**Nurturing Futures: Innovations in Early Childhood Education**

And Meg, you're obviously very tapped into the early childhood space. I guess one of the things that is really interesting is with COVID and mums working from home and being at home, how do you see the evolution of the early childhood education space moving? And is the movement towards micro schools? Are mums wanting to get the kids into nurseries? How do you see that playing out over the next five years? So it kind of ticked the boxes. Teachers earned more than they usually do.

Children got the best stimulation and mums had peace of mind, which is exactly what we want. To this day, I believe that it is one of the best parenting decisions I ever made. Welcome to Sense by Meg Faure, the podcast that's brought to you by ParentSense, the app that takes guesswork out of parenting.

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I am Meg Fora, and this is Sense by Meg Fora. And this is the podcast where we try to demystify some of the mysteries of parenting and just come alongside you as you journey on this parenting journey. And this is one of my favorite types of podcasts because I get to invite a host to host me and to actually interview me.

And the last few times our host has been Tove Gant. She is a mum to three. She'll tell you a little bit about herself, but Tove, welcome.

And I am all ears for your questions. Oh, thanks for having me, Meg. And hi to everyone listening.

I thought today we could selfishly unpack a topic that is super close to my heart, which is education and kind of selecting the right education for our children. We know all of our kids are very unique and not one size fits all. And definitely in my journey with a special needs older daughter and a one-year-old and a two-year-old who are chalk and cheese, it definitely has, I've not had one educational approach that's kind of worked for everyone.

And so I guess, you know, it would be wonderful if we could spend this podcast looking at, you know, education and child care and, you know, what kind of child care we should be looking at and when we should be looking at it. And so I guess I'll start there. At what stage should we be looking for child care and when do we even do that? Yeah, it's super interesting.

So first of all, you know, education is classically paid for by governments and starts usually at around about between four and six years of age, depending on the country that you're in. And that's education. But we know, and particularly you and I know, that we require child care a lot earlier than that.

And the reason is that we are working women and most households cannot afford to not have birth parents work. And so we need to choose child care much earlier than four or six years old. So we need to start earlier.

So that opens up the question around what type of child care should we be looking at? Should we be looking at a nanny at home, a granny looking after our little ones, a child minder if you're in the UK, a day mom if you're in South Africa, a nanny if you're in South Africa, or, of course, a playgroup or a creche. And that's kind of the gambit. Everything from a mom at home with her little one through to an outsourced one-on-one through to an outsourced group and then all the way through to an outsourced out-of-home creche stroke play school.

So the answer to the question about what is best is intensely personal because for some little ones and for some women, the very best solution is one-on-one mom with her baby. And that is an incredible solution. And for our moms who've chosen that, it's a deeply enriched space.

You know what's going on. You're covering all the bases. The person that loves that human being most in the world is looking after them.

And it's a real privilege for moms who have chosen. And I have the freedom to choose to actually be with their little ones all the time. It's a real privilege to do that.

Unfortunately, it's not the reality for most moms. When we start to look at what comes next after that, there are a few principles that I think are very important. And the first principle, and I think we've mentioned this before in a couple of the stimulation podcasts, is that there really are two things that are needed to grow brains other than nutrition.

So I'm going to take nutrition out of the equation and I'm going to give you the two other things that are needed to grow brains. And the one is sensory stimulation and the other one is emotional engagement. And those are the two main things.

So when you're measuring any childcare for your child, you're going to be measuring it against the litmus test of what is the stimulation like here and what is the emotional engagement like. And so, for example, if you have a nanny at home who is doing absolutely no stimulation with your baby and is fully disinterested in them and is literally just ticking the boxes of cleaning the house and occasionally making sure that the child doesn't kill themselves, then actually that's not an optimal childcare for your child because they're not being stimulated and they're not having an emotionally engaging person. If, on the other hand, they have a nanny who is deeply invested and loves your little one and does some stimulation activities, and of course a program like Nanny and Me is a fabulous program in South Africa that actually skills up nannies to be able to actually stimulate little ones.

