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It's almost four months. I actually only started training a month ago. Start small.

There's no rush. Remember, it took you nine months to grow a human in your body. So how can you expect your body to get back, bounce back, as everybody say, in a month or two compared to nine months? You can't compare those two.

Welcome to Sense by Meg Fora, the podcast that's brought to you by ParentSense, the app that takes guesswork out of parenting. If you're a new parent, then you are in good company. Your host, Meg Fora, is a well-known OT, infant specialist, and the author of eight parenting books.

Each week, we're going to spend time with new mums 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 ParentSense 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.

Welcome back, mums and dads. This is Sense by Meg Fora, the podcast that delves into the deep realities of parenting, both the joys and also the challenges, and we offer support and insights, and also a bit of a sense of community for parents everywhere. Today, we are joined by an incredible guest.

She's an exercise and training expert and a lifestyle coach who has recently embarked on the most rewarding journey yet, and I'm guessing probably the most challenging journey yet as well, and that is motherhood. She's here to share not only her professional insights into postpartum fitness, but also her personal experiences and challenges as a new mama. In a world where social media often reflects a very unrealistic picture of getting back into shape and getting back into exercise, and there's massive pressures that mums face, we know that we are not alone in these struggles, and that's really what we're going to be talking about today.

Together, we are going to explore the balance between motherhood and personal health. We're going to talk a little bit about her exercise program that has been designed for new mums, and we're also going to delve into some personal questions about her journey with her little one, Luca. Expect a candid conversation filled with real mum talk, motivation, and advice on how to navigate that postpartum period with grace and strength.

A huge welcome today. I am very excited to welcome Stephanie here with me. Hi, Stephanie.

Hi Meg, thank you so much for having me. It's a real pleasure. I've obviously been following you on social media, on Instagram.

Your account is Stephanie TWS, is that correct? TWS, that's correct. Also, well known as Train With Stephanie, so that's what the TWS stands for. I think most people know me as TWS rather than Stephanie.

Okay, excellent. Well, it's so good to have you here. And you know, I've been following your journey, both because, you know, fitness and health and wellbeing postpartum is very much, you know, center of all of our mom's worlds, but also mainly because you're so real in all of your posts.

And, you know, your journey with Luca, who's now 15 weeks old, has been one that's been very interesting for me to watch because you haven't hacked it into something that's glorious and absolutely perfect every day. You speak your truth. And that really is something that all our moms appreciate.

Yes, for sure. I just, I feel being on social media, we already have so much pressure from trying to be this real, perfect fitness fanatic. And then getting into being a new mom, it's just not that easy just to be perfect all the time.

So I believe in being real and putting the real story out there instead of trying to be perfect and having everybody think you are so amazing. And, you know, it's quite interesting. As you were talking there, I was just thinking that, when it comes to things like being in the exercise and fitness world, the more you put in, the more you get out.

And so there's this kind of direct correlation. And in fact, I've seen it on a few of your stories about, you know, if you work hard, and I see the women who work with you achieve these beautiful bodies and this fitness and this health, but motherhood's completely different. Like, it's not a case of the more you put in, the more you get out.

It's not. I think the more you put in, the more drained you actually are. The more tolerance you have, the more patience, the less, sorry, not the more, the less.

The more you put in with exercise, the less tolerance and patience and energy you actually have for your baby. So in the motherhood industry with fitness, it's really not that easy to try to still stay on top of everything. Because, I mean, everybody expects you to be, oh my gosh, you just had your baby six weeks after you've had your baby postpartum, you get the okay, you can train.

I didn't start training after six weeks. It's almost four months. I actually only started training a month ago because I just felt my body needs to recover.

I don't have to jump in. I'm not going to let social media pressurize me with anything or anybody expecting me to bounce back that quickly, because I know everybody's expecting that. And I was just like, that's not me.

My body did so much for me. Yeah. So Stephanie, how did you end up, I mean, just give us a little bit of an insight into your journey to becoming TWS.

And did you study exercise and fitness? What is your background? So basically I started doing what I love seven years ago. So TWS has been running for seven years and we've changed over 2000 ladies lives. So I studied personal training and seven years ago, I just felt the need to help ladies because I felt there's so many ladies out there that are insecure about themselves, that are insecure to go to the gym.

So basically TWS has a wide variety of home workout programs. And the reason for that, why I chose to start off seven years ago with home workout programs is because ladies don't want to go to gym. They don't have the confidence to go to gym.

They don't know what to do in the gym, but they do want to work on themselves. So that's why I started doing all these quick and easy effective home workout programs. Even those days I knew time management, you only have a small amount of time.

