**Parenting with Purpose: Gentle Intentions for a Thriving New Year S5|142**

Happy New Year, everybody. So this is our first episode in season six and I'm really excited for this season of Scents by Meg Fora. And today our topic is going to look at New Year's resolutions and parenting.

Get ready to kick start 2025 with inspiring new intentions that will make motherhood more joyful and also a little less stressful. In today's episode, we are ditching resolutions for flexible, compassionate intentions that prioritize you and your family. In this episode, Tove and I have a fabulous chat about the value and merits of resolution.

Do they incite pressure and just end up being unachievable and cause us to be guilt-ridden? Well, I do think that there is a different way to kickstart the year. So if you're wanting a guide to how to get off to a good start while still being gentle with yourself, don't miss this episode. You're going to learn about the five principles for setting realistic resolution and you'll gain practical insights for balancing high standards with life's unpredictability.

This will ensure that 2025 is your year to thrive, not just survive. So get ready to transform your year. Tune in and join us as we explore how small shifts can lead to really big changes, making motherhood an even more rewarding adventure.

Do not miss out on today's amazing episode. Welcome to Scents 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 Maker 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 and happy new year. I am Meg Fora and this is Scents by Meg Fora and I'm just absolutely delighted that I get to be with you for another year of your little one's life.

Today is one of our favorite episodes, the ones where we get joined by Tove Gant. Tove is a seasoned mum. She's also my business partner and a partner in many aspects of our lives together.

I'm a godmother to a little girl and we're friends as well. So, it's always lovely for her to be on with us. Welcome, Tove.

Hi Meg. Thanks for having me. It's good to be here.

Happy new year, everyone. May it be a good one. Yeah.

Well, 2024 was a good year, I think. Lots of shifts for people and most of our mums, many of our mums who are listening actually would have had their baby in the course of 2024. So, very exciting year for many and a tough year.

I was going to say lots of changes and lots of lack of sleep I'm imagining for those new mums. Don't worry, you do come out the other side. It does happen.

And then, of course, there'll be the mums who are listening who pray as well. And then 2025 is going to be an amazing year. So, yeah, I hope it's a great year for everyone.

So, I think this is an awesome episode, Meg, and I think I'm going to kick it off if you don't mind. And I think a really good place to start is the kind of expectations around New Year's resolutions. I think we all fall into the trap.

We all do it every year. We get those resolutions and we put them down and then we try and hold ourselves to them, which creates intense stress. And I think as parents, I'm sure I'm not the only one, I kind of have resolutions for myself as a me today, but then I also have resolutions of what I want to achieve with each of my kids.

And I guess one of the things I wanted to ask was, you know, expectations around New Year's resolutions and that kind of stress that it adds to parents. How can we navigate this to be a little kinder to ourselves? Yeah, I mean, in some ways, New Year's resolutions are actually just really a because, I mean, as it is for almost every mother who is listening, she's got these gold standard resolutions that she wakes up with every single morning, you know, or two o'clock in the morning when she wakes up worrying about her children, she's setting herself a whole lot of resolutions and standards. And so, we live with that pressure daily.

And so, in some respects, having a 1st of January type, these are all the wonderful things I'm going to do for the year just adds more pressure. And so, I think that there's enough pressure on moms without loading us with a whole nother thing of, you know, New Year's resolutions. Having said that, you know, and it's a really tough one because there are gold standards, there are things that I do think that if we maintain intentionality around, we can really shift our children's lives.

You've got the start of a new year, which means like a brighter horizon ahead of you and a landscape that you can shift. And you've also got the weight of responsibility of a human life in which we all know first thousand days meaningfully shifts the rest of life. So, you put these two things together and you've got a hot house of pressure, which is I've got to do the best for my child because it's going to affect them for the rest of their lives and I've got to start the year off well because I've got 365 days to make a difference.

So, you've kind of got this perfect storm of New Year plus just being a parent. And it's trying to balance that I think that's really important and maybe hard for parents. Yeah, I think it's, I mean, I feel like it's almost impossible.

