Baby-proofing your home

**Intro**

Welcome to Sense by Meg Faure the podcast that's brought to you by Parent Sense, the app that takes guesswork out of parenting. If you are a new parent, then you are a good company. Your host, Meg Faure is a well-known OT infant specialist and the author of eight parenting books. Each week we are going to spend time with new moms and dads just like you. To chat about the week's wins, the challenges, and the questions of the moment. Subscribe to the podcast, download the Parent Sense App and catch Meg here every week to make the most of that first year of your little one's life. And now meet your host.   
  
**Meg:** Hi moms and dads, and welcome back to this week's since by Meg for I'm super excited to be here with you, sharing the information that I have in my head with a real life mom. We sometimes have experts join us and sometimes we have experts who are real moms. And that's what we've got today because Cass, you've been alongside us for a very long journey now, right from birth. We spoke to Cass in our first episode, just the week that Max was born. And if any of you haven't listened to that episode and are due to have a baby, even if it's your first or second baby, go and listen to it. It's all about that transition to early motherhood and we have tracked Max's journey all the way through. And today we welcome back Cass. So welcome Cass.  
  
**Cass:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Yeah, it seems like yesterday we were recording that first one, but then it also seems like forever ago .  
  
**Meg:** It's exactly. And how old is our big boy?  
  
**Cass:** He's 10. He was 10 months last week. Yeah.  
  
**Meg:** Can you believe it? That is just completely unbelievable.  
  
**Cass:** I know. And he really does look like a little boy now. There's nothing baby really in my eyes about him to other people. I think he still looks like a baby, but he just has changed so much.  
  
**Meg:** Yeah. And it's such a funny thing because you'll feel like he's so big and so grown up and then suddenly you'll have another baby and you'll realize, my gosh, you know, he really was a baby when you were thinking he was so grown up when you look back. So, but they do grow quickly. So what is this week or this month, in fact, I think it's been a couple of weeks since we last chatted. What has this month held for you?  
  
**Cass:** Well, I think a few weeks ago we did episode where I referred to it as the good, bad, the ugly. And I think that's just an ongoing theme really. I think that's parenthood

**Meg:** It is.

**Cass:** Yeah. I mean in terms of from his developmental side of things, he's standing now, he pulls himself up or will use something to kind of balance him, but then he stands by himself without holding onto anything.  
  
**Meg:** Wow.  
  
**Cass:** And he'll walk with something. But even when I'm sort of doing, I call it the finger walking when, which is breaking, but I can't wait for that to be over. But I've noticed his grip is getting….  
  
**Meg:** Less, and lesser.  
  
**Cass:** Yes. So I do think in the next sort of couple of weeks he might just be standing and then go  
  
**Meg:** And go, but Cassie, you know, you've done an incredible job of keeping him going with the crawling because I mean, he was eight and a half months when we spoke and I was starting to get concerned that he was actually going to walk at that time. And I know that you made it a priority to make sure that he didn't have too much opportunity to practice his walking. You're not going to be able to hold him back from it forever. He's definitely going to walk the next month I'm sure. But getting him close to 11 months before he walks, it’s just absolutely spot on.  
  
**Cass:** Yeah, he was keen and we did pull back, but the one thing we sort of let continue is the cruising and that sort of thing. But in terms of him pushing something and walking, but now he just, he'll go and he goes at speed, you can see it. He climbs a full flight of stairs without any help. I mean obviously I'm right there. Yeah, but I'm not helping him at all, that's really strengthening those legs as well. And he does that at pace as well, if he could just go up the stairs constantly.  
  
**Meg:** Can he come back down?   
  
**Cass:** No, we're working on that. He's very good. We've actually just put stair gates in, but he is very good at, he understands the word, no. So as he was getting close to sort of the top of the stairs or something, he knew he had to stop, and then I turn him around. And I think we'd spoken about it before and that's all I really am doing is just every time he gets to a step, I turn him around. And I don’t know, , sometimes I turn him around and then he'll sort of go down one step and then go to sit down backwards and I'm like, can't do that. You can’t wait till you get to the bottom. So sometimes prevents sort of, how do you communicate that?  
  
**Meg:** Yeah. So you've brought up two things that actually really are interesting for me. The one is childproofing the home. So take us through what you've done to actually childproof your home and, and let's talk about those hazards that we actually sometimes don't even realize are there?  
  
**Cass:** Yeah. It's funny, a friend of mine who's actually been on this podcast previously, she's just moved into a new house and I said to her, don't put your sitting room furniture out how you think it looks nice. Do it how it's baby proofs the place. Because we've rearranged our whole downstairs, our whole downstairs pretty much to look at furniture that if he's pulling up on it, is it sturdy? You know, it won't topple down, furniture also that we don't really want him putting his sticky fingers all over and things like that. But in terms of proper baby proofing, we have a marble fireplace that's got cushions all around it and we move the sofa to block as much of that as possible. We've got those things in the plug sockets and all sockets that are ground level, unless we are using it, are turned off. Even with the plastic things in them, all switches are off.

