

# Ep 1. Help! How do I get my child to sleep through the night?

[00:00:00] **Meg Faure:** Habits are not really something that we look at under 14 weeks of age, but from about 14 to 17 weeks of age, babies start to form expectations around sleep. So the way that I am put to sleep in the evening is what I expect in the middle of the night.

[00:00:17] **Vanessa Pickford:** Welcome to our brand new podcast series, the health rep with me, your host, Vanessa Pickford, paired by Melin prime healthcare experts at your service.

[00:00:26] Over the series, we'll explore various key health topics that could affect the different life stages of the children in your care from the baby to the teenage years, we'll give you expert advice tips you can actually use and walk side by side with you on this parenting journey. All parents wish children would come with a handbook.

[00:00:47] Well, consider this a close second. We bring south Africa's best healthcare experts straight to you wherever you. To start. Let me share a little bit of background about myself. I am a [00:01:00] registered nurse and founder of the safe, mid training center. After a fulfilling career. As a nurse, I turned my focus towards training healthcare professionals and members of the public in CPR and first aid as a mother of four, I believe that healthcare starts at home and as such, I've tailored my CPR and first aid courses to empower.

[00:01:20] Grandparents and child minders like you to cope effectively in a medical or injury emergency involving a member of the family for the next two episodes. I'm excited to be speaking with a well known parenting expert Meg fork, where we'll be discussing two of the main issues affecting parents during the first years of their child's life, sleeping through the.

[00:01:41] And the eating habits of toddlers. Please note that the views shared by any of our guests in this podcast may not

necessarily reflect the views of me clinic. So please consult a medical professional. If you have any concerns. In today's episode, we are diving into the crucial, and I know sometimes controversial topic [00:02:00] of sleeping through the night.

[00:02:02] When a baby or a child isn't sleepy. Well, everyone is affected. It's also likely that everyone around you has given a different opinion of what you should or shouldn't be doing, which can be so confusing and isolating. Well, we are here to help. So if you're struggling to keep your eyes open, Grab a cup of coffee.

[00:02:21] You won't want to miss this. And if you haven't yet subscribe to our podcast and share it with any of your friends, you think could benefit from these talks. As I said earlier, I'm a mum of four. The road to peaceful nights in this family has been full of bumps. I sometimes wonder how my face born didn't remain an only child because albeit he was a delight during the day.

[00:02:44] The night times were too dreadful for. By the time he was nine months old, we were getting up up to 14 times per night with him. And nothing seemed to help today. I'm very excited to introduce Meg [00:03:00] for Meg is an international based selling author in the field of child psychology. Parenting and child development.

[00:03:07] Many of you may have heard of her baby since and weening since books or seen them on the shelves of your local bookshop. She's an occupational therapist who is passionate about the care development and education of babies and young children. Me is also a clinical practitioner with international experience and has run many training courses on diverse parenting topics.

[00:03:28] She has a popular mobile app called parent sense that helps track baby. As a mother of three herself, I'm sure she'll be able to share many of her own experiences as she speaks with us now about sleeping through the night. Welcome. Meg is good to have you here with

[00:03:44] **Meg Faure:** us. It's lovely to be with you, Vanessa.

[00:03:46] Thanks Meg.

[00:03:47] **Vanessa Pickford:** We all know how difficult it is to function on little sleep. How important is sleeping through the night for the mom and for the baby or.

[00:03:57] **Meg Faure:** Yeah, I know sleep is critically important. You know, you, you always think of [00:04:00] it as a, as a bit of a luxury when you're a mother and you think, you know, you're lucky if you get a, a full night's sleep, but the reality is that it's very important for both mom and child on the mother's side.

[00:04:09] And any mom who's listening will be able to attest to this. It does impact our mood, our irritability, and our anxiety. When we. Sleep deprived and, and really tired. And so there is a link and there's been quite a bit of research done on it between, um, postnatal, depression and sleep deprivation. And what's interesting about it is that, um, there's actually research that talks about the chicken or the egg, which comes first.

[00:04:33] You know, if you have postnatal depression, Does that lead to poor sleep habits with little ones. And there's some evidence that shows it does, but it certainly works the other way. Where when you are very tired, you are more likely to have a low mood and having low mood and anxiety is not good when you're trying to parent.

[00:04:47] So on a parenting level, number one. Yes, it's very important that babies do sleep through the night. And then there's also enormous amounts of research that, um, show that little ones need sleep too. Um, Critically important for [00:05:00] learning. Um, there's been very interesting pieces of research where they've taught little ones, a little skill.

[00:05:05] And then in one group of, um, they have let the little ones have a sleep and in the control group, they don't have a sleep. And then they, um, have measured the retention of the new skill after the so-called nap period, whether the nap happened or not. And they've found that little ones that have

naps are more likely to retain that information that they've learned prior to the nap.