And you've got this nanny who's absolutely in love with your child. Well, that's amazing. I mean, that has got to be the second best option to a one-on-one, to a mom with her little one.

It is one-on-one. So that's a really great option. But likewise, it goes for, let's take the opposite end of the continuum, which is a massive crèche of 40 children.

And these exist all over South Africa and in other parts of the world where you've got kind of 40 kids, maybe five carers. They rotate in and out and look after the kids. And it's a lot of control.

Well, there's a couple of things there. Number one, they can't be stimulated because there is just the ratio of how many children to how many carers cannot mean that they're being optimally stimulated. And the other thing is that there is zero chance, absolutely zero chance of emotional engagement, because you cannot love 40 children, even if you've got five carers, because everybody's distributing themselves.

Which means that a large crèche situation, by and large, actually is really not a good option. So if we kind of take the principles there of stimulation and emotional engagement, most parents will start to be able to work out what's going to be best for their little one. And, you know, we based obviously, or I'm based in the UK now.

So it's a very different world here, right, where they talk about childminders. And I imagine that in South Africa, that's kind of the idea of micro-schooling or kind of small groups of people, or small groups of children. It was something that was quite foreign to me as a South African to kind of navigate the childminder world.

And it's obviously a very big choice here, I guess, understanding where that fits into that kind of continuum of care. Well, the thing with childminders and micro-schools is that they are a great option. In South Africa, we often call them day mums, where usually what ends up happening is that we have one mother, usually, she's usually a mum of her own children, who then takes on board more than one of somebody else's children.

So she might have four or five, or maybe even six, up to six children, depending on the children's age, inside either her home or inside the mother's home. And it's a really, really great option. And it's a great option for a number of reasons.

First of all, most childminders and day mums are invested in children's development and know how to stimulate little ones. So most of them will be giving some sort of stimulation, which we know is important. The other piece of stimulation, which I didn't talk about, is social stimulation.

And of course, a day mum does that brilliantly, because what she's got is a whole lot of little ones, all the similar ages. And so the little ones actually grow up in a little village, like they would have maybe 200 years ago, where there's a whole lot of little kiddies, similar age, and they learn to socialise, they learn to navigate sharing, and they learn to kind of take turns. These are all very important social skills for two-year-olds.

And so there's that wonderful opportunity of being able to learn new skills and be stimulated. But on the flip side, on an engagement level, you've got enough of a ratio, a small ratio, maybe two, three, or maybe four, and maybe up to six children with one carer, and she will be emotionally invested in those children and engaged with them. And so it's a perfect scenario, which is why in the UK, the childminder scenario, South Africa, the day mum, and then also potentially actually micro school programmes, I think really are fabulous options.

They tick the stimulation, socialisation, and also engagement boxes. That's fantastic. And is that what, you know, I know, PlaySense is one of the organisations or businesses that you're part of, is that what PlaySense does as a business? Very much so.

So a little bit of history there. So my eldest son, who you know, was very anxious when he was a little one, and he did not want to separate from me. And I knew that I was going to have my second baby.

And so when he was about 19 months old, I decided I would put him into a little playgroup. And this is really the background to how PlaySense started. And so I took him down the road to a little playgroup down the road, and he screamed blue murder, like literally burst blood vessels in his neck every single time I dropped him off.

And by the time I collected him in the afternoon, or, you know, after three or four hours, he was still crying and would cry even harder. And so I navigated this. And of course, the teacher said to me, it's because you're not leaving him for long enough.

He's staying the shortest of all the children because I wouldn't let him sleep there. She said he needs to stay for longer. Then I let him stay for longer and have a sleep there.

And then she said, he needs to come every day of the week. I was only sending him twice a week because, you know, I had this little one who was in a daycare or crash situation, basically. And it was, I mean, it was a very enriched environment.

