**Navigating Childcare: Expert Advice from The Nanny Movement S4|EP115**

I think one of the things a lot of parents fear is that things are not going to be done the way that they want to have it done when they're out of the home. And you've alluded to something now where you spoke about how you train the nannies to know that they're almost carrying out the parent's agenda, they're doing it on the parent's terms. So how do the parents communicate that to their nannies and how does this channel of communication develop and what needs to go into it? The one thing is clear and effective communication.

When I talk to parents, I tell them even when we do the recruitment, I will tell them, if you're going to open up your position now where you're looking for a nanny, the one thing you need to be clear from the start is what is your job description? What is it that you want this lady to come and do for you? Do you think that nannies can be adequate or can they be more than adequate? Can they actually fill the void and can they actually be everything that a child needs while a mom is away? Welcome to Sense by Megfora, 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, Megfora, is a well-known OT, infant specialist, and the author of eight parenting books.

Each week, we're going to spend time with new moms and dads just like you to chat about the week's wins, the challenges, and the questions of the moment. Subscribe to the podcast, download the ParentSense app, and Catchmaker every week to make the most of that first year of your little one's life. And now, meet your host.

Welcome back, moms and dads. As always, it is wonderful to have you join me here on Sense by Megfora. I am Megfora, and each week, I come alongside you to go and unpack some of the beautiful parts of parenting, as well as some of the challenges that we come across.

And when we're talking about the beautiful parts, we often are chatting to parents, and of course, they bring their challenges, too. And then sometimes, we actually ask an expert to come onto the show with me and to talk about an area that's very, very focused and very niche. And the topic that we're going to be talking about today is around nannies and nannies looking after our little ones, and particularly our little ones if they have special needs, as well.

And so, to talk about this, I have asked Yvette from the nanny movement to join me. Hello, Yvette. Hi.

Thank you for having me. It's really awesome to have you. And Yvette, I have just loved, we've had a kind of a little chat ahead of this, and I've learned a little bit more about what the nanny movement is about.

And it really is quite an extraordinary company that you're building and such an incredible service for parents. So, I think what would be great is as we kick off, and we will talk more about the nanny movement later on, but let's start with you. Who are you and what brought you to this moment in your life? So, I'm actually just a normal teacher.

I studied early childhood development, and I was a teacher for a while. Usually in the early years, grade R was my favorite age group to work with. And then I got the opportunity to open my own franchise of a franchise group, Pinkfoot Bread, and that is working with moms and babies, babies between three months and three years.

And yes, that is how the whole story began, because while working with the moms and the babies, obviously the need arised about the caregivers looking after the little ones. They wanted them to have more knowledge and what we do in the classes and just giving them, equipping them to being able to stimulate the babies at home as well. So, I started with the workshops then and in 2016, so then I was still a young married woman, no children.

And in 2016, we adopted a little boy. His name is Joshua. He's eight years old now.

He was a very tiny baby when we got him. He was 1.6 at birth. We're not sure, yes, we're not sure if it was low birth weight or prematurely born.

We don't have that information, but he was actually a no fuzz baby, happy little baby, developed perfectly. And then between the age of two and three, he stopped talking and we saw changes in the way he regulate or the lack of regulation in his emotions. And the first stop was at an occupational therapist and we are actually still walking the road with her.

She was wonderful. So, Josh was diagnosed with, the first diagnosis was epilepsy and later on also autism. So, he was non-verbal for a very long time.

He is, communication is still not his strong point. It takes special people to actually understand him. It's getting better.

He is showing wonderful progress. So, we are very thankful for that. But yes, being non-verbal, processing slowly and then the emotions being all over the place.

And me at that stage, still working with moms and babies, mostly typical developing children. I just realized, even if you look at your normal children developing in a normal way, typically, that is the places where they are misunderstood because parents get anxious about their language and speech development or then the emotions, how they regulate or the lack of regulation. And I just, in my workshops that was then growing, I just brought it in there.

And naturally, now later on this year is the special needs workshop that came together. And yes, very excited about that. Josh is the reason for everything, actually.

I think he inspired me. I thought I knew a lot about early childhood development. And when Josh, when all of his diagnosis came, I realized we are going a total different way now.

And it is much more complex. And yes, there is much more to know than meets the eye. So, it sounds to me like there were kind of two areas that you identified as areas of need.

The one was that the nannies were coming to your pink footprint groups and the moms were wanting the nannies to be more trained, to be able to actually stimulate and work with and care for their typically developing children. So, there was that kind of avenue that you saw the potential. And then along your journey, you've recognized that there is that.

