

Fourth Trimester Podcast

Episode 96: Mom Group Guide: How To Find, Join Or Facilitate Your Own Mom Group With Rebecca Walsh, Founder Of Early Childhood Matters

Sarah Trott: [00:00:05] My name is Sarah Trott. I'm a new mama to a baby girl and this podcast is all about postpartum care for the few months following birth, the time period also known as the Fourth Trimester. My postpartum doula, Esther Gallagher, is my co-host. She's a mother, grandmother, perinatal educator, birth and postpartum care provider. I've benefited hugely from her support. All parents can benefit from the wisdom and support that a postpartum Doula provides. Fourth trimester care is about the practical, emotional and social support parents and baby require, and importantly, helps set the tone for the lifelong journey of parenting.

When I first became pregnant, I had never heard of postpartum Doulas, let alone knew what they did. So much of the training and preparation that expecting parents do is focused on the birth and newborn care. Once a baby is born, often the first interaction parents have with medical or child professionals, other than the first pediatrician visits, is the six-week checkup with the OB/GYN. *What about caring for mama and family between the birth and the six week doctor visit? What are the strategies for taking care of the partner and the rest of the family while looking after your newborn?*

Our podcasts contain expert interviews with specialists from many fields to cover topics including postpartum doula practices, prenatal care, prenatal and postnatal yoga, parenting, breastfeeding, physical recovery from birth, nutrition, newborn care, midwifery, negotiating family visitation, and many more.

First-hand experience is shared through lots of stories from both new and seasoned parents. Hear what other parents are asking and what they have done in their own lives.

We reference other podcasts, internet resources and real-life experts who can help you on your own parenting journey. Visit us at <http://fourthtrimesterpodcast.com>

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Sarah Trott: [00:00:00] Hi, this is Sarah Trott. Welcome back to the Fourth Trimester Podcast. I have a special guest today with me. Her name is Rebecca Walsh and I'll introduce her in a moment.

Sarah Trott: [00:00:10] I'd like to remind everyone that we have a website which is fourthtrimesterpodcast.com, so please visit and sign up for our newsletter so you can be reminded every time we have a new episode. We share lots of great content there. You can also hit subscribe on Apple iTunes, Google podcasts or wherever you listen to your show so that you can hear from us whenever we have a new release.

Sarah Trott: [00:00:32] Rebecca Walsh, thank you for joining us today. Hello.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:00:36] Hello. So good to be here.

Sarah Trott: [00:00:39] So good to have you. Today's topic is a really cool one. We're talking about mom groups: first time mom groups, second time mom groups. And I will say that I benefited hugely from participating in your second time moms group. It was just such a cool experience for me, and so I've wanted to have you on the show for a while.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:03] You are a female founder, which I love. You founded your business, Early Childhood Matters in 2009. And you did that after becoming a parent and really being in that toddler mode firsthand with your own toddler. So we'll talk more about that. But you've been creating and leading education programs for first time mom groups and second plus time mom groups for over a decade. And you also offer private consultations.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:29] You have over 20 years experience in early childhood education. You have a bachelor's degree in child development. You have a master's degree as well in religion and psychology. And you've also founded and taught at various preschools, including a homeless program, which I really admire. And you are an up and coming author, so I'm excited for you about that.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:01:52] Yes. Yeah, yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:54] And just on a personal note, what I would say I love about your style of working with parents is that you're incredibly focused on teaching and modeling self-compassion in parenting. So I just want to say thank you for that. And I so appreciate what you've done for me. And I also appreciate that you're so highly qualified, but also incredibly humble about that.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:02:19] Thank you. Yes, well, parenting was one of the most humbling journeys that we can ever go on as humans. And definitely for me, having a couple of degrees and almost 20 years experience working with other people's children before I had my own I thought, at least I have some kind of advantage, right?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:02:39] But certainly when my son became a toddler, I was immediately humbled. And just I think the compassion that you develop for other parents in that moment when you see firsthand like, oh, this is a 24 hour job, this is not an eight hour job. This is not one tantrum a day. This is the intensity of everything. And just needing that support for like I needed that support, right? Like I needed encouragement. I needed a community, I needed advice, right. Like I needed to reread all my books, like all of them. So yeah, it's a humbling experience.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:03:23] And the longer I teach parenting classes, the more I also realize so much of being the best version of ourselves as parents is about how much we are caring for ourselves. And when do we show up for our kids if we are not taking that time to really nourish ourselves and be ourselves and be human, and then we make so many mistakes. And so the more mistakes we make the more we realize that we are