There were probably only 12 children. I mean, she was the most reputable teacher in Nordic at the time, which is where I lived. Everything was perfect.

James screamed blue murder. He hated it. And eventually, thank goodness, I think it did take me six months.

I'm embarrassed to say because, you know, as a mom, you're always second guessing yourself. But it took me about six months. And I eventually worked out that this is absolute nonsense.

I'm hauling him out. So I pulled him out. And what I did was I got three other moms of identically aged children.

And I said to them, look, I'm going to hire an au pair, mornings only. And we'll pay their au pair what au pair rates are, which I couldn't afford. I could afford the little nursery school.

I couldn't afford the au pair. And I said, we'll pay her the au pair rates, but we'll split it between four of us. And we'll essentially set up a little play group in my home.

I will set the program. I was an OT, so I set the curriculum. And in came the au pair, and she stimulated these four little kids.

And let me tell you, did they flourish. I mean, James's language was always good, but it went, I mean, it was, it rocketed. The little girls who were in the group with him have gone on every single one of them to be absolutely brilliant scholars.

And, you know, I just, I just know that in terms of environments, I hit the nail on the head. In terms of engagement, her name was Katrina, and she was just amazing. And that was how it started.

And that was the first play scenes group. We didn't call it play scenes at the time. We called it Katrina school.

And then when Alex came along, and she turned two, I did it about 18 months, we were living on a farm and we had an art building and I did exactly the same thing. And Teflon moved into our art building for like-minded parents and their little ones. And then of course, when Ems was born, we were living in Constantia and we had four or five little ones that came to our house and we had Laura's school.

And so I did it for all three of my children. To this day, I believe that it is one of the best parenting decisions I ever made was to have an au pair shared amongst four children. And because it was so brilliant, and actually today, when my daughter turned 21, my middle child, she wrote me a letter thanking me for what I'd been to her done in her life.

And weirdly featured right there up front was her play sense experience. She said, she knows that those formative years until she was four years old with a teacher in her home, stimulated and with a loving relationship was all she ever needed. And so I believe very strongly that that is the ultimate because it's in home, it's low key, it's low ratios, it's somebody who loves your children and it's cost effective for parents.

So, you know, I think it's an amazing thing to do. The difficulty for most parents is to go out there and find the au pair and put together the legal documents and work out exactly who pays what and what or what is complicated. And most of us are a little bit lazy.

We need, we need childcare just to be as easy as possible. Accessible. Yeah.

And accessible. And so that's what we did. We actually started the PlaySense company, myself and Laura Schoenfeldt from Nanny and me.

And we started the PlaySense company with the absolute idea of equipping moms and teachers and basically joining them up and saying, right, here's a teacher for you in your home. She'll run the curriculum and your child will get the best. And so we kind of ticked the boxes.

Teachers earned more than they usually do. Children got the best stimulation and moms had peace of mind, which is exactly what we want. Well, that's really interesting, Meg.

Is there a reason why they're not like more accessible in places like South Africa? I mean, how easy is it to get into a program like that? Yeah. So PlaySense is throughout South Africa. We've currently got about 37 groups running and I think we're going up to 45 by the end of February.

So you will find them. We've got three groups in Bloemfontein. There's one in Port Elizabeth.

There's another one in KwaZulu-Natal in the Midlands. There's lots in Cape Town and lots in Johannesburg. But you know, if a mom wanted to start this, it's a matter of reaching out and saying, listen, I've got a, I've got an underutilized space in my dining room.

And, and, and, you know, moms often think, oh my goodness, it must, we have to have, you know, what do we have to have to run this? You don't have to have anything. You've got to have four walls and you've got to have an aerated room that's got, you know, windows and doors. You've got to have access to a toilet and very importantly, no swimming pool that's uncovered.

You know, that, that, that's a, that's a, you know, a not negotiable for us. And as long as you've got that, we can make do. And we've had our PlaySense groups in flats, and I mean a two bedroom flat in Seapoint.

