

MY WEIRD PROMPTS

Podcast Transcript

EPISODE #227

Beyond the Diaper Log: Parenting in the Age of AI

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EPISODE SYNOPSIS

In this episode of My Weird Prompts, Herman and Corn dive into the overwhelming world of modern parenting technology. Inspired by a voice note from a new father, they discuss the pitfalls of "quantified self" baby apps and why Google often acts as an anxiety engine for sleep-deprived parents. They explore the shift toward using AI for medical consensus, the fascinating cognitive leaps happening in a six-month-old's brain, and the controversial question of whether society should require a "license" or mandated education for parenting. It's a deep dive into how we can move from data-driven stress to relationship-driven connection.

DANIEL'S PROMPT

Daniel

Hi Herman and Coran. My wife and I had our first child, Ezra, this summer. I wanted to ask you about parenting technology. Many current baby apps focus on tracking minute details like breastfeeding timers and sleep logs, which I find overwhelming. I've found that using AI for parenting advice is much more helpful than searching for symptoms on Google because it's non-alarmist and provides a clear consensus. Instead of just small-picture data, I'd like to see technology that explains how a baby's sensory world and relationships change as they develop. I'm also curious about pre-parenting education. Why is rigorous training required for a driver's license, but proactive education for parenting isn't a standard requirement in most places? Let's talk about parenting apps and being better prepared to become a parent.

TRANSCRIPT

Corn

Hey everyone, welcome back to My Weird Prompts. I am Corn, and I am sitting here in our living room in Jerusalem, looking out at the morning light, thinking about how much life can change in just a few months.

Herman

And I am Herman Poppleberry, your resident seeker of deep dives and research papers. Usually, we are talking about servers or data brokers, but today we have something a bit more... human. Our housemate Daniel sent us a voice note this morning while he was walking around the kitchen with his son, Ezra.

Corn

It was actually pretty sweet hearing Ezra in the background of that prompt. Daniel and his wife had their first child this summer, and it sounds like they are right in the thick of it. He is grappling with something that I think a lot of new parents feel but don't always articulate well, which is the tension between the technology we have and the support we actually need.

Herman

Precisely. Daniel was talking about how overwhelming these "minute detail" apps can be. You know the ones, the ones that want you to log every milliliter of milk, every diaper change, every second of a nap. It turns parenting into a data entry job.

Corn

It really does. And for someone like Daniel, who mentioned his attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, that kind of granular tracking can be a recipe for a total sensory and mental overload. He is looking for something more holistic, something that explains the "why" behind the "what."

Herman

I love the way he framed it, too. He wants to understand the sensory world of his child, not just the output of his child. And he raised a really provocative question about why we require more training to drive a car than we do to bring a human being into the world.

Corn

It is a heavy one. So today, we are going to dig into the state of parenting tech, why generative artificial intelligence is actually changing the game for medical anxiety, the science of a baby's developing world, and that big philosophical question of pre-parenting education.

Herman

Let's start with the app fatigue. Corn, have you ever looked at these top rated baby tracking apps? It is like looking at a project management dashboard for a fortune five hundred company.

Corn

I have, and it is exhausting. I think there is this underlying assumption in Silicon Valley that "more data equals more control," and therefore, "more control equals less anxiety." But in parenting, it often works the exact opposite way. If you are tracking a breastfeeding timer for each side, like Daniel mentioned, you aren't looking at your baby. You are looking at a progress bar on a screen.

Herman

Right. You are optimizing for the metric instead of the relationship. There is a term for this in sociology called "the quantified self," where we start to view our biological processes as data points to be hacked or improved. When you apply that to a three month old, you are basically treating a human being like a high performance engine.

Corn

And the problem is that babies don't follow a linear data path. One day they eat four ounces, the next day they eat two. If the app shows a "red" trend line because of that, a parent who is already sleep deprived is going to spiral.

Herman

That is where the "Dr. Google" problem comes in. Daniel mentioned that searching for symptoms on Google is an absolute nightmare. And he is right. Google's search algorithm is designed for engagement and broadness. If you type in "baby has a red bump," the search results are going to give you everything from "dry skin" to "rare tropical disease." Because the "rare tropical disease" gets more clicks, it often ranks higher than it should in the mental hierarchy of a worried parent.