[00:05:24] And so on a learning level, sleep is important. So you. Stating in the obvious for both moms and babies and dads, um, sleep is very important. Um, of course that's not very helpful when you've got a baby who's not sleeping because you know, it's important and you're just not getting it dry.

[00:05:38] **Vanessa Pickford:** Oh gosh. I absolutely appreciate that.

[00:05:40] There is just so much information out there. If I were to Google the topic, there are numerous results. And personally I've experienced lots of well, meaning people giving me conflicting advice. Uh, there even seems to be quite a lot of shaming for the different techniques caregivers use to help children sleep.

[00:05:59] It [00:06:00] can be quite overwhelming to say the least. So we are excited to hear your expert opinion. What does it actually mean for a baby to sleep through the night? And when could I expect my baby to do.

[00:06:14] **Meg Faure:** Yeah, so sleeping through, you know, I think as a parent, we always think, well, that must be from 10 o'clock at night, until eight in the morning, cuz that's what we would like to sleep.

[00:06:21] But in actual fact, it's, it's not necessarily that and it's different for different aged babies. Um, I like to use the benchmark of 10 hours at night, um, which is if a baby's going down at six in the evening, that could be till four in the morning. Um, so 10 hours with art waking through the night would be what I would say is a baby sleeping through the night in terms of when you can actually expect that.

[00:06:42] Um, obviously. Based on developmental norms in terms of nutritional needs, emotional needs and so on. So realistically babies shouldn't really be expected to sleep for these 10 hour stretches until they're about six months old. Now that's not to say

that babies don't cuz they certainly are babies that sleep through earlier than six months.

[00:06:59] But [00:07:00] um, when a mom comes to me and tells me that her baby's got a sleep problem, They're working up once or twice at night and they're younger than six months. It's sometimes more of readjusting the mom's expectations than getting the baby to so-called sleep through. Um, so, um, you know, to answer your question, it's about six months old, a baby would be able to sleep for 10 hours through, and then from there it just gets longer and longer through to 12 hours at night.

[00:07:22] And going through into the toddler years, as long as you've got your day sleep routine set up correctly, um, your baby should be able to do 12 hours at night, which would be from about six 30, till six 30.

[00:07:32] **Vanessa Pickford:** So Meg, would it then be unrealistic for me to expect my baby to sleep through the night, right from the beginning?

[00:07:39] **Meg Faure:** Yeah, no, that's definitely unrealistic. And you know, I think look, a couple of things happened there. Society, unfortunately does talk about babies, sleeping through very young. And so, you know, new moms start to expect their babies to sleep through from six to eight weeks. And for most babies that's really unrealistic.

[00:07:55] And so in the early days, little ones are needing nutritional support. Um, and that [00:08:00] goes all the way through until about 17 weeks that they're needing some sort of nutritional support at night that they'll wake up for. Um, and then even thereafter until they're on full solids, which is only at around about six months, because it takes time to get your solids intake, um, which is your solid nutrition food.

[00:08:14] Up to a level that, where it actually really impacts sleep. And that only really happens at about six months. So, you know, I really, I, I discourage moms for having, from having that expectation of having a baby sleep through before then. So Meg,

[00:08:26] **Vanessa Pickford:** should I then consider it developmentally appropriate that my baby only sleeps through the night from about six months.

[00:08:33] **Meg Faure:** Babies don't generally sleep through the night before six months of age, um, with the exception of some babies, like our settled babies. So we have these four different sensory personalities that I speak about in my books. Um, and the settled babies are babies that tend to sleep through earlier. So if you do get little one who does sleep through at six weeks and my middle child was one of those, um, very fortunately neither two weren't, but it does happen.

[00:08:57] And those babies are generally your settled babies.  
[00:09:00] And they're very well self-regulated.

[00:09:02] **Vanessa Pickford:** Gosh, I can't imagine what it must be like to have a baby sleep through at six weeks. Um, I can certainly think of many examples of what a bad night sleep can look like. But from your side, how would you describe a bad night's sleep for a baby?

[00:09:17] Um, perhaps you can relay some of your experiences or experiences that some of your clients have shared with.

[00:09:25] **Meg Faure:** So that's a bad night would be a very, um, age related, um, you know, construct. So, so let's start with a bad night for a newborn. So a newborn baby typically, um, wakes up as often during the day as they wake at night.

[00:09:39] Um, and so that there that's very normal. What would be a bad night's sleep for a newborn baby is if they're sleeping for like very long stretches in the day, like let's say six hours between sleeps in the day and then waking up too early at night. And that would be an example of what we call day night, sleep reversal.

[00:09:54] And in that case, the mom would need to work to help her newborn to learn, to wake up more in the day [00:10:00] for their feeds and would actually wake her baby in the day for feeds. Um, and in order to help a little one to sleep for longer

stretches in the night. So that would be a bad night's sleep for a newborn.

