

Establishing a sleeping routine

A lack of a sleep causes difficulties not only for the child who is not sleeping but for the entire family. A lack of sleep causes difficulties in concentration, lowered coping skills, and increased stress, just to name a few of the consequences. For a further discussion on the negative impacts of loss of sleep or disturbed sleep please contact us at info@networkinterventions.com.

Establishing a proper sleeping routine and getting a sound night's sleep is beneficial for everyone in the child's environment.

Overcoming sleep related issues is not an easy thing to do and it is recommended that you seek professional support from a behaviour analyst if possible. All members of the family will need to be in agreement with the routine in order to be successful.

Consistency is the key to success.

General Guidelines

It is best to avoid stimulants such as sugar and caffeine before bed. We recommend no caffeine and only natural sugar after 12pm if you are targeting sleeping routines.

Try to avoid stimulating activities such as video games or physical activity right before bed time. Introducing an hour's quiet time before bed for everyone in the house may be effective. If the entire household is winding down it is much easier for a child to sleep than if the household is loud and lively.

Reduce sensory stimulation in your child's room. Try to have a quiet and dark environment. Put up thick curtains to block outside light and use carpet or rugs to reduce sounds.

Have your child's bed be a signal for sleep. Only allow them to sleep in the bedroom. Do not allow them to play, watch TV or use a computer in their room. Recommended that their play things/play area be in a completely different room of the house.

It is recommended that you keep a sleep diary. This will help you establish patterns (such as does having an afternoon nap keep the child up later at night)

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as well as be a record to confirm that your procedure is actually working. If things are not improving a sleep diary can be sent to your consultant for feedback and is a much more objective measure than trying to remember what happened in the past.

We recommend you establish a bed time routine. For example, relaxing bath time; story on the sofa; bed time. Which ever routine you choose needs to be followed the exact same way every single night.

Getting Started

Establish a Firm Routine

Choose a time that you will begin the “going to bed” routine as well as a time for when the child will be in bed. Everyone should follow the same time routine every night.

When it is time to start going to bed tell your child. “It is time to get ready for bed” If they do not comply with any part of the routine they should be physically prompted to do so.

If you're child does not comply with your demands generally, we strongly recommend you target gaining instructional control. You will want to contact a behaviour analyst when doing this. You will often times just need a one or two hour consultation.

You may want to think about behavioural momentum when deciding on the routine. Choose the order so that it gets more reinforcing, not less, with each step. This could vary from child to child.

Sample Schedule:

7:30pm – Time to start getting ready for bed. Pj's on and brush teeth

7:45pm – Relaxing activity

8:00pm – Kiss and hug before leaving the room

If your child gets up out of bed after this, bring them back to bed without any reinforcement, discussion, or eye contact. This may happen many times in the beginning which is why it is recommended to have additional support. For example, a partner who can take over or a consultant you can call when you need moral support. If they cry, ignore. If the crying lasts too long or is too

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intense you may wish to follow the fading procedure below that is used for children who are used to parents staying with them until they fall asleep.

We may recommend you sit outside your child's room if they are consistently coming out. This way you can catch them before they get too far and you are able to get them right back to the bed.

If you have a child who is used to you sleeping with them until they fall asleep, implement the same "going to bed routine" but then in addition fade yourself from their bed.

1. Lie with child on bed for three nights
2. Sit on chair beside the bed for three nights
3. Sit on chair at bedroom door for three nights
4. Sit outside door but still visible to your child for three nights
5. Fade yourself completely from their sight

If your child wakes up in the middle of the night, bring them back to bed without any reinforcement, discussion, or eye contact.