Spoil Your Baby Ep 47-Trust Your Instinct: Quieting the Sleep Training Noise feat. Gabrielle Ferrara Transcript

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Introduction and guest welcome

and also giving me the language and the tools to kind of quiet the noise that I was receiving regarding sleep training, regarding kind what he had going on and what I intuitively knew that he needed, but I kind being told other things.

So hearing your book and your language gave me language myself to quiet that noise and to really trust what intuitively I knew he really needed. He's down so much like me when I was a baby.

And you're like my mom. Hello, everybody. Welcome to Spoil Your Baby podcast. I am so happy to have Gabrielle Farrara here with us today. She is a Nurture Neuroscience Practitioner and one of the consultants that I have on my page.

So I'm so glad she's here. And there's so much more to your story, Gabriella. We want to know, how did you get into this field of babies and moms and sleep?

Yeah, tell us a little bit about yourself. Yeah. I'm so happy to be here. Thank you for having me, Greer. Um, I'll try to give the Reader's Digest version of my story, but essentially my…

Gabrielle's background in social work

education is in mental health counseling and social work. So I went to undergrad and grad school for psychology and Social Work, graduated with my master's in Social work and actually have a license as a licensed clinical social worker here in the US in New Jersey and Florida.

That's kind of my first career path was mental Health and Psychology and providing therapy services to to lots of different populations, honestly. And then I had my son at the end of 2023, so he's about to be two, I think he'll be too by the time this episode airs.

I'm laughing about a two year old in sleep, but we'll talk about that later. Okay. Okay, yeah. So he turns to next week, early December. And so I went on my maternity leave and plan to come back to being a therapist full time.

I planed to go back my full-time job and really didn't see, not that I didn t see motherhood like changing me, but I did nt see it completely uprooting kind of like what my professional goals were and values.

And then my son came and he was like, Nope, mom, everything's gonna change. I'm here. Unique and I have unique needs and things are kind of going to change so I found your book when my time was about four months old and that's when his own personal sleep stuff really started to get a little hairy.

So I Listen to it on audio book as I was pacing my house with my baby as he was crying and he had reflux and it was really, really tough. Um, and so I'm listening to you and my earbuds as we were navigating all of that.

And so when I go back to that period of time in my life, like I hear your voice in head, cause that's essentially what was in. I had, um, it. It was. Really transformative for me in terms of navigating how I wanted to respond to my own child and his needs and what he trying to communicate to me.

and also giving me the language and the tools to kind of quiet the noise that I was receiving regarding sleep training, regarding kind what he had going on and what I intuitively knew that he needed, but I kind being told other things.

So hearing, you know, your book and your language gave me language myself to quiet that noise and to really trust what intuitively I knew he really needed.

Motherhood and discovering a new path

He sounds so much like me when I was a baby. And you're like my mom. Yeah, he is, honestly. I mean, I know every parent says their baby is like perfect, and all babies, you know, every baby, is perfect.

But I really, love my son to the end of the earth. and I believe that we are given the babies that need in some way, or like the universe gives us kind of like, the baby's that, we need to grow ourselves and also trust that, you know, I know that I was chosen to be my son's mother for a reason.

Like he needed me as much as I needed him and everything. So it's been really a beautiful experience, a very challenging experience at times, but beautiful.

And then so I read your book and I really into everything that you were sharing and saw that. You were launching the first cohort of the nurture neuroscience practitioner program.

And I really, you know, kind of took a leap and jumped on it because I didn't really know where it was headed. I don't know what I would do with it, but I was like, this is really in line with what.

Living right now in my own life. And even if it turns out that I never do anything with that professionally, I think it would be really valuable for me to learn the information and be among other Mom's parents professionals that have this mindset and have these values and how this sort of experience because it can get kind of lonely to be in a high nurture space sometimes you're not surrounded by other people that are in that space so.

worst case scenario, and worst-case scenario is still an amazing scenario. I would be surrounded by people with similar parenting mindset and values. Best- case-scenario would become this thing that I could then kind of translate into a career professionally, as well as something that was really important to me personally.

So that's kind-of how I ended up in the first cohort. Yeah. We have grandmothers, we have, you know, people at all different parts of life, but there's definitely always a huge population of moms with little ones in the group.

