

Preparing for the afterbirth with Renee Reina

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SUMMARY

The O Parenting Mojo podcast episode features a discussion on the often overlooked challenges of early postpartum life, emphasizing the emotional struggles new parents face and the importance of support. Host Jen shares her own experiences of feeling lost and overwhelmed during the initial days after her baby's birth, while guest Renee Reina discusses her transition to motherhood and the societal pressures surrounding new parents. The episode highlights the need for parents to prioritize their own well-being and establish boundaries, particularly regarding visitors after childbirth.

- *Early postpartum can be emotionally challenging, with many parents experiencing feelings of sadness and isolation.*
- *The "Right From the Start" course offers support and information for new parents to help them thrive in the early days.*
- *Many parents focus heavily on labor and delivery preparation, neglecting to plan for postpartum needs.*
- *Setting boundaries with visitors after childbirth is crucial for new parents' mental health and recovery.*
- *Maternal gatekeeping can undermine partners' confidence in caregiving; it's important to allow them to take on responsibilities.*
- *Confidence in parenting choices is essential; parents should prioritize what works best for their unique family situation.*
- *The modern parenting landscape often lacks community support, leading to feelings of isolation.*
- *Open communication and teamwork between partners can create a more balanced and supportive parenting experience.*

Hello and welcome to the O Parenting Mojo podcast. Today we're going to look at another topic that we can file under things I'd never given a moment's thought about before Karis was born, which is what those early days at home were going to be like. Looking back on it, I have really no idea why my preparation for her birth literally stopped at her birth and didn't give a moment's thought to what would happen even in the immediate days afterwards.

And I have to say I felt really lost. I cried every day for the first 10 days and on day four it was pretty much continual from start to finish. And thank goodness my good friend Michelle had told me there would be a lot of hormone rebalancing on that day, so I knew it was coming. Otherwise, I would have thought I was actually falling apart. Things did get a bit better over the following days and on day 10 my husband and I had a little celebration at bedtime cuz it was the first day since she had been born that I didn't cry.

If you're expecting a baby in the coming months or if you have one under the age of one, then the right from the

start course is designed to give you the information you need to go from just surviving each day to truly thriving. In this course that I run with Hannah and Kelty of Upbringing, you'll find information on topics like getting the sleep you both need to function, making choices about feeding, supporting development, independent play, navigating the difficult sibling relationship if you already have an older child, and so much more.

Whether you're brand new at this parenting thing or if you have one or more children already and you know things have to be different this time around, the Right From the Start course will get you out of the midnight Googling about all the things that might be wrong with your child and into a sense of calm and confidence that you've got this. You'll meet an amazing group of parents who are on this journey as well, figuring this stuff out alongside you with support from Hannah and Kelty as well as me. You'll even be able to join group coaching calls to get all of your questions answered. Parents who have taken the course say firstly they had no idea they even needed these group coaching calls, but they really did. And secondly, there's no resource out there that considers them to be just as important as their baby in this relationship.

And as we'll hear about from my guest today, all of the attention's on the mother when the baby's on the way. And as soon as baby's here, the mother's relegated to the background and her only role is to provide a suitable environment for baby. In Right From the Start, we hold you to be just as important and valued a person as your baby and that your baby actually learns really important things when you hold this to be true.

Enrollment for Right From the Start is open now until Wednesday, April 13th and sliding scale pricing is available. And so my guest today in our sharing your parenting Mojo episode is Renee Reina of The Mom Room. Welcome, Renee. It's so great to have you here. Thank you for having me. Yeah. So, what was this uh this transition from not being a parent to being a parent like for you? It was a lot. So, I had my son, he's three now.

I had him when I was 34 years old. So, I had been in grad school, living by myself, um focusing on myself, setting goals for myself, just focused on those to then having a baby, I took a 12-month maternity leave from my PhD program. Cuz you're in Canada, we should mention. Yes, I am Canadian. Yeah, I know people are always like, "12 months?" Yeah. Yes. So, for, you know, in the first 12 months, I would say were good. Like there were lots of things in early postpartum that blew my mind and that is why I started the blog. I started talking about these things on social media and then I found, oh, like I'm not the only one. Everyone else thinks the same thing. Um but yeah, I the first 12 months, I was very focused on it's just me, it's my son, my husband was working full-time.