Although I did pass one the other day and it was on and I realized he had probably…

**Meg:** Switched it on   
  
**Cass:** …switched it on, which I thought was concerning. We have the stair gate, all the cupboards have locks on them as well now in the kitchen. And I was quite relaxed about him going into some of the cupboards. I'd moved sort of, you know, the washing tablets and that sort of thing to higher cupboards. But there was one cupboard that had stuff in it; I just didn't have anywhere else to put it. And that of course was his favorite cupboard because that's the cupboard I always said no to. So, he's got a bit of a habit, it's annoyingly cute, but he likes being praised when he does not do the thing that you're saying no to. But that means that he'll quite often go to do it and look at you  
  
**Meg:** So that you'll say…  
  
**Cass:** Wait for you to say no. And that, so he is not actually doing it, but he's waiting for you to say no and then he'll be really like, oh, I'm so good.  
  
**Meg:** That's very precious. And of course that is such a foundation for positive discipline because all that positive reinforcement, I mean later on when he is a toddler, I'm sure we'll be still connecting at that point now and then, and we will be talking about positive boundaries. And one of the things of positive boundaries is that when you do a boundary, try and find as many opportunities to praise because that's actually all little ones want ultimately. So that's perfect that he's latched onto that.  
  
**Cass:** Yeah. What is tricky in terms of the babe proofing is things that I didn't really see as too much of an issue. As he's got older, they have, I've realized, oh…So for example, he would pull himself up on the table that had the TV on it, but he didn't do anything. He liked his reflection in the TV and that was about it. But now he's getting older and he might have a toy in his hand. He was hitting the TV with a toy. But I suddenly realized this is quite confusing for him because I didn't have the foresight to see he might put his fist through the TV and so he was allowed to do it and now I'm saying no. And so I sort of tried to be very understanding the fact that that's confusing for him and finding where those boundaries are. I don't want to say no for the sake of saying no as well. I've got to be very careful he doesn't just become kind of immune to the word. So I'm really trying to weigh up the safety side of things versus that I just don't really want to have to get up.  
  
**Meg:** It's so interesting because in my Positive Boundaries Talk, which by the way for moms who are listening, if you do want to listen to the Positive Boundaries Talks actually loaded into the app as a course. So if you go into the app, into the Parent Sense app, in the courses section, you'll find the Positive Boundaries workshop there. But in that workshop and in that course I talk about the fact that you've got to pick your boundaries and there's a great quote that actually goes alongside that that says, you know, you've got to pick your boundaries because if you pick them all you'll be too exhausted to keep the ones that really matter. And that's what mothering is all about, because we get to four o'clock in the afternoon or we get to a long weekend where we’re just exhausted and we just keep giving in because we can't actually chase on everything. So picking those boundaries are, is exceptionally, exceptionally important. And the boundaries that should be picked are the health and safety boundaries. So anything that is going to hurt him, hurt somebody else or hurt an item of property does need to be a health and boundary, and for the rest you need to let it go.

Now, because you and I have been talking about baby proofing the house, all of them are actually boundaries that do need to be reinforced because these are all our health and safety boundaries. So these are the ones that we need to stick with. The one that does strike me is, you know, is it possible in your kitchen to have the cupboard that he can access being something with Tupperware in it, you know, our plastics.  
  
**Cass:** Yeah. So there is a cupboard that he can still, and he does open and close and there's upstairs as well. And there's one cupboard as well that I've actually left open, but I use the term no. So he can still open it, but I'm still trying to kind of also understand that it's not just a case of one day I'll take off the locks and you can go crazy. I don’t know if that would happen. But we don't really…The trouble is because most of our cupboards are actually all on the ground and there's not a huge amount of storage. Most cupboards have a mix of everything in rather than just one. So I could, and it's little things like one cupboard has lots of plastic things in it, but then it's also got the mixes in which have blades and I just don't where I could put, there's not much storage at all. But I can look at it to try and give him a cupboard. I was also thinking about, because it's his birthday coming up in obviously eight weeks and I was thinking about getting him a mini kitchen, so that…

**Meg:** Love it.

**Cass:** His own cupboards, his own tag.  
  
**Meg:** Yeah, of course they will always go for the real thing, not the toy. I mean you do know this.  
  
**Cass:** Yeah. And actually that is the cupboard that I could open is the one with the pans in because…  
  
**Meg:** Which is great, yeah.  
  
**Cass:** That's the one…It's loud and it would be noisy, but that doesn't matter.  
  
**Meg:** Yeah. So if you can find one place where you don't have to say no, it probably would be a good idea. And that goes for almost anything, like when parents, for instance, wanting your little ones to always look gorgeous when they go out, particularly when they can start to choose their clothes and then they want to wear their pajamas out. You know, that that's the type of health and safety thing where it doesn't actually matter if they wear their pajamas out. So try and choose things where you just can give them autonomy as much as possible, obviously on these things. And I mean I've been writing down the list of things as you've been saying them because I think that they're just so important and I'd like to just go through them in a bit more detail.  
  
