

**Tove:** Welcome to sense by Meg Faure for the podcast that helps parents make sense of the early years of parenting. Today we're turning the tables and I'm your host Tove Gant. I'm a mom of three, a two year old, a nine month old, and a five year old [00:01:00] special needs kiddo and an avid sense fan. We are joined by none other than Meg Faure, whose podcast this obviously is. Meg is a renowned occupational therapist, bestselling author, and founder of the sense series books, which provide practical guidance on baby and children development.

**Tove:** Meg, it's great to be back on the show with you.

**Meg:** Tove it's so awesome to have you here. And what people don't know is aside from being our new host, who's going to be hosting this with me at least once a month going forward, you also are an integral part of the SENSE team. Tove is our business development manager and kind of runs most of our corporate relationships.

**Meg:** And then also we have a lot of history in that I have been very much involved in her three little one's lives. From the beginning with Gray, who's a special needs little girl with some challenges she had early on. And in most recently with Nova, who I am her godmother. So there you go.

**Tove:** I mean, deeply entrenched.

**Meg:** we are very entrenched, but I'm super grateful to you [00:02:00] Tove for turning the tables and being our host going forward.

**Tove:** No, sure. It's such a pleasure to be here. So I thought today, because it felt like it's a super relevant piece for me in my world. And so I thought as the opening segment, let's do something that's sitting white in my wheelhouse is that we dive into the topic of tricky toddler behaviors. Now toddlerhood comes with a fair share of unique behaviors that can often leave parents feeling overwhelmed and completely confused.

**Tove:** I'm in the thick of it with my two year old who's like an emotional ball of energy and wreck. and so today I thought it would be interesting and engaging to unpack those tricky behaviors, particularly the biting, hitting, screaming, whining, the nightmare and infamous temper tantrums.

**Tove:** Yeah, so what I did was I went into our saints community and I pulled up as much information and as many questions as I could from our parents that

have engaged with us across social media, across emails, across our app [00:03:00] and compiled them together and thought, right, let's ask away.

**Tove:** So Meg, if we can just jump straight into it. sO I'm going to start with the kind of the high level piece, which is the biting, hitting, screaming behaviors that can leave us all like spinning. I haven't had the biting yet, although once, but the screaming is just like very much in my wheelhouse at the moment and regardless of those tricky behaviors, is there a common thread that ties all of these together?

**Tove:** What lies behind these behaviors? Cause for me, it feels like giving him the wrong food or giving him the food he wants and has asked for sets him off on a tantrum that I just can't contain. I have no idea why these things come and where they come from.

**Meg:** Yeah. So look, it is a very tricky time of life and there are certainly things that tie all of these themes together. You can put this all into a single bucket. We obviously have to unpack each of them individually, but you could put all of these toddler behaviors into a single bucket and there'll be a few things that are a common thread.

**Meg:** The first thing is, and I always start [00:04:00] with basic needs, it's where you've got to go as a clinician or as a therapist, whenever you are presented with anything. So what's going on a physiological level and toddlers get tired and , they get hangry enough to be angry.

**Meg:** And so the very first thing is that you're more likely to see any of these behaviors if your little one is overtired or is hungry and or is coming down with something. Let's put that in the same bucket because that's physiological as well and toddlers are picking up things all the time. They go to school and they bring home a germ a month at least.

**Tove:** It's like, they're like incubators of every disease under the sun. I don't think I've not had a snotty nose for like three years.

**Meg:** Exactly. So as they're brewing something, they run a little fever, they're feeling a little bit nauseous, they're just feeling a little bit off color, and they also get grumpy and irritable, and then you're more likely to see these behaviors. So, these behaviors happen at a time when illnesses is at its peak, because they're building immunity, and also where often overtiredness plays a part, because very often toddlers are not sleeping terribly well at night, and may be resisting their [00:05:00] day naps.

**Meg:** At times. And so, and putting their day naps back. And so you also more likely to have them being overtired. And then the third one is obviously hunger, which is often tied up with poor diets where moms are maybe offering too much sugar, spiking little ones sugar levels, and that causes kind of a cycle that isn't very pleasant in terms of their nutritional, but also their hunger.

**Meg:** So that's the first place in terms of the the first point of departure is the physiological basis for these behaviors.

**Tove:** Is there kind of an emotional behavior triggers as well we should be looking at?

**Meg:** Yeah. So always the second veneer I look at before I go into emotional and before I go into behavioral is the sensory. So your first level is physiological, your second level is sensory, and that is that toddlers are more likely to have overstimulation and certain sensory personalities are much more likely to experience overstimulation.

