

Sensible Sleep Strategies for Easing Bedtime Battles

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Sleep

Never realize how important it is until we don't get it!

Often reported concern for children on the Autism Spectrum

Can be difficult to treat..

Focus on Strategies to improve sleep tonight!



Sleep Struggles

Can lead to increased problem behaviors and reduced learning opportunities

Contributes to increase parental stress

Can disrupt family life



Sleep

Often both Biological and Behavioral concerns present.

Biological –

Often need a Physician to help address biological issues
 Want to rule out any medical concerns before addressing behavioral concerns.



Sleep Behavior

Sleep is comprised of multiple behaviors

- Following instructions (go to bed)
- Staying in bed until asleep (sleep compatible behavior)
- Calm behavior (needed to fall asleep)
- Sleep Initiation (falling asleep independently!)
- Sleep Maintenance (staying asleep)



Sleep Behaviors

How do we support good sleep behavior?

- Sleep Environment
- Regular Bedtime
- Consistent routine
- Adult Attention
- Reinforcement



Sleep Environment

Environmental Factors:

- Dark environment –
- Comfortable environment
- Cool but not cold room.
- Quiet but not silent environment. (white noise can be helpful)



Regular Bedtime

Consistency is key in facilitating good sleep behavior.

- Have a consistent bedtime each night.
- Follow it every night! (even on weekends)



Routine

Implement a bedtime routine each night.

- Make it manageable for each night!
- Kids will start to connect those activities with sleep!
- Warning! – once established, kids can come to depend on this!



Routine

Visual schedule –

- Steps are made clear
- Can refer to during the routine
- Supports predictability



Adult Attention

How we use attention can influence sleep!

- We tend to give lots of attention when kids are not sleeping.
- Instead, give attention during bedtime routine. Once you say goodnight, no more!



Reinforcement

How we increase behavior!

Can be anything that is valuable to the child!

Attention can be used as a reinforcer!



Reinforcement

What happens if they stay in bed?
Fall asleep on their own?
Stay in their bed all night?

Should have a plan for reinforcement for appropriate behavior!

Doesn't have to elaborate – think breakfast or am activities



What it that doesn't fix it?

Good information but what if it isn't working that way?



Sleep Troubles

What if my child will NOT....
go to Bed?
Go to sleep on their own?
Stay in bed until they fall asleep?
Fall asleep until really late?
Stay in bed all night?



Refusal

Child will not go to bed?
Bed can be pretty un-fun. No cool toys, no adult attention, nothing to look at.
– Start by putting them to bed when they are very tired!
– Reinforcement for following instructions.
– Follow thru! Once you give an instruction, keep returning them to bed.
– Once they are successful, we can gradually move bedtime earlier.



Independence

My child will not go to sleep on their own?

- Provide a transitional item.
- Reinforcement for doing it without you!

Not enough – try the Excuse Me Routine!



Excuse-Me-Drill

- "Excuse me, I have to go...(insert reason)...but I will come back to check on you."
- Caregiver leaves bedroom, but quickly returns to provide brief attention contingent on "sleep compatible" behavior
- Caregiver repeats this, while slowly increasing amount of time between bedroom visits
- Fade visits times each night
- Goal: Child initiates sleep with the caregiver OUTSIDE the bedroom



Staying in bed

Child will not stay in bed until they fall asleep? Or Child has a lot of curtain calls?

- Limit adult attention after bedtime.
- Provide a visual for staying in bed and laying quietly.
- Reinforcement is available for staying in bed and falling asleep!



Night Owl

My Child will not fall asleep until really late?

- Start where they are, move bedtime later. (when they are really tired!)
- Do routine right before late bedtime
- Reinforcement !
- Gradually push bedtime back to a more reasonable time!



Out of bed during the night

My child will not stay in bed all night?

- If children are leaving bed, return them every time to their own bed.
- Give no attention when returning them to bed.
- Reinforcement for staying in bed all night.



Overview

- Causes for sleep difficulties – biological vs behavioral
- Support good sleep behaviors
- What if's
- Pick one to start!