So that when I started, my programs are really, really short. And that's actually how I'm getting around postpartum exercises now, because I know exactly how short of time you need to actually do something effectively. So yes, basically I have a wide variety of online programs which cater for any fitness level, any age, it all caters for everybody.

And this, the amazing thing about my programs, it can all be done in the comfort of your own home with no equipment. You can basically use a tin foods as weights or water bottles. That's what makes my programs so nice.

And because it's so quick. So yeah, I basically started seven years ago, super, super love what I do. Every time I see transformations and the way that people speak about how they feel, not only about their body, but how they feel about themselves, their health, it just boosts me even more to create more programs to help people.

Yeah, amazing. And I mean, I noticed, cause I was looking, you've got a challenge coming up and one of the things on your social media yesterday was like 15 to 25 minute workouts daily. And for me that totally resonates.

I actually also interestingly started my journey also about seven years ago with only doing home exercises and it changed my fitness. Because before that it was like, get to gym, get to a class, schedule it in. And it's actually the discipline of being able to do it every single day, but just short, like just fit it into my day and there's no travel time.

And that must also work well for new moms as well. So obviously, I mean, that sounds good for any mom. Is there anything that had to change about that? And when you started to talk about postpartum fitness, cause obviously the shortness is great, but there's gotta be other things I guess that are just for being postpartum.

So the workouts itself is easy. That's not my struggle. The struggle is having the energy.

The time wise, it's also okay if you can squeeze it in, but compared to what I'm used to, training as long as I want to, going to gym whatever time I want to, or training in my garage or wherever I'm training to, it's a rat race. You have to, okay, you're sleeping now, I have to put on my clothes quickly. The workouts itself is easy as I said, but just finding the energy to even, just to get into your training clothes, that is how much energy gets taken out of you as a new mom.

We all know the broken sleep. That's one of the big things. And for me, breastfeeding takes out a lot of energy as well.

So for me, I feel I only have a certain amount of energy and I need to choose on what I spend my energy every day. To be honest with you, the first day when I started training a month ago, I was exhausted. I think I did four exercises, which was too much for me.

I put it out as a trainer and completely the wrong exercises and too much of a high intensity workout. And that day I was so impatient with my baby. I was so unenergetic with Luca.

Everything was just, and I was like, no, whoa. I need to split my energy into wise ways. I need to decide what is important and what needs my energy.

So the exercise itself is not difficult. That I can manage, my body can manage that, but it's finding the energy and finding the time to actually do that. And I can remember just like it was yesterday that there were times when we got to kind of 10 or 12 in the morning and I hadn't got out of my pajamas.

And then I would think to myself and I can remember my husband had gone to work and I would think, how the hell am I going to get out of my pajamas? Because I didn't know how long James was going to sleep for. Maybe it was only going to be 30 minutes. And that wasn't enough time for me to get out of my pajamas into the shower and clean.

I mean, it was just like, it was just a complete nightmare. So if getting out of pajamas is a task, can you give us maybe one or two practical tips for moms who are right there right now, who are not getting out of their pajamas every day, nevermind exercising, what tiny steps can they do to start getting them back towards a little bit of fitness and movement? So I would say what I set out for myself, the pressure I took completely off my shoulders was, I'm not going to set unrealistic goals and say, five days a week, I need to train five days a week this week because I need to get my body back. As everybody always states, and a statement that really digs deep into me because I don't like that statement.

So I would say what I told myself, I'm going to put out two weeks and I'm going to train twice a week for the two weeks. So any two days of the week I'm going to pick and I'm going to make it twice a week. I'm not going to push for five days a week because it's unrealistic.

I'm already so tired after the first exercise. And after week two, I will then decide, let me add a walk to my two days exercise. Then I have three days of exercise, which means I'm moving three days a week instead of nothing, or instead of five days, unrealistic, drained, irritated, impatient, can't get time to get out of my pajamas.

Because I mean, it's so strange. I've always been a person early, early in the morning, I'm in my fitness clothes, I'm ready for the day. Now I get to a Monday and by 12, I'm still in my PJs and I'm like, I need to train, I need to eat, I need to clean, I need to, getting out of PJs is the last thing on my mind.

So I'm just doing everything in my PJs, but I would just say set realistic goals, start small. There's no rush. Remember, it took you nine months to grow a human in your body.

So how can you expect your body to get back, bounce back as everybody say, in a month or two compared to nine months? You can't compare those two because that's what people think. People want, I need a eight week program or I need a month or two to bounce back, to get back. But you forget that it took nine months out of your life to create this human.