[00:10:09] Then moving on through, from about three weeks, until about 12 weeks, you should have an incremental improvement in sleep. So. Each night, the sleep gets a little bit better, a little bit longer. The, the stretches get a little bit longer in between the, the wakings. Your baby's still waking four feeds, but they're getting longer and longer now in that period under the three month point, if the baby is still waking, let's say every hour and a half.

[00:10:32] That's never stretching that to me is an indication that there's something going on and quite typically under 12 weeks, if that is happening, it's usually happening for two reasons. And the one is that the baby is very sensory sensitive. Um, and so that's one of our sensory personalities. And the other reason is that the baby may have something organic going on.

[00:10:51] And very often that might be reflex. Um, a gastro suffered gel reflex, which makes them uncomfortable. Or it could be another illness. So if a [00:11:00] baby under 12 weeks is waking kind of every hour and a half at night, that would constitute a bad sleep. Then moving through on from the four to six month stage. Um, if the baby's not ha is if the baby's having more than one to two night wakings, that for me would be a cause for concern.

[00:11:15] And again, you'd look for the organic reasons, but it can also be that they're developing habits. Um, and then habits obviously are what causes poor sleepers. Um, classically going forward. Um, and then the one other reason for us seeing bad sleepers is in a nine month old, who's continuing to wake at night.

[00:11:31] You could be looking at some separation anxiety. So, you know, a bad sleeper is not so much something you can just label any baby. It's got more to do with their age and stage. And then it has something that is associated with it at each of those stages.

[00:11:43] **Vanessa Pickford:** Right. Right. And you, so aside from your day night, sleep reversal in the newborn or organic or

personality traits that would impair sleep, you touched on there being some bad habits.

[00:11:58] Can you. Sort of expand on [00:12:00] what type of bad habits can derail sleep.

[00:12:03] **Meg Faure:** Yeah. So first thing to note there is that, um, habits don't really impact sleep before about 14 weeks of age. And that's because newborn babies have, um, sensory and emotional needs that require them to demand. Attention in the middle of the night in demand, comfort and cuddles and feeds and so on.

[00:12:20] So it's important to first all note that habits are not really something that we look at under 14 weeks of age, but from about 14 to 17 weeks of age, babies start to form expectations around sleep. So the way that I've. Put to sleep in the evening is what I expect in the middle of the night. And, um, for some babies that can be a really quite a significant association.

[00:12:40] And so in those cases, what could happen is that you might be, let's say, rocking your baby to sleep before they go to sleep or always breastfeeding your baby to sleep. Those are two very classic examples of habits that can cause habit later on. And what happens in the baby? Um, you know, kind of going through from four to, to seven months old is they start.

[00:12:59] Wake in the middle of the [00:13:00] night, expecting exactly what happened at bedtime to happen again. And so you can have kind of 6, 7, 8, um, wakings through the night for breastfeeds bottle feeds, dummies rocking to sleep and so on. And that's what would constitute bad habits. And it's something that new parents kind of fall into, into the, you know, miss the mistake of, you know, they've they got used to putting their baby to sleep on the breast every time, because when they were little, which was fine, But at the age where little ones need to learn to start to settle themselves, their baby didn't actually learn that skill.

[00:13:31] And so that is why they then end up with some bad habits.



[00:13:33] **Vanessa Pickford:** Right? So you've mentioned that, um, whether it be rocking the baby to sleep or breastfeeding or the dummy or patting, you know, those pitfalls that carers caregivers or the baby's carers can make that compromise sleep and can create bad habits.

[00:13:49] How could the caregiver then get the child back on?

[00:13:54] **Meg Faure:** So we start from about four to six months actually helping babies or coaching them into [00:14:00] settling themselves. And we do it very gently. I am not an advocate of cried art. I don't believe in sleep training little ones. Um, for me, it's about coaching them in the right direction.

[00:14:10] While supporting them. And you now always say to moms, you know, if you have a six year old, you don't just hand them a book and tell them to learn to read, or if you've got a 17 year old, you don't just put them behind the wheel of a car and tell them to learn, to drive. Those are skills that need support and what I call scaffolding.

[00:14:24] So we kind of scaffold the development of new skills and sleep is exactly the same for little ones. They need to learn a new skill and they need to do it in the context of a loving, caring, and engaged relationship. So from about four to six months, um, an example, Steep coaching would be. You fed your baby, you know, that they're happy, they're comfortable.

[00:14:43] They should be able to fall asleep. They're fighting sleep because that's what they're doing. They haven't learned how to put themselves to sleep. Then instead of doing it all the way for them. So in other words, instead of rocking them all the way to sleep or patting them all the way to sleep, um, you do a little bit for them until they're drowsy and then you put [00:15:00] them down and you stay with them with.