Oh, it's perfect. I love it. That's there. Yeah, me too. So that's the short version of the story, but yeah, that how we're here. I love it. So now you're mostly doing sleep consults with families.

How's that been going for you? It's been really well. Definitely feeling more confident every time I do one and more grounded in A, my own ability to do this work, and B, the overall necessity of this type of work in society as a whole, because what I am seeing a lot of times is a big majority of parents that either I work with in consult or parents I even come into contact with on social media or interacting with them online is this question of, is what my baby doing normal?

I get that question a ton. Is this normal, this is normal.

Finding the Nurture Neuroscience program

A lot of the work that I find myself doing is just providing education and reassurance, like, yes, this is normal, what your baby needs is, normal what they are asking for is.

And if it's not normal here is actually kind of what we can do to navigate that, you know, whether it is medical red flags or maybe neurodivergence or some other things that again, not that that's normal but those are factors that warrant more exploration and more kind of intervention.

And we can target those things in a way that's still responsive and nurturing and attachment based. I think that a breath of fresh air for a lot of parents who, like me, were kind inundated with this messaging that the only answer is

sleep training.

The only is removing responsiveness, telling parents that their babies are being manipulative, all this type of language that can be really, really overwhelming for parents.

one of the best things that I do and the thing that can offer is to tell parents this is normal, your feelings about it are normal and for the aspects of this that maybe aren't normal or need more exploration, I'm here for you and I can help you, and support you through that.

I already feel like, supported just through what you just said. And it really brings in that experience that you had with your son too, right? Like, you can really help people from like a really embodied and knowledgeable face.

Right. Yeah, I think my experience with my son and also honestly, my work as a therapist kind of comes in here too, because I really pride myself on it being like a collaborative approach and kind response and babies aren't one size fits all.

So I kind of am familiar with that conversational collaborative approach from being a therapist. I feel like I bring that in as well. And then yes, the personal aspect of what I've been through as a mom, I think comes into play a lot.

Yeah. The gap between just that isn't normal question. Like the gap between what parents expect, like what the typical mom and dad parents like, you know, go through life before having a baby, they're like…

Supporting families through sleep consults

Oh, yeah, I hear you don't sleep. But then there's like commercials where like the baby's just like lowered awake into a crib and you turn off the lights and turn on a lullaby.

In the perfect nursery with the crib in the nurse. Yeah, all the Exactly, like all my clients always set up that nursery that is just probably never gonna be stepped in or used.

And then the reality, it's so vastly different, right? The babies that are, you know, going down the sleep training route, everything looks so, so different than in a family that's responding.

Totally, and I think we need to normalize the grief that might come along with that experience too. And grieving what you thought your baby's sleep was going to look like, what they were sleeping peacefully in the nursery and you envisioned them going sleep in this nice nursery.

You set it up, you took so much care. Right. I remember for me, I had grief over… I set the nurse room for my son and we had it all decorated and everything like that and then ultimately we ended up taking apart the crib and putting a floor bed in and taking all like the decorations off the wall and Everything like because they were hazards to him and with the floorbed and now his room is literally like an empty room with a mattress on the Floor and I'm like this is Depressing but also I know it's what he needs and i know It's best for him for us but like It's not cute.

No, it's for sure. I mean, I did not get a crib or anything like that. Um, and I knew what to expect because me, myself and my brother, you know, we bed shared and, my cousins all bed share.

Not all, but a lot of them did. But I would still feel like people were judging me or weird. Like, they came up, like, where's his crib? Like where is your son's room?

I was like… He has a dresser. His clothes are… Yeah, exactly. And then my son stopped wanting to be changed on the changing table, so now that doesn't even get used.

Now we just change him on floor or standing up. So I'm like, what was the point of even getting the change in table? So it's just, there's some… that comes along with you.

Yeah. No, it's really important to acknowledge that because I think people have to go through that, like, grieve what they expected to be able to get into the space of actually being able, to like get the joy from baby sleep too.

Right? Do you want to tell us about that part for you on your journey? My journey with my son's sleep. Yes. So he, I make the joke that if you go through the list of medical red flags, sleep disruptors, he has pretty much every one on the or has at some point.