And you've got your whole life in front of you. What is the rush? What is the rush to compare nine months to two months? You can't compare the two. So just start small and have small goals and realistic goals.

Because I think people often put unrealistic goals out there because I'm six weeks postpartum. I'm going to take six weeks now and I need to get my body back. But it took nine months to grow the human.

Six weeks compared to nine months, you can't compare that. So you've mentioned with quite a bit of disdain quite a few times the word bounce back or get your body back. And I mean, those are kind of phrases that social media largely puts on us.

I mean, yes, we do as women, we often put the pressure on ourselves as well, but that pressure that we put on ourselves often is from external as well. How do you manage? And I mean, being in the game you're in, I can only imagine that your Instagram feed is just full of beautiful bodies and exercise and fitness and wellness. How do you manage that noise of perfection and bounce back from your social media? And what advice do you have for moms on that? So the whole bounce back is just so unrealistic to me.

It's just, as I just mentioned, it's super unrealistic if you take it nine months compared to two months, you can't compare the two. So I think when I felt pregnant, I was so at ease with my body and where I'm at. I told myself from the start, I'm not going to put pressure on myself once my baby's born.

And I knew everybody was waiting for that. Oh, TWS, baby's been born, let's see when she's gonna start training, when she's gonna do this. Oh, I wanna see what her body looks like.

I wonder, what did she do? Did she natural C-section? What did she do? Because I'll need to know because I need to do what she does. And I just decided that I'm not gonna be that fitness lady. I'm going to be the fitness lady that is true to myself, true to the people out there and to 99% of the normal new mom, what she can manage.

And a new mom cannot manage six weeks postpartum to start training and get back into gym, getting up at 5 a.m. in the morning. And if you've had broken sleep, 5 a.m., I'm like, I can't open my eyes. I'm like, please, please, Luca, just sleep like another 10 minutes.

Like I can't get up. So I promised myself from the start that I will not be that fitness coach that's going to jump back in. I'm going to give my body a rest.

My body did nine months of growing a tiny human in my, inside my tummy. And I just feel I've built up so much respect, not that I never had respect towards my body, but I built up so much respect towards my body, what it did for me for nine months. So that's why I feel moms out there must remember, it's been nine months.

Give your body a break. Don't jump back into, I know we all want to become healthy again and feel yourself and all of that jazz, but the reality is you don't feel yourself for the first, I'm at almost four months and I'm only starting to feel a little bit normal, feel a little bit as if I can manage Luca, but then you get a day where he's like, no, no, mom, you're not managing me today. I'm in control.

So just bear with yourself and keep on reminding yourself that it's been a hell of a ride to just bring a baby into this world. Apart from your natural or your C-section or whatever you did, people intend to forget the previous nine months. So be nice to your body, be gentle to your body.

I know, like I said, I know everybody wants to bounce back, but what I did was I just kept on eating healthy and eating also makes a hell of a difference to how you feel about your body. So, I mean, if you take it, if you eat junk food, you sleep a little, got broken sleep, your house is dirty, your hair is dirty, everything's dirty. As a new mom, you're not getting, then you don't feel good.

But if you try at least just to eat more healthy and that's what I did in my first three months. I did an exercise. I maybe went for a little walk here and there with Luca, but he also ended up crying.

So that also cut my walking short. But I think be gentle on your body. Remind yourself why you are where you are, because it took nine months.

And just remind yourself, listen, nine months, give my body a rest. We'll get there when we get there. It's all gonna come.

You've got your whole life in front of you to bounce back or get your body back or to how people are saying that. But just remind yourself, you've got time. Be gentle, be nice to yourself.

Your body's going through so much and the broken sleep is just the chair on top. Like don't push yourself. So you've spoken about quite a bit about the broken sleep and that kind of brings me around to your personal journey with Luca in terms of motherhood.

How have you found the transition and what are the things that have really challenged you? So it's been quite a journey. I'm just very thankful. I can't complain about not having a healthy baby.

He's been perfectly healthy. I think more the transition of the sleeping, you know you're gonna get a little sleep, but you don't know to what extent it is. But again, the body is so amazing and your body adjusts.

Like I think the first night when we got home, I think we had an hour of sleep and my body just functioned the whole next day. And then the second night, also two hours and my body just functioned the whole day. So I think the biggest challenge for me was the broken sleep because making me feel the next day, your hormones are all over the show.

So very cry, very emotional, it's just very overwhelming. So I think the biggest challenge for me was the broken sleep because I'm a person that's always had a lot of energy. I'm always positive.

