

## BRISTOL CHILD PARENT SUPPORT HELPING YOUR CHILD SLEEP IN THEIR OWN BED

For some, your child sleeping in your bed may not be a problem, but it is a common theme for parents who attend my clinic, so here are few ideas to help them sleep in their own bed. With love Catherine

- 1** The best approach is to discover the underlying cause or causes for your child's behaviour. 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
- 2** 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.
- 3** The things you are most likely to find are: your child has nighttime 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.
- 4** If your child has nighttime fears, you will need to empower her to manage them, this is why a behavioural sleep plan will not work in isolation. Talk to them problem solve with them in the first instance
- 5** You will need to take some time for your child's feelings to change before you can move her into her own bed. When you do, you may need to make the change in several stages. The first few nights, she might sleep on the floor beside your bed. The next move might be right outside your door, then into her own bed. The large stuffed animal or the tape recording of your voice may help ease the transition.
- 6** 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.