**Meg:** And so that's why you'll get the difference between one child and the next. And you might find that Jagger's temper tantrums and his emotional outbursts are going to be super different from Nova's who [00:06:00] has a different sensory profile. So that's the second thing, first one being physiological, second one being sensory.

**Tove:** and unpacking that sensory, like on a high level, the four little sensory personalities, is there like a rule of thumb, like you'll settle babies slightly less, temper tantrummy then your sensitive baby, or is there a rule of thumb there

**Meg:** Absolutely. And moms, if you're wanting more information on this, you must go and do the sensory personality podcast. It's it was one of the first ones we recorded go and listen to that. Also go and do the sensory personality course, which is inside the parent sense app, that, that'll help you understand your baby's sensory personality.

**Meg:** But Tove to answer your question of these four sensory personalities, your settled baby is significantly less likely to throw temper tantrums, bite another child, hit another child, have screaming behaviors, etc. They just don't do it. They're much better regulated little ones, and they tend to be more laid back.

**Meg:** And so even the physiological issues that I've already described don't affect them as much. They don't get as overtired [00:07:00] and they are

certainly are more emotionally regulated. Settled babies don't perform in quite the same way as the others do. Your social butterfly, they are the ones who seek sensory information. Now what happens with them is first of all, they are going to seek sounds.

**Meg:** So they're going to be your squealers and your screamers, which is absolute nightmare. My first child was one of those. And my husband is sensory sensitive on an auditory level. And it was horrific. James shrieking used to do this high pitched kind of scream and it used to send everybody over the edge.

**Meg:** It was quite a delight. It wasn't even that he was like behaving badly. It was just sensory seeking. But also they're more likely to hit and bite your sensory seekers, your social butterflies. And they are also much more likely to become overstimulated because they stimulate themselves and stimulate themselves.

**Meg:** And eventually, with social interaction and with sensory input and eventually. They're overstimulated, they have it all fall down, and there's your temper tantrum. So that's your second sensory personality. Your third sensory personality, your slow to warm up, is also more likely to have temper tantrums because they like to [00:08:00] control everything.

**Meg:** So the minute that you try and take control away from them, the minute you try and get them to do something that wasn't predicted for them or move them out of their comfort zone, they're going to have a temper tantrum. And they're also going to bite another kid before the other kid can get to them because they are trying to create a bubble around themselves to say, like, this is my zone.

**Meg:** This is my space. I need to control it and predict it. So don't come in. And so that's your slow to warm up. And then your fourth sensory personality, which is your sensitive baby. They are much more likely to withdraw and to scream because they become overstimulated, but really to withdraw from situations.

**Meg:** And so you've got these four sensory personalities, each with their own profile and their own response in terms of toddler behaviors, for sure.

**Tove:** Meg, your child can change sensory personalities as they develop on their journey. Is that accurate? Cause I think of mine, I would have said Jagger was a settled baby cause he was so easy, but I think he's probably more sensitive or actually slow to warm when you're talking about that [00:09:00] now, which I wondered, is that a journey that children can go on?

**Tove:** They can start at one and move into another.

**Meg:** So first of all, in the very early days, the first four months, we don't really say what they are at that stage. So if you're talking about him being a settled baby in the first four months, we don't really tie them down at that age. It's normally after about four or five months that we start to be able to say, okay, it looks like it's going to be a settled baby, firstly, or a sensitive baby. Secondly, yes, the sensory personalities can change, but usually the default personality that you see is the one where they are a little bit out of their comfort zone. He might look like a settled baby when he's in his comfort zone, when he's at home, when he's in control, when it's all going his way.

**Meg:** But if he's a slow to warm up, the minute you put him into a space that's slightly less predictable, like a new school, as an example, he's more likely to withdraw or overreact. On the other hand, , he could also be, I don't know well enough and I haven't spent time sufficiently to actually watch and see, but he could also be a social butterfly and often you [00:10:00] have these settled babies go to become your social butterflies because they realize that the world is more interesting than just letting it bypass them. And when they get involved in it, they start to seek and then they are super busy. Don't slow down. Lots of noise, lots of screaming, lots of drama, so I know you've often spoken about.

**Meg:** About Jagger being a bit of a drama queen and what I have seen of him, he's quite busy and I wonder if he isn't a social butterfly who then has the awful dance because he gets overstimulated. He doesn't self regulate and he's seeking, seeking, seeking, and then he hits the wall because he's hasn't self regulated.