I'm always jumping onto the next thing. Okay, what's the new thing? What are we gonna do with TWS next program? And now since getting Luca, it's like, okay, what will my next meal be like? When am I gonna get time to prepare my next meal? Cause I need to eat, cause I need to breastfeed. Otherwise my milk's not gonna come.

So my mind has changed completely, but in a way still again, I've always just been gentle on my body since having this baby and accepting the broken sleep and saying, you know what? I didn't have a good night last night. I'm not gonna push my body even more to exercise, to drain myself. I'm rather just gonna focus on eating healthy if possible.

I know that's also difficult cause you just grab whatever you can and just stuff your face with it. But I really focus on trying to still eat healthy and getting the right nutrition in. Yeah, absolutely.

And so, I mean, when we look, when we talk about the challenges, you've spoken about the sleep challenges. I know that you said that you breastfeed as well. Are there any questions that you have that have come up over the last three months that you'd like to share with me and that we can share with other people because most moms actually have very similar questions.

Yeah, so there are actually two, Meg. Thank you so much for allowing me to ask you a question or two. So I think a question that I've heard a lot of since speaking to new moms is, with what I'm going through with Luca at this stage is he's got this, it's not broken sleep.

I don't know why broken sleep is stuck in my head, but I think they call it catnaps during the day. So he's on a, yesterday he actually did like 15 minutes, 20 minutes catnaps, but usually it's a half an hour and it's like smack, bam, half an hour. When he hits that half an hour, he starts shoving around, he starts making noises and all of that.

So I've heard that it could be overtired or undertired. How do you define if he's overtired or if he's undertired or what causes the 30 minute catnaps during the day? So it's very interesting. Sleep is such a, it's a trajectory that all babies go through, most babies go through.

The first is that when they're born and they're very little, they tend to sleep a long period of time. So like almost from one sleep to the next during the day. So like you could have like a three or even four hour sleep and like you can actually, I mean, even though in those early days you still think you can't get everything done.

Like when you look back, you go, oh my gosh, imagine having like a three hour stretch of sleep. And then usually at around about two or three weeks, they start to wake up a little bit and they don't have, and that first stage we kind of call the honeymoon period. And then suddenly they're more wakeful.

And so they are, you know, they start to have these much shorter sleeps. Now, a normal baby sleep cycle is about 45 minutes. So that is from the time they fall asleep until the time they wake up will be 45 minutes that they will wake up.

Some babies will do as short as 30 minutes and it still constitutes a sleep cycle that they actually are needing to be resettled at that time or resettle themselves. Now they do learn to resettle themselves and we call it linking sleep cycles. And most babies start to link sleep cycles by six months of age.

So what will happen at six months is that you'll have like a 30 to 45 minutes sleep in the morning and then a good like two hour sleep over midday and then another shorter sleep later in the afternoon. And that's pretty typical for six to nine month old. But between about two or three weeks and about six months, you can actually have these quite short sleeps.

So what do we do about it? So the first thing is some of it is acceptance that some of your sleeps can be like 30 to 45 minutes and that's normal. Anything less than 30 minutes is not normal. So anything less than 30 minutes is not a good enough sleep cycle.

So if he's having like a 20 minutes, then it's not a good enough sleep cycle because he's gonna need another sleep very soon and he's gonna be tired. So I'm gonna give you a couple of tips. The first thing is you... This episode is brought to us by ParentSense, 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? ParentSense 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 ParentSense app now from your app store and take the guesswork out of parenting.

First thing is you do need to watch the awake times. I think you've got the ParentSense app, don't you? Yeah, I've got the app. I did the course last November.

I did the sleeping course with you and it really, really helped me. I still go back and look at the masterclasses and the videos that you posted there. I just pop my earphones on and when I'm breastfeeding I still, I just put my phone down.

So I really make use of that. Give yourself a reminder. That's excellent.

So that's moms for you, all of the rest of you that sleep course is called the SleepSense online course and it's inside the ParentSense app. And we've got another one starting up fairly soon as well. So you can join that.

I would go back and listen to the day sleep video from that one or the day sleep masterclass because it'll cover this. So let's talk about a couple of things. First of all, you watch the awake times and you need to make sure that you watch what time he wakes up and by the end of the awake time he's going back to sleep.

And it usually is about five to 10 minutes before the end of the awake time. Take him to his room, close the curtains, put on the white noise, put him in his sleeping bag if it's a good day, if it's a longer day sleep and then settle him down there for a little bit of a nap. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that if he's sleeping very short, he might be having what's called the hypnagogic startle which is a little startle reflex that they do just as they're falling asleep. And that usually happens at 15 to 20 minutes. And to stop that, you can actually use a little weighted blanket.

