

## Steps to Smooth Bed and Nap Times

### *Bedtime*

Prepare your child's room so that it is calming. Toys tidy on shelves. One lamp. Decide on an evening schedule. For example:

Dinner, brief play period, pick up toys, select clothes for next day, bathe, brush teeth, last toilet break if trained, reading time (two books of appropriate length). You may want to create a basket of appropriate choices from which your child may choose. Turn on soft music (no TV or video screens) child in bed with comfort item, night light on, prayers, kiss, hug, lamp out (some children like to pretend blowing out the light) Good night. Parent leaves the room. If your child is accustomed to you putting them to sleep you may encounter some resistance. Remember that the goal is to teach your child to go to sleep alone. It's a learned skill like riding a bike. They're may be some falls or feelings of discouragement before mastery. Once learned, it is a lifetime skill. It's important to acknowledge your feelings about the process. In our hurried world, bedtime is often the only quiet snuggle time we have with our children. We enjoy it too. To meet your needs and your child's needs for this quiet closeness, make time earlier in the evening to snuggle and give your child all of the attention. No videos, no TV, just the two of you to talk, hug, rock, sing, snuggle, read. I know.... Where is the time? Sometimes we need to make sacrifices to find it and make it a priority. This step is a big one and can be exhausting and nerve-wracking. Your child will be happy and so will you once it's behind you.

### *If you've been lying down with you child, rocking, or holding:*

Begin by sitting beside them and gently patting. After a few nights, sit on the floor next to the bed. Then move to the doorway. Next step is in the hallway. During these steps you are nearby to reassure your child. They will sometimes talk to you; you need to ignore the conversation. It sometimes helps to sit with your eyes closed.

If your child gets out of bed, put them back and simply say "it is time to sleep." No shouting, just stern and simple.

These steps are providing your child "training wheels", your presence is to reassure a child who may feel frightened. But, there are children who are not afraid, they just want you to do it the old way and this does not work. In Dr. Richard Ferber's Book, "Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems", he advocates allowing the child to cry for a few minutes, return and reassure. You may want to check it out to see if you want to try this approach.

Some children become angry when you return and don't do what you've always done. If this is the case, you may need to clearly, firmly tell the child what you expect. "At bedtime I expect you to go to sleep in your own bed." Depending on the age of your child, this could be all it takes. With others, you may have to let them cry it out. If you are going to do this be prepared to see it through. It's often best to start this on a Friday night so you can see it through over the weekend.

The first night your child may cry for twenty to thirty minutes. Could be longer and it will certainly seem like an eternity. Second night will be shorter, third less, etc. This is hard on you. Your child is most likely angry but it is okay. It will work, because the child will realize that you have confidence in their ability to go to sleep alone and that screaming is not doing any good. If you give in, the child will likely scream longer next time because screaming worked.

By instituting a schedule that ensures that your child is really sleepy you may shorten the period of crying.

If your child awakens during the night, you follow the same procedures. If your child comes to your bed, calmly escort them to their bed, tell them they are safe and you are nearby; it is time to sleep. Going back to sleep is also dependent upon the child's ability to go to sleep alone. If your child is awakening for a bottle, wean them off this feeding by watering down until they are not dependent upon this.

*Naptime process is to follow the same steps you've adapted at night.*

We realize that there are different schools of thoughts on this subject. This is an attempt to share some tried and true techniques. We recognize that every child and family is different and unfortunately there is not one easy formula. It is sometimes a trial-and-error approach. Talk to your pediatrician, your friends, and family for support and ideas. If you discover something that works, share it with us. Kinder Haus periodically presents a workshop called Bedtime:Battleground or BLiss. Ask us for more information if interested.

\*All of our parenting workshops can be brought to your workplace or parent meetups for "brown bag" lunch time training if there are five or more people who are interested. Email us and we will get back you you--  
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