**Tove:** Well, I mean, if this is not an incentive for me to go and redo my sensory course,

**Meg:** I think so.

**Tove:** I'm on it, I'm clearly, clearly not. I love that. That's really interesting.

**Meg:** Yeah, so I mean, going back and I know I'm spending a bit of time on this, but if you want to look at the kind of developmental buckets or the reasons behind this bucket of [00:11:00] behavior, we've had the physiological, we've talked about the sensory. The next layer up is the emotional.

**Meg:** If you look at the human brain. You've got this basic low part of the brain, which is your brainstem which is where you respond on instinct to things. So

that's like what a lizard would have. They go and lie in the sunshine when they're cold because , it's like their behavior is it's super driven by reflexes.

**Meg:** And the next layer up on that, that develops is actually this emotional area of the brain. It's called the limbic brain. And it fits like a little hat over the brainstem. And that's where our emotional centers start to develop. And as little ones get into the two year old period, they start to really get access to the emotions in a very strong way, and they can't regulate them.

**Meg:** And so that's the third reason for all of these behaviors, is this emotional driver that they haven't learned to self regulate and between us all, that's totally normal. They're not supposed to be self regulating their emotions. They're supposed to be massive emotions. They're supposed to be overreacting to everything.

**Meg:** They're supposed to be [00:12:00] drama queens because they haven't learned to self regulate those emotions. It is a challenge of the stage to regulate your emotions. You do need to do it and you need to come out the other side of the stage, having developed self regulation of emotions. But one of the reasons behind these temper tantrums is that they haven't developed that.

**Meg:** So. I mean I love the videos that you see on TikTok or on YouTube and you see these little ones who've they've got a cell phone and the mom takes the cell phone away from them and they're only like nine, ten, twelve months old and they fall over with drama. Like it's the most terrible thing that's happened and they're crying.

**Meg:** They can't regulate their emotions. Now that's appropriate at that age. It's not appropriate for a nine year old to do that obviously and So that's the third reason why we see this, because their emotions are just brewing just under the surface all the time, and they're not able to self regulate them yet.

**Tove:** So, I guess with that set of information and that kind of piece in our mind, understanding that prevention is better than a cure, right? Is there a world where we prevent this? Is this just, it's a developmental part [00:13:00] of the journey and we just need to accept it and learn how to manage it rather than even trying to attempt to prevent it?

**Meg:** No, no, you, you have got to manage it. And the reason why it's very important to manage it is it's not pleasant for anybody to be dysregulated. And as much as it sends you over the edge, when [00:14:00] Jagger's throwing his temper tantrums, I promise you, he's not feeling good either. Children and

adults together don't like to be dysregulated and emotional dysregulation, which is like throwing a massive temper tantrum or running and trying to escape something screaming at the top of our voices. That's not pleasant. So what do we need to do? So a couple of things.

**Meg:** First of all, your first line of defense with any of these behaviors is to go back and just think what's going on physiologically. And recognize your baby's sensory personality that those things are important. Those were the first two things I spoke about because it gives you a frame of reference to get inside their head and not to label the child as the behavior.

**Meg:** So what can happen when you've got a toddler who's like shrieking, like James used to shriek at everything, the immediate response was, he's naughty, like you're naughty. And, so there's this label that goes on or you're too busy or. You're a pain or what, your head can go to all of these labels that get thrown at toddlers with these tricky behaviors.

**Meg:** Now, a better response is to go, right, you're hungry. I can see you're hungry right [00:15:00] now. Let's get you, get some food in your tummy and it's sort that piece out. Or, right. I can see that you're overtired, you're overtired, you're overstimulated. It is time for you to go to your room and have some quiet time, some downtime.

**Meg:** Or I can see that this birthday party is way too busy for you and you're sensitive, sensory sensitive little one. Let's get you home. So when you do that as a parent, it's called reflective parenting. It's the ability of a parent to step out of the moment and to not label the behavior and to say, this is what's happening for you.

**Meg:** And it's something that. A parent can do it, a child can't do it, and it's very, very important. So that's your first thing is you definitely have to be reflective as a parent and work out what the heck is going on. And then you need to calm them. Let's say, for instance, it's a dysregulated temper tantrum, and you need to be able to go in and use words.

**Meg:** So the narrative is very important. And we do find that I'm more verbally precocious kiddies. The ones who've got better verbal skills tend to not be [00:16:00] as much as emotional because they're actually able to kind of piece

**Tove:** They're not so

**Tove:** frustrated.

**Meg:** They're not so frustrated. Whereas your little ones who take in a little bit more time to, to get their language together, often, there's that kind of lag and they are more emotional.

