

Why a Sleep Book for Preschool and School-Age Children?

(This is an excerpt from the upcoming book **Become Your Child's Sleep Coach: *The Bedtime Doctor's 5-Step Guide, Ages 3-10***. The book is available for pre-order and will ship on or around September 3.)

Seven-year-old Leo had a good bedtime routine, but as soon as his parents left his bedroom, he was sure to come right out again to tell them one more thing, to get one more kiss, to give them one more hug, or to ask for one more drink of water (even though he had to pass right by a faucet with a cup to find his parents!). Leo's parents always granted these requests, hoping that once all of Leo's needs were met, he would fall asleep. However, almost every night it took more than two hours to get Leo to sleep.

Four-year-old Amanda loved her cute and colorful menagerie of stuffed animals. At bedtime, she would not get into bed unless at least a dozen of these were set up at the foot of her bed. If any of her favorites were missing, they had to be found. If any of them fell over, they had to be set up again before she would lie down. Once her stuffed animals were settled, Amanda's mother would leave Amanda's room to put the baby to sleep, and Amanda's father would rub her back and read to her until she fell asleep.

Her father stopped reading when he thought Amanda was asleep, but Amanda often sat right up again to ask him to keep reading. Reading her to sleep often took well over an hour. During the middle of the night, each time Amanda awoke, she would call her father back to reset her stuffed animals or to read again. This happened many times each night, and both Amanda and her father were becoming very sleep-deprived.

Do these stories sound familiar? If bedtime is a struggle in your home, this book will teach you how to improve your child's sleep with a proven five-step plan.

Parents of babies and toddlers have a myriad of books to help them improve their child's sleep, but most books have one chapter or less on older children. You, the parent of a preschool or elementary school-aged child, may be suffering in silence. You may even be embarrassed to admit that your children still have sleep issues. If so, you will be relieved to discover you have plenty of company.

How much company? Let's explore some data from the National Sleep Foundation (NSF). The NSF commissions a "Sleep in America" poll on different sleep-related topics each year. The most recent national poll studying sleep in children aged ten and younger was completed in 2004.

A random national sample of 1,473 parents of children ages ten and younger were asked about their children's sleep behaviors, routines, and environments. This poll revealed some eye-opening statistics:

- Almost three out of four parents reported that their child's sleep needed improvement.

- Sixty-nine percent reported that their child had sleep problems a few nights each week.
- More than half of the preschooler parents reported that their children stalled about going to bed, and one-quarter of them noted that their children seemed overtired during the day. Almost 20 percent reported that their children had difficulty waking in the morning.
- Forty-two percent of parents with school-aged children reported their children stalled about going to bed, and almost 20 percent had difficulty waking in the morning.
- Forty-three percent of parents of toddlers and preschoolers are present when their children fall asleep, and 23 percent of parents of school-aged children are present when their children fall asleep.

Convinced now that you are not alone? Ready to do something about it? You may be ready to help your child become a better sleeper, but you may feel unsure about how to proceed without causing lots of stalling, anxiety, and tears. You may even worry that you might cause some type of trauma for your child, so you have considered seeking help from a professional sleep coach.

However, you may have several concerns about this type of help. First, you may worry that sleep training is too expensive. Sleep coaches can charge up to several hundred dollars per hour to work with families, and several hours are often required. Other sleep coaches recommend in-home overnight visits that may be quite expensive, too, and several nights may be needed. Next, you may think that you have already tried everything a sleep coach would suggest. And finally, you may worry that sleep training will involve a cry-it-out approach that you are unwilling to try.

But parents actually make wonderful sleep coaches for their children once they understand the simple reasons sleep difficulties start in the first place and recognize they can learn exactly how to manage these problems. Countless numbers of parents, with all of the right intentions, make some very common mistakes at bedtime, ones that are almost guaranteed to make their children poor sleepers. Parents make these mistakes out of frustration and, frankly, even out of desperation, but these result in children who stay awake longer at bedtime and, perhaps even worse, stay awake for long periods during the night.

Once you learn how to use this book's five-step guide to help your child fall asleep quickly, easily, and independently, you will become a confident sleep coach. This book takes all the guesswork out of this quest, and you can feel confident about trying this approach because it is based on solid behavioral research and extensive clinical experience.

What are the five steps?

- Prepare your child's bedroom for great sleep
- Use the 5B Bedtime Routine every night
- Teach your child to self-comfort as you work your way out of the room
- Limit callbacks and curtain calls
- Manage night and early morning wakings

Let's get started!