Like I'm constantly setting targets for myself that I'm almost just setting myself up to fail because I'm only one person and there's three of them. So, like immediately the maths is not in my favor. But I mean, I think you touched on something there, which is kind of the difference between a resolution versus an intention and why framing those kind of goals or resolutions rather as intentions is that just by changing the wording, do you think that that leads to kind of a little more compassionate or realistic approach for parenting? Yeah, I mean, I feel like the word resolution is very authoritarian.

Like I am resolved to do this and it's kind of this, for me, it carries a lot more kind of weight and pressure in some ways. Whereas an intention is something that says, I intend to do it like this. And I'm really, really hoping that that'll work out that way.

But we all understand that even with the best intentions, sometimes things don't happen. I mean, there's even a phrase in English, with the best intentions. So, I think for me, I think to start 2025 with parenting intentions would be a much more gentle way.

And yet it's so, so what it reflects for me is a consciousness. And I'm very keen on this concept of conscious parenting. I think that if we are conscious parents, we take into account ourselves, we take into account the environment, we take into account society and we take into account our child.

So, I think intentional and conscious parenting is where it's at. Resolute parenting and resolutions is just maybe a little bit heavy for this conversation, I think. Yeah, I mean, I think that's fair.

I think the idea that, you know, we can also attempt as much as we can or as with every good effort to strive for what we're achieving. But as you said, there's often things outside of our ability to control the context, the thing, the friends, the circle, the family. And so, you know, being a little kinder with ourselves and saying, I intend to do this, but I'm also aware that life happens.

And so at times there are going to be, you know, it's just not going to be possible. And you mentioned earlier, the kind of idea of striving for the gold standard in parenting, you know, kind of knowing that the reality is that things fall through the crack. We human, we doing juggling 45,000 things.

I always say, I feel like my head is a computer with lots of tabs open. And it's like the shifting of the tabs as to which one is more important and prioritizing the shifts. And each kid has got a tab.

And then in that tab, there's a sub tab of like the curriculum and therapies. And it's exhausting. And so I guess, you know, how do we, how can parents balance that kind of striving for that gold standard that we all really want to achieve? And I think we have the best intent to achieve, but knowing and just being a little, little kind to ourselves that things will likely fall through the cracks.

Yeah, it's such an interesting one. I actually had a conversation with Dr. Jenny Rose, who was recently on our podcast, speaking about attachment parenting around this. And she was saying, you know, it's such a, it actually, it really, we step out there as so-called parenting experts, and we give parents the gold standard of what should be happening for their children's lives.

And, and then she, you know, and then what it does is it creates pressure, and then you can't deliver, and then guilt. So you've got this horrible situation. And deeply seated in my heart, and you know, you know me well enough, and everybody who's ever listened to me knows me well enough to know that the one thing I really don't want to do is to, you know, incite guilt in a person, because that's just, it's a waste of emotion.

It's a horrible emotion. And yet, when you're putting a gold standard out there, you, you know, you are effectively saying, well, this is what you need to do to be perfect or to do it well. And every mom wants to achieve that for their child.

And so when she doesn't, it comes together with this kind of guilt that goes with it. So a concept that I've been starting to think about, and I'm actually going to really be refining it quite a bit over the course of 2025, I think it's going to be one of the, almost like one of the trends in the work that I do. And I actually want to bring it into all of my podcasts is to talk about the gold standard, and then to marry it with when the balls drop.

So here's your gold standard. And this is what's what to do when, when things don't go according to plan. So an example would be, I'm very conscious about my child's gut health.

And so therefore, 2025 is going to be the year of no antibiotics, because antibiotics, we know conclusively impact gut health, and gut health is absolutely critical in the gut brain access and therefore in child's mood long term. So there's lots of interesting research coming out about this. The problem is that come February, little Johnny gets a, like a really bad bacterial infection in a cyst on the base of his spine.

And suddenly this is like a medical emergency. He has got to have antibiotics and they're lifesaving. And that can be, go for any aspect of parenting.