**Meg:** So you wanna get down on your toddlers level when this is happening. You need to hold their hands and look them in the eyes and say to them, I know that you are feeling. And give them the word. I know that you're feeling hungry, tired, irritable, overstimulated, whatever it is. What then happens is that very often they will just, I mean, I'm sure you look at me and you're thinking, yeah, yeah, he will like completely go.

**Meg:** What will he do? Go full tilt.

**Tove:** Yeah, I was gonna say, he's just gonna keep going, right?

**Meg:** Keep going.

**Tove:** keep lying on the floor. And he's like, deeply dramatic. He will put himself on the floor and fling his head back and it will be a whole, I mean, it's a show that one must watch, right?

**Meg:** Yes, yes, exactly. So I think the first line of defense is you have got to go in as an emotionally self regulated adult. And we talk about, yeah,

**Tove:** and that I feel like is hard in itself, right? Because at that [00:17:00] stage, it's five o'clock in the evening, or it's seven in the morning, and you're trying to get everyone ready for school, and now I must be regulated on top of three other children and a husband, and , so I feel like I need a session on how to regulate myself.

**Meg:** Yeah. Well, that is part of it, and it's so interesting. You said that, it is a dance between a parent and a child and it is, it's a couple of things. It's taking a deep breath and going, I am at the end of my tether, but I'm going to take a deep breath and I'm going to be the adult in the room.

**Meg:** Or It is saying, I actually can't be the adults in the room. Like I I I don't have the capacity. And in which case, remove yourself. And that scenario is okay as well. And so, so let's, so let's be completely honest. We are not all ideal parents. We all reach the end of our tether and our child is now throwing a hissy fit.



**Meg:** And in fact, the more we go into him, into Jagger, the situation when he is throwing himself on the floor, the more he's gonna do it. And, because you're fueling the fire plus. It's sending you right out of your beautiful green brain, which is in the frontal part of your brain down into your limbic brain, which I spoke about it, that [00:18:00] emotional brain.

**Meg:** And now you've suddenly got two toddlers in the room. So by removing yourself, you actually might do a better job. So your first point of departure was go in. And your second one, when that doesn't work is to go out. And that is to say to him, okay, you stay there. yoU stay there. That's fine. I'm coming now.

**Meg:** And you turn and you walk away. And some parents have real difficulty with this. I'll never forget a mom in my practice. She had a baby who would hold his breath when he had these temper tantrums

**Tove:** Oh my gosh.

**Meg:** until he passed out. So it was really severe and it was really severe. And the pediatrician had sent her to me and we were working it through.

**Meg:** And I said, look, what we're going to do is we're going to walk and we're going to walk the other way. And we're just going to keep walking. And I said, what you can do is you can have a mirror up in front of you so you can be watching your mirror so you can see what he's doing, but you are just going to walk.

**Meg:** Then let's see what happens. And what was super fascinating is that he never breathed held when she did that. And whereas he did when she stayed there. And so she [00:19:00] walked away. And eventually what happened is that he screamed as well. And eventually they'll get up and they'll come running to you because actually what they wanted was the attention anyway.

**Meg:** And then what you do is you immediately give them what they needed, which was a big, big, big love and cuddle and say, it's all right. Mommy's here. We're okay. And so then again, you are bringing him back down. You're telling me he's okay with a big love and a cuddle.

**Meg:** And what that will usually do is diffuse It might mean that the minute you give him the love in the kettle he throws another temper tantrum which case you say okay all right that's fine you can stay there and mommy will go over there and you stand up and you walk away and you know to the other side of the

room and he will come after you because he doesn't want to be I mean what's the point of a temper tantrum if you haven't got an audience.

**Tove:** Well, this is my thing. So I was going to say, what if you're in a situation where you can't actually figure out what it is, you don't think it's food, they've just had dinner or lunch or whatever it is, they've, just woken up from a nap, you've taken their car away or you've taken their book away or they've dropped it and can't find it.

**Tove:** We've removed the hunger, we've [00:20:00] removed the sleep piece. Is that just a, I can't control something has not worked for me. Like, something in my world is not going my way. How do we distinguish between it being like a proper problem and a behavioral piece that's just like, hold on now I'm just gonna be a bit of a dick because I'm a toddler and I can't do that.