So the plug socket one is a really interesting one; so, obviously Cass, you're in the UK and so the UK plugs actually quite narrow and baby would battle to actually fit their finger into UK plug hole. But because they can stick other things into the UK hole, they have to be covered. In South Africa where many of our listeners are, the plug holes are well big enough for them to stick their whole fingers into, I mean really they are and they're round and so it’s imperative that plug holes are covered. And I loved your advice on actually turning off the plug sockets. That's also brilliant idea. The stair gates are also important for exactly the reason that you've given that, he wants to, he keeps wanting to come up and down them.

One that you didn't mention that is critically important as water. And I'm sure you've got it covered and just hadn't mentioned it. Water's very, very important. In fact, in my first job out of university, I worked in a pediatric rehab facility in New York. One of the most disabled and devastatingly disabled children that I saw when I was working that year was a child of four years old, had fallen into swimming pool and drowned or had a near drowning experience and now was cerebral palsy. And it was just really, really, he was very, very badly contracted and had cerebral palsy. So for me, I'm obsessed with water safety, absolutely obsessed with water safety. And that means latching your toilets closed because first of all, it's disgusting because they'll put their hands in it, but second of all, they're top heavy and they can actually fall into a toilet upside down. But also any water outside. And that goes with swimming pools, duck ponds, but then also actually, and fish ponds obviously, but actually also that kind of bucket that you put under your tap to catch all of the water and you know, if you've got water restrictions or just a puddle of water that you don't even think about, you know, just a place where water collects you. We need to be really, really careful because first of all, they're drawn to water and secondly, children can drown in just literally an inch serve water. But I'm sure you've probably already looked at that in your home.  
  
**Cass:** The lids, we have not, not necessarily. I didn't really have in mind the idea of him falling into it, but it was actually because he does…We saw him once, like he goes to put his hand in and I thought that is just  
  
**Meg:** Yeah, . Yeah.

**Cass:** It's just disgusting.   
  
**Cass:** Yeah, yeah, so the lids are done but we don't have any water around. It's obviously in the heat. He's got a paddling pool that's never really that full. We're always there with him and we empty it.

**Meg:** Perfect.

**Cass:** You know, at the end of every day.

**Meg:** Exactly.

**Cass:** It's not there unless we are there with him and then we'll fill it up again and then it… That's perfect.   
  
**Meg:** That’s perfect, that's exactly what's needed. And then the other thing I would mention, which lot of people don't think about are cords. So, first there two types of chords; one is lamps on tables and the cords because that can be pulled on onto them . And I can see by your expression, which not everybody can see that this is something that is a challenge for Max.  
  
**Cass:** He loves an electric wire. Oh, my word.  
  
**Meg:** He loves it.  
  
**Cass:** Absolutely loves it. And that is part of the rearranging of the sitting room is all tables that have lamps on and now behind chairs and so he can't get to them. There's no, and wires, we've got the fire guard and cushions and stool and I mean, I know listeners can't see, but there's a long line of barriers because there's a wire running along that wall. So, yeah, we have to keep a really close eye on him because he just, he finds them really fun to play with.  
  
**Meg:** Yeah, and that is part of the problem. And then the other one on the subject of chords, which is one that I had never thought of, is blind chords. So, your venetian blinds or your roller blinds or any blinds on windows, those chords; now those chords, if they lose all the way to the end, are actually strangulation risk. And strangulation risk, what you need to do mums and dads is you need to plate the end of it for the, as far as it'll go, all the way to when the blind is fully open. So, when your blind is fully closed. So when your blind is down, you'll see that your cord is obviously pulled up as high as it can go up against, you know, through the eyes at the top. And you need to plate your cord to all the way to that point to prevent strangulation and make sure that, that when the blinds are open, in other words, when a cord is long, they can't actually get that around their neck. So that's another one that's really important.  
  
**Cass:** We've got one of those loop blind cords, so they're, yeah. So I don’t know how you could have plate that because they're sort of going round and round and round.   
  
**Meg:** Correct. So, those ones are less of an issue because they'll break usually with a child's weight on them. But I would just have a look at it, you know, normally they would, if a child got it on the neck and pulled it, they would break. But I would certainly, if it wouldn't break, like for instance if it had one of those nylon strings inside of it instead of plastic, then you would want to maybe just make sure that that's hitched up as well.  
  
