

The Cradle Coach ACADEMY

Continued Education Gentle Sleep Training for Toddlers

Instructor: Melissa Perry



Setting the Stage for the Toddler Years

1. Mobility
2. Language
3. Independence
4. Testing the Limits

Sleep Expectations of a Toddler

- **From 18 months to 4 years**, toddlers nap once a day. The age to transition away from all napping varies a lot, from 2 to 5+ years old, but the average age is between 3 and 4 years old.
- On average toddlers **18 months to 2 years old** sleep in a 24 hour period 13-14 hours total.
- **2 years to 4 year olds** sleep in a 24 hour period 12-13 hours total.

Making the Child Feel Empowered

The Cradle Coach Academy - Continued Education
Sleep Training Toddlers



Toddlers are in a transitional stage.

Toddlers are also expanding their world and their knowledge – and with that unfortunately comes a degree of anxiety.

Fear and separation anxiety can often lead to insecurity and lack of sleep.

Consistency is Always the Key.



Toddlers Thrive on Routine

- Bedtime
- Naptime
- Healthy Nutritious Meals
- Activity!!



Consistent Bedtime Routine

It's a good idea to begin the bedtime ritual with a wind down period that begins 15-30 minutes before their actual bedtime routine begins. This would include NO TV, playing relaxing music, dimming lights, talking softer, and even moving slower. All of these subtle changes are cues that the child will pick up as signs that bedtime is approaching.

Actual bedtime routines can comprise of many relaxing and sleep promoting activities. Here is a typical bedtime routine:

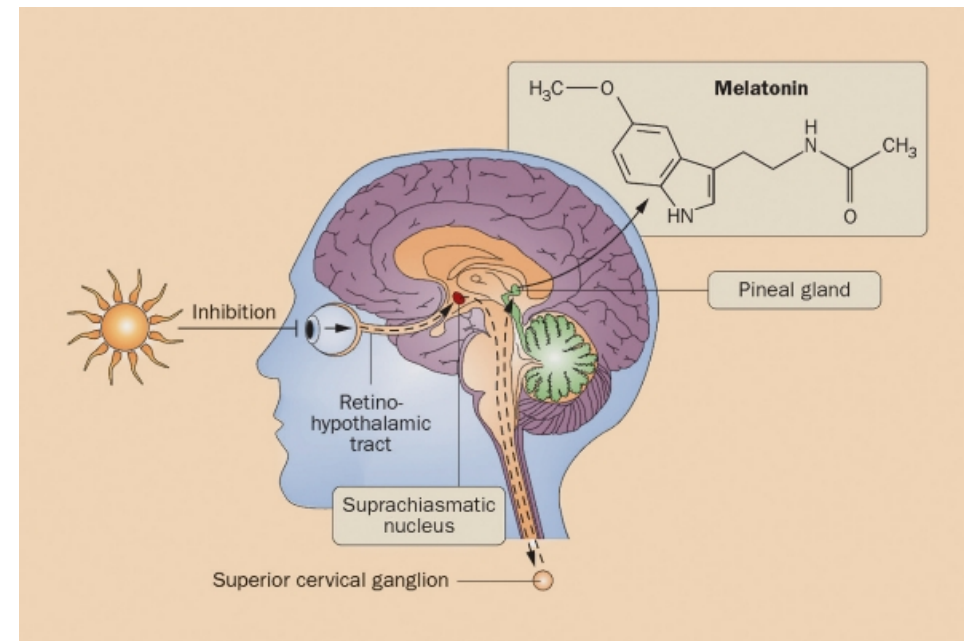
- A relaxing bath
- Putting on pajamas
- Brushing their teeth
- Story time in bed
- Goodnight kisses

The routine itself can be altered or changed entirely depending on what you find works for the child's individual needs. It's not so much the components of the routine that are important, but the consistency that is key.

Consistent Nap Routine

Same with bedtime, having the child nap at the same time each day allows the child's body clock to fall in sync. Our bodies release **chemicals** in a daily rhythm, which the body clock controls. When it **gets** dark, the body releases a hormone called melatonin. Melatonin signals the body that it's time to prepare for **sleep**, and it helps **the body** feel drowsy.

- No TV one hour prior to nap
- darkening shades are essential for nap time
- sound machine on throughout the entire nap
- same routine used at bedtime
- all needs have been met
- kisses and say I love you
- sleep technique begins



Consistent Healthy Nutrition

The Cradle Coach Academy - Continued Education
Sleep Training Toddlers

Caffeine. In more foods than you may realize.

Fatty Foods. Eating fatty foods before bed can negatively impact sleep quality, according to a study in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*.

Coristol Triggers Foods that rank high on the so-called glycemic index (mainly, sugary foods and refined starches) cause cortisol levels to rise, according to the American Nutrition Association.

Avoid big meals before bed.

Load your child up on vegetables, fish, poultry, and eggs, and swap white bread for whole wheat.

Space food out in the day.

While good nutrition promotes healthy sleep, poor sleep is associated with an increased risk for obesity in kids, according to a study in the journal *Pediatrics*.