So, I had that mindset going into the 12-month maternity leave that I don't have anything else to worry about. So, that was really nice and I think something that I wish all moms could experience, you know, and have that time to just be like focused on transitioning into motherhood and focusing on your children. Yeah, that's a it's a massive lack, isn't it? Yes. With with no guarantee of paid leave in the US. And if you're lucky enough to work for a big company that offers it, you might get I mean it was I think it was three months when I did it. Many companies are expanding to six months, but I many parents take three or four days off and then go back to work and they have to pump in the bathrooms at a cafe or restaurant or something. I mean it's just it's just horrific. In

Canada now, we have the option to extend to 18 months.

And you you can split the time with your partner. Yeah. So, like my husband's self-employed, he's a surgeon, so he that's not an option for him. Um but if you work for a company where you have benefits and the insurance, you can split the maternity leave or parental leave with your partner. So, yeah, it breaks my heart to know that not everyone has that as an option. Mhm. Okay. And so, what was birth like for you?

So, I was induced at 38 weeks cuz Milo he was growing fine and then he kind of plateaued. So, the thinking was let's get him out in the real world and you can feed him and then he'll, you know, grow up outside of your uterus. So, I was induced at 38 weeks and I have to say the labor and delivery part was it was pretty good. Like I don't really have any complaints. I had my husband there, my sister with me. Um the scariest part for me was the epidural, to be honest. Yeah.

Okay. And and did it meet your expectations? Was it the same kind of birth that people have on TV or No, not at all. Not at all. So, it's so funny because that's something that I talk about is I think a lot of moms feel shame for not feeling this like overwhelming sensation of love and bond this bond between their baby as soon as they give birth. And that was me, to be honest. I Milo was born, they put him on my chest and I was literally just like impartial. Like I was I was neutral. I was just like, "Oh, okay. So, this is the little person that was inside of me." Like I had no connection and it really took a while for me to build that connection. And now that he's 3 years old and he's developing a little personality, like I find the older he got, the more in love with him and, you know, seeing him as his own little person, like it just grew. So, and it's something that not a lot of people talk about and they feel shame if they don't feel that at their birth. And I did not have a traumatic labor and delivery and many people do.

So, you can't I think a lot of people have that expectation going into labor and delivery and then when it's not there, they think there's something wrong with them. And the same goes for, you know, early postpartum, a lot of people have like a low mood, um depressed mood. Some people have postpartum depression and so it's like this conflicting, you know, society is telling you that you should be the happiest you've ever been and this is the best time of your life.

But you don't feel that. And you know, if society is saying that and that's what everyone else is showing on social media and on TV and, you know, in movies, are you really going to speak up about not um being the happiest you've ever been? Because, you know, you're afraid of being judged and people thinking that oh, she must not like being a mom or, you know, she's not fit to be a mom. So, yeah, that's you know, it's a it's a problem. And this is why I speak out about things like this because every time I do, the response is overwhelming with people who are like, "Wow, me too." And you know, I just I love that people can see my content, read all the comments, and be like, "Oh my god, this is such a common thing."

Yeah. Um Yeah. You brought me back to the moment when Karis was put on my chest as well and we have the the very first picture of her that was taken was of her on my chest and my eyes are screwed up cuz I'm crying. Uh and and the thought that's in my mind is, "Well, I don't hate you." Yeah. Cuz I I had a difficult relationship

with my mom. I was fully prepared to to not love her coming out. Um and I was fortunate as well and had a relatively medically easy birth. Um and and had absolutely no idea how I was going to feel. And and so to to have it have it be neutral was a win for me. Yeah.

That was a real win. And then yeah, absolutely, those first 10 days, I was so lucky actually, a Canadian friend told me about the the day four hormone shift and and I I didn't stop crying the entire day. And if she hadn't told me that, I mean, where where is my doctor on this? Where is all of the support we're supposed to have to help us understand what's coming. If if she hadn't told me that, I would have thought there is something deeply wrong with me because I I cannot stop crying.

And I think on day 10 my husband and I had a little celebration at the at the end of the day cuz I hadn't cried for the first time Oh, nice. And so to to speak about the crying, which I don't know why this like left my memory. For the first week, every day at 7:00 p.m., I would just cry uncontrollably. Oh, wow. And I it's And I remember thinking, you know, I kept going to these doctors' appointments so that they could measure Milo's head and stuff. And I was like, "What about me? Like Right. You know, I just gave birth and I I can't even sit in the doctor's waiting room. I can't sit down because I'm in pain. Yeah. But I'm going to bring my baby there and everyone's going to like, you know, "Oh, like a baby." And then they're going to measure his head and like, you know, check his testicles and whatever. And I'm just sitting there like, "Okay." And I remember my doctor happened to be a young mother herself.