Caesarean section, breastfeeding, leaving your child to cry for five minutes while you change another nappy, then leaving a nappy on for too long and they get a nappy rash, whatever, your head can go everywhere because that's what we do as moms. And I think for me, marrying this gold standard with how do you pick up the pieces when the balls do drop in this one piece, in this one gold standard, in this one resolution? I think for me, that's something that I'd really like to get parents to think about, that yes, there's a gold standard. Yes, there's something that with the best intentions you will do, and yes, the balls will drop and what will you do then? I mean, it's that kind of the concept that we see quite a lot on kind of that repairing parenting, where you, of course, don't want to yell.

You, of course, don't want to lose it with your kids, but you're also human. You also have a sensory system. You're also going to overload.

And sometimes, excuse my language, but shit happens. Like you just, you can't control it, right? And then what do you do? How do you repair it? How do you show your children that you are also just a human? And I actually find that piece is not spoken about enough and is not taught to us enough. It's just, it's drilled into us to be best, to not yell, to not shout, to not lose our cool, but we are human.

And so when we do, I would rather spend the time learning the skill on how to rectify what I've done, because I am going to do it. I just am like, and I think that that skill set is really valuable to parents. Absolutely.

And you know, if parents haven't listened to Dr. Jenny Rose's episode with me, it floated in November. We really talked about that a lot. And I think there are three key principles that need to be taken home.

The one is that if a child grows up in a perfect world, it's going to be very problematic for them because they will have undue expectations around the world. They will have, the world will let them down and they won't be resilient. So number one, kids have to be let down.

Number two, the research shows us that we can fail a lot of the time. And as long as we repair, kids bounce. And in fact, they develop better resilience.

So that's the concept from Winnicott of the good enough mother. So that's concept two is number one, you do want some failure. Number two, being a good enough parent is actually better than being a perfect parent.

And number three, the art of saying, sorry, which we went into Jenny's podcast with me, because when we say, sorry, we teach our kids a myriad of skills that will live with them for life. And I think if those are three things that we can take away in terms of being the imperfect parent, it's quite helpful. Yeah, I think that's, I find that very valuable.

I struggle to ask for help. It's not something that I am very comfortable with. And so a big piece for me is teaching my kids to actually ask for help because it's the same kind of thing, right? It's that like reaching out and it can be, yeah, it's just tricky.

And it's not showing weakness or failure. It's actually, yeah, which is often where we go. Like if I fail, if I fail, I've failed.

And if I ask for help, I'm weak. And those two concepts, very Western that we have to not ever fail and we can never ask for help. Yeah, it is.

And it's amazing how as you get older, you realize, particularly immigrating out, you realize how drilled into those things are. And so how unnatural it feels when you have to kind of do that. And it's such a bizarre thing because it just seems like so ridiculous to just ask for help.

So can you share some practical examples of intentions that parents can set for themselves going into 2025? Yeah, so I think, you know, I kind of had a couple of things that I thought about here and I thought, you know, if we were going to set these intentions, I would put them into four buckets. So the one bucket would be... 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. 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. So the one bucket would be prioritizing self-care and mindfulness as a bucket of intentions.

And for everybody, these are all going to be different, but I'm putting them into buckets and I would encourage you moms, get a pen and paper and just write down these four categories. And then think about it personally for you. So the first one is prioritizing self-care and mindfulness.

And I think looking after yourself at that age old adage about you get onto an airplane and the air hostess tells you to take care of yourself before you take care of your child. If you've got a child traveling with you, because you need your oxygen mask, otherwise you're going to pass out and you'll be useless to your child and you'll both die. So bottom line is prioritize self-care and mindfulness.

And so for that might be for some of you, it might be like scheduling in an intention or an intent to do one thing for you per week. And that might be once a month having your hair done and the next week maybe doing your nails and the following week going for a walk on the beach, or maybe every Tuesday morning going down to Delbrook pool, if you live in the Cape and having a cold water immersion or having a walk or whatever it is. I think every person should put one of those into their intentions for the year.

