

Sleeping *through*



UNDERSTANDING SLEEP

Your child may need between 8 - 14 hours of night sleep (excluding the day time naps a very young child needs). It is okay to rock, soothe or feed baby when new born, but by 5 - 6 months they may become dependent upon this, and for you to settle them. Observe what is maintaining poor sleep behaviour and remove it if possible e.g. a dummy.

SLEEP PATTERN

light/deep sleep

Everyone drifts in and out from light to deep sleep during the night.

If your child needs your help to settle from light to deep sleep, they will need you **every time** they stir during the night.

Therefore, regularly and consistently, put infant in his/her bed at sleeping times still awake. With consistent behaviour on your part, baby should learn his/her new routine within a week.

If awake and crying - use "Checking System" Technique.

Infants only cry persistently if in discomfort or pain.

OLDER CHILDREN

It is much more fun to see mum or dad several times a night than lie alone in bed, even if parents do get exceedingly cross.

From 10 months onwards, it is often attention seeking behaviour.

Therefore be a bore, repeat at 5 or 10 minute intervals - "Checking System" Technique.

Keep a sleep diary - a record of each consecutive night as to how long it took to settle. Accept that on the first night of using checking only technique, the child could keep up poor sleep patterns for hours *but* don't give in. See if there is an improvement over the next few nights. When changing routine try to arrange a "catch up" on your own sleep by organising alternative care for your child during the day for an hour or two.



A GOOD BEDTIME ROUTINE IS ESSENTIAL

- 1 Set bedtime similar each night.
- 2 Quieter play beforehand.
- 3 Milky drink (plus small supper if necessary e.g. biscuit or cereal).
- 4 Bath, brush teeth and into bed.
- 5 Negotiate 1 or 2 small books to be read with an older child.

CHECKING SYSTEM

This technique is for a **well** child.

- 1 Be consistent - both parents.
- 2 No verbal communication - bland face. No smiling.
Do not talk.
- 3 No cuddles - do not pick child out of cot/bed. No drinks.
- 4 Tuck firmly back into cot/bed.
- 5 Walk out.

Leave 3 to 5 minutes - repeat nos. 1 - 5.

Then repeat leaving times left between 5 to 10 minutes just to reassure child you are still there.

OLDER CHILD

Do not talk to child, smile etc. - be a bore.

If you "give in" your child has won and the problem remains. It may take up to 1 to 2 hours to settle first night but look for an improvement over the next few days.

If an older child comes downstairs or into your bedroom, march him/her back into their bedroom using checking system e.g. no verbal communication.

NB. If you allow your child to stay downstairs or get into your bed you are reinforcing (rewarding) his/her pattern of behaviour again and again.

If a child has slept well, reward in the morning. Verbal praise and perhaps for example a treat given *before* breakfast or a promise of an outing, **reinforces** good habits to continue.



ADDITIONAL HINTS

Some infants will settle with a night time “friend” e.g. Lullaby Teddy by Tomy.

Tell older children that mummy or daddy will pop in and check that they are okay before they retire to bed. This action gives reassurance and overcomes any fears the child may have of being abandoned.

ALTERNATIVE METHOD FOR THE OLDER CHILD

If an older child needs your presence to settle them to sleep try:

1st night	-	Sit on bed
2nd night	-	Sit by the bed
3rd night	-	Sit in the middle of the room
4th night	-	Sit by the door
5th night	-	Sit outside the bedroom door

N.B. Remember no verbal communication. If necessary use the “Checking System”.

OUTCOME

If you change your child’s sleep behaviour from a bad pattern to a good pattern the advantages are:

- 1 You as parents are back in control.
- 2 Both parents and child are more awake and happier during the day.
- 3 You can enjoy each other’s company and not be irritable with each other and your patience, listening and playing skills will improve.

N.B. If there has been an interruption in this technique because your child has been ill e.g. teething, then the system has to be repeated from the start.

REFERENCES

My Child Won’t Sleep
Toddler Taming

Jo Douglas, Naomi Richman
Dr Christopher Green

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