be good sleepers. Like it's a given. But in order to help them self-regulate, there's a couple of things we have to do. One is we don't want them to get overtired because if you're overtired, this goes for all of us. Or if we stressed or if we're in pain, we cannot self-regulate.

And you'll know this five o'clock in the afternoon that temper tantrum that your five-year-old throws about something. You could deal with that fine at eight o'clock in the morning, but at five o'clock in the afternoon you are at the end of your tethers. Then, you might snap at them, you can't self-regulate yourself when you're tired and babies are the same. So, if we are keeping them in a good rhythm and a good routine, number one, they're going to be more likely to self-regulate.

 The second thing that's going to happen, and this is something that's going to be potentially a challenge that you're looking at. Although when you and I popped onto this podcast, you said to me, I'm just listening to what sounds Connor's making, I'm seeing him, he's settling himself. And that told me, it was an incredible message that you gave me because that told me that you were giving him the space to learn to self-regulate. I think, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, he was probably put down awake and he was making some niggling noises and you needed to work out if those niggling noises were going to escalate into distress or if those niggling noises were going to decrease into sleep. Am I right? Did I get it?

**Christina:** A hundred percent.

**Meg:** Since we've focused on this almost like sleep coaching plan, I've learned to understand the sounds of his, I won't even call it cries, because it's not even always cries, it's just…

**Meg:** Niggles.

**Christina:** …sounds. Like I know if he's going mm-hmm and sucking his fingers, he's soothing himself to sleep which is quite amazing to see. And I'm so proud of him because it's such a big thing for his little age and it's something they can achieve. I think it's a great gift that we can educate ourselves on this and give our children the opportunity to achieve it. It's just been amazing. But sometimes I can hear it's a very upset and usually what that means is he has a wind still and then I have to pick him up and it almost comes out immediately because it's quite sore for him. Most often, he's just really settling himself a bit and he's fine now. When I checked on him at the beginning of our call, I heard him, and I heard that it was the sounds and it went on for about 10 minutes. I could hear now it's completely, he's soft and sleeping and quite happy.

**Meg:** Well, I mean you're giving him the greatest gift because you kind of mentioned it just now; that that’s one of those greatest gifts we have to give our little ones is this ability to self-regulate. It carries you through life. And at this age it's really tricky. And as a first-time mom, you hear those niggles and you've kind of read the literature on make sure you don't allow your baby to cry at all, responded to every sound. And so you, and which by the way is important, because that responsivity is very important on an emotional level for little ones. And actually in our app we've got an attachment course in our app at the moment, which is worth doing.

But the reality is that those little niggles of learning to self-settle are just as important as responding to the distress niggles because if you allow your little one to develop that self-regulation, particularly 17 weeks to 24 weeks, like it's a golden gift. And actually it's a golden gift to yourself as well because you'll have a good sleep as well.

**Christina:** So from about 12 weeks when we had that horrible night on the last day of the 11th week when he was waking up every 90 minutes at night, I started, one of the things we also did is we switched him from the bassinet to his cot, which I remember with my older two boys, that was a very critical moment in their first year where they started to sleep better. I don't know what it was, if it was just symbolic of the transition and us being ready to help them, but we transferred him to the cot and then we started to do every sleep in the cot instead of baby wearing or pushing in the pram. But I would sit right next to the cot until he fell asleep. And if he really seemed upset, obviously I picked him up for a few minutes and comforted him and put him back down again.

But almost every day it was a percentage less of my support and more of his self-reliance; very, very, very gentle and gradual. And I felt very comfortable with it. And it's just amazing how if you take this approach though and you try to understand the science of their developments and their sleep, how it's impressive, how they can learn to self-regulate and how you can almost regulate understand in yourself too, oh well I wish I could fall asleep that easily. Well, it's like if you do practice those things, you can also fall asleep. As adults, we have sleep preventers and sleep associations as well that are not very positive for us, and our sleep is a crucial part of our health.

**Meg:** Yes, yes, absolutely.

**Christina:** So, like I always say, parenting your children is an amazing opportunity to learn to re-parent yourself and regulate yourself and be a better version of yourself. Yeah,

**Meg:** No, absolutely. Well, I love the way that you spoke about, and what I would call that grading, that kind of going from wearing your baby to sleep, which is contact sleeping, which a lot of moms who are listening to this podcast will have that issue that their babies will only contact sleep. So, that's kind of one end of the continuum. At the other the end of the continuum is putting your baby down, walking out the room, shutting the door and your baby falls asleep on their own. But in the middle, it's a gradual process, we call it grading. And what I love about what you just spoke about is that on the day that you took him off your nanny's back or off your carrier on you, you sat next to him, and you didn't move from him, and I think that is such an important part. We call it co-regulating. And I think when people talk about sleep training and they get the dickers in a knot and start to feel hysterical about the fact that babies mustn't be left to cry, which I agree with, they've lost sight of the fact that there's a whole lot of other stuff you can do as part of sleep coaching, which does not entail leaving your babies to cry. It entails being there co-regulating and teaching them a new skill and that's pretty much what you did through that period. So, I just love that this one vignette that you've brought us, which is what he was doing on kind of 11 weeks and what he was doing within two weeks after that, and how you actually graded it across and how gently you managed to do it and how baby centric it was more than anything.

