

Marc Landry - Occupational Therapist
#1701-1188 Howe Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2S8
604.806.0675

vanmarc98@yahoo.ca

www.marclandry.ca

COTBC (College of Occupational Therapy for BC) Registration # AA0961

Bedtime Ideas

Coming up with a plan to help a child get to sleep or back to sleep is very individualized. Structure and routine are very important, but there are also sensory and behavioural considerations. After deciding on an approach, it should generally be tried for a period of time before results are assessed. It will take a child to get used to a change in routine, even one that is positive. Once an approach is used consistently for a while, then simple modifications can be made or a different approach tried. As you try different approaches, try to identify little things that are positive and incorporate them into the next approach as well. This is an area that often requires some difficult trial and error before everyone is happy.

- Give your child notice. "10 minutes until bedtime" or "You can play for five more minutes." Try using a timer for that final warning.
- Stick to a bedtime routine. It may include stories and songs, a look at a book or collection, a back rub, and snug tuck-in. Use "special" bedtime songs, stories, books, and activities that can become associated with the bedtime routine. Do these things in the bedroom after getting into bed or after at least getting the bed ready. **Use your visual schedule to help the child remember the 'routine'.**
- Children with tactile defensiveness are very particular about clothing, so provide comfortable pajamas. Some like them loose, some like them tight, some like them silky, some don't like them at all. Few like them bumpy, scratchy, lacy, or with elasticized cuffs. When the child has preferred sleeping clothes, provide those as much as possible.
- Use percale or silk sheets for a smooth and bump-less bed. Some kids might prefer flannel.
- Try letting your child sleep with extra pillows and blankets, or with stuffed animals.
- Let the child sleep in a snug sleeping bag or bed tent, or on a water bed. One of these may be just the answer.
- Some children will really like heavy blankets/quilts while others are more sensitive to textures. Some kids will also like sheets tucked in very snugly. Explore a bit to see what works best for your child and stick with anything that works.

- Sometimes a child who wakes up during the night will go back to sleep in a comfortable spot nearby, such as a bean bag chair, a rocking chair, a small trampoline, or a "quiet area". A "quiet area" is a small area that feels snug and relaxing. Often located in a corner, furniture and blankets make good walls while mats and cushions help make it cozy and muffle noise. A collection of textures and quiet sensory materials is often helpful, as touching them can help relax a fidgety child.
- Do not allow a child who wakes up during the night to access the whole house or activities which are stimulating or alerting. If you allow your child to sleep with you, this is likely to become very difficult to stop.
- If the child continues to wake up, allow some quiet activities, as long as the child remains quiet.
- Relaxing background noise may be calming and effective. The rhythmical sound of waves or the steady sound of rain can help one get to sleep. Maybe certain music can be played only at bedtime and quietly. Some children fall asleep much better with quiet music, and with child friendly tape recorders it is easy for a child to learn to turn the tape over and press play during the night. A child can also learn to wind up a music box placed near the bed.

SI-Bedtime Ideas.pages