**Cass:** The only one he could reach is actually on the floor. It's a floor level window.  
  
**Meg:** Yeah, so just have a look at that one. And then the other one, which is quite interesting that people often also don't think about is railings of any sort. So, whether it is balustrade around a swimming pool or around a balcony or a set of stairs should be, and almost none of them are actually this distance apart, but shouldn't be more than a coke can in diameter apart. So if you took a Coke and you shoved it through on its side, it shouldn't be able to get through between two of the railings. So, that's the classic test you should look for, both for cut railings as well as for, you know, swimming pool fences and so on because little ones can squeeze through.  
  
**Cass:** We've got railings actually turn a corner and I am always so paranoid about where it turns. It just looks…   
  
**Meg:** That’s wider.  
  
**Cass:** …wider. And if he hears someone downstairs, you know, he initially wanted to go and look down and I just had…The first time he sort of crawled towards it immediately, in fact, in my mind the gap was wider than it actually was when I realized, but I just had this vision of him going through and thought it gave me, the **[inaudible 17:10]**  
  
**Meg:** So, have you, have you connected it, or is it a coke can distance?  
  
**Cass:** Well, at the moment we've only just put in the stair gate and it's still, I wanted to see if we could put it so that it blocked that too, but we can't, so I'm going to have to come up with that.  
  
**Meg:** Yeah, So then you'll just get some of that nylon kind of fish pond cover nets, or some sort of netting to go around that, you know, you get that for gardens and so on. And then you've just got to, unfortunately looks terrible. I mean these are the things that we do that don't make our house look terribly beautiful, but that keep our little ones safe.  
  
**Cass:** Absolutely. Well, and that's exactly it. It's not about how you want it to look, it's about what's going to make it safe. And it's difficult to get that balance because again, you know, I was talking to somebody who knew a mom who just follows their baby everywhere and is very sort of paranoid and worried all the time and doesn't even actually leave, the baby's a month older than Max, doesn't actually leave the room when the baby's asleep in the day.  
  
**Meg:** Wow. That’s high anxiety.  
  
**Cass:** Yeah. And you know, and it's getting that balance of not over protecting them. We were at a party on the weekend and people actually…I don't think they were saying it in a positive way, but they were saying to me, gosh, he's going to have a strong immune system, isn't he? Because he was just crawling on the floor in a courtyard, he wasn't putting anything in his mouth, but it was a dirty floor. But I can't hold him for six hours in my arms and not let him play.

**Meg:** And you know, in fact that's actually, and it's such a lovely point that you've brought up because it's one of the things that in positive parenting that we actually do need to let our little ones take risks and we need to calculate those risks for them. So, for instance, actually crawling around in a dirty courtyard, or on a dirty floor is actually really good for their immunity. It really is because the microbes that they pick up from there will help their immunity to develop, so, there's nothing wrong with that. Eating poo from a dog for instance isn't, it's obviously clearly not a good idea. So, you need to be sensible with what's sort of microbes you exposing them to. But certainly germs in a normal situation, including in a playground are absolutely fine. There’s evidence that little ones need to walk around barefoot, you know, and I think particularly in the kind of global west and certainly in America, you know, there's an obsession with children wearing shoes.  
  
And obviously I'm from Africa, and in Africa we just don't have that obsession. Our children walk around barefoot and in fact many of my kids used to go to nursery school completely barefoot even though it was school. And so walking around barefoot is also important. In fact, a funny story was when we went to America, we went on a “around the world trip” when our kids were two and four years old and we went to America and we arrived at a shopping center near New York and we all piled out of the car we were staying with my friend Bev. And we piled out of Bev's car and she took one look at James, who was four years old and she said, Meg, he's not going to be allowed into the shopping center, he's barefoot. And I was like, why? You go shopping center barefoot, I don't mind. And she said, “Yes, you might not mind, but it's legislation, it’s law here.” And it was because of the escalators and the risk of toes on escalators. So you mean you can understand it, but I do think the obsession with cleanliness and sterility and that that level of safety for children can be taken too far and the kids actually just do actually need to knock down, get dirty and get themselves really murky and then get involved.  
  
**Cass:** I'm quite pleased to say that because, Max doesn't wear shoes at all. He's always barefooted, but by the end of the day, Max looks like a complete rug rat because he's crawling, his knees are black, the top of his feet are black, looks like such a rug rat. But I did sort of think when we went through in London this weekend with him at this party and I did think, should I get some shoes to put on him? Because it looks a bit like we've not really finished dressing him, but I've also heard, you know, you've got to be very specific with the type of shoe you get because their feet are still developing and things like that. And I just thought I'd rather he was barefoot. It's also quite hot and muggy at the moment; I don't want to be putting him in shoes. So I sort of decided not to. But I then thought, well, I said to my husband on the weekend, maybe I should take him to go and have his feet measured because I'm not sure this is right for him. Having his black feet covered in muck by the end of every day.