Daycare Naps vs Naps at Home

The first step is to know that you are being good parents by helping your child get the sleep he needs, even if he cries and complains.

Try to re-create the atmosphere and rituals as much as possible at home.

Try to keep to your child's usual schedule as best as you can. No sleeping in or napping in the car. In can change up the entire routine for your child and remove any chance of a nap.

If poor napping is occurring at daycare, talk to your childcare provider to see if there is something that can be done to help create a solid nap.

No naps on the drive home unless it's part of your child's natural schedule and doesn't interfere with bedtime.



Consistent Activity Times

How much is enough? Physical activity guidelines for toddlers recommend that each day they:

- get at least 30 minutes of structured (adult-led) physical activity
- get at least 60 minutes of unstructured (free play) physical activity
- not be inactive for more than 1 hour at a time except when sleeping





Creating Safety and Comfort

- Emotional Stability
- Intentionality
- Verbal Affirmation
- Physical Touch

Creating Safety and Comfort

- a. **Fear.** Tell the child that everyone in the house is safe.
- b. **The Dark.** I will often have children create a world or I will have the parent create one for them. This can be a candy land world, a Frozen world, a Lego land world, a Thomas world – whatever is their thing. Be creative and have them help you design what is in that world. Are the clouds pink cotton candy? Are all the people little lego mini figures? Are there rainbows and unicorns galore? Discuss and create the same world each night so it become very real to your child. Before you leave their room for the night, tell your child to continue thinking about their world. If your child has a hard time with their imagination, you can purchase a guided imagery cd.
- c. **Monster Spray.** I've recently been discouraging the concept of “monster spray” to ward off the monsters. As much as you cannot convince an irrational toddler that there are no monsters (nor should you try), you do not want to join them by validating their fears. You can utilize the spray concept (which I like), but tell your child that it will help them “have good dreams and good thoughts.”

Creating Safety and Comfort

1. Bedtime Social Story - <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/.../Bed-Time-Social-Story...>
2. The Kissing Cup - <https://www.youtube.com/watch...>
3. The Kissing Cup Ritual - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-OVPbe1MC0>
4. The Sleeperhero - <https://amzn.to/2CimgiN>
5. The bedtime pass - <https://www.thecradlecoach.com/the-bedtime-pass/>

How do you keep them from getting out of their beds?

- Keep to the schedule
- Have a family meeting
- Have a set bedtime
- Follow through with what you say





Proper sleep training techniques to use

What should I do if my toddler suddenly resists napping or drops their nap?

Some children go through periods where they just don't want to take a nap. Don't look at this as if they don't need a nap because often times they still need the rest.

If this happens, try adjusting your child's bedtime. Making bedtime a little earlier or later can sometimes help a child nap better during the day. If after a few weeks of adjusting and consistency in your technique, try adjusting the amount of time you are giving your child their nap.

Example: 3 year old takes one nap but suddenly started refusing napping in the day. Wake time is at 7am, nap is typically at 1pm - 3pm, bedtime is at 7pm.

We would ask you, is bedtime a struggle? How is your child's behavior during the day if the nap is missed? If he is fine without a nap, we would completely eliminate the nap. If he struggles during that time or sleeps for 20 minutes, I would have you either give him a quiet time or continue to offer a nap even if it's shorter.

Signs of a Transition

- Refuses to take a nap they once consistently took.
- Cries the entire length of the nap and once nap time is over, is happy and ready to play.
- Has great behavior until the next nap or bedtime without too much fussing.
- Plays in their crib/room during nap time without fussing.
- Bedtime become a struggle where they don't want to fall asleep right away.



How do you handle a transition?

Don't try and force a nap if your child genuinely doesn't seem tired. Offer a quiet time. Having quiet play toys or puzzles to play with so you still get some rest time as well. Independent play is essential here!

Dr. Marc Weissbluth, author of "Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child" suggests temporarily making bedtime a little earlier to ensure that your child is getting enough sleep at night. This also helps prevent late afternoon crankiness.

A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a blue denim shirt and dark pants, sits on a bed with a grey tufted headboard. She is holding a silver laptop and looking at it. A toddler with light brown hair, wearing a grey t-shirt and white shorts, sits on the bed next to her, looking at the laptop. The bed has white pillows and a grey patterned blanket. A bedside table with a lamp is visible on the right.

Quiet Time with a Toddler

Signs of a Sleep Disorder

Be on the lookout for signs of sleep disorders. If you've established a consistent bedtime routine and made adjustments to fit the child's individual needs and they are still having difficulties with sleeping, the child may have a sleep disorder.

Keep a close eye on both the child's nighttime sleeping behaviors and patterns as well as how they function during the day. If they are chronically tired during the day, have difficulty concentrating on homework, or have behavioral problems at home or school, it could be a sign of an underlying sleep disorder.

<https://www.alaskasleep.com/blog/signs-symptoms-child-has-sleep-disorder>

Set realistic expectations.

While working with families with toddlers, the process can easily take two weeks to see results.

And that's only if you stay consistent. Continue on...