We've also had them and we have one actually at the moment in Silvermist on the most incredible estate at the top of Constantia with a purpose-built room and a, and a farmyard around it. Actually, that's got a space at the moment. So if anyone's listening and you're in Constantia, that's where you want to be.

And so, you know, we've got the, you've got everything, the full gambit from the dining room, you know, all the way through to, and I think often people think they don't have space, but they've got space. They can do it. Yeah.

I think it's often that philosophy that I think we spoke about in one of the podcasts where you, you think you need more than what you actually need to, to make, you know, to make your, to stimulate your child and engage. And I guess in this case, children. I guess one of my, my concerns and I get some parents' concerns would be, you know, is this kind of group setting our children up enough for kind of the transition into more formal school environment? Will, will they be able to manage compared to children who let's say come from a crash environment? So it's quite interesting.

I mean, the, the evidence, and there's been a lot of research done is conclusive that a early, a very early, very rigid, very focused education system is counterintuitive and actually produces children who have delinquency, have worse behavior, hate school and do worse in the long run. So you do not want your child in a very formal, you know, sometimes parents say, but placements just, they just play. Surely they need to have like math skills, you know, which we do actually do pre-math skills, but we're not doing it on pen and paper.

And so for me, you want something that is just very play focused and it will equip you for education later. Likewise, in terms of being equipped for education and a big group of people, the very best foundation for being equipped for socialization later is a one-on-one relationship at this age. So actually your child is more likely to be socially adept and better at engaging and collaborating and all of those soft skills that are needed in business and school later on, if they've had very nurturing one-to-one relationships early on.

So in fact, instead of actually being, holding you back and not being, it's way, it's by far the gold stand for preparation for long-term education to have them in small groups. There's no doubt. Okay.

And, and I guess something that, I mean, it's, this is probably not relevant for all families, but it's definitely was, it was a massive consideration when we looked at our education journey for our kids is that obviously Gray, our oldest has additional needs. And so, you know, we, we've been very focused on finding environments for Jagger and Nova that will talk to diversity, talk to inclusion, talk to kindness. And, you know, not only for him, but also for the, the hope that the friends he makes around him are then more accepting and tolerant of his sister and his journey when they, you know, come to our home.

And so I guess in a space like this, where it is very small and it's very secluded, you know, how do you ensure that something like these kinds of principles around, you know, kindness and diversity and inclusion and are kind of, you know, resonating through to the children? Yeah. So that's one of our values. In fact, interestingly within the business, we have obviously mapped out our values and inclusion is part of it.

I mean, as an occupational therapist, I believe in inclusive education. I don't think there's anywhere better for a child with diverse needs than in a small group and with children who are able to scaffold them as well. So, you know, to be a little bit more advanced than them.

So we actually encourage parents of autistic children, children with diagnoses with very complicated medical conditions to join our groups. We've had, I mean, gosh, I can tell you, we've had a highly allergic child in many of our groups because you can, you can control things much better in a small group setting. We've had a child who has severe immune compromisation, who actually was spending most of his life in hospitals when he was in a crash.

And when they took him out of there and put him into play since that all stopped. So he was immunocompromised. We have had a very complicated cerebral palsy case where the child was in a wheelchair and she was part of the setting.

So we've always believed that inclusion is important. In addition to that, we actually have an OT who is a roving OT who works with all of our teachers. So as a teacher has a challenge, she puts her hands up and says, I've got a challenge with this child now and the OT goes in and, and it can be anything simple, like the child just can't self regulate their very big emotions through to, oh, I've got an autistic child and I need some strategies to help, you know, include them in the groups or whatever it is.

I've got a child who's very slow to warm up and won't join the circle, whatever it is. So, yeah, I mean, in terms of inclusion, small groups is the way to go. And you kind of touched on that there, your teachers or the leaders of these kind of micro schools, do they have access to, you know, ongoing, you know, education themselves or ongoing training themselves? Because the space is continually evolving.