Mhm. Um she had young kids and she looked at me in the appointment and she said, "And how are you doing?" And she had a resident with her and I just broke down crying. And like if she hadn't just taken the time to be like, "How are you doing?" and looking at me in my eyes, Yeah. I probably wouldn't have said anything. Yeah. Um and you know, I am very self-aware and understand, you know, feelings of anxiety and things like that.

So, I can imagine what most people go through and are not able to vocalize to their partners or to family or friends when they're going through a difficult time. And I remember her saying, you know, it's really common for the first couple weeks when the sun goes down for women to start crying because it's it's like scary, you know, the your support person has left for the day. You are kind of like relaxing, the baby's sleeping.

And now you have time to kind of Yeah, yeah, yeah, hopefully. And now you have time to kind of like let everything out. Uh okay. Yeah, it was so interesting and luckily for me, it ended up going away after the week. But yeah, I'll never forget every 7:00 p.m. Jeopardy would start and I'm just like And it wasn't cuz the questions were so bad. No, no. Yeah. Yeah, it reminds me actually of a study I read and I'm not going to be able to quote this precisely, but and it was old, which you'll understand why this is important in a second, but uh it said something along the lines of what uh was the biggest predictor of whether doctors, and of course it means male doctors, would uh provide appropriate care to mothers after a birth was whether or not their wife had had a baby. Interesting.

It was whether their wife had and of course, you know, we assume cisgender heterosexual partnership uh had had a baby. And so that I think that just speaks to the complete inadequacy of preparation that doctors get in

terms of seeing us as a uh as a complete set as a as a unit. And that it's not just all about the baby, but we're important, too. No. So. Yeah. Um so okay, so in in those early days when everybody wants to come and see the baby, that was another challenging period for me. Did you What was that like for you?

How did you navigate that? This is my favorite topic to talk about and it always blows up on TikTok when I talk about this topic. Um So, when I was pregnant, you know, the days leading up to labor and delivery, I suddenly had this feeling like I didn't really want people at the hospital for sure. So, I think it was like my mom and my dad came and visited Milo quickly and then and my sister was there cuz she was in the delivery room. Um But yeah, then I I went home.

My mom was always around. She lived down the street at that time, which was like amazing. And my mom was like my chosen support person. Like I wanted my mom there. My husband I had Milo on a Friday. My husband was back at work on Monday. So, my mom was always there. Um you know, helping with everything. And so she was kind of like my gatekeeper because she would be like you know, do you want people to come over? Like I had Milo in my hometown, so all my family was there. Mhm. You want people to come? Like people want to come visit. And I was like, "No. Like I don't want anybody in the house. Like nobody."

Um So, my mom I was lucky in that she was kind of the gatekeeper to like having to answer to people. So, I didn't have people texting me. I didn't have to say like, "Oh, I'm not really feeling up to it." or like make excuses. She was the one that was staying in contact with everyone. Um and it's interesting So, this lasted for probably a few weeks. I just you know, every once in a while my mom would check in and I was like, "Nope, I don't want anybody coming." Um and it's really interesting because a week or so No, a few weeks after I gave birth, we had a family function.

Someone had passed away. And so I went to the function and I remember my uncle coming up to me and saying, "Oh, I guess you're really having a hard time." And I said, "What? Like why why are you saying that?" And he's like, "Oh, just because, you know, you didn't want people over and stuff." And I was like, "Well, isn't this interesting? You know?" Because like I just gave birth. I don't want people coming in and visiting and I just want to be alone and focus on Milo, get into a routine, heal heal physically. Um people are assuming that there's something wrong, that I am having this terrible time. And it wasn't the case at all. So, when when that happened, I started to talk about this topic, not wanting visitors after giving birth cuz on TV and in movies, people are in and out. And in most people's situations, people are just in and out like revolving door. And the moms are just smiling and it's, you know, oh, it's like a happy time for everyone to be there.

But for the most part, people like women after giving birth do not want visitors. And there's a difference between a visitor and a support person. Um If I I always say like if I can't just get up, leave the room, and go take a nap when you're over or I can't pass gas in front of you or breastfeed, then you're not a support person. So, it Again, I talk a lot about this topic and it breaks my heart to hear women's stories because many of them are dealing with postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety. Um they're struggling to breastfeed and they have people coming in and out of the house and they don't set that boundary. They don't have the confidence. Maybe their partner is not on board. Um you know, they're forcing their parents like the in-laws to come over. Um it's

terrible and it's it's I started to realize for some reason as a culture, we do not respect moms in the early postpartum period at all.