So that's our first bucket is prioritizing self-care and mindfulness. And I can tell you that if you do that, the others will come a lot easier because when you have a little bit extra to give, because you've done something for yourself, you will be a better parent. And I think this is where we often fail as moms on step number one, which is prioritizing yourself.

Because if you're thinking about, oh, I've got a slightly grumbly, niggly child and I'm going to go and have my hair done, you go, oh my gosh, that's a luxury I just cannot afford. Or I'm going to go for a walk with my best friend next door, but actually my husband wants to go out for beers with his mates. So you kind of end up putting yourself last in every scenario.

And I just think you need to really set an intention now, 1st of January, roundabout there of 2025, that there will be one thing for you per week. Must be. And put that in the diary.

I always love that saying that you can't pour from an empty cup. And I think that, I always think that for me is such a great visual explanation of parenting because as a mom, your cup constantly feels so low and you are, every time your child needs something from you or wants to play with you, engage with you, you are pouring. And when there is nothing in it, you are just, you know, you're actually not giving them, you may be their presence physically, but you're not actually giving them any kind of quality engagement because you don't have the ability to do it.

Right. Absolutely. Absolutely.

And it can, you know, for those people who are feeling a little cash strapped, it can be an afternoon sleep. Like maybe it is that every single Saturday afternoon, your husband has to take the kids and you get from one to three o'clock, you just get asleep. And, you know, just that simple recharge.

And, you know, I've often spoken about my mom-in-law on this podcast, who is just the most incredible mother to me and grandmother to my children. And I can remember we used to, I mean, I was so sleep deprived when James was born. And like every first time mom, I couldn't actually fathom how I could be so tired.

And I would arrive, we would go to their house every weekend. We lived in Nordic and they lived in Gordon's Bay and we'd arrive. And literally I knew that Saturday morning I could get up whenever I needed to, or wanted to, because she took the baby every Saturday morning.

And so my husband and I had a lie-in on a Saturday morning. So there was none of the guilt around you've done less than me or now it's your turn, my turn. And that was such a gift, you know, so, and that was, that recharged me immensely.

So prioritizing self-care and being mindful around that is, is my first kind of intention idea for parents. My second intention idea for parents is around fostering a stronger connection with your child. And I think that's, you know, another big global bucket, you know, and then you will make it your own.

So it might be that you schedule a trip to the nursery every Thursday afternoon with your child, let's just say. And I actually did that with my third child because I was very aware of the fact that she was just sucking on the hind teat all the time because the others were in grade one and grade R and like, she was just being kind of swept along with it. And so for her, that was important to me that I would foster this stronger connection with her by taking her to the nursery.

But the other ones as well, it might be as simple as reading a book every evening. And, you know, for any parent who's got any child of over six months old, please read to your child every evening. It's a great way to foster a connection.

And it also has a whole myriad of other language effects as well. So that would be an example. And then, you know, and then it can go into any idea that you want in terms of spending time.

And it's all around you and time with your child. So the piece there, and now you can see why this one comes number two after number one, because which is prioritizing self-care is because you can't create a stronger connection unless you have the capacity to pull from your jug. And so this is number two is foster a stronger connection with your child and just make it practical for you moms.

Choose one thing that you go, right. I've got three kids and it's going to be this for that child, this for that child, this for that child. And maybe it's not once a week, maybe it's even once a month, or maybe for some of you, it's every single day that an example with that would be a daily one that you might choose to have is I will put my cell phone down every time my child speaks to me and that, you know, and that's a discipline, a massive discipline.

I don't get it right, but you know, and it's, but it's a good intention because often our heads are stuck in our cell phones. We're not connecting with our children. Another intention I had day to day, which will be quite interesting for you because I know how hectically busy your life is and how you stuff everything into a limited number of hours.

And so one of the things that you do, which many moms do is once they are traveling with their children, they make their phone calls and their work calls. And I know that you do this and I do it as well. It's very much, you know, but one of the things that I did with my teenage children, one of my daughters decided to go to St. Sip's, which was in the city ball.

