



Bedtime Struggles

What to do when your child has trouble going to bed

You & Your Child

A guide for new parents

Most young children have times when they don't want to go to bed or don't want to stay in bed.

There are many reasons why. Sometimes it's hard for children to be separated from their parents at night. They don't like to stop playing. And it's natural for them not to like being told what to do and when to do it.

Bedtime problems can be hard on parents, too. You need some time to yourself at night. And it is upsetting to end the day arguing with your child.

Children usually manage better when there are family rules about bedtime. Bedtime rules work best when they are regular, kind, and firm.

You and your child can get through bedtime struggles with a little work. And by understanding the problem and helping your child learn to go to bed without a fuss you're also showing your child you care.

ON BACK
SOME HELPFUL HINTS FOR
BEDTIME



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WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS TROUBLE GOING TO BED

Bedtime starts before it's time to say goodnight

Before bedtime, help your child unwind.

- Do calming and relaxing things before bed time to help your child settle down.
- Whatever you're doing before bed time, remind your child that bedtime is next.
- Try speaking in a quieter voice as bedtime approaches.
- Read or sit and talk with your child. This will help both of you settle down after a busy day.
- Avoid doing things that will get your child excited, like tackle or chase games, or watching an exciting or scary television show.
- Don't give bedtime snacks that have caffeine. No cola or chocolate, for example. Caffeine may keep a child awake.

Set a bedtime routine

Bedtime is easier for children if they know when and what to expect each night. Here are things that some families do as part of their children's bedtime routine:

- Wash up or take a bath.
- Brush teeth.
- Read books or tell stories.
- Give hugs or backrubs.
- Spend time cuddling in a chair.
- Sing quiet songs.
- Say a prayer or talk quietly about what happened that day and what is coming up tomorrow.

Say goodnight to things in the room. For example, "Goodnight pillow, goodnight books." When your routine is over, say, "Goodnight," then leave the room.



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS TROUBLE GOING TO BED

Let your child know it's okay if he or she can't fall asleep right away

It's all right if your child doesn't fall asleep right away, and he or she should know that. But if this happens, he or she should still stay in bed.

Help your child know there are ways children can help themselves fall asleep. Some children:

- Cuddle a stuffed animal.
- Think about a happy story.
- Remember a nice time.
- Sing themselves songs.

Give your child something of yours

Sometimes children don't like being separated from their parents even if they are in the other room.

Try giving your child something of yours to keep through the night so he or she can feel connected to you.

Leave a light on

Your child may also feel more at ease if you leave on a night light in his or her room or if you leave the door open a little.

Don't give in

When your child fusses and wants to stay up longer it may seem easier to give in. But this won't help to solve bedtime struggles.

Crying may mean your child needs more comforting

Even after it seems bedtime struggles are over, your child may have trouble at bedtime now and then.

- On those nights, spend a little extra time with your child before bed.
- If your child cries hard after saying goodnight, sit nearby for a few minutes.
- Try giving your child a backrub to calm him or her down.