And on top of that, the need to actually skill people up, moms, but particularly nannies looking at special needs children. So, that's the direction that you've taken and you started the nanny movement, which is now all over South Africa, in Dubai and other areas coming up quickly now. So, it really has been amazing.

And you train nannies, don't you? Yes, I still train them myself as well. I feel I need to be in there because number one, I absolutely love working with the nannies. It's my passion.

It's not just nannies, it's actually anybody working with children. I just feel that I wish I had all of this knowledge way back when I worked with children myself. So, I think anybody working with children, there's so much to know, but especially the nannies is my passion.

I love working with these ladies. They are hungry and thirsty for information on being better in their jobs and just building on top of their wonderful experience that they have. Yeah.

So, they obviously are motivated to learn and to improve their skill set. But of course, you also have a very distinct need coming from parents. I think one of the hardest moments in any woman's life comes the day that she makes a decision to either go back to work or to just leave her baby with a nanny for whatever reason.

I can remember that in the early days, I was a work from home mom, but I would have to start leaving my little one when I was going out to meetings or going and exercising myself. And so, to find a nanny for me was a massive thing. Do you think that nannies can be adequate or can they be more than adequate? Can they actually fill the void and can they actually be everything that a child needs while a mom is away? Yes.

Actually, in the past weekend, I had a workshop and it was something I spoke to them about, is filling that void and how do we do that? So, with children, we need to understand that if we want a child to have a secure attachment with a person, what does that person need to do to create that environment? Because most children have that secure bond with their parents. That is why they feel safe with them. That's why they feel they can grow.

So, now we have a nanny coming in and we need to replicate that same type of bond there. So, how do we do that? We need to reinforce the same routines as the parents are using. We need to provide attentive care, make sure that you understand who is this child I am working with.

This is something I always lean into for a while in my workshops, is for them to realise caregiving is not universal. Caregiving is very personal and you need to understand the child that you work with and then you need to tailor your caregiving style according to their needs. They need to engage in educational activities that is spot on to that child's needs, where he is at, being able to adapt and be flexible if they need to do that.

And then I think effective communication, not just with the child but also with parents. Because when we have a scenario where there is friction between a parent and a nanny, a child will quickly pick up on that and that causes a child to not be secure in his relationship with the nanny. Because obviously the parent is the number one relationship and a child needs to be secure in his relationship with a nanny so that he can develop properly and feel free to learn and be himself and emotionally feel all the emotions that he is feeling.

So you mentioned two things there. The one is that the nanny needs to be skilled up. The more she knows, the more she will be able to connect with the little one.

And then you mentioned the relationship between the parents and the nanny as well, this kind of trust relationship. And then obviously there's a third part, which is that the nanny just brings some magic that she really loves to work with children. And I think that would obviously be a very important part.

And I think it's quite a nice way of looking at it that you've kind of got these three things. You've got what the nanny brings, you've got her relationship with the mum herself and then you've got her skill set. And you put all of that together in a bucket and now you've got something that actually can fill the void and that can adequately cover for when parents are away.

So part of what you spoke about there was attachment, and that incredible relationship between a parent and a baby that we know our babies, we watch their signals, we understand their routines, we understand their needs and we meet their needs. And all of that together kind of comes together and looks at attachment. Can you explain why this is so important and how this contributes to a child's social and emotional development? Yes.

So for a child to develop, to have brain development and emotional development, they need to have a stable environment where they have consistent care that is kind of the same every single day. So when I explain this to my nannies, I tell them that when we are as adults, when we are in a relationship with anybody, a friend or a partner, whatever, it will be difficult even for an adult to be in a relationship with someone that is not every day the same. If you are one day like this and one day like this and one day like that, it will be difficult for you to know what is coming tomorrow.

So this is why a nanny needs to come in and she needs to be stable. She needs to know, I need to be the same every single day because this is what a child that doesn't understand the deeper emotions and actions of adults, that's what they need. So to grow a strong attachment, they need to know this person is coming in here, they are stable, they are creating a stable environment, they are supporting me emotionally accordingly to my needs.

They will take the time to sit down with me in my emotional breakdown and give me the support that I need. And then obviously also providing the general caregiving that that child needs, feeding, nappy changing and being consistent in that as well. All of that create a secure bond and attachment with a caregiver.

I love the way you've articulated that because I think a lot of parents don't really recognize the importance of consistency of care. And you know, I think consistency of care goes into a couple of things. Number one is that I can predict the way that you are going to behave.

And we see that many years ago, I actually went and visited a unit of a psychiatric unit in London where the moms were schizophrenic. And you know, a schizophrenic mom can never be consistent because sometimes she's not herself, she's in another headspace completely. And so these children have very disruptive and very often what we call insecure attachments, which is a type of attachment which is very risky.