**Tove:** Right. I can just be an ass and everyone's just like, okay, but you're cute.

**Meg:** So you've touched on the fourth layer. So I spoke about the physiological, I spoke about sensory, I spoke about the emotional, and then there's another layer of behavior that contributes to this behavior. And I promise this is the last one, but that is, that is the behavioral element. And that is the toddlers will do these things simply because they can, so they will push the button, not because they're feeling emotional, not because they're hungry, not because they're angry, not because of anything else, but just because they can. And it's particularly happens when they want something and you've stopped them or they don't want something that you are trying to get them to do, like go into a car seat.

**Meg:** So they will [00:21:00] then throw the temper tantrum, push you, bite you, whatever it is, hits you because. They're trying to assert themselves. Now, this piece is a developmental stage. And this is your Erickson stage of autonomy versus doubt, where they are just trying to work out just how powerful they are.

**Meg:** Like, know, am I powerful enough to really affect this world? And at the end of the stage, they've got to come out feeling quite powerful because it's, they've got to come out of the stage feeling autonomous, but they can't come. We don't want our little ones coming out of the stage. Doubting themselves.

**Tove:** Feels like a very tricky balance to,

**Meg:** And it's scary as a parent, because then you think to yourself, shit, if they want to, they need to feel autonomous and they're pushing the boundaries, do they always need to get their way? And in actual fact, it isn't so. So let me

explain to you how that works. In order to develop autonomy and to feel super powerful as a four year old, as you exit your toddler years, you need to have had quite firm boundaries, as well as quite a lot of choice.

**Meg:** So it's getting that balance right between how [00:22:00] much boundary and how much choice. That's what's really important. And the different styles of parenting, there's that very permissive style of parenting that says, you know what, you can have your way in absolutely everything.

**Meg:** And we definitely see it. It's become more of a phenomenon, globally. In more recent years, but what permissive parenting does is it doesn't give you enough boundaries. And so then you feel a little bit insecure. And often when I'm talking about this, I talk about this imposter syndrome, that if you matriculated or finished your A levels, and you were immediately appointed as the CEO of a very large corporate, you would just You just wouldn't, that wouldn't be very pleasant.

**Meg:** You would feel completely, you'd have imposter syndrome. It would feel terrible because there's a time in your life where you really do need to have some sense of limitations and boundaries. And that you're not, so you feel that you're not ready to have that authority. So that's what happens is that you'd start to doubt yourself if you don't have sufficient capabilities within yourself. So toddlers don't want permissive parenting. They want to know [00:23:00] that there is another boss. They don't want to be the boss in the room. Okay. Having said that very punitive parenting, which is on the opposite end of the continuum from permissive parenting, that type of parenting, which is super strict, never gives choices, boundaries, boundaries, boundaries, and punishes children for absolutely everything they get up to.

**Meg:** That's that type of parenting also going to develop autonomy. And so. On both ends of the continuum, permissive and punitive parenting develop doubt. So right in the middle is the sweet spot, where we need to sit. And that gives little ones very firm boundaries.

**Meg:** And we can talk about how to choose those boundaries, but it gives them very firm boundaries. But it gives them a lot of choice and a lot of autonomy. And at the end of that, what do they know? They know that there's another boss. They know that the rules in the world, but they also know that they can be the boss of themselves over certain issues.

**Meg:** And they start to feel super powerful and come out feeling autonomous. So it's getting that balance, right. As a parent of a toddler.

**Tove:** I guess that's the next question is how [00:24:00] do you choose those boundaries, or maybe a simpler question is the choice game. Are we talking choice and like, Here are two items of clothing. Choose your clothing. Here are two pieces of fruit. Which fruit would you like? I mean, is it that simple?

**Tove:** And when we're talking choice, are we talking choice all the way through their life? Like on their day to day, not just when they're having a moment, I even having a breakdown or a tantrum. I'm now going, you can choose between mommy being here and walking away. Is it about putting that choice into everyday life for them?

**Tove:** So it literally becomes part of, their DNA for lack of a better term.

**Meg:** No, look, I mean, that would be exhausting if you did it all the time. Like like there are moments as, as a mom, where you just got to say, right, we're doing this. Yeah. Dinner's happening now. Like you don't get to choose your time of day that you have dinner because dinner happens at five 30 because there are three children and everybody needs to be fed.

**Meg:** So there are things that they don't get a choice on. Books is a great example of how you can do boundaries and choice. So bedtime, every toddler wants more than one book. It's just the way it is. You

**Tove:** Five. At least.

**Meg:** Yeah. So you define [00:25:00] what the boundaries are. So the boundary is you can't have five books, you can have three books. Okay. But what choice can you have? You can choose them. You don't give them autonomy on the things that you feel are very important. You give them autonomy on the stuff that you really don't care about.