As you said, new research always pops up. I guess what is the, you know, kind of best practice or the process there to keep your teachers on? This episode is brought to us by Parent Sense, the all-in-one baby and parenting app that help 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. I guess what is the, you know, kind of best practice or the process there to keep your teachers on? So it's really interesting.

I mean, in terms, if you think about teachers, you can drop them into two categories, teachers and schools. And you can drop them first of all into a category of very well networked in a school. So, you know, there's a classroom, there's a staff room, there's coffee before the children arrive, there's a headmistress, there's a whole lot going on.

And those teachers tend to have a lot of integrated support just through the system that they're part of in the infrastructure. But by far the majority of early childhood education globally, and I'm not just talking in South Africa, I'm talking in the UK as well, is actually delivered by childminders in their own home, or people who've got little pop-up mom and pop shop nursery schools in their garage. By far the majority, because the early childhood education space is generally run by women at home.

So, you know, now if you think about those women, what's the one thing that they don't have? They don't have support, and they don't have kind of growth opportunities. And that's been, that was a very big part of why we started PlaySense in the beginning, is not just to have, you know, this gold standard small scale education in a parent's home for children, but it was also to really support teachers. And so the way that we handle our teachers is we, first of all, train them in their 40 hours of training that they go through, which covers everything from play theory to practical activities to practical toddler, like potty training skills and that type of thing.

So we do all of that. And then in addition to that, we have our continuing education that they're part of. So they would get trained in self-regulation as an example of one of our master classes, and then they get SACE points or CPD points for that.

Okay, that's amazing, because I think that is, you know, imperative as in things change and evolve that they've got access to that support, because I can imagine it must be quite isolating otherwise. Meg, you're obviously very tapped into the, you know, kind of early childhood space. I guess one of the things that is really interesting is with, you know, COVID and mums kind of working from home and being at home, how do you see the evolution of the early childhood kind of education space moving? And, you know, is the movement towards micro schools? Are mums wanting to get the kids into nurseries? Where do you, how do you see that playing out over the next kind of five years? That's so interesting.

I, very sadly, in some respects, the pressure on men and women, on families, is immense nowadays. And so by far, I mean, when you're asking me for trends, and I'm not saying this is a trend that's positive necessarily, but the trend is towards having two parents working very full days. And like that can be from like seven until five, or even later.

So, you know, outsourcing or your children is the trend. That's the direction it's gone in. And it's just necessity.

When COVID hit, and we were all at home, you know, there was potentially this romanticised idea of having, you know, everybody under the same roof. Or let me tell you, if you were a mum with a toddler through COVID, you were frigging dying. Because it was a very scary time to be a mum.

Yeah, it was very hard. And so, you know, that romantic view of, you know, take the children and be flexible. And, you know, you can paint these pictures of how fabulous it is to have this flexibility of work from home and whatever.

It just is, it makes it harder. It really does. Because you can get no work done, you're trying to shove it in between the emails that you're answering.

It just adds a whole lot of stress into the equation. So I would say that the majority of mums, if I look at trends, are no longer looking for, as they were in the old days, mornings only education, almost everybody's looking for full day education. And that's one of the drawbacks of Playsense is that it is morning only.

Although we've got our first three schools opening up just in the next couple of weeks in Pretoria that are full day. So we are moving towards full day education. It obviously doesn't always work with our teachers lives.

So we have to find specific schools that are happy to do that. So in terms of trends and where, what parents needs are, the trend is going towards full day education. And so that would be one thing.

In terms of what children need, and in terms of the trends of where the world is going, that's a little bit of a different thing, because sometimes what parents need and what children's needs are not necessarily aligned. Our children need to be equipped for a world that we have no idea what it looks like. And, you know, if you looked, if you rewound 18 months, so just 18 months, not long ago, just 18 months, 2022, October, 2022.