And it has been a journey of advocating for him and figuring out what is going on and what to even tackle first or was impacting other things. I want to be mindful of what I share for his privacy, but he has had reflux, he's had oral ties, What are some of the big ticket ones?

Normalizing grief and different sleep setups

I don't even know. But like open mouth breathing, snoring, like all of those sorts of red flags, the disruptors that we have been trained in this program to identify or to help support families through.

And he has also a pretty sensitive temperament. So even things like getting him tested for some these things has been really hard and I've been putting it off sometimes because I just know it's going to be an experience of having to Maybe hold him down or have him cry the whole time and like I'm just it's hard to balance the medical needs with the Nurturing needs for lack of a better term.

Like obviously I don't want to have to hold them down to get blood drawn But sometimes it necessary so you get that data and it just been a very difficult challenging experience of trying to meet his needs and figure out what about sleep is so challenging for him and what is impacting what, like what factors are impacting the other factors.

Yeah. So, and I've met, unfortunately have met a lot of pushback from the medical system, which is something that I talk about, you know, with parents and Unfortunately, there is a very medicalized behaviorist approach to infant and toddler sleep, especially here in the US.

And I've gotten a lot of pushback about what I should be doing to support my son and what he needs. Even just today, honestly, I got a… I asked for the medical records from a sleep doctor that we saw and the visit summary from our appointment.

says that he needs to learn how to self-soothe, needs learn to be more independent, he should be put down jowsy but awake, all those things, literally in this visit summary.

That was very discouraging to me because I'm there trying to advocate for him and his symptoms and what I've seen as his mom that's with him 24-7, and I am getting the run around of what society sees as the solution to infant sleep problems.

Yeah, it's been tough and it tough having the professional experience that I do because I want to say like, no, I have education in this. I've been trained by neuroscientists.

Like I know things about sleep and end up kind of not saying those things and going into a bit of a fawn response as the mom because i'm the Mom in This role.

So navigating all that has been pretty tricky. But We're getting through it. He is a wonderful toddler with very curious, funny personality, and he sleeps on my chest every night.

And that's just how we go about right now.

Advocating for a sensitive toddler

That's how I think this ties into how it's so important to kind of move away from this abstinence-based approach to bed sharing and co-sleeping because there are some situations where it is truly the only option for some families

and some babies.

And it's about being able to educate families on what to do in the meantime is kind how I say it. So like, for example, if you see your baby has open mouth breathing and snoring and you're able say, okay, this is potentially an airway health concern, But I'm not going to be able to do anything to solve it today.

So what the heck am I supposed to able do tonight to get some sleep for our family? And when we have this absence based approach to bed sharing, it leaves parents in this predicament where they're like, okay, I know this issue is happening and I want to help my child, but it's not going to be solved in a day.

So what am I supposed to do tonight? Like sleep happens every night, bedtime happens, every. Yeah. What am i supposed do in the meantime? And I think that that's where we need to.

A little bit less black and white about it, because right now, while we're not getting all this, my son sleeping on my chest is how we get enough sleep to function and how.

We get through the day and we will navigate the rest of it as it comes and as the time allows. But I. Think that, that ties into this too. Yeah, absolutely.

I feel like we always want to help parents, like, hold how hard infant sleep is and hold, how beautiful that support is. Because I see both from you telling your story too.

Yeah. Totally. Cause you also being able to show up for him with so much compassion and love and support. for all these past two years as well. I hope so.

It's making a difference, and I have to believe that it is. And I know that intellectually, but sometimes day to day, I'm like, is this even really making any difference?

And, you know, it's definitely had its ups and downs and it's not easy by any means. Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So I love that you have had such a deep experience, like navigating the health systems, navigating sleep for you and your baby.

and can step into a place to really help parents, which is so lovely. I wonder as well, like through the navigation of like medical systems and specialists and things, do you feel like your voice has gotten stronger?

Do you like, because I am right with you there on the fawning and people pleasing and feeling like the domination of medical, you know, influence and thing like this.

Do feel you've grown in that way as a mother through that process? I hope so. To be honest, I'm not where I want to be in that regard. And I think there's a lot of people pleasing in my history, just as my personality that I need to work through and process and kind of come out on the other side of.