[00:15:02] Petting and soothing and kind of breaking the habit of, let's say the rocking to sleep, or let's say the feeding to sleep, but doing it with lots of support. And there can be a little bit of niggles then, but you're there supporting them, loving them as they do the

last little bit themselves. Um, if they become very unsettled, it's picking them up, loving them again, getting them unsettled again.

[00:15:20] But always having them do the last little bit themselves. Now it's not easy. It is hard work. It's, you know, that that's part of teaching new skills. Um, but if you persist with it, you should have a little one who learns to really put themselves to sleep. Um, quite effectively, by the time they're six months old.

[00:15:36] Mm-hmm , you know, Meg

[00:15:37] **Vanessa Pickford:** as a mum of four, I, I had very different sleepers. All four of them were very different sleepers. Do you think that the child's personality or perhaps sensory profile can come into play and affect how their.

[00:15:50] **Meg Faure:** Yeah, no, Vanessa, there's absolutely no question. And I love that you've had four children cuz you've got real context.

[00:15:55] If, if two of those children were twins, then you'd have even more context because what's [00:16:00] incredible. Is that even twins who are genetically identical have gone through the same nurturing will still have different sleep habits based on their own sensory personalities. So we have these four different sensory personalities, which is, um, on the more sensitive side we've got our sensitive babies and slow to babies.

[00:16:16] So they are often oversized to sensory. Their world, they notice everything that's going on. So if they've got a little gas bubble trapped in their, in there, tummy coming up there, esophagus it'll wake them. So they often are quite poor sleepers just because they are a lot more sensitive to everything that's going on in the, in their, in their world.

[00:16:34] And then the other two sensory personalities are much less sensitive and that's the settled baby and social butterfly. And the settled baby has a very high threshold for sensory information. So a lot can be going on. even in their sleep space and they

won't really notice it so they could have. Another person in the bed next to them, they could have a dog bark, two blocks away or whatever it is or in the same room.

[00:16:55] And they manage to sleep through it because they're really settled. And those are typically our little ones who might [00:17:00] sleep through early. And then our social butterflies also have a high threshold with sensory information, but they seek information. And so they actually need to have very busy days in order to sleep well at night.

[00:17:11] And so you've got these four different sensory personalities. And the way in which the child engages with sensory information will impact the way that they sleep at night and how easy they are to put down as well.

[00:17:21] **Vanessa Pickford:** Gosh, I, I feel like you have managed to describe each of my children. I wish I'd known this before.

[00:17:27] so, so other than their personality and sensory profile, are there any other problems that could derail sleep like, um, illness,

[00:17:36] **Meg Faure:** for example? Yeah. So definitely illness is something that impacts on sleep. And, you know, I always say to mom that at any age and any stage, if there's ever a sleep problem, you have to start with the organic and that means illness and nutrition.

[00:17:49] Predominantly, you have to know that they've got the right nutrition and that they're healthy because when you're not, well, you're not gonna sleep. Well, if you are running a fever, you will wake up. If you've got a, a, a stuffy [00:18:00] nose, you're gonna wake up cuz you can't breathe. If you've got, um, gastro diarrhea, you're gonna wake up with tummy pains.

[00:18:04] So, you know, across the board, you are going to find that your, your little one will have disrupted sleep when they, um, have health issues. And that by the way, includes our normals. You know, so-called normal health issues like teething, that'll also

impact sleep. Um, although teething gets way too bad, a wrap, it should only really disrupt sleep for a couple of nights around the eruption of the tooth.

[00:18:23] Now, the important thing with health is that first of all, you want to rule out that there is anything that needs to be addressed by medical doctor. So let's say for instance, For a little one had had a really stuffy nose and a, and had had a cold, you know, quite a little obnoxious, little, um, viral infection.

[00:18:40] Um, but they're still not sleeping. Well kind of three weeks later, then you might want to go and get their ears checked because glue ear, which is different from an ear infection, but glue ear, which happens after a cold. And you've kind of still got that. Um, snottiness kind. Um, sticky inside your, um, inner, inner ear that can actually cause, um, sleep problems.

[00:18:58] And so you, then you'd go and see your [00:19:00] doctor and make sure that for instance, the, there, there is are clear. So, um, the first thing is, if you think it's something big or something chronic or something that's impacting, that you can't deal with at home, then you need to see the doctor. The second line of defense is just to keep your little one comfortable.

[00:19:13] So if they've got, um, gastro, keep them hydrated. If they've got a fever, get the fever done with the paracetamol. So if, if they've got a stuffy nose, um, and they're under the age of one, you can't give them decongestants, but then you would be able to give them maybe some Abu or eucalyptic oil that can help to clear their nose in a humidity fire.

[00:19:30] So there's strategies to use to help them to, to, um, be more comfortable. That would be the second thing. And then the third thing is you do need to suspend some of your expectations then at that age. So, you know, if your little one needs a. Extra comfort because they've been hospitalized or because they're really feeling terrible then that's okay.