We lived in the Southern suburbs and I never put her on a bus and I never did a lift cab. And I never answered a phone call when she was in the car, because I made the decision that every single car trip would be a conversation opportunity because especially when they're teenagers, like you honestly, you can pass like ships in the night. I was going to say, it's like drawing blood from a stone.

Exactly. And so that's a really, that's a really nice one is to say, right, I've got to do the car trip. They're going to be sitting still.

They can't go anywhere. I'm going to use it for conversation time, you know? So that's an example of fostering a stronger connection with your child by using a car trip as an example, or it might be also fostering a stronger connection with your child. A good resolution or intention would be to eat with them twice a week.

And, you know, we've always had family dinner where once a week, from the time they were six months old, Philip and I would get home early enough to be able to have really early dinner with them. And then it became a thing. We've never not eaten together as a family, but we started it when they were very little.

And that's a great discipline. So maybe that's all it is for 2025. I intend to have a family dinner once a week, or maybe it's more than that.

Yeah. And there are also things that parents are already doing, right? It's just about maybe making, putting a little more intentionality behind it. So I'm already bathing my kid, but now I'm going to like really bath them, you know, like I'm going to get in the bath with them once a night, you know, once a week or whatever, you know, so, you know, if you use the things that you really are doing, I think that that also takes a little pressure off to add new things or take more time, like the car trip.

It's perfect. You're in the car. So number three, my third bucket would be to cultivate a more positive and patient mindset.

And this is obviously like a big, hairy, audacious goal for somebody like me. I can be very positive. I have no problem with that.

But being patient does not come naturally to me. My favorite movie scene of all time, and if you want to make me cry with laughter, just show it to me, is the scene of the sloth behind the desk in Zootopia, where the bunny is like, come, we're going to go now, we're going to go. And the sloth is moving very slowly.

And when I see that, I start to cry with laughter. So patience is not a good, is not one of my strong suits. But again, you know, just in terms of this bucket, it would be things like breathing before you react, or like a very simple one is speaking low and slow when I'm angry.

That's a great intention, because if you speak low and slow when you're angry, first of all, children listen better. But second of all, you can't lose your cool because you're low and slow. And so you're activating a part of your brain that doesn't go for like screaming like a banshee.

So and so maybe it's just a little bit of patience. And, you know, I think it's a big lesson for us as parents, because, well, certainly for me, like I want my kids to put their shoes on right now. Like if they're going to do it, then it's just now, you know, come.

And if you can't do it, yeah, it's a rush. And my kids always used to laugh because we have a couple of friends, my kids have had a couple of friends who've been dyspraxic and dyspraxic children move like sloths, because they're having to piece it together. They're having to plan, sequence, ideate, and in action, you know, it's like a really, you know, more laborious.

And my kids used to watch me when I was getting kids bags in the car and moving them off to your water polo session. And like, I couldn't believe that this child moved so slowly, just moved now. I can see this playing out.

Yeah, you can just imagine. So yeah, so I think cultivating a more positive and patient mindset is a lovely thing. And again, of course, it depends on number one, which is prioritizing self-care and mindfulness, because there's no patience when you're frazzled. And then the final one is probably the one that when you say to somebody, what's your New Year's resolution as a parent, this is probably actually where they go. And this bucket is called establishing healthy boundaries and routines.

And, you know, I think those are the things where like no TV viewing is an example of that, you know, or no screen time or a bath before a bed every night or whatever it is, you know, baby massage before they get into bed or whatever you want to say. So I think for this one, again, be intentional about it. You're not going to get it perfect, but set up those intentions.

And one of the ones I actually would have there is limit screen time. And I mean, people have heard my talk on it. When you're talking about limiting screen time, it's like 10 minutes per year of their life, once per day, once they're over a year of age.

So that would be 10 minutes for a one to two year old, 20 minutes for two to three year old a day. And if you can have that as your intention, understand that you're going to fail sometimes and be gentle with yourself when you do, that would be a really good route to go. And Meg, one of the things I want to add or throw back at you is what about kind of a partner, partner intention? Oh, I love that.

So there's, we've got a fifth bucket, which is relationships. I love that. We definitely should have put that one in.

