



Bristol Child Parent Support

Positive Parenting Solutions and Gentle Sleep Advice

My help to you, so your child can sleep in their own bed. It's never too late



- It does not work well to tell children to sleep in their bed and then relent when they act up. This only teaches them that their persistence will be rewarded with a trip to your bed. You must be consistent, consistent and consistent.
- The best approach is to discover the underlying cause or causes for your child's behavior. At some level, your child knows why she doesn't want to sleep in her own bed, even if she isn't able to articulate what she is feeling. If you ask her outright what she is feeling, you may not get any valuable information.
- Your child may not be able to self-soothe, you will have to address this first. This means they cannot go to sleep without you helping them. You may have to stroke them, sit, sing. If this is the case, be gentle and help them to have the tools to manage this so they feel safe and secure. This can take time.
- A great way of discovering what your child is feeling is to play with her using dolls or action figures to represent members of a family. Have the characters act out several typical family situations: mealtime, going to the park, driving in the car, etc. Enact several of these non-threatening situations, and let your child put words into the figures' mouths. When you get to bedtime, if your child is hesitant to talk, you can try speaking for the characters. If your child has gotten into the play, she will correct you if you give the character's motivations that are inaccurate from her perspective.
- Another approach is to encourage your child to color or paint while she tells you about what she is creating. Be sure to allow her lots of time to open and don't react negatively if she says something you don't want to hear.



- The things you are most likely to find are: your child has night time fears, i.e. she is afraid of the dark, being alone, separation anxiety, closet monsters, etc.; she is jealous of one parent or a sibling; she is afraid of losing your affection if she "grows up"; or some variation of one or more of these.
- If your child is suffering from night time fears, give her tools that empower her to overcome her fears:
 - Ask her what would help her feel safe
 - Allow her to have something of yours to help her feel safe
 - Help her with my mindfulness meditation, finding your safe haven
 - Record a tape of her favorite stories and songs that she can turn on whenever she is feeling alone or afraid (it is best if the recording is of your voice).
 - Give her a stuffed animal as big as she is to sleep with.
- Ensure you have a plan that is well thought out and you let her know what it is. Most parents try to initiate plans at night when everyone is tired. This leads to inconsistency and then it's likely to fail. Spend some time thinking about this together as a couple or enlist a friend if you are a single parent. Take each step at a time slowly. She may sleep in a mattress by your bed, or you may start to reduce stroking time, or sit by the bed etc. Following this, talk it through with your child, ask them if they have any solutions and what they can manage. You should challenge them a bit but you can use a ladder drawing to write each step on the rung. It is always best to be gentle with small steps so everyone can succeed. Have a reward chart for each step. Remember it's normal for your child to resist after the third night. Stick to the plan and BE CONSISTENT (inconsistency is the most common mistake)
- If the primary reason your child wants to sleep with you is night time fears, you should be able to switch her into her own bed as soon as she has the tools to cope with her fears.
- If you discover that your child is jealous of one parent or a sibling, evaluate the situation and determine if she has reason to be jealous. This can be common if you are separated or divorced and meet a new partner.
- If she has a younger sibling who is getting most of your attention during the day, she may feel the only time she "gets you" is at night. The best way you can help overcome her jealousy is to pay special attention to her when she is not asking for it.
- Spend positive time with your child. Have special time with them, play with them. Look out for my podcast coming soon on Special Time.

Good Luck and if all this fails, get some help. Contact me for a consultation. With love Catherine (Copyright 2017)