

Beat the BED TIME BATTLES!

If having children teaches us one thing, it is the value of sleep! Whether it is pregnancy, a new baby, or a not-so-new baby that keeps us awake, it can turn life upside down.

And if THEY don't sleep, YOU don't sleep. With babies, we can expect to be up at night. But what if problems with sleep continue long after your child should be sleeping through the night?

Elizabeth Pantley's new book says there is an 8 Step Sleep Solution:-

CHILD magazine checked it out.

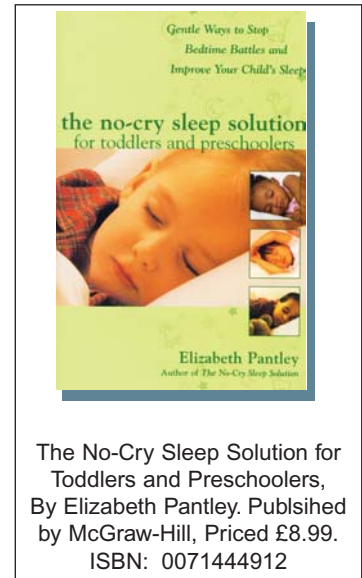
1 Maintain consistent bedtime and awaking times 7 days a week – When you establish a set time for bedtime and wake up time you “wind” your child’s clock so that it functions smoothly. Aim for an early bedtime. Toddlers and preschoolers respond best with a bedtime between 6.30 and 7.30pm.

2 Encourage regular daily naps – Children aged 2-6 are full of energy so daily naps are critically important to recharge and revive.

3 Set your child’s biological clock – Take advantage of your child’s natural biology so that they’re actually TIRED when bedtime arrives. Align your child’s sleepiness at bedtime by dimming the lights one-hour prior. Expose your child to morning light, it’s equivalent to pushing a “go” button in their brain!

4 Develop a consistent bedtime routine – Routines create feelings of security. A specific before-bed routine naturally ends with sleep. An organized routine helps coordinate the before bed agenda: bath, pyjamas, and teeth brushing.

5 Create a cozy sleep environment – Make certain the mattress is comfortable, the blankets are warm enough, the room temperature is right, pyjamas are comfy



The No-Cry Sleep Solution for Toddlers and Preschoolers, By Elizabeth Pantley. Published by McGraw-Hill, Priced £8.99. ISBN: 0071444912

and the bedroom is welcoming.

6 Provide the right nutrition to improve sleep – Carbohydrate-rich foods can have a calming effect on the body, while foods high in protein or sugar generate alertness, particularly when eaten alone. A few ideas for pre-bedtime snacks are: whole wheat toast and cheese, bagel and peanut butter, oatmeal and bananas.

7 Help your child to be healthy and fit – A sedentary lifestyle prevents good sleep. Children who get ample daily physical exercise fall asleep more quickly, sleep better, stay asleep longer and wake up feeling more refreshed. However avoid physical activity in the hour before bedtime, since exercise is stimulating and has an alerting effect.

8 Teach your child how to relax and fall asleep. Many children get in bed but aren't sure what to do when they get there! It can help to follow a pre-bed routine that creates feelings of sleepiness. A common bedtime ritual is story time, and for good reason. A child listening to a parent read will tend to lie still. This quiet stillness will allow them to become sleepy.



Why don't children want to go to sleep?

NOT TIRED

A child will not enjoy being put to bed when he's wide-awake. He'll do anything to prevent you from turning off the light – one more book, etc. To determine if this is case, take a good look at your child's nap schedule and sleep routine. A nap that occurs too late in the day will keep your child refreshed and alert far past bedtime. More activity in the early afternoon, including outdoor play when possible, may help your child to actually be tired when it's time for bed.

OVER TIRED

Very often young children are tired quite early in the evening, around 6pm to 7pm, but parents think that it's just too early to put them to bed. Or the family gets busy, and two hours fly by without you realizing it. What happens in this case is that your child becomes so overtired that he gets a second wind – propelling him into a wired-tired-can't-sleep state. He's running on adrenaline and will need some help to wind down enough for his condition to transform into sleepiness. The solution to this dilemma is an earlier bedtime, preceded by a peaceful, hour-long pre-bedtime routine.

TOO BUSY

Toddlers never seem to want to stop. Giving up the exciting world for bedtime doesn't appeal to them.

Creating a

consistent and pleasant bedtime routine, plus avoiding any new or exciting toys or events before bedtime, can work wonders to help a busy child cooperate at bedtime.

TOO CURIOUS

Children can feel that when they are confined to their bed, magical and

marvelous things are happening in the rest of the house. They listen to people's voices, the television, and sounds of activity in the house. Keeping the

household quiet after your child is in bed may keep a curious little one from coming out of their bed.

AFRAID OF SOMETHING

The dark, monsters under the bed, or dogs barking outside etc. Because of their emerging intelligence and their active imagination, this is a common age for fears to surface. Talk through with your child what they are afraid of and try and explain it. Be there for your child, and if there is a way of removing the threat, try it. For example, a child afraid of the dark could have a night light left on. Avoid TV before bedtime. Ask the child what will make them feel better.

BEDTIME NOT ENTICING

A good bedtime routine is one that's

reliable and predictable. A great bedtime routine is one that your child looks forward to. Books, songs, and fun games can make it more interesting. You can do a chart to tell your child in which order everything will happen.

THEY WANT TO BE WITH YOU

The dark, quiet, lonely night is a time that separation anxiety often surfaces in toddlers and preschoolers.

They want to be with the people they love. Don't fight this – they will grow out of it soon enough. Don't be afraid to spoil your child with your time and love and providing the attention he or she needs. Practice with quick, safe separations – go into another room, and sing or talk while you are out of sight so they know you are still near.