But I do think that making decisions and staying strong in those decisions on more of a micro level. So like, for example, maybe I am still struggling to advocate to like doctors and things like that, but I'm definitely more grounded and confident in my choices with like family and friends and kind of on that micro, micro-level where I can say, no, we're doing this because, and this is what we do in our family and our house because X, Y, Z.

And I can kind of communicate it better on that micro level and working towards being able to do it on a more macro level. It's very strong to communicate in your own community.

A lot of times I'm doing consults, parents will, that's one of their big questions is like, I just saw a family last week and they're like, our neighbor just keeps coming over and telling us that we hold our baby too much, that like we're not doing it right.

We're holding a baby to much. And they like what do we say? They're, like… We've read the book. What do say to

them? So it's very important to be able to communicate, right?

And not… put our approach onto other people, our views, or judgments onto people. But we can absolutely stand in that confidence in ourself and say, I know you want to take care of me.

This is what I sold to them. I'm like, yeah, that you're like looking out for us. Love that. Thank you so much. And I want you to know we're doing great and like this is, this what is best for and thank you again.

Right? Absolutely. People sometimes build it up in their heads. It's like such a big, you know, a good deal. So, have your, has your family and friends been supportive of your sleep approach?

Bedsharing, medical pushback, and staying responsive

More or less. More less, I think it's been a learning experience for everyone, just around me, because it is not the traditional approach. It's not mainstream approach yet.

I hope it is one day. Hope it does become the mainstream. And I think we're headed in that direction, or at least making progress in a direction. But I definitely think it's an adjustment, especially from a generational perspective.

Because as much as, for example, older generations want to support me and parents in my generation, there is that kind of mindset of, well, we did it this way and like, everything turned out okay, or you guys turned it out fine or, you know, this is how we've done it for so many years, like why change it now?

And I tried to kind of respond to that with, yes, and I understand that past generations were doing the best they could with the information they had at the time.

And we have more information now. We have kind of confidence in parenting decisions and things like that, and more ways to navigate these issues. And when we know more, when you know better, we can do more and we do better.

our parents or grandparents, it's that we're recognizing they did the best they could with what they had at the time. And here we are trying to do the most we can with we have right now.

I'm sure 30 years from now, when I am a grandparent and my son, you know, God willing has kids or has a family, there's going to be a bunch of other new things that maybe we've developed or learned or understood about infant mental health and brain development and nurture and all those things.

And maybe there'll be different ways to nurture and respond 30 years from now. And I hope that I remember what I'm thinking right now and be open to that.

Yeah, and teach our kids that too. Model it and then teach them that grace and acceptance. I love that, I mean, had I see you and your son are so much like me and my mom.

And I do look back and I'm so grateful that she didn't listen to all the people around her who told her, she was weak and making us wake up and, you know, was the cause of all of the sensitivity and things like that.

Um, and that she did, like she, did so much to figure out our reflux and our food sensitivities. And, uh, so my brother and I were very similar, um, in our crying and discomfort.

Yeah. I do have to say, I don't think I've ever publicly given her credit for it. She was also back then noticed that, that red dye, made us, like, behaviorally, you know, dysregulated.

And she was like don't give my kids food coloring, and everyone's like you're crazy. Like, that's not, I'm like that has been proven, so. Yeah, yeah, she's, it's your intuition.

Trust the data you're gathering with your own baby and know that they do ask us for what they need. Totally. Thank you for sharing that. I know you do a beautiful job sharing it online too, which is so supportive for our moms and babies who have the highest needs overnight.

Yeah, I appreciate that, yeah. And I was also laughing a little. I don't know. Tell me whether or not you experienced this or no. When my son was about to be two, it was like 22-ish months.

It was the hardest sleep time for me. Are you feeling it over there? Oh, yes, for lots of reasons. One is he is flirting with dropping his nap completely.

He's on the lower sleep. I don't want to say low sleep because he's average, but low average I would say. For example, right now, he has a nap today. And I tried twice, I offered the nap two different times over the past few hours.

It's not happening today, and we've had a couple of days like that in the last month or so.

Growing confidence with family and community

Some days he naps no problem, kind of like, you know, on his normal routine, but other days, he is just not having it. And then when he does nap, bedtime has gotten super late.

