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Strategies For Getting Your Baby To GO TO SLEEP

The Ferber Method

The conventional baby sleep advice involves setting up a strict nighttime routine and introducing objects - such as stuffed animals - into the bed that your baby can associate with sleep. However, if you find after some months that your baby is still not able to sleep on his own, you can try what is known as the Ferber method.

Invented by Dr. Richard Ferber, the Ferber method is the most common way of weaning your child away from the mother, in terms of his sleep habits. It is usually successful within a couple of weeks. Nevertheless, it is important that you choose a week where you can afford to lose some sleep to begin the Ferber method.

Especially at the beginning of the process, the Ferber method does require that you spend a lot of time listening to your baby crying and, if you attempt it at a time when you are desperate to sleep, you run the risk of breaking down and allowing your child to sleep with you, or sleeping in the room with him. If you do so you risk undoing a lot of work that you will have put into the method.

The first night you attempt the Ferber method, put your child to bed as you normally do. Your baby should be tired but still awake when you put him to bed, so that he is left to fall asleep on his own. After you leave the room, the baby will inevitably start crying. Allow him to cry for about 5 minutes, then re-enter the room to console him.

It's important that you stay in the room for only a short time - even if he is still crying - and that you don't pick him up or rock him. This second time you leave the room, wait 10 minutes before returning in the same manner. The third time wait 15 minutes, and set this as a maximum wait time for the rest of the night.

Every time thereafter, enter the room briefly and then allow your child to cry for 15 minutes. Eventually, he will fall asleep on his own during one of the 15 minute intervals in which you are out of the room. The second night, you should begin with a 10 minute wait before re-entering the room, followed by 15 and then 20 minutes. In a similar fashion, increase your initial and subsequent wait times by 5 minutes each night.

Using this method your child will soon learn to go to sleep on his own. Although it can be difficult to listen to your baby cry, understand that the Ferber method is a safe and effective way of getting your baby to learn to sleep on his own.

Ferberizing Your Fussy Baby to Sleep

Richard Ferber is director of the Center for Pediatric Sleep Disorders at Children's Hospital in Boston who believes in a "progressive" approach to helping your child fall - and stay - asleep.

Ferber has developed a forward-thinking plan of action to instill consistent and regular sleep patterns in your child. Briefly, he suggests that after a warm, loving pre-bedtime routine such as singing, rocking, or reading a book, you put your child to bed while she's still awake. According to Ferber, putting your child to bed while still awake is crucial to successfully teaching her to go to sleep on her own.

Once you put her in bed, leave the room. If she cries, don't check on her until after a specified amount of time has passed. Once you do return to her room, soothe her with your voice but don't pick her up, rock her, or feed her. Gradually increase the length of time that passes between checks. After about one week, your infant will learn that crying earns nothing more than a brief check from you, and isn't worth the effort. She'll learn to fall asleep on her own, without your help.

Ferber says that there are a number of things that may interfere with your child's sleep. Before you "Ferberize," you should make sure that feeding habits, pain, stress, or medications are not causing or contributing to your baby's sleep problems.

Ferber recommends using his method if your baby is 6 months or older. Like most sleep experts, he says that by the time most normal, full-term infants are 3 months old, they no longer need a nighttime feeding. And at 6 months, none do.

Ferber's method can be modified if you feel it's too rigid. Stretch out Ferber's seven-day program over 14 days so that you increase the wait between checks every other night rather than every night.

Developing Sleep Associations

The process by which your child begins to fall asleep on his own is one that involves a natural transition from falling asleep with the mother to falling asleep in an independent fashion. One of the best ways in which you can speed up this transition is to encourage your child to develop sleep associations that he or she can recreate independently.

Naturally, everyone - and babies in particular - will develop sleep associations. These are the things that you associate with bedtime, and allow you to create an environment in which it is easy to fall asleep. When your baby is at an extremely young age, he will naturally develop sleep associations involving the mother, as he will often fall asleep in her arms. As you attempt to get your baby to sleep in his own, however, it is crucial that you work to change these associations.