just we're all on this journey and we're all just doing the very best that we can. And that's full of lots of la la la la la. So yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:04:06] And so you were doing this for so much time and then you became a parent yourself, right?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:04:12] When my son became a toddler, I think, and I realized we were on like the 10th tantrum of the day, I realized, oh, this is why it's so much harder. Because normally when I'm working with other people's tantrums, other people's tantrums of their children, I get like maybe 1 or 2 of their tantrums. And so I kind of have this capacity to hold your ground, to be calm, to be firm, to be loving, to be kind. And then when you're at home and it's like the 20th tantrum of the day, that's when you realize, oh, this is why parents give in to tantrums. I mean, it sounds ridiculous, but I really as a teacher, I never understood why a parent would ever give in to a tantrum. I was like, well, obviously if. You give in, it's going to reward that behavior. Like, why would anybody do that?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:05:04] And then you have your own and you realize, oh it's tantrum number 30 that you give into. And that's only been in the course of 24 hours. Um, and yeah, just so humbled.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:05:24] I think for me at that moment I had this aha moment. I had all the strategies that I could cycle back through and I could remind myself of. I knew which books to read right. And now, of course, it's like, who do you follow on Instagram and all of that? But like, I knew what resources would be incredibly valuable and incredibly helpful.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:05:47] I had mentors in my head. I had people that I could almost like a video rewind and watch them in my mind and say, what would they do in this situation? What would they tell me right now? And I knew that the average parent just didn't have all of those resources.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:06:03] You know, the internet is full of information and you get very overwhelmed and confused. But I knew exactly which research I wanted to look at. At that moment, I knew what I wanted to review. I knew the mentors in my head that I could replay what they would do, what they would say. And so it was helpful to me, like all of that was really helpful.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:06:24] And I had this aha moment like, okay, if this is this hard for me, and here are your average parent who doesn't have all those resources and ideas and mentors fall back on, like how hard is it? How is anybody doing this? Like, how are any of these children making it? Okay, I'm just kidding.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:06:42] But it just was like, I've got to at least start sharing what I know. And all of our workshops have always started with the developmental piece, like, what do we know about child development? What do we know about how their brain works? I always start there because that was the most helpful for me to fall back on. And then what are tried and true strategies with each age group. Right. And I know most of your listeners are really in that fourth trimester. Right. And in those early days, although some of your listeners might have a second child in that time as well.

Sarah Trott: [00:07:19] Yeah. We do have a lot of listeners going through the second time or maybe even third time, where they're looking back and they're saying, gosh, I want to know more this time around, or doing some deeper research and, and looking for resources in a different kind of experience.

Sarah Trott: [00:07:34] In fact, we have an episode on the show dedicated to the second child transition, which is episode 79. For anyone who's interested, go back and listen to that one. And I recorded that shortly after having my second baby, so it was highly relevant for me at that time. Yes.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:07:50] Yeah, that's so good.

Sarah Trott: [00:07:53] Yeah. Which is brilliant.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:07:55] Well, I'll definitely be sharing that episode with all of the second time moms that I work with as well. Yay! Thank you.

Sarah Trott: [00:08:03] And you, it's like you were saying, it's so vivid. You had all these mentors and these people in mind. Are there books or mentors or and resources you would share since you mentioned? Yeah.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:08:13] Yeah, definitely. For, yeah. For which stage like for the early or for the toddler or either?

Sarah Trott: [00:08:20] Any! I have so much respect for you in this space. I just would love to hear who you love and appreciate.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:08:25] Yeah. I mean, definitely like Magda Gerber, the RIE Method. And then later Janet Lansbury, who I think took her work and just made it really applicable. That was a huge resource for me. But there was a book called Becoming the Parent You Want to Be, and it's Janis Keyser and Laura Davis, and I found this book when my son was becoming a toddler.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:08:52] And what drew me to it was it was written by actually some local Bay area early childhood experts that were they taught at the actually at Skyline College, which is a community college here in the Bay area, and they were in the child development department. And that just reminded me so much of my mentors, right? Because I had the opportunity, I went to a university that had a lab school. And so I got to actually watch my instructors in college be preschool teachers. And that was an amazing experience. I mean, these were people that were just the top of their field, right? And so I got to watch them.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:09:29] So these authors who are instructors in child development, they wrote this book together. And so that I love this book and it's become I love the title too, becoming the Parent you want to be. Because I think a lot of what they talk about is this idea of how do we break cycles of maybe what was handed down to us.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:09:48] And we all have those things in our minds when we become parents where we say, I'll never say that. I'll never do that. I'll never yell like my mom did. I'll never do this. I'll never do that. And then. And we find ourselves as parents and we're like, oh, I'm actually doing all of it. Yes. And that's I think that's really normal and that's really human.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:10:11] But the thing that and maybe you remember me saying this to you, Sarah, but the thing that I try to do as a parent is to not then stop in that cycle where then you're like, oh, okay, I did that. Oh my gosh, I'm such a bad mom. I'm just like my mom. I can't believe, I can't believe I did that. I can't believe I said that. And then what do you do then the next time it happens, you do the same thing.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:10:34] So what I like to do and what I like to share is this idea of when that happens, you forgive yourself, you just forgive yourself. And you say, you know what? That was a bad moment. That was a bad day. I was stressed, I was tired, I was exhausted, like, whatever it is. And then you give yourself a little compassion and then you say, okay, so I know my child is going to do this tomorrow, right? I know this is going to happen tomorrow.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:11:00] Maybe you're talking about a newborn. I know my newborn is going to be colicky and upset tomorrow. Like, what are my strategies? Who am I going to call for help? How do I do something differently than what I just did that I didn't love, that I did, but like instead of getting trapped in that cycle trying to think. And that's where I said that's how I tried to handle those moments as a parent was to say, oh, wow, this is really hard. And I really don't like the way I responded.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:11:26] But like, this is going to happen again, like literally tomorrow. And so what am I going to do? Like what are my resources in my back pocket? What are my strategies? And so trying to to use all of those. But yeah, so we do have our parenting through the toddler years courses online as well. And so those are some other resources just so you can get more strategies right. Like more things in your back pocket. But yeah I, I would say those I mean gosh there's so many books but those for the early years, those were definitely some of my favorites.