Corn

It is an anxiety engine. But what Daniel said about using large language models like Chat G P T for advice really struck me. He called it "non-alarmist" and said it provides a "clear consensus." That is actually a huge shift in how we interact with medical information.

Herman

It is a massive shift. Research suggests that parents may trust A I generated medical advice highly when the source is anonymous, often rating the A I text as credible and trustworthy. It is fascinating because, technically, these models are just predicting the next word in a sentence based on a massive corpus of data. But because they have been trained on medical textbooks, pediatric guidelines, and parent forums, they can synthesize a "middle ground" answer. Instead of giving you a list of ten terrifying possibilities, an artificial intelligence can say, "Based on general pediatric consensus, a red bump is usually this, but keep an eye out for these three specific things."

Corn

It provides context. Google gives you raw data; the artificial intelligence provides a narrative. And for a parent, narrative is what calms the nervous system. It's the difference between someone handing you a dictionary and someone telling you a story that makes sense.

Herman

Exactly. And I think we should talk about the "consensus" part. When you ask a well-aligned model a question about, say, sleep training or starting solids, it isn't just giving you one person's opinion. It is summarizing the prevailing wisdom of the last twenty years of pediatrics. It filters out the "fringe" stuff that usually clutters up search results. Though, we should note, pediatricians are still better at spotting actual developmental delays. Some research indicates that A I may be less effective than doctors at identifying potential developmental delays.

Corn

So it's great for calming you down, but you still need that human expert for the high-stakes stuff. But Daniel wanted to go deeper than just "is this normal?" He wanted tech that explains how Ezra's sensory world is changing. Herman, you've been reading up on developmental milestones. What is actually happening in a six month old's head that an app isn't telling us?

Herman

Oh, it is incredible. At six months, which is right where Ezra is, the brain is going through this massive "synaptic pruning" and reorganization. Their vision is undergoing a huge shift. While they won't have adult-level clarity until they are about three or four years old, six months is the sweet spot where depth perception really clicks. They are finally seeing the world in three dimensions.

Corn

So when Ezra is looking at a toy, he isn't just seeing a shape; he is seeing its position in space relative to him.

Herman

Right. And he is starting to realize that he can manipulate that space. This is also the age where "object permanence" starts to kick in. Earlier on, if you hid a ball under a blanket, it basically ceased to exist for the baby. Now, the baby starts to realize, "Hey, that ball is still there, it's just covered." That is a massive cognitive leap. It's the beginning of symbolic thought.

Corn

See, that is so much more interesting than a sleep log. If an app told me, "Your baby is currently learning that objects exist even when they are hidden," I would spend my day playing peek-a-boo and feeling like a scientist, rather than feeling like a failure because he only napped for forty minutes.

Herman

Precisely. There is a famous set of books and an app called "The Wonder Weeks" that tries to do this. They call these periods "leaps." Now, I have to put on my researcher hat here and say that the scientific community is a bit split on "The Wonder Weeks." Some studies have struggled to replicate the exact timing of these leaps, and critics argue that every baby develops at their own pace. But even if the timing isn't a perfect science, the framework is helpful because it reframes a fussy period as a sign of growth rather than a problem to be fixed.

Corn

It's like a software update. The system is buggy while the new code is being installed.

Herman

That is a perfect analogy. And if we had "Developmental Tech" instead of "Tracking Tech," we could focus on things like "joint attention." That is when a baby looks at an object, then looks at you, then back at the object. It is the foundation of all human communication. If an app prompted a parent to look for "joint attention" milestones, it would encourage the kind of bonding that actually matters for long-term emotional health.

Corn

I wonder why we don't have more of that. Is it just easier to code a timer than it is to explain developmental psychology?

Herman

Part of it is definitely the "ease of measurement" bias. It is very easy to measure "ounces of formula." It is very hard to measure "the quality of a social-emotional connection." But I also think there is a market pressure to keep parents in the app. If you are logging every diaper, you are opening that app ten times a day. If you are just reading about developmental leaps, you might only open it once a week.