Yeah. It's everyone feels entitled like they get to come and see the baby. Um and moms for the most part don't want to set that boundary because they feel bad. They don't want to be judged. They don't want to like stir up conflict in the family. And it's like it shouldn't even be a thing. Her needs and her wants should be heard and should be you know, respected. Yeah. I'm just thinking back to to what my experience was there and I would say we we didn't have the revolving door, but there were definitely people coming over. And it would not even have crossed my mind, I don't think, to check in with myself and ask myself, "Do I want these people to come over?" It was just assumed Yeah.

that because we have a baby, there's something to see, that people should come over. And I remember uh some friends had a baby. This would have been I see Cara would have been probably two or three. And so they had a baby then. Um and I I said, you know, "Do you Should I come over?" And they're like, "No, we're okay. We're just we're just getting into this routine and and creating this sort of warm, nurturing little nest around our new baby. And you can come visit at the end of that period. And if you want to bring some food, awesome. Please leave it on the on the porch. Yeah.

Thank you so much." Um and it was just like, "Whoa, that that's a thing. That that I could have done that." And it did not even cross my mind. Interesting. I am so passionate about this topic that I would like to create a greeting card that people send out before they give birth. And it just like lays everything out. You know, here are the If you want to be supportive, here are the ways that you can support us. Take our pets. Leave food. Um an Uber Eats card. You know, there's so many things that people can do to support new parents. And going over, being in their space, and holding the baby doesn't have to be one of those things. But for some reason, people get and you'll see it in the comments whenever I talk about this on TikTok. It like people get up in arms about it.

Saying what kind of thing? Saying like like, "Oh my god, big deal. Like if you want to take a nap, just go in the other room. Like, you know, if you're breastfeeding, just go in the other room. And it's like like zero respect. And the interesting thing is that usually these comments are from other mothers. Mhm. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, and and I think that's that's part is really important, right? Uh because that's how these kinds of decisions are enforced. This is how we learn what's okay and what's not okay.

When you put this message out there and 300 people say, "That's not okay." then a new mother who's watching might think, well, most people seem to think that's not okay. Whereas people if you put this message out there and people are supportive and yeah, we should have boundaries. Yes, we should respect ourselves, then maybe that new mother thinks, "Oh, yes, it's okay for me to have boundaries." Mhm. Um so so this is how we learn whether these kinds of things are acceptable in our society or not. And so I think it's really important that we are super conscious about that and that we we understand what's happening here.

That this is how norms are policed. This is how we as mothers police other mothers and and like sort of force

them in a way into doing things that are not okay with them um because our culture up to this point has said when when you have a baby, everybody has to come over and see it. Mhm. Yeah, and the all like 95% of the comments will be people saying like, "Oh my god, I wish I did this when I gave birth. I wish, you know, known. Yeah, or like telling Yeah, or telling me their story. Um and then there's the odd one that's like, "This is cruel to the grandparents." Um You know, and it's like, "What about being cruel to the mom that just gave birth? Like, what about that?" Like, I don't know why people don't consider that. It's like, "Moms, you have the baby. Everyone's focused on you when you're pregnant. How are you doing? How are you feeling?" Then you have the baby and it's like pushed aside. Okay, baby baby baby and like nobody cares about the mom's needs or wants. Yeah.

Okay. All right. So you you've mentioned your mom a fair bit in the last few minutes. You you haven't mentioned your husband so much. My husband? Where where is he in this uh picture of these first few months? yeah, so the first few months. So as I said, he's a surgeon. He was back to work on Monday um cuz he's in In Canada, it's you're self-employed if you're a physician. I don't know if it's the same thing in the States.

No. No. So you're not entitled to um like parental leave, basically. Sure. Yeah. So it's funny cuz people always talk about, "Oh, Canada, the parental leave is so amazing." But really, if you're self-employed, which many people are, then you don't you don't get it. So I had Milo Friday. My husband went back to work Monday. He was so involved. Like when he would come home, this was our routine. And people listening might like their jaw might hit the floor. But this is what worked for us because after a couple weeks, we started formula for Milo. And so my husband was able to do the nighttime feedings. And so what we would do is around 6:00 p.m.

he would get home from work like around 4:00, 4:30. So 6:00 p.m., I would go to bed. Which, you know, and so between 6:00 and midnight, I would get a solid 6 hours of sleep and my husband would be with Milo in the living room doing all the stuff that you have to do with a newborn. And then at midnight, my husband would come into the bedroom and put Milo into the bassinet beside like where I was.