But in that, you know, kind of going through that process of meeting those moms in that unit and learning more about attachment, and you know, also the work I've done in infant and maternal mental health, you start to recognize that this absolute consistency of caregiving that when I do this, I can expect that reaction from that person is very important. Now, obviously, when we stress moms, we will sometimes not always react consistently, because we'll have the day when we're super stressed. But certainly, the majority of our interactions need to actually be predictable for our little ones.

And that's very important. What I always find amazing about nannies is that they're very often able to park their own very disruptive home environments back at home, where they've come from. And they come in and they are consistent.

And my kids certainly had that with our wonderful nanny, this incredible consistency. And I think what helped me in this as well is remember, when we adopted, it is actually it's like the same lane we moved in, you know, we received a baby that did not grow in my tummy. So we had to work very hard.

We went through extensive therapy, when he was older, especially to work on techniques of attachment, because even though we provided the care that he needs, the general care, we had to work hard to make sure we have that secure bond with him. Because with an adoptive child, you do get your little bag that is coming with that. So I'm very passionate about that.

And it's always so nice for me to talk to the nannies about that and to explain to them, like you said, now, when you are a nanny, and you're coming to your work, you need to park your own whole life there at the door. And when we talk to the nannies about that, there is the significant thing we talk about is, it's like being in two different lanes. In the one lane, this is exactly how you raise your own children, what do you do with them, and then we get into another lane when we are professional, it's our job, and we raise someone else's child.

Because when we raise someone else's child, we have a set of boundaries we need to stick to, where if we are in our own line with our own children, we have our own way. And that's perfect. It's wonderful.

But it's something that I'm passionate about is for our nannies to realise that when we have our own children, it's a different thing to get into another lane, where we take care of someone else's child. Yeah, no, absolutely. Very interesting.

So we've got a couple of C's coming up, the letter C coming up. So the first one that has come up for me, you know, obviously childcare, but the next one was consistency. And the next C that has come up, and I've been listening to you talk about it a couple of times, is communication, this very important channel of communication between the parents and the nanny.

And I think one of the things a lot of parents fear is that things are not going to be done the way that they want to have it done when they're out of the home. And you've alluded to something now where you spoke about how you train the nannies to know that they're almost carrying out the parent's agenda, they're doing it on the parent's terms. So how do the parents communicate that to their nannies? And how does this channel of communication develop and what needs to go into it? This episode is brought to us by ParentSense, the all-in-one baby and parenting app that help you make the most of your baby's first year.

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So how do the parents communicate that to their nannies? And how does this channel of communication develop and what needs to go into it? So when I talk to the parents after our workshops, we send them a feedback email to give them some heads up about what came up, what was concerns, you know, things we really want them to work on because it is a two-way street when we are in a nanny family relationship. And the one thing is clear and effective communication. When I talk to parents, I tell them even when we do the recruitment, I will tell them if you're going to open up your position now where you're looking for a nanny, the one thing you need to be clear from the start is what is your job description? What is it that you want this lady to come and do for you? Also then when I give my child to you, what do I need from you and how do I want you to do that? Something as simple as sterilizing a bottle or changing a nappy.

A mom can have a very specific way that she's doing it and that is what's making her feel safe in her parenting journey. So she would want a nanny to do exactly the same, but the only way that you can teach the nanny or you can make sure the nanny does that is by teaching her. So it's so important for the parents to go in and have a nice training day with the nanny in their home where they teach her how do I want you to do this? How do we do this? A very interesting topic is discipline.

So when we get our little toddlers coming later on when we need to do discipline, it is extremely hard for our nannies to discipline. Number one, they are very scared to discipline because it's usually a point that can cause friction in a relationship. And number two, they do not know how to discipline.

I think if you think about anybody, I'm a teacher now so I mean that comes naturally for a teacher, but it's difficult to discipline someone else's child. But if you have a relationship or a nanny coming in your house, you have that very unique opportunity where you can teach them what is your discipline style in your home and how do you want her to pull that through. And it's very important to have this conversation and it's very important to give her the space that she needs to teach them.

What is it exactly? How do I want you to do that? I think that you want a mom to feel safe with you as a nanny and you want her to feel safe and trust you enough that you will do things the way that she feels comfortable with that. But the only way to do that is to have clear instructions and clear communication. Very interesting and that's amazing that you cover that often in your course as well for these women.

