**[0:00 - 1:21]**  
**Meg Faure:** This week on Sense by Meg Faure we're joined by certified sleep consultant Jihan Khoury to tackle one of the biggest parenting stresses, holiday sleep disruption. If you are dreading what travel, jet lag or change in routine might do to your little one's sleep, then this episode is your go-to guide. What you'll learn today is how to keep sleep on track during holidays without sacrificing all the fun, sleep strategies for babies, toddlers and older kids including napping in strollers and managing shared hotel rooms, simple tricks to create a sleep-friendly space anywhere, so you can think about white noise, blackout materials and also breathable covers, how to reset routines quickly after travel and avoid the dreaded sleep regression, plus the link between nutrition, bedtime routines and melatonin and why screens in the afternoon are a no-go. So whether you're packing for a weekend away or a long-haul adventure, this episode is full of realistic, gentle and expert-backed tips to keep your child and you well rested. Press play now for practical holiday sleep strategies that work wherever you are in the world.

**[1:22 - 2:04]**  
**Announcer:** Welcome to Sense by Meg Faure, 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 Faure is a well-known OT, infant specialist and the author of eight parenting books. Each week we're going to spend time with new mums and dads just like you to chat about the week's wins, the challenges and the questions of the moment. Subscribe to the podcast, download the ParentSense app and catch Meg here every week to make the most of that first year of your little one's life. And now, meet your host.

**[2:07 - 3:00]**  
**Meg Faure:** Welcome back mums and dads. As always, it is wonderful to have you join us here today. And today is one of those episodes on Sense by Meg Faure where I invite a fellow expert to come on and talk to me about a topic that they are super specialised in. And so today I am delighted to welcome Jihan Khoury to join us. I met her in Dubai in May and we have spoken a few times since. She is a sleep specialist. So she is a certified sleep consultant focused very much on little ones from zero to 12 years old. And it's all about building healthy sleep habits so that parents and children can enjoy peaceful and restorative nights. So a big welcome to you Jihan. Thank you for joining us.  
**[3:00 - 3:04]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** Hi Meg. Thank you for inviting me to your podcast. I'm really excited to be here today.

**[3:04 - 5:11]**  
**Meg Faure:** So sleep is definitely a deep area of interest for me as well. I wrote Sleep Sense many years ago and I've gone on to have a busy sleep consultancy. But I know that there's so many different perspectives on sleep. And one of the things that I love doing on this podcast is just bringing in people with different perspectives, because I think mums need to hear everything and choose for themselves what really works nicely. And so I wanted to chat to you. But then when we had a chat a few weeks ago, something really piqued my interest, because you spoke about understanding how holidays and vacations can impact on sleep. And we see that all the time, that little ones might have been good sleepers. They go on holiday and everything gets completely disrupted. So in the context of the fact that almost all of the world is on school holidays at the moment, because in the southern hemisphere, Australia, South Africa, we've got winter school holidays. In the northern hemisphere, everybody's got their really long summer vacations. So I think most parents right now are thinking about returning back from their holidays and the disruption that that will bring in their children's sleep. So I would love to chat a little bit about that today.  
**Jihan Khoury:** Sure. I mean, a holiday is on everybody's mind. And I have lots of queries from parents saying, you know, "What do we do? How do we minimise the regression after a holiday?" Well, it's a fun time. It's a time when you want to squeeze joy and happiness through a number of days. It's when you meet grandparents and family, and you have unenforced boundaries, you have inconsistent schedules. And this is why it kind of causes a regression during the vacation, and even after when you return back. And my experience has been that it's the parents who want to really have a good time, and they are kind of sick of their routine and their schedule. And they want to have time and fun, they want to break their own boundaries. And it's actually they want their kids to keep up with them. And this is why most of it causes a bit of concern for the parents. So I do want them always to have a good time. But yes, there are some guidelines that we can go through that can help us reduce this regression.