If you always put your child to sleep by holding him, or allowing him to use a pacifier, you create a sleep association with these things. Then, when your child wakes up in the middle of

then night, he can't go back to sleep on his own because he is unable to recreate his sleeping environment without you: he needs you to feed him or rock him in order to sleep.

As you begin to try and get your child to sleep on his own, you should introduce items into his sleeping routine that he can sleep with, such as a particular blanket or a stuffed animal. What this will do is create associations for your child with these items for sleep. Then, when he awakes in the middle of the night, he will be able to recreate a sleeping environment without your assistance by grabbing his stuffed animal, etc.

It can also be beneficial to introduce "transitional items" into your baby's bedtime routine: Allow him to have his stuffed animal or blanket with him during a final feeding and before-bedtime activities, and allow him to take these things with him to bed.

No matter what you do, your child is going to be creating his or her own sleep associations. Your job is to try and create associations with items that are under his or her control. By giving your child as much control over his sleeping environment as possible, you allow him to begin to achieve sleep independently. The most difficult transition in early parenting is the one towards independent sleep for your child, and if you introduce new items into your child's sleeping place, you will hasten this transition, which will soon allow both you and your child to get a good night's rest.

Healthy Bedtime Routines for a Happy Child

Bedtime routines and rituals are very important for most children in establishing positive sleep patterns and in developing a sense of security and stability. Your child will benefit from a set bedtime. Pick a time for bed that is reasonable for your child and which you can consistently provide.

Establish a bedtime routine that can provide predictability and a comforting, familiar pattern. Even an understandable and structured visual pattern can assist this process and can provide reminders and consistency for the whole family.

A good bedtime routine will help teach a child to calm down, relax and get ready to sleep. However, not every technique works for every child. For example, if bathing is stimulating or frightening for your child, it's probably a better idea to do it at another time of day rather than right before you want your child to calm down and go to sleep.

Incorporate activities that you know have a calming effect on your child into their bedtime preparatory routine. Keep the routine short and sweet. It should realistically only consist of four to six steps that can be completed in a reasonable time frame, not drawn out into hours on end each night.

Reading a favorite book each night, brushing teeth, having a glass of water, and saying a goodnight prayer can all be calming, soothing activities for a young child to perform each night routinely. Hugging and kissing family members is usually also an integral part of the process, of course!

There are those nights or times when circumstances prevent your child from getting to bed at their usual time. Be sure not to shortchange the process when this happens, but keep in mind that each step can be shortened significantly in order to prevent long frustrations at a time when everyone is tired.

Impose and Stick to a Routine

There are many joys to being a new parent. Most new parents will agree, however, that one of the less than pleasant aspects of having a newborn is in dealing with the baby's sleep habits. A newborn baby will, of course, want to sleep a lot, which is completely natural. The difficult thing, though, is that the child needs to learn to sleep on his or her own. Until your newborn learns to go to sleep on his own, you will spend many sleepless nights tending to him when he wakes in the night.

Good baby sleep tips involve developing a routine with your newborn at a young age, which helps ease the transition into more adult sleep habits.

It can be tempting, when dealing with a newborn, to succumb to the habit of allowing the baby to dictate his or her own sleeping habits entirely. As much as is reasonable, you should try to avoid this, and instead try and establish a routine in which your baby sleeping habits begin to mimic those of the rest of the household.

Developing a routine for your baby's sleep should follow two different tracts: first, you should be putting your baby to sleep in the same fashion each and every night. A typical routine would involve a feeding and changing, combined with some time for play.

You should put your child to sleep at a point where he is tired, but still aware of what's going on. In this way, you establish the precedent that he falls asleep on his own, without you holding him or being in the room. This is crucial to ensuring better sleep habits for him down the road.