**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:** The shoes that I like are other soft sole shoes. They're not hard sole shoes for this age. They're not quite booties and you know, kind of socks, but they're a little bit, they’re usually are soft near in soles. There's a great brand in South Africa that I used to actually used to live next door to the guy who started it, it was called Shoe Shoes. And I know we have them with the UK here as well. And they're just really soft sole shoes, so not real shoes. That would be what you're looking for. There's kind of soft leather, they're almost like leather, the pumps that are just soft all the way around. And that's what you want to look for. But it certainly is important for children to take risks and it's not just in germs, it's in other things as well. And my co-founder of Play Sense Laura Schoenfeld, is just an incredible mother. I mean she was one of those earth mothers who…She did elimination communication with her babies, which means that they never wore nappies. She potty trained them from the day they were born. So she's actually…  
  
**Cass:** Max has done one poo and one wee in a potty  
  
**Meg:** That's incredible. Go, Max. We do need to move on that as well. But I mean, Laura's a super in tune mom. I mean she's incredible. And by the way, if any of you don’t know about elimination communication, there's a course going into the app on it and there's also podcast on it which you can listen to which has been released. Listen to that. Yeah, so what I was saying was, Laura is like this incredibly in touch mom, and yet from a very little age when I think her little ones were like three or four years old, they had pen knives, you know, they're Swiss army knives and they're fitting sharp. And I was, “Oh my gosh, she not actually giving her child a knife, are you?” And she…I mean I think she…they were blunt, and she watched them and she gave them blunt knives to cut tomatoes in the kitchen. But her attitude was, and it's been actually part of the ethos in Play Sense, whereby we don't dump things down for children, is that you need to scaffold them. You need to be there right next to them. You don't leave them alone with a knife, but you need to give them the opportunity to learn with you there, and I guess that's what it's all about.  
  
**Cass:** And it's also actually I've learned, it's been really important for me to see him fall over and to get myself used to it, so I don't overreact. You know, so often their reaction is a direct point. They sort of look at you and if you're like, “oh dear, stand up. Hope you get this. Oh it's okay.

**Meg:** Correct.

**Cass:** The first couple of times when it's your baby, you do think, “oh my gosh.” And so, it's not only a training, I felt it's not only been a training for Max to get a bit more savvy, it's also been for me to learn to give him the best reaction because he does get over it. I mean, yesterday he took a tumble and hit his head and I couldn't help myself because it looked like a bad one and he started crying. But as soon as I changed the way that, and Alex was there too, as soon as we sort of went, oh look, your boss running, he started laughing and he was actually fine. But it was, I think my reaction had led him think, oh this was bad, I should cry. And so often you can also see it's not that it hurt, it's more the shock of I was up and now I'm down.   
  
**Meg:** Yeah, yeah. They do reference everything first. And you know, I think that for anxious moms who listening and you know, certainly, I mean, I was more anxious of James than with my other two, obviously firstborn children. I do understand anxiety, but I didn't suffer from an anxiety disorder. But for our moms who suffer from anxiety disorders, there is a lesson in that. And that is that, even when it's feeling horrific inside of you and your stomach's in a knot and you know, like your friend who doesn't leave her little one to sleep on their own during the day, that's a symptom of very, very high anxiety around curtains, and around sits because you wouldn't otherwise be sitting with your baby during the day.

Well, first of all, if you ha experiencing that level of anxiety, you do need to find out why, because there will definitely be some reason, something underlying that in your fear of loss. It'll be a mother's, whether she's had multiple miscarriages, whether she has had a termination of pregnancy that's unresolved, whether she has lost a parent at a critical time and her parenting journey. Those are all types of things that are psychological crisis points that can actually create this kind of almost PTSD around separation and that needs to be looked at.

And then the second thing is, you might be feeling it, but try and keep it from your child because you know, there is something around fake it until you make it. You know, you've just got to, and that's parenting. Like, they're going to be times even in adolescence where you're actually anxious as a parent and you've just got to be brave and tell your child they're ok, you're going to give them wings, they're going to be fine, and then just support them through the process, so, yeah. So we've spoken a lot about safety and little bit about anxiety, but you didn't get down to all of your list. I'm sure you've got it on good, bad night because we haven't spoken for a month. So, Cass, what else has been happening?  
  
**Cass:** Yeah, so there's been…The other sort of really great thing is we are starting to have moments where we see he's got a great sense of humor and we're all really laughing together and that's been really fun. There was a moment when we were away, he was in our room in the hotel and he woke up in the morning and was peering over the top of the cot just staring at us in bed. And I turned over and caught his eye and I tapped Alex and Alex turned and caught his eye and the three of us just burst out laughing  
  
**Meg:** Love it.  
  
**Cass:** And it was just such a nice moment. And so, he just has this look where he's looking at you thinking this is funny. So his humor and his personality are really developing. He's waving, interestingly, he'll happily wave hello, but he doesn't like waving goodbye.   
  