**[5:11 - 6:23]**  
**Meg Faure:** Yeah, absolutely. Well, I'd love to break this thing into two parts today. The one part, let's focus on how do you actually make sleep and routines work while you're on holiday, because I love the fact that you identify that parents actually, really, they want a break in their routine. That's what holiday is about. Holiday is about like, just being a little bit more flexible. And you can't be super rigid, even if you were a mom that did like to follow a routine and had a good bedtime routine at home, you want to be able to eat out and only have your little one go to bed a little bit later at night and come to a restaurant with you instead of having a bedtime routine. So let's talk about how to manage your little ones when they're on holiday. And I'm sure that you would maybe look at different age bands, how important is routine, bedtime routines and so on to be adhered to in little ones? And then what about the older child and how late is too late? Let's talk about holiday sleep routines.  
**[6:23 - 8:12]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** Okay. So let me start with babies, for example. So this is from, let's say zero until 18 months. After that, it's a completely different toddler stage and we can deal with it. They are more tolerant and they can deal with deprivation of sleep and change of schedule better than a baby. So with babies, when they have regular naps, we can have naps on the go. So I advise parents either to put them in a stroller or to wear them during vacation and to ensure that this baby at least is able to get a decent nap a few times a day as he usually does when he's back home. Then I advise them that sleeping in the crib is very important. So it would be very, very wise if they every few days go back to the crib. So this means one, maybe an adult has to stay home or in the hotel with that baby to allow the baby a nice, settled, relaxed, calm nap, which becomes more complete in their environment for them to sleep properly. This means one adult gets deprived of maybe some fun time. And if they do that every few days, then they can change a lot. So at least everybody gets the fun experience, even a bedtime routine. If we are not doing it on time and so on, so I ask them, "Please don't do it three, four consecutive days. Break it. Break your schedule and your boundaries for two, three days. And then please come back to your schedule." Come back to it. Have a good bedtime routine. If you have family outdoor playing, bring your child in to a closed room, calm room, play with them calmly for 20 minutes. That is capable of making them forget, you know, the FOMO, forget the FOMO of having fun outside with their cousins or family members and then have a proper bedtime routine. So going back to schedule every few days will help reduce the regression with babies. And actually this applies to toddlers as well.

**[8:12 - 9:56]**  
**Meg Faure:** Yeah, I really love that because I think I'm in agreement with you that, you know, those day naps are so important. You know, when little ones become completely overtired and maybe stay up until, you know, kind of 11 o'clock at night, it actually just wrecks it for you as well. It's not that anybody's having fun anymore. So, you know, adhering to sleep times is very important. Flexibility on sleep environment then needs to be where it is, but, you know, just think about having a consistency sometime. We actually had a very interesting situation when my baby, when my second child was just two years old, she just turned two, we decided we would go for a three-month trip around the world. So we kind of sold the house, put the dogs on the farm for three months and we went and we just explored, you know, and just had an adventure and she was little and she needed her day sleeps. And I just had two principles and that was she had to have her midday sleep and she had to have a bedtime routine that wasn't more than an hour later than her usual bedtime. And she got really, really good at falling asleep exactly at the right time because she was obviously only on one day sleep because she was two years old, in her pram when I pulled a cover over it. So I literally, I would just have her pram or her stroller, put her down, pull the cover over it. And wherever we were, I mean, I've got photographs of us in Times Square in New York of her doing that. And so we just made sure that over the time for her sleep, there was always a place and an opportunity for her. And I think, you know, I think that's a big piece of, you can be flexible maybe about exactly where they're sleeping, but you've got to make sure those times are there because otherwise nobody wins.  
**Jihan Khoury:** That's true. This cover is extremely important. It's very important for that cover to be breathable cotton material. So it should be healthy. You can put it on your child, even in a car seat, not just a stroller, and when you carry them as well. And if you do that and you use your phone or your mobile shusher, that will mask all external noise from your child's sleep environment, and it will help them have proper naps.

**[9:56 - 10:01]**  
**Meg Faure:** I love that. Do you have any specific brands of blackout blankets that you like that are breathable and nice cotton?  
**[10:01 - 10:13]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** Actually, I usually use those regular breastfeeding covers that moms use when they are breastfeeding. Those are, you know, the muslin ones. Those are good enough because they stop the lights from going in. And at the same time, they're not really dark. It doesn't get very dark in there.  
**[10:13 - 10:14]**  
**Meg Faure:** That's super. Okay.

