

How to get your child to beg to go to bed!

By Margaret Saunders

As you know, it is not always easy getting your child to go to bed, let alone staying there and then falling asleep. Your child may be the “stay-up late, no matter what” type. You know, its ten o'clock and you're bleary eyed but he is wide awake and bushy tailed. Or its 3 a.m. and it's the fifth time your angel has woken up and called for you from her bed. Perhaps it seven-thirty, bedtime and your “adored one” won't budge from the television set and lounge room. Or, all of these scenarios apply to your household or its something else and you too are drop dead tired. Sound familiar?

It was like this too in our house, and on top of all this one of my daughters liked to wake up at 4.30 a.m. and that was the time she expected us to start our day, and for a while we did. However, the time came when all this stopped and I invented a fool-proof never-fail-go-to-bed-routine which also included both my daughters falling asleep fast! Yes, a dream come true – for us all!

It did take a while, but not forever, and it did happen and now daughter number 2 who is 7 goes to bed happily at 6.00 p.m. and is asleep by 7.00 p.m. without a fuss and her older sister who is nearly 11 goes to bed at 7.30 pm. and is asleep by 8.30 p.m. Night after night after night!!

I have the philosophy that there is no guarantee that I will have my daughters tomorrow. Things can happen. Just as life is given to us it can be taken away. I use the attitude that this day may be the last I have with them, and that this night may be the last one that I put them to bed. And that if this is the last night I have with them, well I want them to have bedtime bliss and fun at bedtime. When I wake up I want to remember that the last moment I had with them was a happy one.

So with this in mind, I make going to bed fun. Sometimes there is a treat for my child by her bed. Sometimes I may do something amusing, like dress her favourite teddy in her pyjamas and have her tucked into my daughter's bed. I use a lot of humour. We all laugh a lot at bedtime, and my routines and activities are strictly adhered to over and over again and they are now embedded into my children's subconscious minds.

So if your child won't leave the television set at 7.30 p.m. why not try horse backing him all through the house with outrageous horse noises and jokes until you eventually get him to the bedroom.

If it's the fifth time your angel has woken up calling out for you why not sing in your sleepest voice a go-to-sleep song that you have made up just for her as you tuck her in one more time.

And if it is ten o'clock and your child is still wide awake and bushy tailed this is the time to get serious about considering a bedtime routine to get him into bed at say 9.00 p.m. for a week, 8.30 p.m. for the next week, 8.00 p.m. for the next week and then 7.30 p.m. for the rest of the year.

This takes planning and tenacity and courage, which is definitely worth while which eventually leads to the "in bed by 7.30 p.m. and asleep by 8.00 p.m." stage and you all become wide awake and bushy tailed at 7.30 a.m. and ready for your day.

When I did this for my eldest daughter the routine fell into place so well that there is one memorable night that she actually asked to go to bed early and it was a Saturday night. It was 6.30 p.m. Who were we to refuse such a request. It sounded too good to be true. And to top it all off she was fast asleep before 7.00 p.m. We had the rest of the night all to ourselves. Heaven and bliss! Until ... we remembered that this was the night daylight savings was changing over and the clocks were to go back an hour. She had sort of gone to bed at 5.30 p.m! Oops!

By now it was too late to change things, and we braced ourselves, and yes, she woke at 5.30 a.m. bright eyed and wanting to start her day. So we did! There were other times when she wanted to go to bed early, and that was OK with us, but, when it came to daylight savings change over we always took note of what time she went to bed.

Both my daughters really adore a "go to sleep song". I made one up and with individual words just for them. I am not musical, I do not sing well, but when I sing their song, especially at night I sing it very, very sleepily and the words are very, very sleep orientated. I cannot recommend this enough especially if your child is a baby or very young. After you have sung your own song a few times, your child will recognize that this is a go-to-sleep time and it is especially handy, if your child has woken in the middle of the night, had a bad dream, is restless or is sick. It can also be used to relax your children as you are driving in stress inducing traffic.

These are just a few ideas and suggestions for getting your child to beg to go to bed. Here's a summary

Step by Step

1. Use the attitude as if this is the last night you may have with your child.
2. Make going to bed fun, use humour, jokes, horse-back rides or something unusual or funny on or in their bed.
3. If your child stays up really late, start a go to bed routine, and put him to bed half an hour earlier each time on a weekly basis until he is in bed at a designated time of say 7.30 p.m. (More details of how to do this are in my manuals – see below.)
4. Make up your own tune and add your own words and sing it to your child or children in a really, really sleepy voice when they are in bed.

Please do not under value the simplicity of these suggestions and ideas which work best by implementing them over and over again.

This article is written by Margaret Saunders at Fresh Waves for Families and How To Get Your Child To Beg To Go To Bed!

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