Um and then when Milo would get up overnight, I would do the feedings. And my husband he can sleep through anything. So so he would stay sleeping and I if like Milo had a big diarrhea explosion or something where I needed help, obviously, he would help. But that's what we did for the early months. And it was comforting because I knew that I was going to have a solid 6 hours of sleep no matter what. And so I was never overtired the next day, you know, even if I was up multiple times between midnight and the morning when Milo would get up. It didn't matter because I had a solid stretch of sleep. So that's what we did in the early uh weeks and months.

And then once Milo got a little bit older and he was in his nursery to sleep I would sleep in a guest bedroom. I would go to bed at like 9:30, 10:00. And my husband would sleep with the monitor in our bedroom. And the reason we did that, and some people are probably like, "What? Her husband slept with the monitor?" Yes. And I'll tell you why. For us, it worked because when Milo would wake up in the middle of the night, I it's like cortisol spike. I am I try to explain it as and my husband thinks this is like unbelievable that I respond this way, but when Milo starts crying and the monitor, I can hear him.

It's almost like that feeling when you're about to rear-end the car in front of you and you get that like rush of like adrenaline. That is me when Milo starts crying in the middle of the night. So it's really hard to come down from that and get a good night's sleep when he's doing that like two or three times a night. My husband, on the other hand, can get up go give him some formula, instantly fall back asleep. Yes.

Like I'm so jealous of his sleeping. Like, you know, So that's what we did. And that is what worked for us. Mhm. I I just want to for for regular listeners of the podcast, I just want to say what a beautiful illustration that is of meeting everybody's needs, right? Right, when when we have a baby, I I think it's super I and I put myself in this in this uh category as well. We we sort of think we need to get a baby onto our schedule. We need to get the baby to go to sleep at a reasonable time so that we can have some quiet time, so we can do some things that are important to us and and that has to happen in this certain window of the day.

When if we actually look at what's happening here, uh the baby has a need for for sleep and also for food and to have someone attentive when when they need it. You have a big need for rest. Your partner has a big need for rest. And through a pretty unconventional arrangement, you're able to get that need met and your partner gets their need met and the baby gets their need met. Yeah. And yes, maybe some other needs like connection with your partner, you're you're a little bit like ships passing in the night for a period of time.

I can just imagine the impact that that had on you in terms of feeling as though you could navigate things effectively as a new parent though getting 6 hours of uninterrupted sleep every night, right? When we see these things from a perspective of what is my need here? What are the other people's needs in this relationship? Then things that didn't seem possible when it was just how do I get the baby to sleep so that I can have some self-care time um see become possible. So I thank you for for walking us through that. And and that's not going to be the right arrangement for everybody. Uh but but when we can apply that kind of thinking to this, we can find other solutions that work. And yeah, sleeping in the guest room, we we have come up with a similar uh way of working that doesn't involve the guest room. We don't have a guest room, but yeah, I wear earplugs at nighttime cuz I'm super sensitive and I wake up at every single sound. And my And it takes me an hour to get back to sleep. And my husband doesn't wake up as easily and it takes him 3 minutes to get back to sleep. So when Cara calls in the night and she calls Mama, it's not Mama she's getting.

And so we we've achieved the same outcome with different goal with with you know, with with a different method um and it meets everybody's needs even though it's a bit unconventional. So thank you for illustration that for us so beautifully. You're welcome. It's To me, I look at it as a team. Mhm. Here's the goal. Here's everyone's needs. Like how can we function as a team Yeah. to have the best outcome possible for everybody. Yeah. And you know, that was our situation, but obviously, every family is going to have their own something that works for them.

And I like how you say it's unconventional because I think a lot of times people are afraid to start living in a way that is unconventional, you know, because of what other people are going to think or they're afraid of being judged. So yeah, I encourage every family to sit down and actually think about it. How can we do things where everybody's needs are being met and let's start living, you know, in that way whether or not someone else is

going to look at us and be like, "What? Like, what are they doing?" Yeah. Um I talk a lot about sleeping separately from my husband um cuz I'm a super light sleeper.

We have guest rooms. Um He's on call a lot, so he gets called throughout the night. His alarm in the morning is like, you know, it sounds like the world's ending. We have two little dogs. Like there's so many reasons why we sleep separately. And that's also a huge topic on TikTok. People are like, "Me, too. But I would never say it out loud because I'm afraid of what other people are going to think." But for us, like we're happily married. We love each other.

Not sleeping physically side by side is not an indicator of having a good healthy relationship. Um and I remember reading this article about cuz I I've done episodes on sleeping separately. This article was saying, "You know, lots of couples do sleep side by side and they have a terrible relationship. So you can't look at that as like, 'Oh, there's something wrong in my marriage cuz we're not sleeping separately.'" Sleep is so important, especially once you have kids because it's not in your control anymore, you know? So, you almost become obsessed with sleep.