The second thing is to try and mold your baby's sleep habits. For example, you should discourage extensive napping throughout the day, as that increases the chance that the baby will be unable to sleep throughout the night. In a similar fashion, if he sleeps in too late during the morning hours, you should rouse him.

No parent wants to interfere with their baby's sleeping habits too extensively, and it is natural to want to avoid having to wake your baby up when he is sleeping, or to prevent him from napping when he wishes to do so.

There are, however, subtler methods with which to direct your child's sleep patterns. For example, when your baby naps, you should make sure that he does so in a brightly lit room - this ensures that he won't nap for long periods of time, which will affect his nighttime sleep.

There is a tendency amongst parents to make their baby as comfortable as possible when napping, which is, of course, entirely natural. But keep in mind that when you draw the curtains

or turn out the light when your baby is napping, you are creating an environment where he is likely to nap for a long time, which isn't really helpful.

In general, you should think of an overall plan to develop sleeping routines for your baby that are in sync with those of the rest of the household. If you do this, you will find that not only your baby, but you yourself, will be getting a good night's rest.

Making Your Baby Comfortable

Often, it seems fairly random whether or not babies sleep well. New parents will often discuss how they were simply "lucky" with one child as opposed to another. While it is true that in many cases how your child sleeps is largely out of your control, there remain many baby sleep tips you can employ to encourage better sleeping habits. One of the most important is to ensure that your baby is comfortable when he/she goes to sleep.

Bedtime is a transitional period for your child, and your efforts to make him sleep better should revolve around getting him to learn to sleep on his own. One of the most important elements of achieving this is to create an environment where your baby is as comfortable as possible. For this reason, the before-bed routine should always consist of changing and feedings - the worst thing for a baby, in terms of sleeping well, is to be in want of something when he is put to bed.

You should also be trying to make your baby as physically comfortable as possible when putting him to sleep. One of the most commonly overlooked aspects of this is allowing your baby to breathe easily through the nose.

Most people, but especially babies, depend on clear nasal passages for a good night's sleep. It's important to remove all airborne allergens in the baby's nursery: everything should be well dusted, and you should keep dust collecting items - like fuzzy blankets and stuffed animals - to a minimum.

When your baby is very young it takes time for him to learn to breathe through his mouth, so you must carefully pay attention to his nasal breathing when putting him to sleep. If you notice the problem is persistent, you may benefit from installing an air filter in the room that is designed to remove dust particles and allergens - this also has the added bonus of creating a soothing hum that will help many babies sleep better.

You should also pay particular attention to your baby's clothing. All babies are different in terms of their preferences, and you have to watch them closely. In many cases, things that look comfortable to you - very snug outfits, for example - may not be comfortable for your particular baby. Try both tight and loose fitting clothes and see which ones your baby seems to prefer.

Finally, consider how well your baby sleeps with wet diapers. Most babies will sleep well through the night with a wet diaper, but some will not. If this is the case, you can often solve your baby's sleeping difficulties by giving him a change in the night.

The main thing to keep in mind in terms of your babies comfort is to pay close attention, and to trust your instincts. Although it is tempting to follow guides and stick to hard and fast rules, remember that the adage "mother knows best" is generally true. So if your baby seems uncomfortable in his clothes, don't hesitate to change him into something that doesn't "look" as comfortable. If you trust your own judgments over those of guides in terms of your baby's comfort, it's likely that he will sleep much better.

Avoid Stimulating Your Baby During Night-time Feedings

As your newborn baby grows, it is slowly acclimating to sleeping at night and being awake during the day. Also, as baby's stomach is growing and holding more breast milk or formula, it will be able to go for longer periods between feedings at night.

At approximately three months of age your baby will likely sleep about 15 hours out of each 24-hour period, and two thirds of that sleep will take place during the night. Most babies will have settled into a daily sleep routine of two or three sleep periods during the day, followed by "sleeping through the night" for 6 to 7 hours after a late-night feeding.