Sarah Trott: [00:12:03] Thank you I appreciate you sharing those resources. I'll link all of those onto our article on our website fourthtrimesterpodcast.com, so people can go and find them too. Perfect.

Sarah Trott: [00:12:11] What you're saying about self-forgiveness, it seems so important. And I've gone through those cycles of like, oh, I said, I can't believe I said that. Or like those moments where you just realize for whatever reason, I've been there where I've felt depleted and said or done something that wasn't my goal. Yeah.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:12:30] It wasn't the parent you want to be, right?

Sarah Trott: [00:12:32] Yeah. By the way, I love that book. I think we have that link to our site in our recommended books list. It's recommended by so many people. It's so highly regarded. I love that you mentioned that resource in particular. So good. And I've read it and I love it.

Sarah Trott: [00:12:46] And so I'd be curious to know, do we give ourselves some credit for even recognizing those moments. So it's not like, yeah, these things happen and we continue ... The fact that we're recognizing it is how to break that cycle and change. Right? That's the whole point.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:12:59] Beautifully said. Sarah, yes, 100%. And I think for most generations before us, there wasn't, in fact, parenting like the word is actually very modern, just the idea of parenting, right? For most generations, you sort of just did what your parents did and you didn't really think you didn't really do research on it, right? You didn't listen to podcasts, you didn't really get many more ideas.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:13:26] And there were also different support systems that probably in some ways made that easier, like where you had larger networks of support. Right? And you had grandparents and uncles and aunts and older cousins and all of these but the reality is this idea of actually thinking about how we want to parent. It's a very modern invention.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:13:51] And I think it's wonderful that we are bringing a level of intentionality now to our parenting. I think that's what our generation is doing. Right? That's what's setting us apart, is we're saying, okay, you know what? I don't necessarily just want to do everything that my parents did, and I want to think about how to maybe do something a little bit differently, how to be more intentional, how to respond a little bit differently.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:14:13] And I don't want to just pass down all of those generational patterns that maybe didn't serve me well as an adult, right? Maybe it didn't encourage me to be the best version of myself in some ways. Right? I mean, I was lucky to have a very loving mother, and we take what is good and then we try to iterate upon that.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:14:34] That's what I always tell parents, too. Like what is Einstein's version of insanity is doing the same thing and over and over that's not working right. And that's where we get stuck as parents over and over. We do the same things that are not working. And so I love to help parents just think, think a little bit more broadly about what are some other things.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:14:56] Because when you're in the moment too, like it's really hard to think about anything else. So that's why I say like always, like, wait, give yourself just some time. And then that night maybe listen to a podcast, maybe check out some resources. But then think about, okay, well, what am I going to do a little bit differently tomorrow? Yeah. But the other thing I have to share, as you brought that up, is the four stages of learning. Have you ever seen that?

Sarah Trott: [00:15:20] Let's talk about it.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:15:22] I love the four stages. Well, it's four stages of competence. So I love this and basically it reminds me like exactly what you're saying. So the first stage is called unconscious incompetence. And this is like ignorance is bliss, right. So we don't know that we're incompetent in something. We're just doing it incompetently.