Corn

That is the attention economy at work, even in the nursery. It's a bit grim when you think about it. But let's move to Daniel's other big point, the "Driver's License" for parents. This is such a spicy topic. Why is it that I have to take a written test and a practical exam to drive a one ton piece of metal, but I can just walk out of a hospital with a tiny human being and zero instructions?

Herman

It is a classic policy paradox. In many countries, including here in Israel and in the United States, there is a very strong cultural emphasis on parental autonomy and privacy. The idea of the state "mandating" education for parents feels "Orwellian" to a lot of people. They see it as an infringement on the family unit.

Corn

But we mandate education for everything else that involves public safety. If a parent is ill-equipped, it doesn't just affect the child; it affects the community, the school system, the healthcare system. It's a public health issue.

Herman

It absolutely is. There is a famous study from the early two thousands called the "Adverse Childhood Experiences" study, or A C E s. It showed a direct correlation between childhood trauma or neglect and long-term health outcomes like heart disease, obesity, and even life expectancy. Proactive parenting education is arguably the most effective "preventative medicine" we have.

Corn

Daniel mentioned his sister in the United Kingdom had a course subsidized by the National Health Service. That seems like a middle ground. It isn't a "license" you have to earn, but it's a resource that is pushed to you as a standard of care.

Herman

The United Kingdom actually has a very interesting model with "Health Visitors." Every new parent gets a series of visits from a trained professional. However, even there, it can be a bit of a "postcode lottery" where the quality of support depends on where you live. But the principle is sound: it "normalizes" the idea that you aren't supposed to know how to do this automatically.

Corn

I think that is the biggest misconception we need to bust. This idea that "parental instinct" is all you need. Instinct helps you keep the baby alive in a cave ten thousand years ago, but instinct doesn't tell you how to navigate the digital world, or how to manage a modern sleep schedule, or how to identify post-partum depression.

Herman

Right. Instinct doesn't teach you "co-regulation," which is the scientific term for how a parent's calm nervous system helps soothe a baby's stressed nervous system. That is a skill you have to learn. It involves understanding your own triggers and how they reflect back onto the child.

Corn

So, if we were to design a "Pre-Parenting Curriculum," what would be the "Core Subjects"? If it were up to you, Herman, what's on the syllabus?

Herman

First would be "The Biological Basis of Attachment." Understanding that a baby isn't "manipulating" you when they cry; they are literally incapable of that. Their prefrontal cortex hasn't developed yet. They are just a bundle of reflexes and needs. If parents understood that, it would eliminate so much resentment.

Corn

That's a huge one. I'd add "The Science of Sleep." Not just "how to get them to sleep," but understanding sleep cycles. Knowing that it is normal for a baby to wake up every two hours because their cycles are shorter than ours. If you know it is normal, you don't feel like you're doing something wrong.

Herman

And I would add "Emotional Intelligence for the Parent." We talk so much about the baby, but the parent is the "operating system" the baby runs on. If the parent is crashing, the baby is going to have errors. We need to teach parents how to identify their own burnout and how to ask for help before they hit a breaking point.

Corn

It is interesting that we call it "parenting," which sounds like a verb you do "to" a child. But it is really a relationship. It is an "inter-action."

Herman

Exactly. And I think technology could actually help with the education gap without being "mandatory." Imagine if, instead of a tracking app, you had a "Parenting Mentor" artificial intelligence that sent you a five minute video once a week. Not a "how-to" video, but a "what's happening in your baby's brain" video.

Corn

Like a "Weekly Ezra Update." "This week, Ezra is starting to recognize faces from across the room. Try making different expressions and see how he mimics you."

Herman

Yes! That turns the parent into an observer and a participant, rather than a data logger. It gamifies the "connection" rather than the "output."

Corn

I also want to touch on the "Driver's License" idea from an economic perspective. If a government invested in mandatory, high-quality parenting education, the return on investment would be staggering. You'd see lower rates of developmental delays, fewer emergency room visits for preventable accidents, and eventually, lower crime rates and higher workplace productivity.

Herman

There is a Nobel Prize-winning economist named James Heckman who spent years researching this. He developed what is now called the "Heckman Curve." It shows that the highest economic return on any social investment comes from the earliest years of a child's life, specifically from birth to age five. Every dollar spent on early childhood development saves the state between seven and thirteen dollars in the long run. Some economists project that when you factor in multi-generational benefits, the return could be even higher.