**[10:14 - 10:37]**  
**Meg Faure:** And then let's talk about just sticking with while you're on holiday. Now, let's say you are on holiday, you've been invited out, you're in somewhere in Greece or wherever you are, and the sun's going down at, you know, kind of nine o'clock at night, and everybody's having a dinner at a restaurant at like nine o'clock at night. And you've got an 18 month old who's used to being in bed by seven. How do we start to marry these situations? And how do we deal with this?

**[10:37 - 11:21]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** This is one of the toughest things to do, because really, the baby will get tired. So I would say, do a temporary nap in the late afternoon, so that this baby can at least extend his bedtime. I wouldn't advise starting the bedtime during the dinner and then transporting the baby back. Because if he wakes up during this transition and places, then you're going to have a very tough time putting him back to sleep. So maybe I would say, give him an extended nap in the late afternoon, and do everything you need to do for him to be sleeping for bedtime. Meaning, if you need to give him a bit of a wash, give him his dinner, give him his bottle, get him ready for bed, and then go back home. So if he sleeps in the car or through a walk in a stroller going back to the hotel, then at least you'll be able to move him back into his normal environment. It's really the only way, because if he wakes up in between...

**[11:21 - 11:27]**  
**Meg Faure:** Are there any other pieces of advice that you have for sleep while parents are away on holiday before we move over to coming back home?  
**[11:27 - 14:14]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** A lot. I tell them that we have something called sleep debt. Sleep debt is when we get overtired, and therefore it stops us actually from sleeping. So when parents think, "Oh, let me now not put my baby to sleep because I don't want them to be waking up at night," that's not the case. An overtired baby is going to sleep less at night, and going to sleep less for naps. So if you were busy and very active the day before, and you suspect that your baby looks a bit overtired today, do have extended naps. So if you normally have an hour's nap, midday or a two-hour nap, make it a bit more. Three hours can be fine. So look at the total amount of napping that he does through the day, and then increase it a bit. Like this, they make up for the sleep debt. And then I would say if you're sleeping all in a room, this happens a lot. So that's when you're on vacation, you don't have a room for every baby or for yourselves. If you are in a hotel, you're going to all sleep in the same place. My advice is always have your baby in a crib. Have your toddler on a mattress on the floor. I prefer not to co-sleep in the same bed if the parents are not doing it, you know, when they're back home. Because this is one of the most difficult things to go back on, to fix when you go back home. Plus, the fact is, if you're not used to it, and your bed is not big enough, you're not going to sleep and your baby or toddler is not going to sleep. Have them on a floor, bring their toys, common toys, bring a favourite blanket, bring a favourite pillow that they like, so that their little space of sleep environment becomes a bit familiar to them. So they are not like, you know, in a totally strange place to sleep. Have your baby as far away, even the toddler, from your bed. I've had some clients who were so desperate to avoid regression, they put their crib in the bathroom. Because they just didn't want, they wanted a dark closed room for that baby. Dark rooms are very important. Okay, so I know you can't control it when you are on vacation and sleeping in somebody's other person's bedroom. But you can take garbage bags that you can take to your windows. You can wet aluminium foil and stick it on your windows and you'll have perfect darkness. And these are two tools that you can take anywhere that are light to carry and very easy to apply.  
**Meg Faure:** I love that. I've never heard of the aluminium foil. I love that idea.  
**Jihan Khoury:** You just wet it, or actually sometimes you just wet the glass and you put it on it. It just sticks. It's very easy. Then, yeah, so no bed sharing. Your toddler, tell them about the boundaries. Remind him of the boundaries that he, this is his sleeping place. He can't get up and come to their bed. And if he does, of course he will. He's going to try. You just take him back to his mattress and have him stay in it. So if you follow at least these as guidelines, you're not going to have a terrible regression when you go back home.