But we don't know that we're incompetent. So it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter to us or we don't know any better. Ignorance is bliss. Okay?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:15:49] The next stage is conscious incompetence. And so this is where I think our generation of parents is where we're like. I am now aware that this way of parenting is not ideal, that this way of parenting is not who I want to be and who I want to help my child become, right? So I'm now entering a different stage called conscious incompetence. So I'm consciously aware that what I'm doing is maybe not, like you said, not the parent that I want to be.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:16:20] The next stage is conscious competence. Conscious competence is when you have to think really hard about what you're doing and you know, so when my kids were young, I kid you not. I wish I had taken photos of this, but I had sticky notes up all over my house of reminders of things that I wanted to say in certain moments.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:16:45] And so I had to be really conscious about moving into this competency stage of like, saying the right thing. But it took a lot of effort. It took a lot of reviewing the night before. It took a lot of practicing, sometimes in the mirror, and then if I could glance up and get that reminder, or if I had that in my back pocket, then I would be able to use that strategy and say, oh, it looks like you're feeling really frustrated instead of like, stop screaming, right?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:17:16] And then the next stage is unconscious competence. And unconscious competence is where these things just flow. You know, they just come out of your lips. They're just on the tip of your tongue. You don't have to think about it anymore. It becomes your language.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:17:30] It's really interesting when you think about this with learning a new language, right? If you don't know Japanese but you don't ever, you're not in Japan, or you don't have any Japanese communities that you're a part of, then you're unconsciously incompetence. You don't know it, but it's not like it's not bothering you that you don't know it. If you go to Japan, you're immediately consciously incompetent.

You don't know the language at all, and it's very obvious that you don't know it. And then you know you're trying to learn it.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:18:00] So you're sitting there and you're like, oh and you just get out a few words and you're just able to order a drink or whatever, and then that's your conscious, but then you become once if you've lived there for a couple of years, you will be able to walk in, order your food, order your drinks, say goodbye, talk about the weather, and at least become unconsciously competent. So that's a really interesting thing. But I like to share with parents.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:18:27] So I'll tell you as a teacher 100%, after 15 plus years of teaching, I got to that level of unconscious competence. I mean, I didn't have to think about how to give instructions to kids. I didn't have to think about what to do when they were upset. It just came off the tip of my tongue. After years of watching, like I said, mentors, leaders in the field after years of trying and being consciously competent, it was totally natural for me.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:18:56] And I'll tell you where I went back to the day my son became a toddler. I didn't go back to conscious competence. I went all the way back to conscious incompetence. But like you said, to my credit, I never went all the way back to unconscious incompetence, right? Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:19:16] You were aware.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:19:17] I was always aware that this was not the parent that I wanted to be. Right. And I think that's where most of our generation is now. I've met the occasional parent who's like, I don't see a problem with any of this, you know? But for the most part, I think our generation is in this place of trying to do things a little bit differently, trying to be a little bit more consciously competent.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:19:38] And so now I always tell parents like that for me, where I and we'll have to put a visual of this because there's like a nice triangle visual of this.

You'll have to put the link on your site. But for me, what happens is as a parent I'm almost never unconsciously competent.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:19:58] And mostly I'm going back and forth between conscious incompetence and conscious competence. Right? Like it takes so much effort and I constantly have to think about it. And every once in a while I'll be able to respond in the moment. But yeah. So yeah, I think you're right though, like we have to give ourselves credit. And that is the first stage of healing and breaking cycles is just saying maybe I don't want to do this the same.

