

Responsive Settling

Responsive settling is a way to sensitively respond and support each stage of your child's sleep development



12 Months to Toddlers

Sleep is complex and follows a normal developmental course similar to the way your toddler develops the ability to walk and talk. During the toddler years routines fit more comfortably in with the rest of your family. Daytime naps get shorter and your toddler will have most of their sleep during the night-time hours. Sometimes problems with going to sleep or resettling during the night can arise or continue to occur during the toddler years. This pamphlet provides some ideas to help with your toddler's sleep patterns.

Bedtime routines

A quiet soothing bedtime routine signals to your toddler that it's time for sleep, helps him/her settle into bed and then sleep better.

- The routine needs to be consistent, easy and familiar both day and night.
- Your toddler's routine should take no longer than 30 to 40 minutes.
- Avoid stimulating activities prior to sleep.
- Use a soft, low voice to read stories from books and sing songs.
- Give plenty of calm loving cuddles and a goodnight kiss.
- If your toddler has a special toy or comforter this will be an important part of the routine.
- Sometimes a soothing bath at the end of the day can help some toddlers calm for bed.
- Nappy change, into pyjamas and importantly teeth cleaning.
- Avoid the use of smart phones, tablets, TV, game consoles and fluorescent lights as these are very stimulating and interfere with the onset of sleep.
- Ensure your toddler is clothed according to the temperature of the room e.g. warm pyjamas if it's cold, or use a sleeping bag with fitted armholes and no hood.
- If your toddler is in a cot ensure that the sides are up and securely in place.

Settling options

The following techniques are a guide to help you choose a way that best suits you and your toddler to settle to sleep and for re-settling if they wake during their sleep.

Toddler Responsive Settling

If your toddler has never settled to sleep on their own you may like to start with modified responsive settling. This provides your toddler with reassurance and support while also providing an opportunity for your toddler to develop their own way of falling asleep.

Start with a familiar and soothing bedtime routine.

1. Talk quietly and reassuringly as you take your toddler to their bed e.g. 'good night it is time for sleep'
2. Once in bed or their cot you can continue the bedtime routine with a story, or simply provide verbal reassurance in calm, soothing voice.
3. If your toddler starts to fuss or cry then cuddle, pat or stroke soothingly until he/she is calm. Try to keep your toddler in the cot or bed.
4. Once your toddler is calm and drowsy, move away from the cot/bed or leave the room. Ensure cot sides are up.
5. If your toddler starts to fuss or cry go back and cuddle, pat or stroke soothingly until calm.
6. You may have to repeat this several times before your toddler is able to settle to sleep.
7. Some toddlers may need you to stay in the room until they fall asleep.
8. If your toddler wakes during the night and doesn't manage to self-settle, follow steps 3-7 providing comfort/reassurance.
9. If your toddler is very distressed you will need to pick him/her up, cuddle soothe and calm. A distressed toddler is saying 'I need your help now to calm'.

Daytime sleeps

During the day if your toddler has trouble falling asleep or resettling try:

- a. responsive settling (steps 1-4).
- b. stay with your child until asleep.
- c. if your toddler wakes during the sleep and you can't resettle, get your toddler up and continue with your daily routine and try again at the next sleep time.



Toddler settling strategies

1. If you have tried putting your toddler to bed but he/she continues to be distressed or crying, pick him/her up and cuddle until calm. Check your toddler's nappy and then attempt to resettle.
2. Speak gently and quietly to reassure your toddler repeating calmly 'it's time for sleep'. Once your toddler is calm again, position her/him comfortably in the cot or bed while still awake and drowsy.
3. If your toddler still doesn't settle and starts to cry, pick him/her up again and cuddle until calm.
4. You could try giving your toddler a drink of water (only) they may have worked up a thirst.
5. Try not to leave the bedroom. Stay near the bed while you calm and settle your toddler.
6. If your toddler continues to be very upset, then try staying in the room until he/she falls asleep in the bed. You can sit on a chair quietly next to the bed or lay your head on the bed next to your toddler while you continue to soothe and reassure.
7. The length of time it takes to soothe and settle your toddler will decrease as she/he begins to calm to sleep.
8. If you find your toddler needs you to stay in the room while he/she falls asleep, try sitting on a chair beside the cot or bed, and then, over time, gradually move your chair a little further away as he/she gains more confidence in being able to fall asleep without you being so close.
9. Eventually move your chair until you are sitting near or just outside the door, responding with your gentle voice that you're still there.
10. You might like to try Parental Presence (over page) if your toddler is anxious about separating from you at sleep time.



Parental Presence

You may prefer this option if your baby has never been separated from you at sleep time.

1. Once your toddler is calm and drowsy lie down or sit beside the cot within sight of your toddler and pretend to be asleep.
 2. If your toddler remains wakeful, give a little cough or quietly say 'ssshhh time to sleep' so he/she knows you are still in the room.
 3. If your toddler becomes distressed use calm, repetitious strategies to soothe, try not to pick your toddler up as your first soothing option but lie or sit beside the bed/cot using your voice and touch to help calm your toddler.
 4. You may have to repeat this several times before your toddler is able to calm and relax into a drowsy state and fall asleep.
 5. Stay in the room until your toddler is asleep during the day and sleep in the same room as your child during the night.
- Continue this for at least 1 week or until your toddler has 3 nights in a row of relatively uninterrupted sleep. You can now begin to leave the room before your toddler is asleep.

Transitioning from cot to bed

1. Start by encouraging your toddler to climb into bed unaided.
2. Give your toddler verbal reassurances and calmly say 'it's bedtime now'.
3. Be positive, gentle and firm as you discourage your toddler from climbing out of bed saying 'it's time to go to sleep now'.
4. Keep a familiar blanket, toy that your toddler chooses from his/her cot to help her feel more secure in her new bed – nothing small that she/he can swallow or choke on.
5. You may like to have your toddler help choose the bedding for their new bed to make this step a positive and fun experience.
6. If your toddler has a comforter (comfort object), to help him/her feel safe and secure, keep it with them and not reduce it's use.
7. Praise your toddler when he/she manages to stay in the 'big bed'.
8. If your toddler does get out the bed, gently walk him/her back to bed, tuck him/her back in and say good night. Sometimes you will have to do this several times and you will need to stay as calm as possible.
9. You may need to use the other settling techniques described elsewhere in this pamphlet such as sitting beside the bed.

**Our friendly team at
Tresillian are here to
support your family!**

Book a visit to Tresillian:

Visit **tresillian.org.au**, fill in the short
online contact form and one of our
Nurses will call you back



Ask your local Health Professional,
Child & Family Health Nurse, GP or early
parenting support service to refer you
and your child



Tresillian Parent's Help Line
FREECALL 1300 272 736



JUNE 24_4085 v2



Acknowledgement of Country

Tresillian acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the First Peoples of Australia, the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land in the countries on which we live and work in NSW, the ACT and Victoria. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present and acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the communities we serve.