You can help adjust your baby's body clock toward sleeping at night by avoiding stimulation during nighttime feedings and diaper changes.

The act of breastfeeding itself provides frequent eye and voice contact, so try to keep the lights low and resist the urge to play or talk with your baby. This will reinforce the message that nighttime is for sleeping. Keeping the door closed to keep out well-meaning but vocal older children, spouses and pet will also keep reduce stimulating your infant. Avoid the use of musical mobiles or toys as a way to lull your infant back to sleep after night-time feedings. This will also help to reinforce that nighttime is for sleeping.

And, as with adults, overly tired infants often have more trouble sleeping than those who've had an appropriate amount of sleep during the day. So, keeping your baby up thinking that he or she will sleep better at night may not work. You may find that when your infant sleeps at regular intervals during the day, it will be easier to put them back down to sleep after night-time feedings.

Background Noise for Bedtime

A fussy or crying baby can make for a fussy and often frustrated parent. There are many reasons a baby could be fussy or unable to sleep, including illness, colic, or something as simple as either too much noise or too little noise. Before altering your baby's sleeping environment, take a moment to evaluate just why your baby has been fussy or upset at bedtime.

Things like changes in the weather, a neighbor's new puppy continually barking, a loud car stereo blaring, or a bright street light can all contribute to changing a baby's otherwise familiar and comfortable sleeping environment. If after evaluating, you discover that there has been an

environmental change that has occurred, but are out of your control, you might consider creating some 'white noise' in your baby's environment to help drown out these unpleasant and loud sleep disruptors.

Noises that are repetitive and almost monotonous sounding are known as 'white noise' - noise that is occurring constantly, and, as a result, we've 'tuned it out.' There are many items in our house that create white noise that we might not even realize - our air conditioners, vacuum cleaners, clothes dryers, or fans all create white noise as they operate.

Other things such as running water, an analog clock with a ticking second hand, or a fish aquarium also create white noise. These noises might actually help 'drown out' the disruptive external noises that are keeping your baby, and thereby you, from a good night's sleep.

Another option might be to run a favorite lullaby on continuous play in your baby's room. There are many options out there for newborns and toddlers alike in the music department of your favorite store. You could even put together a special mix just from mommy and daddy on your personal computer. Better yet, put together a recording of mommy and daddy's soft, soothing and gentle voices, and baby will be back in dreamland before you know it - and so will you!

Consistent Naptimes Are Key to Quality Nighttime Sleep, Too

Research has shown that the quality and length of your baby's naps affects his nighttime sleep. If he naps too late in the day, it will most certainly affect his nighttime sleeping. It's important to tune into your baby's biological clock and learn when his natural naptime is so his nighttime sleeping schedule is on the right track as well. It's also imperative to get your baby down for a nap as soon as you see his "sleepy signals." He will become overtired if you wait too long, and unable to go to sleep as a result.

Consistency is the key. Know when to get him down for a nap, and then get him down for a nap each and every time you see the signals. Those signals might include quieting down, losing interest in people and toys, rubbing eyes, fussing, yawning, or decreasing activity. Waiting too long might find your baby getting his 'second wind' and making it difficult if not impossible for him to lay down for his nap.

When you respond to the signals right away, you not only eliminate the later possibility of having an increasingly crabby child later in the day or evening, but you eliminate the frustration for yourself of having to deal with such a fussy child. Once you've studied your child's biological clock and watched for the signals carefully and consistently for a week or so, it should be a breeze to develop a solid napping schedule that will be easy for you both to follow.

Developing a consistent nap routine is equally important. Just as you have a routine prior to bedtime, you should also have one for naptime. This routine should be different from your nighttime routine though, although it can have similar elements, such as quiet music. Follow the routine faithfully every day, unless your child has been especially active such as a family outing

or another activity outside the daily routine. And once your baby learns the nap routine, he'll learn the cues that tell him when naptime is nearing, making naptime easier on you as well.