Sarah Trott: [00:20:26] Yeah, yeah. There's no need to beat yourself up. Give yourself a pat on the back for at least noticing and being aware and acknowledging and seeking out alternatives. Like that's a very positive thing.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:20:36] Absolutely. Absolutely. 100%. Yeah. Wonderful. Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:20:41] And some of the stuff we talked about in the second time moms group too, so the first time mom groups and second time mom groups have some pretty big differences. I know for me, I remember just at first when I had kids, I didn't have as many mom friends, and I was sort of seeking out female peers to just share my experience with and also like do things in the real world, like go on walks together in the neighborhood or break out of some moments that might have felt isolated otherwise.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:21:09] But I'd love to hear kind of your perspective as a seasoned facilitator of these parenting groups for moms and everyone who identifies as a mom.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:21:18] Yeah, yeah. So I mean, like you said, I think becoming a parent can be really isolating. It's a huge transition and it's an identity shift. Right. And a lot of times whether it's your first time or your second time or third time becoming a parent, the friends that you have before are not usually going through that transition. You may be super lucky and have a best friend that gets pregnant at the same time as you, but that's really rare, right?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:21:49] I know for me, I was definitely the youngest of my friend group to have children, and so I didn't know anybody that had kids except the kids that I taught and the parents that I knew that way. But I didn't have any friends that had children.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:22:02] And so and it was also, I think, the other identity shift. I mean, I had always worked full time. I mean, even in college I worked, right? And then as soon as I got out of college, I worked full time and I started teaching and I taught in Prague. And then I came back and I taught and I went to grad school and I was working - I didn't have an unstructured day. I don't do super well with unstructured time. It was kind of paralyzing.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:22:29] And so for me, one of the things that the moms group and what I did when, when my son was born was that I had three different groups that I went to, and I went to like one on Monday and then one on Wednesday and one on Friday and went to these different groups.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:22:43] And they kind of created a little bit of structure in my day and a little bit of awe in the week and something I could look forward to and something that, you know. And then from there I would meet people and maybe plan something for the Tuesday and Thursday. I had to have a plan for every day. That was just me.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:22:58] I'm not a super planner. It's not that I'm like super Type-A and planning necessarily, but it's more like that. Unstructured time was so new to me, I'd never had it before. I was actually an athlete in college as well. I was always like, I came home from practice. I was like, wow, you guys watch TV? Like, what is that like? I had no idea, right? So I think unstructured time was so new and so scary to me that that was number one was just like creating a little bit of structure during that identity shift.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:23:35] And then second, here's the beautiful thing about moms groups is that you are going through something together at the same time, and there is a level of vulnerability that can happen that I don't think happens in very other places in your life where you're actually you're going through a very similar experience.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:24:03] That is a life transformational experience, right? That is life identity changing, like all of these things. And you're going through it with other women who are going through it as well. And I think that is so powerful and allows for this thing we call vulnerability, where you are more open, you're more you have to you share because you have to share, right?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:24:29] Because like, you have these things that are deep on your mind and your heart, and it's like when you start a new job, let's say, like you're not like your whole identity isn't shifted. You're not tortured by thoughts that you never had before.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:24:46] So anyway, I think there are a couple of moments in life. I mean, I think going away to college is one of the other ones, right? Where all of a sudden everybody's living away from home at the same time. Right? Everybody's away from their families at the same time. Everybody's starting off on this thing. We call it adulthood at the same time, and there are very few other opportunities.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:25:06] And so I really encourage your listeners to get involved in a new mom group or a second time moms group, because there are a few opportunities where you will really be in a place of going through something with other people for the first time together.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:25:24] And I'll say, like the moms I met in my first time moms group, we're still friends. You know, we have 14 year olds. We just went out last week. Oh, and I have other friends that I've met since moving to San Francisco in different, different ways. But like those friends, there is something and there's something about those friendships. And I really believe that they began with vulnerability. They began with openness. They began with truth. They began with a bit of suffering. Right?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:25:56] Like all of those things that really forge connections. We become very guarded as adults. Right. And it's one of those rare opportunities where you let your guard down and you open up to people because you have to you need that,

right? And you and other people are opening up to you. And so it becomes this, like this really forged connection. So yeah.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:26:20] So I think it really encourages you to, like I said, not miss this opportunity where one of these major life transitions that you could do with other people, like how amazing it is just to do a major life change. We do so many major life transitions like moving or starting a new job. Like all of those are so on our own. Right. And so this opportunity to do a major life transition within a community, it's a beautiful opportunity.

Sarah Trott: [00:26:50] I have lifelong friends as well from my groups that I've been a part of. They're so wonderful. They're so encouraging. We have a WhatsApp group where we're sharing pictures and staying in touch. And then occasionally we'll get together in real life too, which is really lovely. I couldn't agree with you more.

Sarah Trott: [00:27:06] I mean, it's just such wonderful support to have with the good and the bad, and it is, as you are kind of hinting at, it's this real leveling of the playing field for everyone. I really liked something that we talked about before when we were prepping for the show was this concept of like everyone comes in as an equal and we really focus on what we have in common and we don't really like, don't even need to know what anyone does for a living or we don't even talk about that. We don't even talk like it's just we're all going through the same thing at the same time. And that's the connection. That's the connective tissue.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:27:40] Yes. So the very first, second time mom group that I ever led, I had everyone start by introducing themselves. And I asked them to share a little bit about themselves, maybe what they did for a living. Da da da. And so everybody went around and said what they did for a living, or if they were working, if they weren't. And immediately I realized that was the wrong move.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:28:05] And so ever since that group, I never asked that question. I never asked that question. And what happens is as humans, right? We create patterns. So it's like, oh, okay, there's another techie. Oh, okay. There's another teacher. Oh,

okay. There's another entrepreneur. And you create those kinds of connections. But the beauty of this period in our lives is that we are all connecting on something fundamental about becoming a parent, right? Becoming or becoming a second time parent. And there is so much connection in that that all of those other things like, just don't even matter.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:28:45] And, and everyone can kind of like you said, it's very equalizing in that it doesn't matter if you're like the CEO of like some company or if you're a stay at home mom, like, you are completely overwhelmed by the fact that your newborn isn't sleeping. It doesn't matter what you are. Everybody is having that same experience of being overwhelmed by certain things. You know, everyone in a second time moms group is overwhelmed by the fact that their toddlers are running around like crazy animals while they're trying to breastfeed. Yes, everyone's having that experience and so it is immediately connecting.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:29:25] But there are a couple other things that I've found can really help to facilitate those connections, too. And we can certainly talk about those.