At that point, artificial intelligence was still something that was for sci-fi movies and was being used, you know, a little bit. With the advent of the GPTs and really putting AI very firmly in the consumer's hands and kind of really starting to understand what AI is able to do, we're starting to understand that the world doesn't look anything like what we thought 18 months ago. And those jobs that we were going to prepare our children for, they're just not going to exist.

And so education now does need to position children to be future players. And, you know, I listened to an enormous amount of podcasts on artificial intelligence, because we've got our chatbot Aya, which moms of you have not used Aya, she's available in WhatsApp now, and she's just really incredible. So that's well worth doing.

And today on that, I mean, maybe I can just quickly pop in the telephone number that people can actually WhatsApp. I know that I'm diverting a little bit here, but if people, if you are interested to be able to ask questions of a chatbot that is trained in all of my content, the number to pop into your phone is plus 44 779 786 4585. And we'll pop that in the show notes as well.

But we have been working very deeply on this artificial intelligence for our businesses. And so we know that AI is going to start to take away some of the jobs of the future. And the jobs of the future that are going to be impacted are mainly the content and knowledge jobs and the menial tasks, because nobody is going to be able to do content, knowledge and menial tasks better than a robot.

They just are going to be able to. So, you know, you need to start looking at the jobs that require unique thought and individual thought and novel ideas. And that means that all of that speaks to creativity, the ability to collaborate with another human being, which a robot can't do.

And so that's where we need to start putting in our soft skills early on. And so that's, you know, that for me, when I'm looking at education trends, I'm looking for education programs that are not focused on content and knowledge, that they're focused on their soft skills. Oh, that's amazing.

I mean, that's definitely something to one more thing to consider when we're looking at trying to make these hard choices. I mean, you know, one of the things you kind of touched on was that the needs between what mum or families need and what children need are often at odds with each other. And I guess, you know, the ideal world is mum at home with child.

Most families can't afford to do that. You know, is a one-on-one nanny, let's say she is engaged and adoring better than a micro school environment? Because I imagine you're missing that socializing. I mean, there's a difference between socializing with adults and socializing with a child your own age, right? So would you still promote, I guess, a micro school environment over that kind of one-on-one nanny? Is there an age where one is better than the other? Yeah, it's 100% the age.

That's exactly what I was going to say. So under 18 months, children just do better with one-on-one. It's just the way it is.

Their socialization needs are much lower. And in fact, if you look at the developmental milestones of play, between a year and 18 months, they're still doing a lot of parallel play and maybe a little bit of kind of play where you're both playing with the same activity, but you're not really actually playing with each other. You know, you might look like you're playing with each other because you've passed something across between yourselves, but you're not actually playing with each other.

Real play with a friend only comes about at around about 18 months and then older, and particularly when imagination and language kick in. And so my suggestion, like if a mom said to me, okay Meg, let's suspend all of our family's financial requirements and let's suspend my personal ambitions, which by the way are very important as well as a woman. But let's suspend all of that.

What's the gold standard for what every child should have? So that for me would be mom at home with her baby for at least six months. Okay. I know it's not the reality and I'm not saying that this is what people should be aspiring to, but I would say first six months of a child's life, one-on-one with their mother or their father is a primary caregiver is very important.

Then from there, that you would have somebody who starts to dovetail, overlap and take on that responsibility of one-on-one and a nanny would be that. So personally, having lived through a very, very healthy nanny culture in South Africa, like many of us do, and having taken the care to train my nannies and to nurture them, I think a nanny culture is, it's just incredible.

And then at about 18 to 24 months, somewhere in that gap, I would be putting my children into a group situation, either a micro school or a small player group. And I think if you can do that, you really are setting your child up for, you know, really a perfect start in terms of ratios and childcare. Great.

And I guess where the mom guilt sits in that, when we're not able to do... Oh, I could hear the mom guilt. Great, didn't do that. What am I going to do now? Sure, now what? Exactly.