So we've spoken a lot about kind of the typical scenario of mom or dad going off to work and bringing in a caregiver for their typically developing child, but of course there is a big population of children that don't develop typically and that also need care and very much more specialized care. So what are some of the unique challenges that these caregivers might encounter when they are actually caring for these children with special needs and how can they best support the child's development and well-being? What can they do? Yes, so it's very interesting. Our nannies, they are so inquisitive if you start talking about children with special needs because they will always say I did not know that and they want to know more about that.

But it's such a unique field that I think before we start with what is the challenge is going to be, is this nannies really need training. They need training in if you think about just a broad spectrum of children with special needs and then from there on I think you can send them into different lanes according to the child's specific needs that they work with. But I think one of the biggest barriers would be the way the child communicates or the lack of communication.

I mean that's a big thing that is something all human beings want to do is want to have a way to communicate with the people around them. So I think they need to adapt to the way the child is communicating. If it's a non-verbal child, is the child going to do sign language? Are they going to use some sort of device, a communicator? Is the child at a stage where the family is still sorting it out and the child is using certain sounds, pointing or whatever? So I think communication barrier is something that our nannies will definitely struggle with and something that they would need more information on and that is also then something very personal to the family because the family would choose then according to their child's needs what are we going to use to make communication more effective for our child.

And then medical needs. What is the child's medical needs? Is there medication that needs to be given to the child? Is there things we need to look out? Is the child getting fit? Is it epilepsy or is it maybe a heart condition or anything like that? What is the things we need to look out for? And I think there what is very important there is taking our caregivers with to appointments, taking them with when we go see the specialist, taking them with when we go to our therapies. If I think how much I learned through going to our occupational therapist, the speech therapist, the physio, and it's consistent because you go weekly or sometimes when they do that intense therapy it's a few days a week.

I mean can you imagine the information you're gathering when you do all of that things? So I think when we look at the medical needs of a child it is important to take our caregivers with to our professionals to let them hear what is that specific medical needs that the child's got. And then behavioral issues. I mean, most children that's got some type of developmental delay or something like that, our behavioral issues, they creep in, it's a very normal part of them. And again, like we said earlier, our nannies struggle with discipline.

And this is now not even really discipline, it's just a whole new can of worms that you are opening. So in our workshop, I explained to them the window of tolerance, and to try and explain to them how we need to keep our children, even children developing normally, keeping them inside the window of tolerance. And where did I learn about this while going through therapy with Josh? Tell us more about the window of tolerance.

I'm very interested in that. So the window of tolerance is actually it's like a little sketch that they go through, and they're showing you the middle part is your window of tolerance. And then it's hyper arousal, and it's hyper arousal and hyper arousal.

So during your day, you are going through things. So when I what I explained to the nannies is, you woke up this morning, and your power went off. So obviously, your window of tolerance is getting a little bit smaller, but you are still fine, you can still cope with everything.

Then you make yourself some tea, and the milk went sour, still affecting your window of tolerance, the window of tolerance getting a little bit smaller, but you're still fine. Now you get to your public transport, you're on your way to work, and you had to wait very long, and now you're going to be late. Again, affecting your window of tolerance getting smaller again.

So it's basically your patience, if we can say that. And so, so let's say just there, your boss sends you an Uber, and you get into the Uber, and now you go to work, your window of tolerance will expand again, because you can take a deep breath, you know, I'm not going to be late. And the morning is now turning into a better morning.

If you did not get the Uber, and you now had to get onto your public transport, and now you are in traffic, and the person next to you is rude to you. And when you get at work, your boss is now very upset with you, because you were late. Now, there's nothing left of your window of tolerance.

And you would either go into your hyper arousal, or your hypo arousal. So either you will go into, you're losing your temper, saying things you don't mean, with our kitties, they're going into tantrums, or you will go into the hyper arousal where you are lethargic, depressed, crying. And what do we need to do to get them out of that as well to regulate? Very interesting.

It's lovely. It's a lovely illustration of self regulation, isn't it? Yes, it is. And that made so much, much sense to us.

So this was our play therapist that said, to have a healthy, emotionally developing child, we need to try and keep them inside their window of tolerance, which means I need to know when is that window of tolerance getting smaller? And when should I remove a child out of a situation to make sure that he doesn't go into his temper tantrum, overstimulation, overtired child, all of those things affect the window of tolerance. So that is a tool that they can use with the behavioral needs. But again, it's going to be very personal.

It's going to depend on the child's level of frustration. It's going to depend on his needs. It's going to depend on does the child experience any type of pain or something like that.

But it is something that our nannies also need a little bit of training in because research is giving us every year, every month, every whatever, there's new research giving us information about how does a child's behavioral needs work. And I think when we were raised many years ago, there's much better information given to us now. So it's a different way of thinking.

And you need to get them into that different lane. And then also their educational support. Our nannies need to know where is this child, even if I think about my child, she's eight years old now.