Sarah Trott: [00:29:33] Yeah. Tell me what comes to mind for that.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:29:36] So when I started the second time moms. That was the first. Those were the first groups I started those before the first time moms groups. And the reason I started the second time moms was and I had already had early childhood matters, and we were focusing on those toddler workshops and like parenting your toddler and maybe even had started the Parenting Your Preschooler workshops and I had a mom who had taken a bunch of my classes and and she was like, have you ever thought about doing a second time moms group? Because I'm about to have my second, and I feel like I won't be able to go to a first time moms group because they'll be talking about really different things.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:30:15] And I was like, oh my gosh, I was literally six months postpartum with my second when she asked me that. And it had just been like the loneliest time of my life, because during that first, like I said, with the first, I had gone to

like three groups and I had all these friends, and then I had all these mom friends then. And so I thought I didn't need to make more friends, first of all. And I did try to go to one, and I just felt like the questions were very different. It is a different stage, right? Like we talked about, you're you're going through that transformation to motherhood together.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:30:52] And if you're a second time mom, you're not going through that. So it doesn't quite resonate. There was my perspective and the perspective of hundreds and hundreds of moms that have taken my second time moms group since.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:31:04] But anyway, she said, so it was her idea. She was like, would you ever think about doing a second time moms group? And I was like, that is an amazing idea because I'm so I've been so lonely because every time I meet with my I have all these mom friends now, but most of them either don't have a second yet, or they had their second a year ago and they're back at work or whatever it is. And so I just had the mom friends, but I still didn't have a community that was going through this life transition with me.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:31:34] And so yeah, so I love the idea. But when I started the groups, one thing that was really important to me was that I wanted to model it on the groups, actually, the group that I had met my core people in, and I found it really interesting. I had gone to one group that was sort of like an expert, a sage on the stage kind of group, and it was wonderful. It was like you went and you asked all your questions about lactation, or you asked questions about sleep, or you ask questions about this or that.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:32:02] But basically we were all there and we asked the facilitator a bunch of questions, and she answered all the questions. And I think if I hadn't had that experience, I may have unknowingly kind of created a group around that model accidentally just because, like, I am kind of an expert with a toddler thing. I had just gone through the transition, right? Like I could talk for hours about, like how to handle meltdowns and what other strategies to give your two year old when they want to squeeze the baby. Like, I could have talked and talked and talked about all of that.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:32:34] But what my experience was in going to those because I because I was a little shopper for my groups, my experience was that the group that was the most powerful, where I made the deepest connections to the other women, was the one where the facilitators were more like maybe my backgrounds or sometimes they were, sometimes they would be a lactation consultant, but they were they were actually like Kaiser groups. And their facilitation style was to have everybody go around and share a high and a low. And sometimes that took up the whole session, believe it or not. And some people were like, oh my gosh, this is crazy.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:33:13] Like, but it was amazing because basically all you did was hear, oh my God, over and over you heard, oh my gosh, that mom is feeling that way too. Oh my gosh, that mom is feeling that way too. Oh, that mom is feeling that way. Right. And like with those were bigger groups. Our groups are pretty small, like 8 to 10 max.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:33:33] But with the bigger group, it was interesting because you had like then you had 20 different people sharing. And as a mom, you know that you've had all 20 of those feelings, all 20 of those lows sometime that week. Right? No matter which one you chose to speak of, you would basically had all 20 of those lows, and then you had probably all 20 of those highs as well. And again, it allowed for that vulnerability. It allowed for that sharing of the experience.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:34:02] And so that's kind of how I tried to structure the group. And I created a little bit of balance where we did. We'll do like you know probably the first half is that sharing of just like highs and lows. And then the second half we'll do a topic. And I find that to be a really good balance. And so hopefully when my book comes out, which is going to be called When Baby Makes four or more, it will actually create.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:34:23] The idea is because I like I said, I've been facilitating these groups for so long and I would just love, like all of your listeners who don't live in San Francisco, for example, to have the opportunity to create these kinds of groups wherever they are. So the idea with the book is that it's actually a guide for discussion topics.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:34:43] And so we do the highs and lows, and then we have a topic each week with an article. And so with that we can actually then talk about a specific thing. It's usually either self care or self compassion, its relationships with our partners, its bonding with the new baby, its how are we feeling? You know, mental health check in its you know and then if it's a second time mom group it's like the sibling dynamic and how that's going and what are some strategies and what are some ideas and tools.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:35:18] So but having that balance I think has been really nice for our groups to have that vulnerability piece, that openness piece, that knowing other people are going through the same thing and then having a little bit of sharing also. But again, even with that section, I try to not mean the sibling ones are probably the hardest ones for me to not give a lot of ideas on just because that's my background, right? Like working with toddlers.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:35:44] But for the most part, with all the topics, I really try to inquire how is the group feeling about how things are going with your partner, how are things like what works for you to stay connected in this time? What's really tricky for you?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:35:59] I actually had a mom once share when we were talking about relationships, that she found it so comforting to know that other people were having a hard time in their relationships right now, too. And that's the kind of stuff that you just can't find online. Like you can't vibe that online, right? Like you can read an article or a blog or whatever about how tricky it is, but like, is that isolated? Is that but like to have other women share like, oh no, this is a really tricky time in our marriage.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:36:32] And like, you actually have a relationship with those other people and you're like, oh, these are like people that I really value and I trust. And I really appreciate and admire sometimes. And they're having a hard time in their marriage after their second baby was born or after their first like those kinds of things, I think are those moments where a the vulnerability, but you just feel not alone.