**Christina:** Absolutely. I mean, that's our role as parents is to hold their hands slowly along every difficult journey they come across. And it also makes me think so much of the toddler years, which were my older boys, was the most difficult part of the parenting journey for me because we are having to learn to understand their difficulty with emotional regulation, and how to help them. And it can re-trigger us again another opportunity to re-parent ourselves. But it's just the same gradual process as you say, recognizing where you need to have positive boundaries with parenting your toddlers and that it, it's a process. It's recognizing what they want, how they're behaving in response to whether or not they're going to get it, what their emotional outburst is and helping them to understand like, I acknowledge this is how you feel, this is the boundary, and these are the choices you have. And just also giving them the space to let out these negative emotions instead of us as parents try to squash, diminish, suppress appease these negative emotions because that's not really going to help them learn to regulate themselves and become older, better, more mature versions of themselves. That's our job, and not just given.

**Meg:** It is, it is, absolutely. And what's so interesting is that you've alluded to the journey of self-regulation because self-regulation actually starts in utero at 34 weeks gestation, babies start to regulate things like their heartbeat and they're kind of swallowing and sucking reflexes and they start to actually do a little bit of self-regulating on a physiological level, not on their state, not on behavior, not on emotions, but physiologically. And your baby was born in little early, Connor was born a little early, and so he would've had a poorer ability to self-regulate his temperature as an example than for instance a baby who's born at full term. But by the time little ones are kind of two, three weeks old, their physiological regulation should be really well established.

 The next level of self-regulation is the sensory and state self-regulation, which is of course what you've been doing. Now, this is exactly, it is a challenge that goes from about two weeks and goes all the way through till about 17 to 19 weeks where they start to have to become a little bit more fussy and irritable, and then move through that. And then the next level of self-regulation is emotional regulation, which is the second half of the first year where they have to start to learn frustration, tolerance, separation, anxiety, all of that type of navigating their very big emotions. And then only after that in the toddler years do we talk about behavioral regulation. And that's why we never do behavioral training with babies who littler than that because they can't do behavioral self-regulation before that. And that's your a, b, c approach that you alluded to. There's positive boundaries, which is another course that I have got on the app that people can go download.

**Christina:** I did that course with you. It was life changing. I did that course when Lincoln was about three and he was my challenging, full of beams kiddo. And we still practice those principles today. And in fact since bubba's been born, he's have a little bit of a regression emotionally, we've noticed where we sort of look at him and think like, you are behaving like a toddler. Where is this tantrum coming from?

**Meg:** He is? This is out of it. I suppose he's [inaudible 22:09]

**Christina:** Yeah, but I mean we've definitely seen a bit of a regression but only in the last few weeks. So it's like almost like it's hitting home, there's this other child and he's acting out for attention. So, we are aware of that and we're helping like co-regulate him again, let him know he's safe, secure, and loved, but certain behaviors are…

**Meg:** Pushing those boundaries.

**Christina**: …not okay.

**Christina:** Yeah.

**Meg:** Absolutely. Christina, it has been the most amazing time. I cannot believe that our time has gone so quickly because we had a whole list of other things we wanted to chat about and I'd love to have you back as a regular. We tracked Cassidy's life with her little one, Max who was born and we tracked him for a full year. So, I'd love to connect with you regularly about Connor because there're so many learnings. And moms, if you've enjoyed this time with Christina, I really do encourage you to go and have a look at the Honest Hour Podcast; it's a fabulous resource. And Christina and I did a couple of…I think we had two podcasts maybe together. So it's worth going and listening to those and to all of our other fabulous guests as well. So Christina, thank you for joining us. Thank you for giving us your wisdom. As I said, sometimes I have experts and other times I have moms who are experts, and I'm delighted to have had a mom expert on today. So thank you for joining me.

**Christina:** Definitely wouldn't call myself an expert, but I love the opportunity to share and I'd absolutely love to come back again and continue to share where we are at in our journey. I have so many more questions; I can't believe how quickly the time went. Thank you so much, Meg.

**Meg:** Thanks Christina. Cheers.

**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.