**Meg:** Oh, precious  
  
**Cass:** He’s just really sweet. And he's clapping now as well. It's a bit sort of hit-miss, but he's clapping and that sort of thing. So there's a lot of that development happening and it's a really exciting time. But I did have one of the questions kind of around safety is around in his cot, because obviously we've spoken before about this sterile environment in a cot, but I wondered when we could introduce him having a couple of toys in the cot so that when he wakes up in the morning, you know, he loves to read, well obviously not read, but he loves to open a book and stare at it. So, I wondered when do you… is it safe? I know the sort of risk is up until one year in terms of Sense, but that, well obviously I'm sure it goes beyond that, but kind of the guidance says particularly six months and then kind of in the first year. But what is the sort of recommendation around them being able to have some toys in the cot?  
  
**Meg:** Yeah, so it's a great question. I mean it is around safety and the risk of SIDS drops off exponentially as you approach a year, so it really is reduced significantly now. I still wouldn't be having a duvet or a pillow in the cot. And I noticed you used the word sterile just now, which is exactly the word that I use with cots. But I want to just clarify for people that in the context of the germs we were talking about just now, this is not sterile for germs, this is sterile for stimulation. So, we like to keep cots as stimulation free as possible; so no toys, no mobiles. And so guess what I gather you’re speaking about when you want to introduce things, it's probably toys and kind of little doodoo blankees and lovies, and is that the type of thing that you're thinking?  
  
**Cass:** Yeah, he has his comforter, which is the only thing. And his dummies, those are the only things in the cot, he's in a sleeping bag. But, I've heard a few people talking about their child has a few toys in the cots so that when they wake up in the morning they kind of have a bit of a play. So, whether that's a book or some teddy bears or something like that. And I just didn't know when, if that was possible and when that was possible.  
  
**Meg:** Yeah. So we’re talking about two different things here. The one is the safety around it, and the second thing is what about the stimulation and sleep habit? So in terms of the safety around it, I think from 10 months old it's absolutely fine to add in some toys. But I would say that he's a really good sleeper, I would still keep the sleep space only for sleep equipment. And so, that's kind of a sleeping bag and a doo-doo blankie only, or if it's a doo-doo toy, so like a bunny; like my daughter’s was a bunny then it's a bunny, so that's absolutely fine. But not to throw in a whole lot of toys, that would be my recommendation.

However, and you know, this is always when we talk about sleep, if you've got a good sleeper, you can actually change everything up. You do not have to follow any rules. So if he is going down at seven o'clock in the evening and waking up at six o'clock in the morning, then by all means pop the toys in. There's no reason you can't. And on that note, maybe you could share with us how 10 month old Max is sleeping.   
  
**Cass:** Well, he was a good sleeper, and that leads me onto my next point.  
  
I don't really know what's going on because, and it's only really been…I think my gut is telling me it's because of the change, you know, going to London, he was in our room and then there was a lot of the huge amount of stimulation. I mean, yesterday was the first day when we were back and he was exhausted. I had to put him down kind of his first sleep. I put him down after two hours and usually he's going sort of two and a half, maybe even 2:45 hours in the morning. But after two hours he was just beside himself. But he was waking in London every night. He woke at sort of 4:20 in the morning and would not settle unless he was given a feed, which at 4:20 I thought, okay, fine.  
  
**Meg:** Fine, spot on.  
  
**Cass:** But last night, well one thing that started happening is, he started waking in the night and he cries out sometimes not even awake, his eyes are still closed and he's rolling around and he will be crying out as though something awful has just happened in his dreams. It's like he's really scared. If he can't find one of the dummies or his comforter, he will eventually wake up and then he'll be really upset. And last night at about one o'clock in the morning he was…I felt he was really scared in my arms. He was like looking around, his eyes were really wide. He was sort of doing that noise and I could not calm him. I took him out of his room.

**Meg:** Was he awake?

**Cass:** He was awake then.

**Meg:** Yeah. Okay.

**Cass:** I'd left him a little bit. I'd gone in, put the dummy in his mouth, given him his comforter back and he kind of started to resettle. But then, suddenly he just went and he was awake. My husband went in, I went in, we tried all sorts of different things. I tried just sitting in the chair rocking him. We tried just putting our hands on him, but he was distressed and the only…We gave from Calpol, I thought maybe his tooth is…because he's got one of the pair, so I thought maybe it's that tooth and nothing, nothing, nothing kind of settled. But then 20 minutes after that we had it all again and this went on for about an hour and eventually I just gave him a bottle and he went straight down till the rest of the night. But he was so distressed it was a different cry. But it's been these crying out in the night, it has been getting progressively worse.  
  
**Meg:** Okay. So, two things about this; the first thing is what are his day sleeps at the moment?  
  
**Cass:** He's doing one in the morning and then one oh sort of one 30 till three and that's it.  
  
**Meg:** Okay, perfect. So that's spot on. So for everybody else, your cusp age happens at nine months, which is where you go from three sleeps to two sleeps. And very often babies if you don't make that change for them start to wake up very early in the morning or have long patches of wakefulness in the middle of the night. So, that was why I wanted to know that we’re on the right sleeps. And so that is first of all correct what you've done. You've dropped a sleep, you've dropped that late afternoon sleep. I think actually in our last podcast when we were chatting, we were starting to alternate days and you know, intermittently start to drop that late afternoon sleep. So he's done that spot on.