And I do think, I mean, Tove, you know, Philip and I, and we've, I've always prioritized our marriage over our children. It's just been the way that we have, that's the contract we formed when we got married. And I think it's very important.

I love one of the things that you do, you decided you wanted to spend time together. You don't necessarily like drinking and just sitting and eating, you know, a restaurant art and it can be expensive in Jersey. And so you guys took up dancing together.

And I mean, I don't think even 2% of the moms who's listening to this would have thought of doing that, but what a great thing to do together, you know, because you laugh together, you play, you're playing together. And so I think playing with your partner is absolutely vital. It really is because if that relationship's okay, then everything else will actually fall into place.

Yeah. I think that's a, it's a very, that's definitely the take home I always get from you and Phil is the stronger we are, the stronger our unit is and the more aligned we are. And so making that time to really connect and communicate and talk and yeah, make that effort.

Cause it is an effort. Like it's a relationship you need to nurture and look after. And it's the relationship you tend to, you know, you know, you have meetings at work every day, but you don't have a meeting for, you know, your husband and you to discuss where your head's at or what you're going through.

So I think it's a really good piece to prioritize, like really intentionally try and make space for. And sometimes that, you know, I mean, it didn't always come easy to pull up a knife because we're human, just like everyone else. We went to a patch where he used to tell people that, and I'm going to swear now.

So just for those of you who don't want to hear us, we were just mute for a second, but he used to tell people that we'd have passage sex. As we'd walk past each other, we'd go, fuck you, fuck you. It wasn't that bad, but I'd continue that there was a time in our marriage where it was really rough.

And we actually went to a session, it was just three sessions of imago therapy and it was incredible because it taught us how to listen, didn't tell us how to speak because we know how to speak. It taught us how to listen. And it was the most frustrating thing because in the first session, the psychologist said to me, said, okay, what's going to happen in the session is that you're each going to get a chance to talk, but the other person is not allowed to interrupt at all.

They're not allowed to counter. They're not allowed to have a facial expression. They just have to listen.

And when you're finished, they have to say, are you finished? And then you can carry on, still more. And then when you say, yes, I'm finished, then the person who was listening has to then summarize exactly what was said, not respond to it, summarize. Oh, so you actually have to listen.

You can't be thinking about what your rebuttal is, right? Exactly. The first session we went to and Philip spoke for 45 minutes without taking breath. I don't think he's, I think he used up his annual word quota.

And at the end of it, he took breath at 42 minutes. And I said, are you finished? Which is what I had to say. And he said, actually, there's still more and did another three minutes.

And then I said, are you finished? And he said, yes, I'm finished. And then I wanted to go, well, actually that one time and I wanted to rebut and I couldn't, and I had to reflect it back to him. And I got home that day from work and there was this biggest bunch of flowers that I've ever received from him, because I think it was the first time that he really felt hurt.

I didn't have to fix anything. I just had to listen. I often say that to Devi.

I'm like, I'm not asking you for the solution to my problem. Just asking you to listen and be like, yo, that's cuck. Or like, I hear you, like, don't give me the answer.

Just listen to me. Exactly. Exactly.

So yes, time for your partner. And it does require a little bit of homework. It's not just, you know, as nice as going out for a Thursday night date, which we do do, but it takes a bit of work.

Well, Meg, I think that's, we've put together some really good tips and focus points for parents to think about going into 2025 or in 2025. Is there any other lasting words of wisdom you want to impart before we wrap it up? No, I mean, I think it's hopefully been a useful session in that I'm hoping that we haven't put pressure on mums because there's enough pressure and that we really haven't put guilt on. And that people walk away going, okay, let's be intentional about 2025.

Because if you can just do that, that will really be the biggest shift. And you know, just having the smallest intention, you will move the needle in a direction and it'll be a positive one if you've done it positively. Yeah.

So I think the last message is have a wonderful 2025 and thank you for allowing us at ParentSense and myself, Meg Forer, to be part of your parenting journey. It is the biggest honour. It's the most important role of your life and enjoy the year.

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.