So, that is just what works for us and he still sleeps with the monitor. So. Yeah. Yeah, and but if we look at our media, do we ever see parents in happy relationships sleeping apart? No, we don't. Nope. Um and when nobody talks about it, it just seems as though well, nobody else is doing it. So, that's not really an option even though it's an option that meets our needs and everyone we're just taking the the unconventional idea a bit further. What's actually unconventional in human history is two people trying to raise a child together with very little outside support. Oh, right. With I mean, you're you're super lucky to have your mom with whom it seems like you have an amazing relationship super close by. For many parents, they don't have that and so they're trying to to be everything to this child, which is not the way we evolved to raise children. Yeah, I talk a lot about the modern-day village.

So, my mom we moved to the Toronto area. So, when Milo was almost 2 years old. So, now we're like a 4-hour drive from my parents. Um I still see them often because my job is so flexible. I can visit and they can come here. Um but yeah, the modern-day village. Like sometimes a lot of people they don't live near family. So, you're not having, you know, meals brought over. You're not sharing meals with other households. A lot of people don't even talk to their neighbors or know who they are. That's just how the world works right now. Um so, I always say, you know, my village when Milo was really small was the Wiggles, um Uber Eats, uh like, you know, his teachers at daycare. Like those are Those people are a part of your village.

Sports, like athletic coaches. Um so, yeah, it's it's changed and I think a lot of people are ashamed to be like, we order we order in food a lot. And it's like, well like it's the way the world works now and how people's lives are, that's what has to happen and it shouldn't be something that we feel shame over. Yeah. Yeah, it's not something to feel shame over and also I think it's super important to recognize I mean, this this is white supremacy and capitalism at work here, right? Um but white supremacy divides us. It keeps us separate. It says, "Hey, you stay in your lane and I'm going to stay in my lane." And if you're if I see you struggling, maybe I'll offer help once.

And if you sort of put your smile on it like you're supposed to and say, "I'm okay." then I'm I'm never going to ask again. Um and and for you, maybe you're paddling 3,000 miles an hour underneath the surface, but on top you're projecting this aura of everything's fine and I'm coping even if things are falling apart inside. And then of course, capitalism comes in and sells us the services that we need to try to feel whole when actually what we need is connection with other people and support from other people. Um and yeah, I'm super interested in ways that we can break down these uh these silos that we find ourselves in that says, "Everybody needs to be in their own box behind their own fence in in their own walls um buying all of their own stuff."

And how can we move beyond that to sharing, to being a community with others? Yeah. Cuz I think that that would benefit parents and children and the fabric of society as a whole. Yeah, and it's it's interesting cuz nowadays I feel like a lot of people find their communities online as opposed to that you know, one-on-one or, you know, real-life in-person contact. So, especially with the pandemic, um you know, like the early childhood centers, like those were shut down. Like nobody had anything. And so, now it's even more so I'm sure like people feel isolated and alone.

Yeah. Yeah, and and linked to this I I know this is something that that you've talked about a lot and I it's it's linked a bit a bit of bit of a non sequitur is on on this idea of maternal gatekeeping cuz I think that that's another way to create silos. Um and to to set up this condition where I'm I'm the only person who can get this done competently and I think that this has massive implications for the ways that work loads get shared through the rest of our relationship, through the rest of our child's lives.

Um can you can you talk a little bit about how you see that, maybe how that's played out in your relationship and and what we can do to shift out of the maternal gatekeeper role? Yes. So, I'm going to tell you an experience that happened to me a couple months ago. And I shared it on TikTok and it was like the feedback was incredible. And I don't know, maybe you can help me with the terminology. So, I I call it martyr tendencies.

Um but maybe that's not the right term. So, what happened was my husband and I we were downstairs. It was after dinner and the plan was, "Okay, we're going to go upstairs. My husband's going to do bath time and I'm going to go get in the shower." So, that was the plan. And as we're walking upstairs, my husband just like walks past the bathroom and starts he goes into our closet and he's like organizing his clothes for the next day or something.

And I'm with Milo. So, I'm like you know, eye roll. Okay, I'm going to bring Milo, start the bath and the longer I'm in the bathroom giving Milo his bath, I'm like getting irritated. And so, my husband it's such a funny story, but it's so like this this like happens all the time. My husband, 5-10 minutes later, walks past the bathroom and he just casually says, "Oh, are you going to go have your shower?"