[00:19:49] **Vanessa Pickford:** Yeah. So, you know, as a, as a mom, I can appreciate that. We, we all desperately seek, um, our babies

sleeping well, but as you've [00:20:00] said, the health of the baby is paramount. So in the event of an emergency or a concern for the health of the child, me clinic has a 24 hour call center where you can speak to registered nurse and receive medical advice and assistance.

[00:20:13] The nurse can even arrange for an ambulance if necessary. Now the number is oh, 8 6 0 2 3 3 3 3. So why not pause this episode quickly and save this number into your phone so that you can have it on hand in case of an emergency. Before we get back into our conversation, I want to share a really exciting offer with you.

[00:20:36] Me is offering a 50% discount on her app parent sense for all listeners of the health podcast. So please use the discount code since. That's all capitals, S E N S E 50. This app is available on both Android and the apple app store. So Meg, what about older children? When we think of sleeping through the [00:21:00] night, we generally think of our babies, but older children can also struggle with sleep.

[00:21:04] I, I have a 17 year old who still struggles to sleep. In fact, he has struggled persistently for 17 years. So what kind of problems can those children face and how do they differ from baby sleep issue?

[00:21:20] **Meg Faure:** Yeah. So look a lot around, um, sleep of, for any age comes down to sleep hygiene. And, you know, I think that's a very important point of departure for older children.

[00:21:30] And so sleep hygiene is, um, really not age related. It's for us as adults as well. And so here are a couple of little tips there. The first one is to have a very regular. Set bedtime. And we do that. In fact, in the parent sense app, we do that. We have a set bedtime, and we tell parents what time to wake their babies in the, for the last sleep in the afternoon, so that they actually will go to sleep at that time every night.

[00:21:52] And for babies that's between six and 7:00 PM. Now, as you get older, it obviously gets later. And so it can be between

seven and eight, for [00:22:00] instance, for a child. Um, but the important thing is to have it as absolutely consistent. So a consistent. Time bedtime is important. A bedtime routine and rhythm is also important.

[00:22:10] So likewise, the same principles that we use with little babies, we should be using as with ourselves as adults and our older children. So a set bedtime routine can involve for instance, um, a nice warm bath that can involve a little bit of tea that helps us to calm down a little bit if that's what it takes.

[00:22:26] Um, and then a darkened room, which is really important and then reading instead of screens. Um, so a bedtime routine is important. And then I've mentioned, um, screens and screens have two very, very important repercussions on sleep. The first one is that all screens. So whether it's a mobile phone, a tablet or television or a computer screen, IMIT blue light.

[00:22:48] And, um, we have an magical little, um, gland in our brain called the pan gland. And it is responsible for releasing melatonin, which is our sleep initiating, um, hormone. And melatonin is released [00:23:00] in the absence of blue light. And so that's why we want blackout lining in our curtains and so on. And it's why when, you know, kind of the, the, the night comes along, we start to feel drowsy.

[00:23:10] Now, if you are using blue light in your bed, um, particularly if you, if you're using screens, you're gonna inhibit the release of that melatonin. So, so screens from the perspective of melatonin lease are something that's very important that you do watch with children of all age. Um, but there's another problem with screens and that is that screens are on a sensory level, very passive and really only trigger two sensors.

[00:23:33] And that's your sense of vision and potentially your sense of auditory, your auditory sense, um, your sense of hearing. And other than that, none of your other senses are activated. And your very important senses for sleep are actually your vestibular sense and your preceptive sense. Now your vestibular senses in your inner ear and it monitors movement, and your preceptive sense is

in your muscles and joints and it monitors, um, movement of your body parts.

[00:23:58] And both of those two [00:24:00] things together are incredibly regulating on a sleep level. And actually Vanessa, I happened to have done a boat trip yesterday. Um, it was quite a long boat trip out in island. And, um, I was exhausted when I got home last night, fell asleep and literally didn't stir the whole night and woke up this morning, realizing that all of that movement on that boat and in the energy of when we were on the island, moving around.

[00:24:20] Sand must have helped me to sleep well. And it's just the same for children. So if you are 17 year old or whatever age your children are, is not sleeping well, get them involved in active movement. So sport is particularly regulating running mountain climbing, mountain biking. Those are all very regulating.

[00:24:36] So. On a sensory level. You want to have all this movement input. And of course, if your baby or your child or your adolescent is spending too much time in front of screens, they're simply not getting it. Um, and so, you know, it's, it's about sleep hygiene. It's about the sensory and it's about watching the screens as well.

[00:24:52] Brilliant.

[00:24:52] **Vanessa Pickford:** Thanks Meg. So what we've learned so far is that we need to create good sleep habits, that [00:25:00] support sleep whilst being aware. Of our babe or our child's personality and sensory profile. But what resonated with me is that we do need to have some flexibility and may in fact need to adjust our expectations from time to time.