**Meg:** So you have to wear exactly.

**Tove:** your clothes, choose a fruit. Here's three fruits for dinner. Choose a fruit.

**Meg:** exactly. And so you're going to school now you have to wear clothes. You can stay in your pajamas. That's absolutely fine. Or you can put on this outfit, and they might choose to stay in their pajamas and I've often spoken about wearing pajamas to school as something that should be a super acceptable thing.

**Meg:** If your toddler doesn't want to get dressed in the morning, that's fine. They go to school in their pajamas and you can pop in a change of clothes that

the teacher can put on later if they want. So try to be kind to yourself. Try not to pick every battle because. With toddlers, you will eventually get fatigued enough that you'll start to become inconsistent.

**Meg:** So it's better to be consistent with a few things and let the rest go.[00:26:00] With toddlers.

**Tove:** That's really interesting. I feel like we've unpacked the tantrum in quite a lot, and I know quite a lot of the questions that we've seen in our sense community is around biting I'm sure every parent can relate to it. There is literally nothing more embarrassing than when school pulls you aside and it's like, by the way, today your child bit someone, or even worse when you are with someone at a play date and they run up and bite the child and you're just like, can I crawl to a ball and die So, I guess my question is, what do we do?

**Tove:** Why are they biting? Is that just purely an autonomy desire? Where does that stem from? And why do some kids bite and hit and others not?

**Meg:** Yeah. So first of all, I always said that there's only two types of mother. The mother of the child who bites and the mother of the child who's going to get bitten. It's going to happen. One way or the other, your child is going to get bitten or your child is going to bite. And I don't know which is worse, actually, because it is so embarrassing when your child is the biter.

**Meg:** So a couple of things on [00:27:00] biting. I mean, it is going to happen, but that absolutely doesn't make it acceptable. So this is one of the behaviors. There are a few behaviors that I think you draw very, very hard lines on universally, whether you wear pyjamas to school is maybe a bit more of a personal decision, but biting is, is unacceptable, absolutely ever in any format of anybody.

**Meg:** So, a couple of things. Let's always go back to our physiological, our sensory, our emotional, and our behavioral. That's how we're always going to think about behaviors. So let's start with the physiological. Interestingly, Um, you might want to deworm your toddler and when toddlers have worms, they tend to be uncomfortable and irritable.

**Meg:** They don't know where it's coming from. And we often see that might be something that leads into it. You can actually deworm your child anywhere. We say 18 months to be safe. The FDA approves most deworming medications from two years old, but pediatricians certainly in South Africa recommend deworming from a year of age.

**Meg:** So whatever age your doctor's happy with, deworm your little one. And then obviously [00:28:00] make sure they're not hungry, angry, and overtired. Those are all going to feed in. And then of course on your sensory level, you've also got children that are more likely to bite. So any child who has reached the end of their tether and is overstimulated is more likely to lash out with a bite.

**Meg:** And you can often see that at a birthday party, particularly with your slow to warm up or your sensitive baby. Like they've been there, they've socialized, they've got their kind of social batteries finished, and then they will lash out and either hit or bite. So you want to kind of watch for those.

**Meg:** Preemptive signals there, but your sensory seeker, interestingly, is also likely to bite. And the reason for that is your sensory seeker seeks proprioception. No, it's sensory. They're seeking proprioception. And you've got more proprioceptors in your jaw than you've got anywhere else on your body. And so if I go in for a nice big bite, it'll actually feed into my sensory system and it actually makes me feel quite good. And that's also why people often will chew chewing gum as an example of our sensory seekers because it's something to do with [00:29:00] their mouth. So, you do need to think about that.

**Tove:** Yeah, a lot of parents use like those chewy toys that they tie around kids necks that they Yeah, if they are inclined to bite. I know we went through a stage with Grey, she's never bitten, but she, she's very oral. She drools and she sucks, and so we've kind of redirected her to those chewies, which I found very good.

**Tove:** sO I guess one of the things for me would be, Biting. So Jag's only ever bitten once. And me, which was lovely. And I was feeding Nova and not giving him attention. And so for me it was purely a, I need to get your attention piece. It wasn't a breakdown. I can't control my emotions.

**Tove:** It was, you need to give me attention. So for me, that's a behavioral.

**Meg:** Correct.

**Tove:** Peace, right? So the disciplining there is different to a tantrum, which is obviously I can't control myself and I'm unregulated and I just I'm not managing.