Corn

That is an incredible return. So, why aren't we doing it?

Herman

Politics. The benefits of that investment don't show up for twenty years. Most politicians are looking at the next four years. It is a classic "long-term thinking" failure. Plus, as we mentioned, there is that cultural resistance to "government in the home."

Corn

It's a shame. But I think the "bottom-up" approach Daniel is using, where he is seeking out consensus via artificial intelligence, is a sign of things to come. If the "system" won't provide the education, parents will find it themselves using these new tools.

Herman

I agree. But we have to be careful. While artificial intelligence is great at consensus, it can still "hallucinate" or give outdated advice if it isn't connected to a verified medical database. We are in this "middle period" where the tech is powerful but not yet fully "medical grade" for everyone.

Corn

That's a fair point. You still need that "human in the loop." Like Daniel's first aid course. You can't learn C P R from a chat bot as effectively as you can from a person with a mannequin.

Herman

Definitely. There is a "tactile" element to parenting that tech can't replace. You can't "app" your way into knowing how to swaddle a squirming infant. That requires muscle memory.

Corn

So, let's look at the practical takeaways for Daniel and for other parents who might be feeling this "data fatigue." What can they actually do today to move toward a more "sensory and relationship" focused approach?

Herman

My first suggestion would be the "Delete and Observe" challenge. Pick one thing you are tracking that stresses you out, maybe it's the exact duration of every nap, and stop tracking it for forty-eight hours. Instead, spend those forty-eight hours just watching for "cues." Is the baby rubbing their eyes? Are they turning away from light? Learn the "language" of the baby instead of the "language" of the app.

Corn

I love that. My takeaway would be to use artificial intelligence as a "developmental coach" rather than just a "symptom checker." Instead of asking "why is he crying," ask "what are some activities I can do with a six month old to encourage depth perception?" Or "how can I practice co-regulation when I'm feeling stressed?" Use the tech to build your own skills.

Herman

And for the "Pre-Parenting" side, if you are an expecting parent or know one, look for "Evidence-Based Parenting" resources. There are amazing programs like "Triple P," which stands for Positive Parenting Program, or "Incredible Years." These are research-backed curricula that actually teach you the "how" of the relationship. Don't wait for the government to mandate it; seek it out as if you were studying for a master's degree. Because, in a way, you are.

Corn

It really is the most complex job in the world. And yet, we treat it like a hobby you're just supposed to "pick up" as you go.

Herman

It's the only job where you start with a twenty-four hour shift on day one with no training and a "boss" who screams at you and can't speak English.

Corn

Ha! When you put it that way, it's a miracle any of us survive. But hearing Daniel talk about Ezra, it's clear there is so much joy there, even in the "blowouts" and the sleepless nights.

Herman

That is the "second-order effect" of good parenting tech. If the tech reduces the "logistical stress," it clears the mental space for that joy. That is what we should be optimizing for. Not "maximum data," but "maximum presence."

Corn

"Maximum Presence." I think that's the title of our hypothetical parenting app. No timers, just presence prompts.

Herman

I'd subscribe to that.

Corn

Well, this has been a really enlightening dive. Daniel, thank you for sending that in. It's a beautiful thing to see you and your wife navigating this with so much intentionality. Ezra is a lucky kid.

Herman

He really is. And to all the other parents out there, or future parents, we hope this gave you a little bit of a "higher-level" perspective on the tools you're using. You are more than a data point, and so is your baby.

Corn

If you're enjoying these deep dives, we'd really appreciate it if you could leave us a review on your podcast app or on Spotify. It genuinely helps other curious people find the show.

Herman

Yeah, it makes a huge difference. We love seeing where these prompts take us. You can find all our past episodes and a contact form at our website, myweirdprompts.com. We are also on Spotify, of course.

Corn

Thanks for listening to My Weird Prompts. I'm Corn.

Herman

And I'm Herman Poppleberry. We'll be back next week with another rabbit hole to explore.

Corn

Until then, stay curious. And maybe put the phone down and just look at the baby for a bit.

Herman

Good advice, Corn. See you all next time.