Is his morning sleep an hour or 45 minutes, the first sleep?  
  
**Cass:** It varies. Sometimes it can be the longer, sometimes he'll do an hour and a half in the morning and then he'll do an hour in the afternoon. Sometimes he'll do an hour in the morning and then he turns to do hour and a half in the afternoon.  
  
**Meg:** Okay, so that's spot on. So, and then that's absolutely fine. Doesn't matter which way around they do it. That's absolutely fine. Because as we get closer to you, 12 to 14 months is the next cusp edge where we'll drop from two to one sleep and then it's fine because we just merge those two sleeps as one and we'll cope with that when we get to it. So, the other reason why little ones have these little kind of terrorism, the middle of the night is actually associated with the fact that you've done the right thing. And that is, so let expand that to you. So there's two reasons why the ones wake up in the middle of the night and do this like scream like out loud, like yell and then seem very upset afterwards. So the one is nightmares, nightmares involve imagination where there's actually been a dream. So, that would be where they've actually seen something or heard something and it's usually something that's been scary to them. And that only ever happens once little ones have got imagination. And imagination by nature of what it is, is linked to language. So as imagination erupts, language and erupts, and as a language of erupts, imagination erupts. And so we tend to see imagination only really coming from about 18 months old. So when they're starting to be able to speak in just modern sentences or understand quite a bit more; so highly, highly, highly likely that little ones under 18 months of age are having nightmares.

However, they do have night terrors and night terrors are different. Night terrors are when there's a sensory experience that they've experienced and it's usually is associated interestingly with over tiredness. And so what a classic night terror looks like is that they scream, you go in, they're not awake, they're not asleep, they almost in this horrible zone and they're just screaming and they're inconsolable and he's not doing that. But it could be that the initiation of why he is waking up when he does that scream out loud is actually bit of a terror.

And night terror can be because they’re overtired and it could be we a little bit tired because we’ve done the cusp age; we have dropped from three sleeps down to two sleeps, which as we know if he's waking at three o'clock in the afternoon and he's going down at seven, it's a very long awake time. And so we are not going to put back in that late afternoon sleep because A, we can't. And B, it's going to wreck his nighttime sleep. But it's linked then with having these little kind of night terror episodes.

So, it's kind of a typical and normal. It's how you handle it is important. The first thing is that in general just ignore if you can; like if it's just a scream out loud and like a little bit of sob, see whether or not he'll settle, if you want, go in and then use deep pressure, that's the best strategy. So just putting your hands on him and just shushing him with your hands on him. And then if you can't, obviously picking him up and then if he does get to a point that he needs a feed in that process, preferably water. So preferably not milk because the milk is just another habit to break, which we don't really need to get into. Having said that, the 4:20 in the morning is absolutely fine to give milk, so I don’t know if that's helpful when you consider.  
  
**Cass:** Yeah, I wondered if part of it was when he was doing those…When he first started doing those scream outs, I'd maybe over responded. And so now it was a habit where he kind of wakes up and thinks, okay, mommy's going to come in so I'll just wait. And now I've kind in my own worst enemy. I mean last night was the first time it's been right in the middle of the night. And you know, we do have these nights every now and again where in the middle of the night it happens.

**Meg:** They do.

**Cass:** I hear people saying, oh yeah, my baby sleeps through the night. And I think, well, technically Max does. But if that's only when there's absolutely nothing wrong, there's no teething, there's no this, there's no that, and that's not that often.  
  
**Meg:** So, it's such a brilliant point that, you know, I mean first of all, sleeping through the night is the misnomer because no baby in the whole world, not a single baby sleeps through because they might self soothe, but they're waking. So, that's the first point out there; no baby sleeps through the night. They all rouse, they all wake up, but the good sleepers put themselves back to sleep and nobody knows that they wake up. So therefore we think they're sleeping through. So that's the first thing.

The other thing is that sleep really is terribly higgledy higgledy; it does get affected by everything. Whether it's a worm infestation of two years old, and it's slight iron deficiency at seven months, separation anxiety at nine months, a holiday in London, it just…I mean the list is never ending, there's so many factors. The critical thing, and this is the big difference, is that you don't want to set yourself up for long-term habits. And that means the ultimate putting themselves to sleep has to be done by them. Whether they are 12 weeks old; so from a little age or whether they're three years old, they need to be doing…however they're getting to sleep needs to be the way in which you expect them to do in the middle of the night. So if you lying next to your baby at three years old, your toddler at three years old and expecting him not to come through to you in the middle of the night, well you're smoking your socks because the reality is they're going to expect the same thing.