And there's some lovely little weighted blankets. Snuggle Time sells one, Soda's Nurture one. They're very small, so they're not these massive big things.

They are very light, they're not too heavy. And they're awesome because as he has a little jerk, he'll come up against the little weighted blanket and hopefully fall back asleep. If he doesn't do that and you don't want the weighted blanket, then my suggestion is to actually sit with him, with your hand on him until he moves through that hypnagogic startle.

So keep his hands in so they can't startle. Keep a little bit of pressure on him. Maybe listen to a podcast or whatever it is while you're doing that.

And then get him through that little reflex, that little hypnagogic reflex. And then after that, he'll have a longer sleep. If he's sleeping at about like 30 minutes, so if he's gone through the hypnagogic startle and he's still waking at 30 minutes, just a couple of pointers.

Make the room dark and play white noise. And a lot of parents think I must differentiate day sleep and night sleep. And it's gotta be like sleep in a light, noisy space in the day and sleep in a quiet, dark space at night.

But it actually isn't like that because sleep is so critical for little one's day and night. It's better to have him in a dark space with the white noise for day sleeps as well. And then the final tip is that if he does wake up and it's been really short, like 30 minutes, you can go back in and just resettle him.

So turn him on his side, pat his bum till he falls back asleep or give him his dummy if that's what he takes, give him his doodoo blankie and that would be important. And then the last thing, I know I said that was the last one, but the last thing is so important, Stephanie, because actually, particularly for Luca, because he's approaching 17 weeks. At 17 weeks, we sometimes have what's called the 17 week sleep regression, which is where they actually start to wake up more frequently.

And the reason that they do that, it does have a little bit to do with nutrition, but it has more to do with that they need to actually learn to self-soothe. And one of the things I would recommend is that even for those day sleeps where you think he's waking, our tendency is, sure, I can hear him, I'm gonna run in. If I settle him quicker, if I get to him quickly, then I can settle him quickly and he'll re-sleep.

And what we do, exactly, but what we actually do is we start to train our babies that every time they come into the slight state of sleep, we'll be there and we'll put them back to sleep. So what I would suggest you do day and night is that when he starts to make a noise at 30 minutes or 40 minutes or whatever it is, is just to listen and just to see what he does. And you might find that he kind of makes some noise, he might even call out, but don't go to him, just listen.

If he is really crying, then go to him, obviously, and then try and resettle him if it's been too short or pick him up if it's been longer. But by listening, you'll be amazed that actually he'll probably put himself back to sleep in some of those little wakings. So try and see if you can just see if he'll resettle himself.

Yeah, just one question on the, you mentioned to keep the room dark during the day. So I haven't been closing the curtains, I've actually been leaving it open. The reason why, and I could be wrong, this is what my mom brain told me, my uneducated mom, first time mom brain.

So I was thinking if I keep the curtains closed for every day nap, and maybe in a month or two, we go somewhere and it's not dark, is this not gonna affect him on wanting a dark room? Why is my mom not making my room dark? How can I sleep in an open room? So will this not affect going forward to always having the curtains closed, always having a dark room to going somewhere where we don't have curtains that can be closed or there is no dark room? Yeah, look, I always talk about healthy and unhealthy sleep associations. A healthy sleep association is something that you can actually reenact without you having to be physically in the room. So having a dark room is something that you can do without being there.

Like just take a roll of black bags, refuse bags, and stick them inside the windows of wherever you are. So my suggestion is that that is a healthy sleep association. Yes, it is a sleep association, you spot on, he is gonna expect that.

But it is something that actually is not a major thing. Whereas an unhealthy sleep association is like breastfeeding to sleep because you will never be able to drop that without some work. So try to, you know, the things that you can use that he can use independently, like a weighted blanket or a dark room or white noise, I wouldn't worry about those habits.

And the other thing is, you know, what also happens is that right now he's sleeping a lot during the day. But when he gets to six months old, he's only gonna be having three to four sleeps. By the time he gets to nine months, he's only having two sleeps.

And by the time he gets to a year, it's only one sleep. So it's not like your whole life is disruptive. It's just one or two sleeps, you know? So I think it's important to keep, for me, it's important to make sleep the absolutely the priority in the perfect sleep space.

What you will find is that when you've got things perfect and things are going really well, your little one is amazing at how they're able to actually generalize that to a new situation. And I always tell the story about when my son was 18 months old and we had, it was 2000, he was born in 1998, showing my age, he's in his 20s now. And we had, I'd always had him in a rigid routine, dark room, like perfect.

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