[00:25:14] I must say, I certainly think we would've had a very different first year of my son's life. Had I had access to information like this. In the next part of this podcast, we'll look at how you get, can set your child up for sleep success and help them get back into good sleep habits. If they have problem sleeping or are regressing.

[00:25:33] So what are the solutions.

[00:25:36] **Meg Faure:** So, um, I actually have a sleep course, which is on, on the app. So anybody who wants to download the app and the app is free, um, in the free version of the app, there is the course which you can upgrade to. And in that course, we go through 10 steps and it really is as complicated as 10 steps, Vanessa.

[00:25:52] And that's why, you know, very often people go in with, um, instructions to sleep train or, or sleep coach or, or controlled crying, but [00:26:00] actually. Behavioral modification is actually the only the 10th of the 10 steps. So there's just so many things you need to do to set up good sleep. So you've mentioned one of them already, which is health.

[00:26:09] Obviously the second one would be nutrition. So we need to make sure that, um, little one's nutrition is setting them up for good night's sleeps. And in the early days, that'll mean a milk diet. But as they move on through from six months old, it means a solids diet with good protein in it. So you need good protein and healthy fats in, in your diet in order to sleep well.

[00:26:28] And from six months onwards, you also need iron in your diet to be able to sleep well because your iron reserves from pregnancy, um, have been de start to be depleted in babies. So we do need to have, um, the, the nutrition box ticked as well. Then the next critical thing that really does impact on sleep is the day sleep routine.

[00:26:45] And, you know, I think, um, there's a little, um, adage that says, um, sleep Bagge sleep. And that really is true then that is that if babies are sleeping well in the day, they will actually sleep better at night. Instead of, you know, your logic might say, keep your baby up all day. So they're exhausted and [00:27:00] sleep better at night.

[00:27:00] And that actually. Is does not work. So your day sleep routine is very important and it needs to be just right. Um, you can't have too, too much sleep and you certainly can't have too



much sleep right before bedtime. Um, so you need to be guiding your baby into a good flexible day sleep routine. And that is in fact, on the parent sense app.

[00:27:18] One of the things that we do is, um, you have on your home screen, the next three things that are coming up in order to get your baby into a good day sleep routine for night sleep. So. Another step, as I've mentioned, there would be the day sleep routine. Um, and that, by the way, changes because, um, uh, a six months old sleep routine might be three to four sleeps.

[00:27:36] Whereas at nine months old, we call it a cusp. Babies actually drop sleep. And if they don't drop a sleep, they're likely to sleep worse at night as well. And then again, at 14 months old, they need to drop another sleep down to one sleep a day. Otherwise they'll also be awake at night. So you have to have an age appropriate day sleep routine in order to sleep.

[00:27:54] And then your next step would be a bedtime routine. And you know, I've mentioned it already when we spoke about health, [00:28:00] um, sleep hygiene, but a bedtime routine's critically important. Um, it sets you up for good sleep during the day during the night. Um, and then of course there's the sensory information, which I've also alluded to babies need to have good amount of movement and sunshine and light on them during the days they need to have enough outdoor play.

[00:28:16] That makes a difference. So you can see how many different things. Are involved in setting a baby up for good sleep. And then as we get towards the, uh, you know, the last few, um, steps, you start to look at, um, sleep associations and sleep habits. So, um, you need to have healthy sleep associations, something you can use independent at night.

[00:28:35] So. Some people don't like dummies. I personally love dummies. Um, because dummies are one of the tools that babies can use independently to resettle themselves from about seven months onwards. So you need to have a look at all these different aspects and put them in place. And, you know, just by mentioning

all of these, um, you know, kind of facets, you can see how easy it is for, for sleep to fall off the rails.

[00:28:57] Because if you've just got one of them that isn't going well, [00:29:00] like for instance, nutrition or the sensory. Load during the day, you then would have a little one who might have disrupted sleep, right?

[00:29:07] **Vanessa Pickford:** So you really have given us the keys to good sleep habits, but what should a parent or caregiver do if the baby already sleeps poorly or has already developed bad sleep habits, how would you correct the sleep

[00:29:21] **Meg Faure:** behavior?

[00:29:22] Yeah. So I would always go back to step number one I would work through and, and that's why the sleep course is what I recommend, because you should go right from the beginning, you know, set the stage for sleep, look at their health, look at their nutrition. You, you want to, it's almost like ticking boxes.

[00:29:36] And so you look at one, you move on to the next, you move on to the next. Um, because it's very difficult for me to say in, you know, for instance, without knowing a baby's specific, um, circumstances. Exactly. Which one of those criteria has fallen apart, but it really would be, you know, kind of going. Through the, each of the steps and setting your baby up for good sleep.

[00:29:55] Um, by the time you've done everything that I've mentioned, you [00:30:00] probably left with habits and that's of course, very, very common that a baby would've fallen into bad habits, maybe cuz they were sick or they were teething. And so you brought them into your bed and now they're breastfeeding to sleep all night or they.