**[14:14 - 15:15]**  
**Meg Faure:** I love that. Very, very interesting. And I think it is all about picking the things that you really should keep consistent like times for sleep. And I love the block out lining. I think that is such a good idea and where to sleep. So no, that's brilliant idea. So now many of our parents are going back after this holiday and now they have encountered sleep regression. They have gone through everything that has been tricky on holiday. And sometimes parents come home and they say "holiday wasn't even really a holiday anyway," because it isn't when you're away with kids. But now you come home and you've got a really disrupted routine for your little one. How do you get back into it?  
**Announcer:** This episode is brought to us by Parent Sense, the all-in-one baby and parenting app that helps 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 personalised for you and your little one. Download Parent Sense app now from your app store and take the guesswork out of parenting.  
**[15:15 - 15:23]**  
**Meg Faure:** But now you've come home and you've got a really disrupted routine for your little one. How do you get back into it?

**[15:23 - 17:15]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** As soon as you land, you start yourself on your local time. And you start with the meals as per your local time. So even if you had dinner on the aeroplane and you arrive to your hometown and it's morning, it's time for breakfast, sit and have breakfast. All these are things that will help reprogram the body clock. Then you go straight into your routine. You go straight into your boundaries. You go straight into your schedules. Of course, you are enforcing them, but keeping in mind that your child could be jet-lagged like you are and could be overtired like you are. So keep those considerations, a bit of allowances here and there until they come back to the schedule. When you have a toddler, it's actually even harder because they want to test the water. They don't like schedules anyway and boundaries. Give them a reward system. Create for them a consequences system. Have them learn how to go back. I mean, usually when we come back, it shouldn't take more than five days for us to resettle with everything. If the time zone difference is about two to three hours, you can do it in two days. Just cut it in half and do that adjustment over two days. If you were in a six to 12-hour time zone difference, that's when it's going to take five days, five nights, let me say. And again, they will sleep. When you put them to bed, the problem is that they're going to wake up later on. If they do that, keep them in their dark room. Keep them in the calm environment. Do sit with them for one hour. And then once that is done, you read books, you play calmly, you put them back in their bed, and you walk out. I like proper food. Food is very important. When it comes to evening time, we should have a protein and fat and a bit of carbs. Protein and fat are things that are going to stay in the stomach longer.  
**Meg Faure:** No iPads, nothing.  
**Jihan Khoury:** We stop electronic screens around 4 to 4:30 in the afternoon so that when the time comes for this body clock to kick in the melatonin in their bodies, it will do it. Because all these screens have the blue light that is going to stop the secretion. Actually, it's decreased cortisol, which is the stress hormone. So you get this battle inside the little body, not knowing what to do with themselves. So I encourage activity and eating in the right way, stopping things that can hinder the process of melatonin. A fantastic good half an hour bedtime routine is amazing because slowly the mind will get it. As soon as you do a bath time and you put them in that dark room, then the child knows its brain starts to secrete melatonin.

**[17:15 - 17:49]**  
**Meg Faure:** Yeah, absolutely. That's all just such fabulous advice. I really do appreciate that. What about the little one who's gone on holiday at three years old and they were having a consistent day's sleep before they went on holiday? Obviously, with all the excitement of what's going on when they're on holiday, they drop their day's sleep. When they come back, they're not wanting it. At what sort of ages can we expect that to happen? And is there a way to deal with that?  
**[17:49 - 18:50]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** Yes, of course, there's always a way to deal with all these issues, especially a two year old. I mean, this is when even I think three years is just as it's even more difficult than two years. But the beauty about this age is that you can start to reason with them. So reasoning with them is very important. So talk, talk, talk, I say to the parents all day about what is your expectation from them at that time. And yes, there will always be resistance, but it's a very healthy resistance. I love working with toddlers because I just see their personality showing through how they decide to resist. And once they feel the parent at a very calm and very steady voice, no feelings whatsoever, no even expressions, facial expressions, is enforcing the boundary that they know they cannot trigger their parents to get upset or to be stressed. And they will soon work with them. Rewards are very important. "If you do this, or when you do that, in the morning, you'll find a little balloon for yourself." So this will help them and encourage them to behave in the right way.