**Meg:** So with that type of, with that type of behavior, we then are going to the [00:30:00] ABCs of discipline. So your A is. An acknowledgement of what's just happened and what he's feeling, which I'll come round to. The B is the

boundary and the C is the choice. Now, your A in that situation was, I know that you want mommy's attention because mommy's feeding now B is the boundary. You can never bite mommy. And then you'll see your choice on something that's as severe as biting, because most things need to have other choices. But on biting, I actually do do a timeout for that because I think that they need to be removed. So, if you'd bite mommy again, you will go to a quiet space or a timeout and, and that would go for hitting as well.

**Tove:** So that's an interesting piece for me, the time out piece, does that actually work? Like, where is this magical quiet place that I'm putting him that he doesn't move? Cause I don't want to put him in his bedroom, right? His bedroom for me is a sacred hallowed place that like sleep must occur.

**Tove:** And so I never want to disrupt it with a place of [00:31:00] punishment. Just it is just a special place for me. So I can't put him in his bedroom. If I put him on a step, you're simply just going to get off the step, right? I mean,

**Meg:** Yeah, so yeah, so he's little so he's little still and and he's not strongly verbal and we normally say that timeouts you start when little ones are verbal. And because they need to understand, but the first time you use a timeout so so pick your place is is an important thing. And I mean, some people are quite happy with bedrooms, some people are quite happy bathrooms.

**Meg:** For me, it was always somewhere like the pantry in the house or the laundry in the house. Or, a room, kind of a corner in, in one of the, in the dining room where people don't usually go because everybody's in a TV room. It's separate. The important thing is it's separate

**Tove:** removed.

**Meg:** it's removed.

**Meg:** And then the first time you use it, you use it quite strictly and quite firmly. You say you're going to sit there. And then when they stand up, you say, no, no, no, you sit down. So you're using a low and slow and firm voice. And then they sit [00:32:00] down and then they, they learn quite quickly that actually. That's not negotiable.

**Meg:** They can't, they can't stand up and move out from there. Interestingly, after those first few times, when they've got used to the idea that that's a punishment space, I actually, they never put a time limit on it for my kids. I

would, they could come out when they were ready. And I would say to them, you stay there, you can come out when you're ready.

**Meg:** And that sometimes was 30 seconds, but if they came out and they understood and they gave me a hug and they said, sorry, then it was fine. But if they didn't, and they continued with whatever they were doing, like, pouring the dog's water bowl over the Persian carpet. They were straight back in there when they had to stay there.

**Meg:** I do think that, time out can certainly work. I think it works differently with different children, but it is about how you approach it.

**Tove:** I know that there's so many different parenting styles and, and parents are particularly. Now are very conscious or trying to be very conscious around parenting. And so I guess one of my questions is for those parents that maybe don't feel comfortable with the time out strategy.

**Tove:** Is [00:33:00] there a, another alternative? Is there something else you'd recommend?

**Meg:** It's a difficult question to answer because. I do feel quite strongly that we don't have any corporal or punitive punishment that involves, smacking children and that sort of thing. So I, so I'm not a fan of that. I don't think that's the right way to go, but you do have to have something that's really, really hurts.

**Meg:** And the thing that actually hurts a toddler the most is that separation, and that removal. And so I think if you aren't going to have that, then what is your arsenal? Like, like, what, what, what is your final go to place? And, I don't think using time out often is a good idea, but I think using it constructively is a good idea.

**Meg:** So

**Tove:** taking, taking things away from your child. I mean, are they just too young for that? Like I'm gonna take your, I don't know, your toy car away

**Meg:** that's.

**Tove:** I mean, does that,

**Meg:** Yeah. So that kind of, and that's probably a whole conversation on its own, because as your children gets older, you have to work out what their



currency is. I always talk about children's currency [00:34:00] and, for some children, it's sweeties, for other children, it's actually money, for other children, it's, it is one of their special toys.

**Meg:** But yeah, taking things away is also absolutely fine. But you know, taking something away. When you've bit your sister, that doesn't make sense. It doesn't tie up. It's not logical, when you've bitten your sister, like it's got to be instant and it's got to be, it's got to be a punishment. It's not going to be bite back.

**Meg:** It's not going to be hit your child. It's got to be something severe, quick, swift, predictable, and that's when you look at any legal system in the world, the legal systems that work best where people actually follow the laws is where your punishment is sure and swift. And so, if there's uncertainty about it and you're not sure, and it's not going to happen, it'll happen next week.