Relaxation Techniques for Toddler's Bedtime

Though it may seem like your toddler does nothing but play all day, he's working very hard and by no means is his life stress-free. As he's learning to walk, talk, and climb, he's pushing himself to the limits of his physical strength and mental learning.

He's also falling down, bumping, surprising, and hurting himself over and over again each day. And since your toddler doesn't yet know how to roll with the punches or ease up on himself, he's constantly frustrated and angered by failure. All this activity is bound to make for an exhausted toddler.

If you find his favorite activities or routine tasks are frustrating him, he's most likely overtired and in need of restorative and restful sleep. Physical exhaustion, excitement, and tension build up until he no longer knows he's tired. Then it is up to you as a parent to help him figure out how to stop and rest. You can help make the transition from busy, active, energetic day to tranquil, quiet and peaceful night by easing him into sleep with quiet activities in the evening after dinner.

Coloring a picture, sitting down and watching a favorite, but quiet, video, reading books, singing, quiet play at bath time, or singing lullabies together helps your toddler disconnect and start winding down. If this is done within the framework of a consistent bedtime routine, your toddler will come to associate these activities with bedtime and find them comforting and he'll be able to easily recognize when bedtime occurs.

It's also important to relax with your toddler. If he sees you busy in the kitchen cleaning, outside gardening, or doing other busy activities in the evenings, he'll be likely to want to do the same, making the bedtime routine frustrating for everyone involved.

Setting a Bedtime Ritual

One very important thing you must do as soon as possible is establish a bedtime ritual for your baby. The reason that your newborn doesn't sleep well through the night at first is because he is used to falling asleep with his mother. When he awakes in the night he naturally cries for his mother - the only way he knows how to go back to sleep.

As your newborn grows older a slow transition will occur whereby he learns to go to sleep on his own, and - more importantly - when he wakes in the night he can learn to fall back asleep on his own. Your goal as a parent is to try and speed up this transition as much as possible, the result will not only be a good night's rest for you, but a development of better sleeping habits for your child in the long term.

To get your child to sleep well on his own, focus on a consistent bedtime routine. Babies are very dependant on routines - their world is so narrow that they generally focus on only a few things throughout the day - the way to create transitions in their day, therefore, is to change how these things are presented to them.

For example, your bedtime routine may consist of a warm bath, a feeding and changing, and some rocking before bed. If you repeat this every night your baby will slowly begin to associate these things with sleep. Every night, then, your child will naturally start to fall into a "sleeping mode" when you do these things.

If you are inconsistent, however - if, say, you only bathe him on odd nights, or change the order of bedtime events - you will confuse the child and he will be unsure of what happens next: he won't know whether he's going to sleep after his bath, or being read a story.

A bedtime routine should also employ spending a good amount of time with your baby. Even from a very young age, babies will learn to manipulate their parents, and if you don't spend enough time with your baby before he falls asleep, he will start to stretch out the bedtime ritual in order to spend more time with you.

In establishing a bedtime ritual for your child, your primary concerns should be to make it consistent. To ensure better sleeping habits for your baby, don't focus so much on what you do before bed, rather, pay attention to doing the same things in the same order every night.

Several Steps to a Sweet Slumber

Dr. William Sears, father of eight and a practicing pediatrician for over 30 years, has developed a comprehensive checklist for parents so they can get their baby on a solid sleep schedule that will enable them to sleep for longer periods of time, thereby allowing mom and dad more restful nights as well.

Initially, he advises parents to develop a realistic attitude about nighttime parenting, and to develop a long-term plan that will teach your baby a restful attitude about sleep. He reminds parents that no single approach will work with all babies, and that it's very important to keep an open mind and remain flexible during this process. If your baby's sleep plan just isn't working, then drop it.