**[18:50 - 18:56]**  
**Meg Faure:** And what about that midday sleep? Because they are dropping that around about two, three, four years old. I mean, every child is different. How do you address that?  
**[18:56 - 19:25]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** Well, I would, let's say if they are overtired, I say to the parents do reintroduce it, but it shouldn't be a short nap. You know, I'm talking about 15 minutes. If they had dropped it already, if they hadn't dropped it, they're going to just go back to it. But even if they had dropped it, I would encourage that or encourage very early bedtime. So it's really dependent on the parent's schedule. What would be more beneficial for them? So this is where you make up for overtiredness and you make up for your sleep debt by introducing a little nap, even if they had given it up.

**[19:25 - 20:31]**  
**Meg Faure:** Brilliant. Okay. Wow. Wonderful advice. Thank you so much. So I think we've covered off beautifully what to do while you're on holiday. I love the idea of having some flexibility, but having certain things that you are inflexible on to maintain a routine. I love the idea of the five-day reset plan and, you know, adjusting time zones and pegging the circadian rhythms to meals, which is really interesting. I think it's really super advice. The other thing I often say to parents is that, particularly for babies who are under nine months of age, is go back to the awake times because, you know, you don't know. I mean, they've woken up now at six o'clock in the morning. It might've been 11 o'clock at night in the last time zone. Just go back to your daylight awake times if it's daytime. So you treat it as if it is day in your new time zone. So all of those things are very, very practical and very helpful. Is there anything that you would like to leave our parents with as they return their children into a normal routine and then, of course, back to school?  
**[20:31 - 21:02]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** Well, I tell them, enjoy. I hope you enjoyed your summer and do enjoy your vacations. Try to keep your guidelines minimum. Guidelines just to reduce that amount of regression. And when you come back home, just go fast forward and start as if you hadn't gone into a vacation. Don't introduce new props, please, by rocking or swaying or, you know, holding hands and feeding. It's the most common one. Holding hands for some reason, you know, just don't introduce new props and you will be safe as soon as you come back. Within five days, you should be all set.

**[21:02 - 21:30]**  
**Meg Faure:** They will return. Yeah. And I think, you know, if parents are finding that they're battling to get their little ones down while they're away and they're having to use some props that they wouldn't have liked before, I always say that one prop you must not use is feeding because that's the hardest one to break. You know, rocking to sleep and having them sway in a pram to sleep because they had so many of their day sleeps in a pram or stroller, you'll be able to work with that. But the one that's really difficult is particularly breastfeeding to sleep because as they get older, it's a very difficult habit to break. So, yeah, so I think you're right. I mean, pick your poison, as it were, and go with that and then hopefully return as quickly as possible to the norm.

**[21:30 - 21:40]**  
**Meg Faure:** Excellent. Well, thank you so much for joining me, Jihan. It was lovely to chat with you and hear your perspectives on baby sleep and infant sleep. And if our mums are interested, how can they get hold of you? Do you do online consultations?  
**[21:40 - 21:55]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** Yes, I do online consultations. I have also a website where they can book a call with me. It's a free call and we can just talk and chat and see how I can help them. I may give them just quick remedies there and then, or we can commit to something bigger if that is how they feel is necessary.  
**[21:55 - 21:58]**  
**Meg Faure:** That's super. So what is that website?  
**Jihan Khoury:** It's mynamejihankhoury.com.  
**[21:58 - 22:15]**  
**Meg Faure:** So it's J-I-H-A-N and then K-H-O-U-R-Y, all one word?  
**Jihan Khoury:** One word.  
**Meg Faure:** Okay, jihankhoury.com. So mums, if you are looking for just a quick fix, a little bit of help, Jihan will be able to chat with you. And if you're wanting something a little more in depth, you can also then schedule a proper consult with you. So that's really super, Jihan. And you are based in the UAE. So if any of our mums are based in Dubai, they would be able to come and see you.  
**[22:15 - 22:21]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** Yes, of course. I have clients all over because there's a lot that we are able to do online now, especially with this video consultations. But yes, everything is possible.

**[22:21 - 22:24]**  
**Meg Faure:** Well, thank you so much for making the time for what is a very hot topic.  
**[22:24 - 22:27]**  
**Jihan Khoury:** Yeah, thank you. Take care.  
**Meg Faure:** Thank you, Jihan. Bye-bye.

**[22:27 - 22:36]**  
**Announcer:** 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.