Sarah Trott: [00:36:58] And it's safe to share that kind of information with other people and be that vulnerable in a way, because they are not necessarily your next door neighbor or your best friend from college, or people who you have these other connections with. They're this fresh group of people who you create trust with yes in this moment. And you may or may not have overlapping communities outside of that group.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:37:20] Yeah, that's a really good point too. Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:37:23] Yeah, I found that that's really opening for people and also being in that raw moment of parenthood with an infant at home. I mean, most people are just kind of cracked wide open generally emotionally and physically, mentally, all those things. So it's just so much to go through. And having a group to share that with has been so brilliant.

Sarah Trott: [00:37:41] And I love that your book is going to help create a framework for people to create these themselves, because not everyone lives in a city or a place that has groups available to them. Obviously, if you're in the Bay area, I highly recommend Rebecca's, which is Early Childhood Matters, and we'll link to that. And she's given us a discount code to that. You can use it's FOURTH, so go sign up if you want to do that in the Bay area. You know, anything that she has online she's got tons of online content there. So that's global for everyone.

Sarah Trott: [00:38:09] There are also online groups. I mean, what you're talking about are facilitated groups that are focused and really kind of touch on the big themes that you know are important and relevant from having done this for decades. And I also love that there are online groups. Are there any online groups that you like and appreciate?

Rebecca Walsh: [00:38:29] Yeah. So I know Famfully actually is just starting to do some of those online groups as well. So that could be something else to check out. But yeah, I know looking at Facebook groups in your area, like local Facebook groups here in the Bay area. We have like Main Street Mamas or we have the Golden Gate Mothers group. But those can be good places to start for sure. But I will say like look for a facilitated group.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:38:58] I know that there are often a lot of free meetups and I mean I'm biased here, probably. But I will say, I think that there is a difference with a facilitated group. Or if you start your own group actually agreeing to some guidelines.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:39:16] And I would say you can use my book once it comes out, but before it comes out, just have some basic guidelines like okay, so we're going to start with highs and lows. I tell you it's transformational to start with highs and lows. Because here's what happens if you don't go around one at a time and do highs and lows. People start chatting about different things and you end up talking about things like what bottles you're using and what diapers you're using and what sleepsacks you're using. And all of those things are helpful, right? And those are the kinds of things I think you can get from a meetup.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:39:50] But to have a facilitated group or to have some intentionality around a group that you do start in your own community, it. Another level of sharing when you do that because otherwise, like I said, the conversation will quickly just kind of stay at. Yeah. Just like a more casual level. Right. Like we're humans. We're not going to just like I mean, occasionally you might open up unprompted, but I think that's what I've seen is that we end up talking about we end up talking about the weather, right? To quote the English.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:40:27] So to go deeper, I really recommend, if you are starting your own group, just do that one thing and that would probably be transformational right there. And the other thing I love about doing that is that as moms, we do a lot of listening, right? Like we're constantly listening to others all day. And I always tell the moms, like, you have a moment where everybody's just going to listen to you. We're not going to try to solve your problem. We're not going to necessarily jump in and give you advice. In fact, I rarely comment after someone shares a high and a low in that way. Like it's very easy to do on your own, like you don't you don't need an MFA to do that.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:41:16] But you do need some agreements around that, that something, you know. And when you put out the group, like when you put it out on your

local Facebook group or whatever neighborhood group, tell people that you are creating a group with some level of intentionality around sharing and the joys and the challenges, and you want it to go a little deeper than a meetup. And so state that as your intention, and then you will draw people in that are actually interested in that level of connection, because some people may not be.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:41:48] But when you create that as an intention, and I think that's a nice thing about our groups is that you kind of know what you're signing up for, right? Like that you're signing up for that level of sort of intentionality. And so it does draw in people that are interested in that. And, sometimes people that don't maybe wouldn't be. But once they get there, they're like, oh, this is exactly what I needed. But I think, yeah, I definitely would recommend that. And to me, that's a big difference between a facilitated group and a meetup. And so if you can find a facilitated group or if you can't try to bring some intentionality to a group that you're starting, I think it makes a big difference.