And do you know how badly I wanted to say, "Never mind. I'll just do the bath myself. Like forget about it. I'll shower after he goes to bed." That is what I wanted to say, but I caught myself and I was like, "Renee, you know that you want to go have a shower. Why don't you just get up, say, 'Oh, yeah.' Go have your shower." And that's what I did and it was a non-issue and we had a great evening, you know?

Now, if I would have responded in that way, he would have been like um you know, taken aback by my attitude and why I was mad. And then I would have like probably given him the silent treatment and, you know, gotten maybe talked about it a few days later. But in that moment, it's like would you call that a martyr tendency where Yeah, probably. Yeah. And so, I don't know if that has a connection to maternal gatekeeping, but I see maternal gatekeeping in little things for me. Like I'm sure some people have you know, like on on a bigger scale, but for me it's like make sure his pull-up is put on properly and I'm like checking after my husband puts it on, I check it to make sure like the edges are are picked out or, you know, I like washing his hair.

I don't like the way my husband does it. So, for me I'm able to like I'm self-aware and I understand what I'm doing those things and so, I will let it go and I'm like, "Whatever. If he has soap in his hair tomorrow, then so be it." I don't want to use the mental energy to be constantly supervising what my husband is doing. And you know what? At the end of the day, the outcome is going to be the same whether I do it or my husband does it and I know that rationally, but it's hard to just like let it go in the moment and I think what happens is a lot of times moms feel that way and then they kind of end up isolating their partner and their partner loses confidence in being able to do the bedtime routine, the you know, and then so they stop doing it because if you're trying to do something and someone is constantly like criticizing or nagging you, you're eventually going to be like, "Well, I guess I can't do this properly." and just let them do it.

And then that leads to a whole bunch of other issues. So, it's something that I definitely do here and there, but I try and catch myself because you know, at the end of the day, I want to be able to up and go somewhere for a full day or a few nights and you have to know that your partner is able to do everything that you would be doing. Yeah. Yeah, I've I've just been doing a lot of research on this topic. So, and and the physical reaction that I felt when you were talking about your you're there giving Milo the bath.

Like I know what that is like. Um and I think that this is really important because we we see ourselves as the only people who can get something done and get it done the right way and that means we have to do everything. Um I'm actually a big believer in natural consequences in this arena and I and I will make the assessment that is is the natural consequence that happens here going to negatively affect me in a big way. Um so, if my partner doesn't put the diaper on properly, am I the one who's trying to leave the house with a baby and a diaper explosion is going to have a negative impact on me? Okay, then yeah, I'm probably going to check the diaper. Um if they're the one leaving the house with a baby, I I'm I'm kind of willing to to see what happens.

Um the the other day actually, I mean, my daughter's seven now. The other day my husband and my daughter were getting ready to to leave. They were going out for the afternoon and I realized they didn't have any snacks. And I thought, "Hmm, that's a ballsy move." Going out for an afternoon with no snacks. And I realized if she gets hungry, they're going to come back earlier and my work day is going to get cut short. So, I ran and got some almonds and I took them downstairs. And I said, "Here are some snacks." So that I knew that she would have something if the worst came to the worst. But if uh if my if I wasn't relying on that time for work, I'd be like, "Okay, we'll we'll see what happens when she gets hungry." And then now how they're going to deal with it. So, um and I think that that can be really good for our partner to experience themselves. And also good for us. I mean, we we talked about um we we have talked about control and how control sort of masks a lot of stuff that's

going on underneath us and it how it can be a fear, like a fear for our child's well-being. Um is our child really going to suffer if they have a diaper explosion? Uh probably not much.

So, why do we need to check the diaper every time? Yeah, I know. I'm working on it. It's like It's so funny. And the funny thing is if he doesn't put the pull-up on properly and Milo happens to have an accident overnight, he sleeps with the monitor. So, I need to just let that go. Yeah, that's what I'm saying. Right? I mean, that that that's you've got your perfect natural consequence right there. Yeah. It's not your thing to deal with.

So, you don't have to be the one nagging because he's the one who has to deal with the consequence if something happens that you would prefer not to happen. As long as you're not the one who then has to deal with the laundry the following day. Yeah. Yeah, for sure. Yeah, so I think it can be enormously freeing for parents to maybe let go of this a little bit so that we're not the only one providing all of this care.

Because I I think that when when we take that to its logical conclusion, where that ends up is the partner's like, "Well, I since I can't do anything right, I'm not going to do anything." And then the mother is like, "Well, I do all the work and maybe sometimes I have a full-time job on as well. And this is something that's causing amazing resentment building up in me and this is either going to be something I live with until I can get out of this marriage or I'm going to end this marriage now.