So he's literally like bedtime now, and everything's just chaotic. He like doesn't want to wind down. It's interesting though, because he not upset. Like he, not angry.

Not upset, He's not cranky. he just wants to keep going. I think that that is very normal and typical. and I know it's normal. And hard. It's been hard, it has been because he's talking more, he is running, jumping, there's just so much going on and it's amazing to watch as a parent.

And when he like running laps around the kitchen at 11 p.m., I'm like, oh my gosh, please, just give me something. Oh my God. Yeah, let's see what happens.

Sometimes at this age when everything is wild, sometimes they will return to napping. Yes. Yeah, I've heard that too. And maybe, yeah, we'll see what happens today too, because the alternative is he doesn't nap and he's ready for sleep at like 6pm, which is not ideal either because I have to go to bed with him.

Yeah. Yeah, and that's it. I mean, I feel like this episode could be called infant sleep is messy. The reality of infant's sleep, it's messy and we have to be on our toes a lot.

Amazing. Well, before we say goodbye, will you give us a little impression of our certification for anyone who may be listening and is like curious about doing sleep consults?

Yeah let us know. What did you think about the whole program? Yeah. So I recommend the program to anyone and everyone who is interested in it. Like I said, I think that there is a wide range of possibilities with what you can do with the programs.

For example, if you just want to use it as personal education for yourself and for your parenthood journey, there's lots of opportunities to use it that way and lots of wonderful information to just inform your own parenthood journey.

Then if you want to take it to a professional aspect of things, which I know is the intention behind it, you are more than equipped to do that too with sleep consults.

That's mainly what I've been doing. I think that you and Rocio do a fantastic job of preparing us for the business aspect. You know, I go through the Business Module, regularly just to look at the scripts for intro calls and the script that you have for, you know, talking to families about testimonials and feedback and all those types of things.

And I think it's been so helpful to have it all laid out like that in a way that's so easily digestible, digestable. The other thing too that I thing is so wonderful about this course is it is new parent friendly.

Toddler sleep challenges and nap transitions

By that, I mean I was able to complete it at a time in my life that was pretty unpredictable because of the flexibility of being able to listen in on sessions with my camera off and participate in the chat or watch the replays later on or refer back to things.

So I actually had someone message me on Instagram. asking me if the program, if your program would be able to be completed with a new baby that is co-sleeping and contact napping.

And I said, absolutely. That's literally how I did it. Like I would do this live sessions with my ear, make your buds in with, my son nappying on me and participate in the chat and, you know, come on if I could.

and I think that that makes it so accessible to everyone and i think it makes a really unique program in some regards because it's not strict and it is very parent friendly, baby friendly which obviously makes sense given the nature of the material but it a big bonus and would highly recommend.

taking the leap and jumping into it because it does kind of change how you see your own parenthood journey. It changes how to see parents around you and it changes, how are you able to interact with the world of infant sleep and stress and maternal mental health, baby mental, all those things.

So it really is a holistic, well-rounded experience that I never regret for a second. And I'm so grateful that had the opportunity to do it. Amazing. I always get surprised when people ask me like, can I bring my baby?

And it was like. Like, I would never think of creating something where you couldn't bring your baby. But it's great to hear that you felt that. I'm so happy you thought that way.

Yeah, when my son was, like, really little, i would still do talks here and there. And I'd just have my camera just like this, and my husband, or maybe my cam would like end here.

My husband would just, bring my sun in, breast feed him, as I was doing talks.

Reflections on the certification program

Then like slide him out. You can never say moms aren't superheroes. Moms are superheroes, moms are amazing. We're amazing, we can do amazing things. Incredible.

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for being here and sharing everything with us. So, all your intimate experience with sleep. Let us know where we could find you.

How can our viewers and listeners find ya? Yeah, so I'm on Instagram usually as my main social media. My name is nurtured mom, nurture baby with periods in between each word.

And you can find me there and I am also on the Nurture Neuroscience website as a sleep consultant and you could find there too.

Where to find Gabrielle

I look forward to anyone and anyone that wants to reach out, chat, connect. Be happy to be part of your village, your community. Amazing. Thanks Gabrielle.

Talk to you soon. Yeah.