Sarah Trott: [00:42:33] Yeah, that was definitely a draw for part of the reason I joined Second Time Moms, because I wanted that deeper connection, and to talk about more than, as you say, the weather. But there are plenty of meetups out there. So I love this. Anyone who's listening, you can use what Rebecca just said as a guide for creating your own group out there.

Sarah Trott: [00:42:53] And be like, Rebecca, you don't have to just join one. You can have your online groups, your real life groups, go to multiple groups. You can just go for it if you have the time and energy to do so. And so long as it's serving you well to do that.

Sarah Trott: [00:43:07] Yeah, there's so many cool things. I will give a shout out to La Leche League. They have support groups out there that are specific to breastfeeding. So if that's a topic for you, yeah, if that's a big topic, you can go to groups that have a specific focus like that. I don't know if you've heard of Parents Helping Parents. That's another good one.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:43:25] Yeah. Yeah definitely. Yeah. Do they have online groups as well?

Sarah Trott: [00:43:29] Yeah. You can find online groups. And in fact they're facilitated online groups that are volunteer facilitators, which is really cool.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:43:38] Okay.

Sarah Trott: [00:43:38] Yes. And then there's also Mocha Moms, which is described as a community for mothers of color, which are both local and online, and they're a nonprofit. So that's another cool one to give a shout out to. So yeah, and then I have to mention Parenthood's. Parenthood's is an online app. That's really good. It was founded by Jeni Diaz, who's been on the show back on episode nine. If you want to go listen to that one.

Sarah Trott: [00:44:01] So there's just a lot of stuff out there. There's paid and there's unpaid. Yeah, I certainly am happy to pay good money for facilitated professionals who are experienced and have the credentials to help lead these groups. I'm more than happy to do that.

Sarah Trott: [00:44:19] However, there's plenty that's free out there. I'm a big fan of just those free services too. So yeah, I don't think that you have to pay money, like if you don't want to or you can't, you do not have to pay money to get access to support from peers.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:44:32] Definitely, definitely. And I think yeah, trying to reach out and to build those connections is most important. And I will always do a sliding scale for people. So don't necessarily let cost be a barrier.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:44:48] And a lot of the hospitals that will do in-person groups, a lot of the hospitals have centering groups or like I said, I did the Kaiser group. And so. Get to your local hospital and see if they have a group. Those are good options that are usually free or covered by your insurance. So those are good options.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:45:06] But yeah, I would just encourage you to just understand the difference between a facilitated group and a meetup and the level of vulnerability can sometimes be richer and more meaningful. If you do have the opportunity to do more of a group versus a meetup.

Sarah Trott: [00:45:24] I love that advice. Thank you. Thank you. Well, as we come to a close here, I just want to mention again that there is a code you can use which is FOURTH if you want to sign up for Early Childhood Matters and get a 20% discount for any of the online programs and classes and groups. And so check that out.

Sarah Trott: [00:45:43] And then also, Rebecca, I just want to take this opportunity to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for this time and this conversation and for everything you're doing for parents.

Rebecca Walsh: [00:45:52] Oh thank you. I'm so excited about your podcast, and I think it is a wonderful and free resource for parents to get support, to get ideas, to get strategies, to get some experts in different areas, just giving support. It's such a critical period in our lives as mothers and, and for our children. And so to have a resource like this is so amazing. So thank you for the work that you are doing.

Sarah Trott: [00:46:19] Thank you Rebecca.

Sarah Trott: You can find out more about Esther Gallagher on <http://www.esthergallagher.com/>. You can also subscribe to this podcast in order to hear more from us. [Click here for iTunes](#) and [click here for Google Podcasts](#). Thank you for listening everyone and I hope you'll join us next time on the Fourth Trimester. The theme music on this podcast was created by Sean Trott. Hear more at <https://soundcloud.com/seantrott>. Special thanks to my true loves: my husband Ben, daughter Penelope, and baby girl Evelyn. Don't forget to share the Fourth Trimester Podcast with any new and expecting parents. I'm Sarah Trott. Goodbye for now.