Um and and that's not good for anybody, right? Mhm. Yep. We had a unique So, when Milo was really young, I had to No, he was just he was a year old, I think. I had to go to Ottawa, like out of town, to defend my dissertation. And so, we had these periods of time where I left Milo with my husband for days at a time. Um and that really served us. Yeah, that served us because you know, my husband was super confident now that he could do everything. I was super confident in my husband's abilities. Um we also do bedtime routine every single night together, like since day one.

Mhm. So, we we both are going through the motions. And you know, if I up and left for a week, like my husband would be fine. Cuz we are pretty good at doing everything together and communication, too. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So, what advice would you leave parents with who are maybe they have an infant at home and they're still sort of in the thick of this right now or maybe maybe they're still expecting. And baby's not here yet. And if they're anything like me, they spent days iterating their birth plan and zero time thinking about what was going to happen afterwards.

What what advice would you have? Maybe there's different advice for each of those two groups. So, where where where where would you like to leave? What would you like to leave them for the expecting, don't focus so much on labor and delivery because that is such a temporary moment in time. And people put all their energy and their planning and focus on labor and delivery. And then you're in the early days of postpartum and you're like, "Why did I spend so much time and mental energy preparing for that?" You know? Um be like obviously be educated about labor and delivery and all that stuff, but really focus on getting yourself set up for the early postpartum days.

Think about whether or not you're going to want to have visitors and set the boundary. Prepare your family and friends for, you know, I might not be open to having visitors. Like here's ways that you can support us. Um so, for sure prepare for the early postpartum days if you're expecting. And then for parents with infants, I would say do what works best for your family. And I can't stress that enough. And I think people there's so much information about parenting online and there's so much about like best practices and you know, parents not wanting to choose a certain route because they are worried about what other people are going to think, like whether it be sleep training or co-sleeping or formula feeding, baby-led weaning, like all these things. And it's like at the end of the day, everyone's situation is so unique that what is considered best practice is not necessarily best practice for your family. Best practice means best practice when all the other variables are like neutral and will allow for that best practice. So, a good example from my experience is baby-led weaning. I was like all about it. Bought all the books, like I was ready to do it. The very first time I tried it, I was like, "Okay, well, we're not doing this because I am too anxious of a person."

And so, it didn't work for us. Like did I want to spend the multiple times a day where I had to feed my son being anxious and like dreading the next time I had to sit there and watch him eat? No. So, it didn't work for us and that's okay. He's eating fine now and he's 3 years old. So, just kind of like sitting down, really working through these parenting choices, figuring out what works best for you, and being confident in that decision.

Like confidence is huge and it will serve you so well because when you get these offhanded comments or you read, you know, someone shaming someone else online for doing something that you do, you're not even going to you're going to be like, "Oh." Like, you know, you're you're just it's going to roll off your shoulders. So, Yeah, cuz I know I've made the right decision for me and for my family. Exactly. Exactly. So, that's that's my my advice. Okay. And so, for for folks who want more of what they're hearing from you, where can we find you?

So, I am active on TikTok and Instagram at Renee Rena with the little underscore thing at the end. Um the podcast is called The Mom Room Podcast and on Tuesdays I have um episodes that I do with guests. And then on Thursdays I do solo episodes where I just kind of talk about something that's going on at the moment, like in my life. Um so, yeah, I have an episode with Jen coming up soon. So, yeah, that is uh that's where they can find me.

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for being here and and talking through the stuff that that wouldn't have even occurred to me, right? Like the the whole uh we shouldn't necessarily have people around in the the first weeks after our baby is born. Would not even have crossed my mind uh when when I was in that phase. And so, I think it's it's so important that parents know that you have choices. Yeah. Uh that you can check in with yourself and see what feels right to you. And if you want to be socializing with people, socialize with people. And if you don't, then you don't have to. Yeah. Um so, so the more that parents I think can know that just because our culture says we do one thing after a certain thing happens, um doesn't have to be the case, the the better off we're going to be, the happier we're going to be, the more fulfilled we're going to be. So, thank you for being out there and and dealing with the the the negative messages and and information. And I'm glad that they're mostly outweighed by the people who are supportive. If people are out there and you don't want visitors and people are pushing themselves on you to come visit, talk to me. Just give me a call.

That's going to be my new career in life. I'm going to be like the bouncer for mothers. Yeah, wow, that would be a I I can Yeah. I can already see that that would be an amazing successful service. Yeah, totally. So, thank you so much for being here and I Thank you.