Also be flexible in the method which you use in order to lull your baby to sleep. Don't rely on just rocking or just nursing in order to entice your infant to sleep, but get them used to several different routines that can be associated with sleep time. In addition, consistent bedtimes and rituals are key to a successful transition to sleep, and help your little one stay asleep longer. Any changes in their sleep time routine can be a stressful and confusing thing, thereby causing everyone to lose sleep as a result.

It's also imperative to teach your baby that daytime is for playing and eating, and that nighttime is for sleeping. Sometimes older babies and toddlers are so busy playing during the

day that they forget to eat enough, which can result in hunger pangs at night, so be sure to feed your baby sufficiently through the course of the day.

And don't forget to create an environment that's conducive to sleeping, eliminating as much noise and light from the room as possible. Some soft soothing music can help drown out outside noises and help baby sleep more soundly.

Sleep Methods

There are many different methods from the "experts" on dealing with sleep problems in your developing baby and child. Again, do what works best for you and what you feel comfortable with.

The Ferber method involves letting the baby cry herself to sleep, on the theory that if you're firm about bed time, she'll learn to comfort herself to sleep. This doesn't mean just plunking the baby down in her crib and walking away. It differs from what you may already be doing in that it encourages you to put the baby in her crib while she's still awake, so she gets used to falling asleep without you. But this might also mean letting her cry it out for a few weeks. This can be stressful for everyone in the household.

Another method is the controlled crying method. Again, this involves your usual bedtime rituals of a bath, perhaps a snack and a story, rocking and cuddling. Put your baby in her crib and kiss her goodnight. If she starts to cry, wait 10 to 15 minutes before going in to comfort her.

Try to resist picking her up, just shush her quietly and pat her on the back. Some experts suggest not talking, as this can reinforce the waking and crying behavior. You want to reassure your baby that you're there, but you still want to encourage sleeping.

After the first half hour of crying, increase the intervals before you check on the baby by a few minutes each time, up to about 15 to 20 minutes between checking. This can take some time, and can be trying on your nerves, but in time, your baby will learn that you're not going away and that you're nearby. This teaches your baby self-comforting, but also gives her the confidence and security that you're there for her.

Sleep Requirements

As a new mother, you probably will wonder whether your baby is sleeping enough, or sleeping too much. There are guidelines of what to expect, but of course these can vary from baby to baby. Even if you've had children before, each baby will be different.

Newborn babies usually sleep about 16-17 hours in a 24-hour period. Most babies will not sleep through the night until they're at least 3 months old. There are several reasons why. First of all, their stomachs are very small and they'll get hungry faster, especially if you're breastfeeding

your baby. Breast milk is much more easily digested than formula, and your baby will need to feed more often, especially in the beginning.

Babies also have shorter sleep cycles than adults do and have shorter dream cycles. In general, though, a newborn baby should sleep about 8 or nine hours during the day and 8 hours or so at night. These won't be in 8-hour cycles, of course. In the beginning, those sleep times will be very short.

As the baby gets older, up to about 2 years of age, she'll still be sleeping 13-14 hours, but the amount of daytime sleep will diminish month-by-month. By age 2, your baby should be sleeping through the night with a 2-hour nap during the day. Again, this will vary by child. Your baby might need a slightly longer nap or two short naps. At this age though, try to discourage naps too late in the afternoon, as this can make it harder to get them to sleep a few hours later at bed time.

Once a baby begins to regularly sleep through the night, parents are often dismayed when he/she begins to awaken in the night again. This typically happens at about 6 months of age and is often a normal part of development called separation anxiety, when a baby does not understand that separations are temporary.

Taming a Tough Toddler at Bedtime

Putting your toddler to bed can sometimes be an exercise in frustration. If you have experienced this, you might want to consider one of the following techniques to make bedtime a peaceful time.

Be consistent about bed times and waking times. Your toddler is more likely to respond positively if he's used to a specified schedule. The earlier your child's routine is established, the easier it is to put them to bed without incident.

