

## STEPS TO SMOOTH BED AND NAPTIMES

### Bedtime

Prepare your child's room so that it is calming. Toys on shelves. One lamp.

Decide on an evening schedule like:

Dinner

Brief play period

Pick up toys

Select clothes for next day

Bathe, brush teeth, last potty if trained

Reading time (2 books of appropriate length) you may want to create a basket of appropriate choices from which your child may choose.

Turn on soft music audiotape or CD (no TV or videos)

Child in bed with comfort items

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 your putting him/her to sleep you may well encounter resistance. Remember that the goal is to teach your child to go to sleep alone. It's a learned skill like riding a bike. There may be some falls, 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 for this quiet closeness, make time earlier in the evening to snuggle and give your child all your attention. No video, 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 your child, rocking or holding:

Begin by sitting beside him/her and gently patting.

After a few nights, sit on floor next to 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's time to sleep."

These steps are providing your child "training wheels"; your presence is to reassure a child who may be 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. Ferber's book, Solving 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 20, 30 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 is okay. It will work, because the child will realize that you have confidence in their ability to go to