He can definitely not do what a normal, typically developing child that's eight years old can do. He's starting to do some of the things, but his caregiver would have to know where is Josh at and what do I need to do? I cannot do what I do with a normal, typically developing child. Very interesting.

So she's really got to be on top of her game. She's got to look at the medical and physical and organic needs. She's got to understand emotional behavior, discipline, self-regulation, and then she's got to understand all the cognitive learning and so on.

So it's really being on top of her game. Now, there's two pieces that probably contribute to that. The one is who that person is innately, which I don't think we've got time to go into today, but I'm sure there would be certain things that you would want to look for in a nanny.

But obviously on top of that, once you've chosen the right nanny, there's all the training and that is something that the nanny movement does. So Yvette, as we finish off today, can you tell us a little bit about the courses that you run and how that would work to actually equip these nannies to do their role? So our workshops is one-off workshops. So we have the comprehensive nanny training that we have in two parts.

It's two totally different workshops, but we just felt it is a part one and a part two because all of those topics that we are talking about is important. Both of them are between five and six hours per workshop. Then we have our clever kitchen workshop.

That is the one where we are talking about healthy eating, portions and sizes, how to make food fun for children, lunchbox ideas, talk a little bit about healthy family recipes and all things kitchen related. It's not a cooking course. It is more about information given through about healthy eating for children and all of the things that go with that.

Then we have a preschool assistant workshop because our preschool assistants is much loved in our preschools and they don't have, most of them don't have any sort of formal training. We just saw a gap there where we would want to give them that opportunity to learn about the finer things so that they can really be the support that a preschool teacher and the children need. Then we have a mom and nanny workshop where we are working on the environment, on the relationship, talking about the things that is usually not easy to talk about.

People have got different personalities. Not everybody can just go sit down and talk about this is my boundaries, this is what I want you to do, this is what I don't want you to do. We try and facilitate that, talk about the contract, talk about what do I need from you.

Before, right at the beginning of the workshop, we start with who are you and who am I? Because I'm a firm believer if I know where you come from, I know what struggles you went through in life, I'm going to have a totally different perspective about you and I'm going to totally be different with you because I understand why you might do things in a different way. We start with knowing each other a little bit better and then going all the way to what is the job description, what do I need from you, what is my boundaries regarding screen time or whatever it is in the household. Then we also have the special needs workshop that's kicking off just now.

It's a brand new workshop. Our first workshop is in Pretoria in July. Yes, it's face-to-face workshops.

All of our facilitators all over South Africa, they schedule their dates. Everything is on our website. You book a workshop on the website.

The nannies get a little nanny movement bag with a manual and everything they need for the workshop, it's in there. They can take the manual home so the parents can also see what is it that we learned about. Yes, it is just trying to cover all the aspects of being a nanny and how to support.

Ultimately, it is the love for child development and then just supporting the caregivers to absolutely be professional and see themselves as professionals in their jobs. Absolutely. I think just to finish off, just to reflect on this whole nanny culture and the fact that we go to work and that we have our babies with nannies, it's just so important to recognize that this is ultimately an extension of the ancient village where we were as moms and women, we had other roles.

We didn't just have the role of caregiving. We had to go out into the fields or we had to look after our sister's child while she was out. This is an age old thing.

This is not a new thing that we need to shy away from. If we think about our nannies as just being another person in our village, as another person, then what we're wanting to do is we want to ensure that that person is somebody who adores our child, who is part of our family, who's emotionally attached and who is cognitively equipped to actually carry out the task. When we've got those boxes ticked, we don't need to have the maternal guilt because this is a historical thing.

We are not trying something new here. We have ticked the boxes of emotions and of cognitive and we can do that. I am 100% behind having nannies with our little ones and I'm 150% behind equipping them to do their job well, because it is an incredible vocation for them and role in their lives.

Yvette, thank you for the work that you do. It's really awesome. Moms, I hope that you've taken away just one or two nuggets.

There was so much today. Yvette, if they do want to get hold of you, they want to do the nanny courses or they want to actually have you recruit their nanny for them, how do they get hold of you? On our website, it's www.thenannymovement.co.za. On there, you will have access to all of our facilitators all over South Africa. When you click on a facilitator, it will show you all of her workshops or you can just go and click on all the upcoming workshops.

We also have the recruitment tab where you can go on and you can contact us directly or you can just follow the in-detail. We have put together an ultimate guide on recruitment and yes, that is how you can get hold of us. That's wonderful.

Well, thank you so much Yvette. I hope that you and I are going to do lots more together. I think we will and it's been really lovely having you chat with me today.

Thank you. 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.