Make the activities the same every night, and make the time before bed quiet and peaceful. Whether a parent tells the child a story, provides a bedtime snack, puts in a short video, or plays quiet games before putting the child in bed, consistency is the key.

Try not to lie in bed with your toddler until he falls asleep. This might actually have the opposite effect, and might encourage your child to stay awake, and ask for drinks of water and more bedtime stories. An alternative might be telling your toddler you're going to complete a chore and that you'll come back in and check on them in a few moments.

It's most likely that the child will fall asleep while waiting for mom or dad to return. You might also want to talk about your child's day with them. Keep your tone soft and quiet, and try not to excite your child in the process. Turning this into a nighttime story with your child as the main character is a fun option as well.

As the child grows older, if a consistent bedtime is maintained the task will become easier. The most important issue is consistency and repetition. If the child can expect the same thing every

night, and these customary tasks are pleasant, bedtime can become a delightful family ritual. If however, your child is continually resisting sleep, talk with your child's pediatrician, as their might be a medical problem at the root of it.

The No Cry Sleep Solution

Parenting educator Elizabeth Pantley is president of Better Beginnings, Inc., a family resource and education company. Elizabeth frequently speaks to parents in schools, hospitals, and parent groups, and her presentations are received with enthusiasm and praise. Her newest book, *The No Cry Sleep Solution: Gentle Ways to Help Your Baby Sleep through the Night* offers a variety of sleep-inducing tips parents can use to develop an individual sleep program for their baby.

Pantley's methods are a gentler and more welcome option for those sleep-deprived parents who just can't bear to let their child cry it out on their own, and find that approach too unfeeling or uncaring for their baby.

Probably the most important step to the overall success of developing a working solution is documenting the child's sleeping and waking patterns each night on a "sleep chart." This can be a difficult task for a sleep-deprived parent in the middle of the night, but is a crucial step and must be completed diligently.

Pantley herself states her "solution" is certainly no overnight cure, or a one-size-fits-all method, but a gradual progression for educating your child to fall and stay asleep without constant intervention and assistance from the parent.

The successful program requires dedication and consistency from the parent. It could take a month or longer for your child to make the full transition to sleeping through the night, but one that will save a parent many sleepless nights in the long run. After the month is over, everyone who's participated in the process will benefit from a more restful night, and the baby will learn how to sleep independently without the need for continual, repetitive comforting.

Your Personal Parenting Style and Your Child's Sleep

Good mothers and fathers come in many styles. Each one of us has different strengths, interests, and values that make us great parent. Don't let yourself become discouraged or disappointed when others 'give you advice' that doesn't seem to mesh with who you are. Maybe you're not a roll around on the floor kind of parent with your child. Maybe you've decided to hang back and let your little one explore.

That's great! As long as it works for you and your child, nobody should be able to convince you that your method is incorrect or wrong. Once you recognize and embrace your own personal

parenting style, you can stop trying to live up to everyone else's expectations and get on with the business of enjoying being a parent.

It's important to keep in mind too, that these well-meaning advice givers don't know your child as well as you. They aren't there with your child night and day, watching him grow, learn, explore, play, eat, and sleep. Only you know what's best for your child, and you know what works best in your household and for your lifestyle. As with anything, figuring things out along the way will involve trial and error.

So when you receive yet another unsolicited piece of advice regarding your child's napping or nighttime sleeping habits, keep both your and your child's personal style in mind. You've done the legwork, you've experimented, and you've learned together what works and what doesn't work.

The cues should come from your instincts regarding your child and from your child directly. There's no such thing as a hard-and-fast rule for sleep habits among children other than it is needed! As your child grows, his cues may change, but as long as you stay in tune with him, his sleep habits shouldn't have to suffer as a result. And neither should yours.

You are invited to pass this report along to as many people as you like, provided that you make no changes to it and that you give it away for FREE.

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