[00:30:11] You own holiday and you didn't have a, a set bed. So then you rock them to sleep in the pram every day. Now they're dependent on that. So habits develop and that by far is the, is the biggest, um, um, kind of area for solving for most parents. And so if this

[00:30:25] **Vanessa Pickford:** bed has developed bad sleep habits, would you support sleep training?

[00:30:31] Um, do you think that that is one of the ways that caregivers or parents could get the babe sleep back on track?

[00:30:39] **Meg Faure:** So. Along with, um, Crea sections and breastfeeding and, and that type of thing, sleep training is one of our more contentious, um, issues of parenting. And it's very polarized because you get parents who are vehemently anti, who will actually shame other parents and say, um, you know, you're damaging your child emotionally.

[00:30:58] Um, And on the other hand, you have [00:31:00] parents who have read literature that says it won't damage your children and who they need a good night's sleep and they've done it and it's worked. And so they're big advocates for it. So it's a very polarized area of parenting. And with all polarized areas of parenting, I believe that there's a there's room for.

[00:31:15] Everybody's opinion. So there will be babies for whom sleep training works really well. It's effectively, and it, and it is done correctly. And there have others who for, for whatever reason, like for instance, if a mom has postnatal depression, it's really not advised to do, um, sleep training as an example, because it can be disruptive emotionally.

[00:31:33] Um, so, you know, it's hard to say that it's it's good or bad and you don't wanna throw the baby out to the bath water. In addition to that, I believe that there's a continu of sleep training, um, all the way through, from what I mentioned earlier, which is sleep coaching, which is supporting your baby towards, um, establishing independent sleep habits all the way through to close the door, walk out the room and use the, um, extinguished method, which is the baby will eventually crowd out and, and fall asleep.

[00:31:58] And then there's a whole lot in between of. [00:32:00] So for me personally, um, what I advocate is I do advocate staying with the baby while you sleep training them. Um, and the reason is

that, um, one of my specialties and areas of interest is infant mental health. And I believe that, um, babies who are learning to sleep through the night are learning a skill of self-regulation and self-regulation is an very important skill, particularly as it pertains to sleep.

[00:32:24] But it cannot be done in isolation. It's something that a baby has to have support in order to do so. That's why on my course, the mom or dad stays with the baby and supports them as they learn their new skill. Um, and so that's the way that I personally do it. I, I think in many respects it suits most babies and moms well, but obviously there are other ways of doing sleep training.

[00:32:44] Maek

[00:32:45] **Vanessa Pickford:** sometimes a baby could be sleeping very well for a while. I remember with my second child that at about three months of age, we thought we were winning at parenting when he started sleeping through the night. And then it all seemed to go [00:33:00] swiftly downhill at about five months when he started waking up.

[00:33:03] A lot, and it didn't seem that anything we could do would change that situation for him. He just kept waking up and waking up for months on end. What could have been happening in that scenario, where he started out sleeping well, and then became a wakeful baby again.

[00:33:20] **Meg Faure:** So Vanessa, what you have described is what we call the 17 week sleep progression.

[00:33:24] And unfortunately, it's so common that it's almost normal. Um, so what happens is that little ones typically, um, start to link their sleep cycles better and bed at night, stretch out, um, for one long stretch all the way through, till one or two in the morning, and then end up only having one night feed, which will be a two in the morning.

[00:33:41] And then. Morning feed. It'll be three hours later at five and that's considered a morning feed. And that usually happens by about 14 weeks. And so most parents exactly like you did feel that they're winning and that they can see the light at the end of the tunnel. And then as life would happen and it's very cruel.

[00:33:57] The babies start waking up more frequently and it [00:34:00] happens at around about 17 weeks, which is why it's called 17 weeks sleep regression. Now the two main reason. That we surmise that this happens. The one does have to do with nutrition and diet. And that is that babies need a little bit more to round about that age, which means that if you've chosen not to introduce solids, you will need to do an extra night feed, but it also means that you can actually start solids.

[00:34:20] And there's an enormous amount of science. Now that tells us that introducing solids from four to six months is no, has no increased risk of, um, of any health problems. And in actual fact can limit the risk of allergies as well. So you can start to introduce solids at around about that time, quite safely.

[00:34:37] The other reason. And I believe actually the bigger reason why little ones start to wake more frequently at night at 17 weeks is because they have to start to learn at that time to, to self soothe. So they have to learn to put themselves back to sleep when they come into their light sleep states. And if we have been supporting them or continue to support them very strongly to settle themselves every single time, then they never actually.

[00:34:58] To put themselves back to [00:35:00] sleep when they come into that light sleep state. So what happens during the course of the night is that babies cycle through light sleep, deep sleep, and then back into deep sleep and light sleep. So, so on and through the night and when they come into the light state of sleep, they, um, might RO even wake completely.

