Sleep Strategies for your Young Person

There are many sleep strategies out there to use; the most effective ones are the gradual retreat, the rapid return and the 15-minute return.

We would never suggest leaving your child on their own to cry.

Before implementing a sleep strategy, do you have the correct sleep environment? Do you have a bedtime routine in place? If not, we would suggest you focus on these two things first.

The most important thing when implementing a sleep plan is consistency. Before you start, please ask yourself if:

- you mentally have the energy.
- you physical have the energy.
- you have a few quiet weeks with not a lot planned.

If the answer is no to any of these questions, we would suggest you wait until you are well rested, and the time is right for yourself.

I would also like you to ask yourself if you:

- are due to go on holiday.
- are due to move house.
- have visitors staying over.
- have any sleep overs planned.
- know your child will be out of routine for any reason.

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, we would suggest waiting until after the event before starting the sleep strategy.

Gradual Retreat

This strategy is more suited for those that don't like to be left alone and need the support of a parent / carer to fall asleep.

When it's time for bed, lay your child down. You can give them a kiss and a cuddle and choose one phrase to say, for example: "It's bedtime now, love you, see you in the morning". Try to avoid saying anything else. This helps to keep things consistent and to avoid conversations or arguments with them.

Then sit on a chair next to the bed and wait until they fall asleep. Once they are asleep, wait 20 minutes and you can then leave the room or get into your bed (if you're sharing a room). This will allow enough time for them to get to sleep and not be disturbed when you leave the room.

If they get out of bed, gently lay them back down. You may have to do this several times.

If they wake up in the night, repeat the step as above. Sit on the chair and say the same phrase, "it's bedtime now, love you, see you in the morning". Once they have got back to sleep, wait 20

minutes and then you can leave the room or get back into bed (if you're sharing a bedroom). Keep doing this every time they wake up.

When morning comes, wake them up at the planned time, even if they are too tired and haven't had much sleep.

The next steps are designed to cover a period of months so that they don't become too distressed with too many changes. Once they are used to this new routine and it begins to work, you can then move onto the next stage.

- Move your chair slightly away from the bed towards the direction of the door.
- As long as they are happy and not crying you can gradually move the chair every 3rd to 4th night closer to the door.
- If they get upset when moving the chair, leave the chair where it is until they are happy. Don't move the chair backwards.
- Keep doing this until the chair is on the other side of the door and they can settle themselves and fall asleep without you there.
- If they wake during the night, return to the chair, and continue the steps above. The chair represents where you come back to if they wake during the night.
- Remember, consistency is key.

Rapid return

This strategy is more suited for those who do not like their parent / carer in the room with them, or who may become for distracted if there is someone in the room.

When it's time for bed, lay your child down. You can give them a kiss and a cuddle and choose one phrase to say, for example: "It's bedtime now, love you, see you in the morning". Try to avoid saying anything else. This helps to keep things consistent and to avoid conversations or arguments with them.

Then, leave the room and wait outside the bedroom. As soon as your child goes to get out of bed or stand up, return to the bedroom. Don't give them any eye contact or conversation, except your chosen phrase. Put your child back into bed or lay them back down and leave the room again. For teenagers, this may include taking screens or devices off them.

Repeat this until your child is asleep. Once your child is asleep, wait 20 minutes before you move away from the room. This will allow enough time for child to get into a deep sleep, allowing you to move from outside the room without disturbing them.

At first, you may have to repeat this many times, but consistency is key.

If your child wakes during the night, put them back to bed and wait outside their bedroom, repeating what did before. Once your child is asleep, wait 20 minutes before you move away from the room again.

When morning comes, wake them up at the planned time, even if they are too tired and haven't had much sleep.

15-minute return

This is more suited for those who are able to fall asleep on their own but may need some reassurance from time to time.

When it's time for bed, lay your child down. You can give them a kiss and a cuddle and choose one phrase to say, for example: "It's bedtime now, love you, see you in the morning". Try to avoid saying anything else. This helps to keep things consistent and to avoid conversations or arguments with them.

Then, leave the room and return in 15 minutes. The young person is reassured that someone is going to come back, and they also feel reassured that the parent / carer knows that they're still awake. Keep returning every 15 minutes until they are asleep.

If your child wakes during the night, put them back to bed and return every 15 minutes until they have fallen back to sleep, repeating the steps you did before.

When morning comes, wake them up at the planned time, even if they are too tired and haven't had much sleep.