

How to get your kids out of your bed Blog

It is 11pm. You have finished your day up. You turn off the TV and the house lights, go upstairs to your room. You put on your PJ's, brush your teeth and go to your bed. Your mate is already sleeping snoring quietly. You smile and go to your side of the bed. As you get ready to lay down you have to squeeze onto your queen-sized bed on one corner, so you don't awaken your seven-year-old daughter who is already in your bed. You sigh, but get in the bed trying to get comfortable, but it is not easy. IS THIS YOUR LIFE?

Maybe this better describes you. You decided when you became a parent, you wanted to have a bond stronger than you had with your parents. Your baby always slept in the bed with you since they came home from the hospital. You love your precious bundle of joy, but now he is three years old and he refuses to go to his own bedroom to sleep. You have tried so many times to put your son to bed, but he cries, whines, screams or even throws a tantrum if you don't allow him back into your bed. You tire from fighting with him, after a long day at work, so you give in once more , and your son is back in your bed.

One more scenario. Your spouse and you argue a lot over your child sleeping in your bed. You want to be close to your mate, but intimacy is near to impossible because of your child invading your bed. You love your spouse, but you also love your child and don't mind an occasional night with your child in your bed, but it has become a nightly fight for both you and your child and then your mate. What do you do?

I know what some of you are saying. Some people say, "Get that child out of YOUR bed." No excuses. Others who like the concept of having a "family bed" talk about the closeness and the tight bonds that are built from a family sleeping together. Some people allow their child to sleep with them when their child is afraid or in an unfamiliar place. Some children sleep with their single parents and problems occur when a new person comes into the house and into the bedroom. Maybe a new boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse. This person is seen as an intruder to the child, and the fight is on.

I wanted to list some reasons why you should not sleep with your child but first some research on sleeping habits of children. According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), as many as 24% of parents allow their children to sleep in their beds, at least part of the night.

Parents may have had no problem when their children were younger, but at what age do you or should your child stop sleeping in your bed? There is no specific age that is required, however this is a decision the parents must make. I will give you some suggestions on how to have a smoother transition with school aged children ages 5-9. Children 10 and older are usually not in their parents' beds unless there is an illness, extreme fear or high anxiety level of being alone.

All children need to feel a sense of security in their lives. They require this from birth. A trauma can cause a child to retreat to their parent's bedroom. Counseling along with support from the parents is useful in helping these children transition back into their own bed.

Systematic desensitization is a technique that can be very useful to help all people with fears. It is a process where the fear or trauma symptoms are exposed at very low levels and paired with the anxiety level of the child and a calming intervention. Over time the exposure to the fear increases as the anxiety decreases, along with the amount of intervention. Ultimately the child faces their fear of sleeping alone and goes to bed without much resistance. I do suggest this is a process, and consistency is required for it to be effective.

All children including (school aged) should have a bedtime routine. This helps provide security for them. They need to feel safe and loved and comfortable in their room. Put away any scary objects or things that could scare or harm the child.) toys on the floor, clothes hanging can look like a monster. Reading a bedtime story or two as a part of the routine can also be helpful. Maybe end with a nighttime prayer.

Never demean or belittle your child's fears. We all have had fears we had to overcome. In the case of abuse, a child may take years to really trust people again. Counseling is highly recommended. You don't want to put the child in a situation that triggers their fears or reminds them of their trauma.

I like aromatherapy as another form of treatment for relaxation. Of course, it should be childproofed. Maybe use a diffuser in a place a toddler can't reach. It can soothe them. Lavender and peppermint are known as calming scents. Himalayan Salt lights can also sometimes help. But again, keep it away from the child's reach. Many parents use night lights in the child's room or keep the hall light on.

Remember, you as the parent set the tone. Don't give into your child's demands. Check their room with them and show them there are no monsters or other things they fear. Sing a happy song with them. Be careful not to get them too excited. The goal is for rest not play time. Assure them of your love for them.

Tell them adults need alone time. Use examples they can relate to. Maybe share a time they wanted to be alone or not share something they considered special to them. Kids are ego centric, so they may be able to relate to that better when they are around the age of 6.

Be prepared for a fight. Stand your ground with your child. This is a battle you need to win overall. In case of extreme fears, you might spend time with your child in their room until they feel safe or they fall asleep. Go to them and not let them stay in your bed. Make sure they are warm, not hot or too cool. Make sure they have taken care of their needs, (brushed their teeth, used the bathroom). Don't leave room for their excuses to get back out of the bed. Praise them often when they do good and encourage them when they start to whine or beg to get in your bed. If you are consistent EVERY night your child should be okay sleeping in their room in about two weeks. Yes, you might be tired at first, but don't give up. Tag team if you are a couple. Each one walks them back to the room if they come back to your room.

If your child has a disability or special need, you may need to assist them more and make some concessions. Again, if possible, go to their room, but do be attentive to their needs. Maybe put a camera in their room if you need to watch them for health or safety reasons.

Overall no matter how your child started in your bed, by the time they are in school they should be weaned out of your bed. Seek counsel from other parents who might help support you and don't give up on yourself or your child. You can do it. Tears, fears and all.