

# How to Establish a Bedtime Routine.



## Tips on how to set up a bedtime routine.

- ❖ Keep your child's bedtime consistent. This helps to train the brain to recognise when it is tired.
- ❖ Try not to change your routine – if you want your child to have a slightly later bedtime at the weekends, then only change it by no more than an hour.
- ❖ Get things organised before you start the bedtime routine e.g. PJ's on the bed ready, bath filled, curtains drawn and lights dimmed around the house, all screens turned off and relaxing music playing softly in the background.
- ❖ Start the bedtime routine 30 mins to an hour before you want your child to go to sleep.
- ❖ Keep activities calm and relaxing such as jigsaw puzzles, drawing or colouring. Stay away from lively or stimulating activities.
- ❖ Help your child to relax by avoiding TV or using electronic devices such as tablets, phones, consoles etc once you start your bedtime routine.
- ❖ Avoid checking the time or rushing your child.
- ❖ Give your child gentle reminders of what's coming next, possibly whilst they're in the bath e.g. 'In 5 mins you can get out of the bath and get your PJ's on.'
- ❖ Soothing music or monotonous sound can help to settle a child to sleep.
- ❖ Try to end the day on a positive note by telling your child something they did that pleased you.
- ❖ It is just as important to wake up the same time everyday including weekends.
- ❖ BE CONSISTENT!

## A Good Routine.

### Example – your times may differ

8.00pm - No screens, dim lights, pull curtains or blinds, light snack

8.10pm – Relaxing activities

8.30pm – Bath time (warm not hot)

8.45pm – Toilet/teeth

8.50pm – Book or chat in bed

9.00pm – Say 'it's night time, go to sleep' Lights out

## What if I want to get my child's bedtime to be earlier than it currently is?

Once your child has slept 3 nights at their bedtime, say 9pm then move it back 15mins to 8:45. Remember to also start your routine 15mins earlier at 7:45pm. Repeat every 3 nights until you get it down to where you would want it to be.

## What if my child wakes in the night?

- ❖ If your child gets up in the night, calmly return them to their bed. Avoid talking to them is possible.
- ❖ If your child has woken up because they have had a bad dream, quietly reassure them with a cuddle, stroke their hand or apply gentle pressure on their arm.
- ❖ Some children will take longer to settle after a bad dream. You can help by reassuring them that the dream is not real and that dreams are just a movie of which they are the director. They can change the movie by imagining something else e.g. the monster changes to a playful puppy or the bad man gets stuck in toffee.

## Bedtime rituals for Anxious Children.

### Read My Fingertips

Trace words, pictures or messages on your child's back with your fingertips. Try to think of things to induce sweet dreams. This can be very soothing and relaxing.

### Sweet Dreams

Before your child goes to sleep, try exchanging stories that begin, 'The wonderful dream I am going to have tonight is....'

### Start a Saga

Invent your own epic story. Start with an intriguing story opener such as 'Once upon a time, there was a tiny mouse who strayed away from home....' Take turns adding a sentence to the tale and continue on for a few nights. Keep stories light hearted, no violence etc.

### Piece it Together

Set up a 500- or 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle somewhere that won't be disturbed. Every night, work on it with your child for 15 minutes as part of your bedtime routine. It is a calm activity and you can chat while you work.