Yeah, there's, I mean, there's definitely, I think we know mom guilt or parental guilt just follows on in the journey, right? But I think, you know, taking these kinds of principles and trying to as much as we can with, you know, our context and situation and requirements, as you said, all the other things, the other siblings, the other elements in a family life is really, really helpful. Is there any other words of wisdom you would give parents kind of at this stage of their journey, if they're trying to figure out what decision to make? I mean, I know for me, what's been really interesting is that just between Nova and Jagger, because Grey's obviously a different journey, as kids, they're just so different. So the schooling environment I thought I would put Jagger into is very different from the one I'm thinking of Nova, because they're just such different kids.

And does that play a role? Or do you think regardless that kind of structure that you've just laid out is kind of the gold standard? You will get some little ones who will do better at home for longer, and you will get some little ones who want to socialise earlier as well. So I don't think it's, I don't think it's a cookie cutter approach. And it certainly isn't one size fits all.

And I think what we haven't spoken about, and you know, you said the word mum guilt there, and of course, it just comes with the placenta and never goes away. And so that's there. But, you know, I do think it's a process of accepting what is your family need? And therefore, what will be okay, adequate for your child.

And remember that as long as there's no abuse, and that's very important. And as long as there is a safe, safe conditions, you're actually not going to be doing a terrible job, you just want to make sure that there is some stimulation and socialisation as well and, and love. So yeah, I think it's, you know, I guess, parts in conversation on that note is to try and choose the best childcare that you can afford for your child, try and make sure that whoever is looking after your child absolutely loves your child, because at the end of the day is the most important thing regardless of ratio.

And then of course, you know, have a look for an enriching and stimulating play programme as well, if you can. And Meg, last question, just before we round up, you kind of mentioned it in the last answer, and that was, you know, sensory personalities. And I guess one of the things which we obviously, you know, very, very believe very strongly in senses around our sensory personalities and, and is there a different journey for children with different sensory personalities? Is like one better than the other? Or does it just really not? Yeah, so definitely, you're slow to warm up and sensitive babies will always do better in a small group.

And actually, I probably wouldn't even try and put them into a larger group, because it's just going to be, it's going to be a minefield. They often take longer to settle. And so sending a nanny with your little one to school for the first couple of weeks is a good idea.

Having a school that's flexible enough to have dummies and doodoos with their little ones when they need them, you know, little attachment objects, that's important. Having schools that have short enough hours that you can collect your child before they're overtired, you know, those are considerations. So you're slow to warm up and sensitive babies need small numbers of children, preferably a teacher understands the sensory personalities, short hours, and not an overstimulating environment.

Now for the settled baby and the social butterfly, you can turn that all on its head, they can deal with much longer periods, they can often settle very easy to sleep in that scenario, especially the settled baby. And it's more, the more stimulation, the better, and bigger groups doesn't bother them at all. So, you know, I do think you need to cater your environment to the children.

So, you know, if I had a child who was slow to warm up, had some sort of language delay, had anxiety like my James did, I just, for me, it's a no brainer. It's a small group care is going to be the best. If you have a little one who's a social butterfly, you can be a lot more flexible, you know, they can go into much bigger groups and shine.

Well, Meg, this has been incredibly helpful and very valuable, I'm sure for all parents who are on this journey and are about to go on the journey or, you know, midway through trying to unpack where they send their child and how they select the best child care for their family and their contacts. So, thank you so much. It was incredibly helpful.

Thank you. And mums and dads and parents, what we need from you is please like the podcast, subscribe, review us, rate us, follow us, and we look forward to seeing you again soon. Thank you so much, Tové.

And if mums are interested in Placesense, the website is placesense.org and you can go and have a look at that and find yourself a group in your area or start one. We'll definitely put it all in the show notes. Excellent.

Thanks so much, Tové. Thanks to everyone who joined us. We will see you the same time next week.

Until then, download ParentSense app and take the guesswork out of parenting.