[00:35:16] Um, if they're an older child, they might even sit up. And they might call out for you. And what parents often do, um, is that we think, oh my goodness. If I get to them really quickly, then I'll be

able to resettle them quickly. And I won't have them awake for the next hour and I can just jump back into bed.

[00:35:30] And so we become hypervigilant and we jump into their bedroom quickly, put the dummy in, pat them, feed them, whatever it is quickly to get them back to sleep. So we can get back to sleep. If parents actually at that age, stop and listen, rather than immediately respond, very often little ones will actually resettle themselves.

[00:35:46] And so that's the first thing you can do at that age is just, listen, don't respond. If your little ones, um, talking or moaning, don't respond. If they're crying, obviously you're gonna go in and then Sue them and settle them back again, but try as much as possible for them to be able to [00:36:00] settle themselves into the last little bit.

[00:36:01] The. And research has shown that if parents do this between kind of four and seven months of age and particularly around five months and they get it right, they help the little ones to learn to resettle. Those babies typically become our long term. Good, good sleepers. And that was researchers was done by Anders in Australia.

[00:36:19] And so if you get it right in that window period, where babies start to wake more frequently, you'll have it right for the long term. So then

[00:36:26] **Vanessa Pickford:** that brings us to the older child. We spoke earlier about some of the problems children face with sleep. And you touched on the use of our electronic devices and how prevalent those are amongst older children and how they can interrupt sleep.

[00:36:41] But how could parents and caregivers help children to sleep better if they are poor? Perhaps not at the age where they're on the electronic devices. So, you know, the, the early childhood age where they. Active little beings, not spending too much time on devices and [00:37:00] still not sleeping.

[00:37:01] **Meg Faure:** Yeah. So, I mean, let's talk about toddlers.

[00:37:03] So first of all, it would surprise you to know how many toddlers are in devices. So that's the first thing. I mean, I would definitely go back to how much technology the little one is using because it has been very, become more and more prevalent in the toddler to age band. So really limit the, um, the tech devices as much as.

[00:37:21] Second thing is you need to look at health. Um, I mentioned that we always look at the organic first and one of the things that happens for young, um, children is that they get worm infestations. And of course that freaks everyone out, the thought of babies having worms. But we are just talking about little pin worms here.

[00:37:35] They're very, very common and simply de worming. Your child can make all the difference to have them step through the. And then having the appropriate amount of sleep during the day, and it's appropriate time for sleep. So toddlers until they're about three or four years old, need a rest during the day.

[00:37:50] And for many of them that'll mean it's asleep for some of them. It'll just be a rest where they're lying on their bed. But I like to have that in place. Um, and they must sleep past 2:00 PM in the afternoon. If, if [00:38:00] toddlers and preschoolers have a asleep, like at four o'clock in the afternoon, they are not going to want to fall asleep by seven, and then you're gonna have issues there as well.

[00:38:07] And if they're sleeping too long during the day, they're also going to, um, kind of wake up at night as well. So you can see with toddlers, it is, um, it's a little bit around. It is also around nutrition that I haven't mentioned. Um, they need to have good nutrition as well. And for toddlers, they can be very picky eaters, which I'm sure we'll be able to cover off in another podcast.

[00:38:26] And if they are picky eaters, um, it's worth giving them a little supplement, like a, you know, a toddler shake. Um, so that we are covering of all those nutritional bases. So with toddlers, there's

also the pushing of boundaries. So if there's a boundary to be pushed, a toddler will push it. And that means that they might be asking for one more story, one more bottle of milk, one more going to the toilet.

[00:38:47] And so you really do need to form quite firm boundaries around toddlers as well about where they sleep, what time they go to sleep and how they fall asleep.

[00:38:54] **Vanessa Pickford:** AME, you have provided such interesting input about sleep and creating good [00:39:00] sleepers. And that as parents or caregivers, we can start from day one to set our babes up for a good night's sleep.

[00:39:07] So thank

[00:39:08] **Meg Faure:** you. Thank you very much, Fe Vanessa, it's been wonderful to chat.

[00:39:13] **Vanessa Pickford:** Thank you for tuning into the health wrap podcast, powered by Melin prime. Be sure you subscribe to our podcast as we'll be bringing you more experts to support you in the upcoming episode. And if you'd like more health insights and tips brought right to you in your inbox, then sign up for our informative Melin prime newsletter called you'll find a link for the newsletter in the show notes of this podcast.

[00:39:38] Meg also has a podcast called sense by Meg fork, where you can find more resources about sleep. There is a link in the show notes for this. So, if you enjoyed listening to Meg today, you're in for a treat because she'll be joining us again in episode two, to chat about healthy and fussy, eating something we all deal with in the parenting [00:40:00] journey.

[00:40:00] So if mealtimes make you want to pull your hair out, or you want to set the right eating habits for your child from the start, make sure you don't miss the next episode.