**Meg:** It's like, it's a lawless place. Yeah. It's a lawless place. So I think you do need to have something that's consistent, swift, and that is predictable, that they know it's going to happen.

**Tove:** So Meg, I'm mindful that we're running out of time here and I've hardly touched on any of the questions as I'm not surprised because we love going off on these [00:35:00] tangents and I think it's so important to unpack. Unpack the space particularly because it really is a very overwhelming, I know for me and a lot of friends are obviously in the space at the moment, incredibly overwhelming, incredibly triggering a journey to be on at the moment and, exacerbates everything you get grumpy and affects your relationship with your partner and it's just like really, just really triggering behavior and time in a kid's life.

**Tove:** So I guess my final. Peace would be, is there any words of wisdom you can give parents on how to take care of themselves because as you said, there's no good at having two toddlers in the room, right? And there's definitely moments where I feel like I'm just, I'm either going to shout, which I don't want to do, or I'm just equally going to come down to the level and I just, sometimes I lie on the floor with them and just cry.

**Tove:** And then I'm like, this is, we're going to do this together. You and I, we're just going to cry here. And then he's a bit like, I don't really understand what's going on with this woman. Not getting, not getting what I want [00:36:00] here. But I guess, is there any pieces of advice we can leave for mums or parents who are struggling in the space?

**Meg:** look, I mean, I think also go back to those four steps. Look at the physiological, you got to take care of yourself on a physiological level. You've got to have enough sleep. If you're not getting enough sleep, it's going to be worse, and obviously if you've got a five month old, he's waking at night and then you've also got Three year old is throwing a temper tantrum.

**Meg:** It's, it's hard. It's a recipe for disaster. But the first thing is to just take care of yourself on a physiological level and then to be kind to yourself to understand that, there are going to be days when you get it wrong. And, there's a fabulous , term in psychological theory , that's called the good enough parent and we are going to stuff up and sometimes actually you can really stuff up 70 percent of the time . And as long as you repair at the end of it, and you have that reconnection with your child and it's all okay.

**Meg:** You've done a great job and your child will be well adjusted. And there's lots of lovely research that shows that. And I think it, it doesn't give us the freedom to behave like toddlers all the time, but it does give us the [00:37:00] freedom to say, okay, so I really stuffed up. And I mean, honestly, Tove, I look back at my parenting journey with my kids and there are things I regret.

**Meg:** There are things that, where I behave like a toddler, where I didn't, co regulate them. I'll never forget one day. I was so furious with James and I'd lost it. I was in a temper like, which you should never discipline in a temper. And he looked at me and he was tiny and he said, mommy is naughty.

**Meg:** And in that moment, I knew that he was right. I knew that I'd crossed a line that he had, that I'd lost my plot. But it was okay. And I think we need to give ourselves the freedom to know that. When you do mess up, try not to, because obviously you're going to watch your emotions.

**Meg:** You're going to take deep breaths. You're going to go for walks in the garden. You're going to have all the support, all the stuff I could tell you that will help you to. To, to not be the toddler in the room, but when it does happen, just to give yourself a break.

**Tove:** I mean, I absolutely love what you've just said there. The fact that. Really, the focus is, is actually the repair piece, right? And I think if I have a [00:38:00] choice between our next, next episode, I'd love to unpack that because I think that's so much pressure that parents are sitting with is that I can't get this wrong.

**Tove:** I can't make a mistake. And we are all going to make a mistake and we're going to do it. As you said, at least 70 percent of the time. So focusing on how we fix what we do wrong and acknowledging it and working on that piece, which is actually a huge amount of introspect on our side, right? What baggage are we bringing?

**Tove:** Why is this triggering us? What is our stuff that's making this really tricky? To manage with our children is a piece that I feel is quite a new age parenting piece that hasn't, isn't unpacked as much as that repair piece. And I think it's really important.

**Meg:** We need to look at, yeah,

**Tove:** Yeah. So, I mean, yeah, thanks, Megan.

**Tove:** Just a massive. Thank you. For all your time and for sharing all the wisdom. And I hope that for everyone listening that these insights help you navigate the world of toddler behavior with a little more confidence and a little more kindness to yourself. And until next time, take care and good luck.

**Meg:** Thank you so much to Tove and moms. The [00:39:00] only request from my side is to go and like, and subscribe to the podcast, because as Tove said, this is something that we commit our time for, and we love doing and a little bit of kind of reward coming back from you would be to subscribe to the podcast so we can always be in touch.

**Meg:** Thank you.

**Tove:** Thanks meg.