So, I think the principle is pretty much what you've said; expect it not to always be perfect but always maintain that the last little bit must be done himself. So if he needs a little bit of a feed, make sure that he is settling himself, that he is awake and preferably obviously no feeds before 4:00 AM because otherwise there will be more, you know, there will be dependence on eating those feeds through the night.

**Cass:** Yeah, yeah.

**Meg:** Well it's been a very rich episode today. We have spoken about everything from safety through to sleep, a little bit on behavior as well, and we'll be talking some more about positive boundaries as he gets older.  
  
**Cass:** If I could ask one more because it is started to drive me a bit [inaudible 38:40

**Meg:** Yeah

**Cass:** He shouts, like really impatient shouting that's getting quite bad and I just wondered but it feels like he's frustrated because he doesn't know how to communicate but it's very loud. I mean, I honestly it's sometimes the neighbors say, is everything okay ? It's particularly around meal times when he is had enough, or if he's tired. So, I understand the reasons behind it, but I just wondered, it's not a pleasant noise. It's very, very shouty. Is there anything around that to manage that or do I just let him go or and also the giving him something when he is making that shouting noise. I don't want to teach bad habits, but I don’t know that's the age that that's even a thing.  
  
**Meg:** So, it's interesting because actually a lot of the principles I'm going to talk about now are actually the way that you're going to deal with temper tensions later on as well as, you know, like, like all sorts of behavior things. So, always the very first thing is go in with explaining to them how they're feeling. And I loved what you said there because you said it's usually when he's hungry or when he's tired. So you are identifying with the state that underlies the behavior. And that's true reflective parenting, which is reflective parenting is the single most important skill that a parent can have because when you reflect for your child, you teach them about themselves, you develop their emotional world, it's just very, very important. And actually we've got a course going into the app on good enough parenting, which goes in in October.  
So, and this will flight after October. So, do go and have a look for that course on attachment and being a good enough mother, it's on good enough parenting.

So, the first thing, go in with, “I think you might be tired, or I think you're feeling…You've had enough Max. Have you had enough? So give him the words that you're articulating for him, what lies behind his behavior, first thing. Second thing is before you go in with discipline, and I'm definitely not saying we're going to discipline this, but certainly in their toddler years when they're kind biting or throwing, throwing temper tantrum, you'll want to potentially discipline then, and we'll talk about positive boundaries later. But before you do that, go in with distraction because distraction is awesome and you know, you've actually said that that's what you do. You kind of you know, pick him up, change the space, move onto something else. Absolutely nothing wrong with that. So the first thing is reflect, the second thing is distract.

And then the third thing, if it's really a behavior that you don't want to encourage and you have gone in on an emotional level first, and you have gone in with distraction and they've still continued, then you can do an extinguishing behavior, which is something like ignoring them. So saying to them, no, we don't do that. And then standing and walking away and walking away from a little one is a very, very strong signal that I don't want to engage with that. And so, you know, if he's sitting on the floor, and you've taken care of everything else, you can pop him on the floor where he's sitting and say, “No Max, no, we don't make that noise.” And then, kind of walk away a little bit and he'll come after you. But he probably will then calm down a bit and what, you know, whatever it is that he is been going for, don't give in on that. So, if he does the shouting because you've taken away your cell phone or the TV remote and don't give in on it if it's something that's a boundary. So that's kind of, you know, it's around consistency, it's around reflective parenting, which is so important. It's around distraction and then it's around extinguishing the behavior by not feeding into it as well.  
  
**Cass:** Yeah. Because a lot of it is if you're trying to do anything in the kitchen, he wants to see what you are doing and so he wants to be in your arms, but of course you can't prepare his food with one arm…  
  
**Meg:** With him in your arm

**Cass:** …all the time.

**Meg:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.  
  
**Cass:** Yeah, it's usually because he wants to see what's going on.  
  
**Meg:** Oh, precious boy. Have you got a carrier? Because, I used to just have my kids in a carrier absolutely all the time. I wore my babies 9 out of 10 hours because I know they want to see your world.  
  
**Cass:**Yeah, I haven't put him in the carrier, I do have one so maybe I'll try because I have often thought I need two hands, but I'm terrified he's going to like go and grab a knife for, but maybe that's what Laura…Well, not right.  
  
**Meg:** Well, you know, I mean in the beautiful African way, you can strap him onto your back. I mean if you've got one of those carriers that can go on the back and they are lovely carriers have go on the back as well. You know, he's up against you and he's kind of part of what's going on; you can turn him sideways, have a look. I mean in Africa, that's how our mamas look after our babies, you know.   
  
**Cass:** Anything to stop shouting,  
  
**Meg:** Yes, exactly.  
  
**Cass:** Thank you very much.  
  
**Meg:** Pleasure Cass, lovely to chat and we all connect again in a couple of weeks.  
  
**Cass:** Absolutely. Thanks so much.   
  
**Meg:** Thanks.

**Cass:** All right, cheers.

**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.