A Clinical Treatment Guide to 10 Common Pediatric Behavioral Problems

Going to Bed on Time

Ennio Cipani PhD

Going to bed on time

Ennio Cipani

Table of Contents

Going to bed on time

1. *Setup a consistent schedule for bedtime.*

   In many cases, children who have difficulty going to bed on time have no consistent bedtime. Therefore, an essential first step in getting control over bedtime problems is a bedtime schedule. You need to designate a consistent schedule for bedtime for both weekdays and weekends. In fact, to facilitate learning appropriate bedtime behavior, you might initially have the same schedule for all seven days.

2. *A pre-bed routine is necessary.*

   The pre-bed routine should end in the child being in his or her bed at the designated time. Here is a sample pre-bed routine. At 8:00 p.m., a seven-year-old child brushes his or her teeth, gets a drink of liquids (*nothing with caffeine*) and uses the toilet. The child then goes to his or her bedroom, puts on pajamas and gets in bed by 8:25 p.m. This sequence of activities within the pre-bed routine should remain the same, *especially* during the first 6-8 weeks.

3. *Bedtime stories are conditional upon being in bed on time.*

   Many children love to have bedtime stories read to them. You can use this to your advantage in solving bedtime problems. In the above scenario, the child was to be in bed at 8:25 p.m. If the child is in bed at or before 8:25 p.m., the child earns a bedtime story. However, if the child is not in bed by 8:26 p.m., then he or she goes to bed without a story. The length of story time should be fixed with a timer to avoid arguments about how long you should read (have a timer by the bedside for this reason).

4. *After the bedtime story, no other competing activities should occur in the bed.*

   If you are going to teach your child to fall asleep upon going to bed, you cannot allow them to watch TV or play video games once in bed. Those activities would interfere with the development of a quick sleep onset pattern (this is also true for adults who have difficulty with sleep onset).

5. *A bedtime pass is provided if the child gets to bed by the designated time.*

   In addition to earning the bedtime story, the child also earns a bedtime pass that allows him or her to leave the bed just once for any additional need. The bedtime pass was

developed by Dr. Pat Friman and fellow researchers at the University of Kansas, who found it very effective in reducing behavior problems. The bedtime pass is surrendered by the child to allow one trip out of the bed. The child is not allowed to leave the bed subsequently. If the child leaves the bed after the pass is surrendered, an additional consequence is warranted.

6. *A star chart system for adherence is strongly advocated.*

Highly preferred weekend activities can be exchanged for points earned by going to bed on time and not getting up after the bedtime pass has been surrendered. For example, each night that Billy (hypothetical child) gets to bed on time and does not leave the bed subsequent to surrendering his pass, he earns one star. If he earns five stars (out of seven in a week), he gets a designated weekend privilege. When Billy does not earn at least five stars, the designated weekend privilege is not available for that particular weekend. Of course, every week brings a new opportunity for your child to earn that weekend privilege (read Section IV in free downloadable ebook, *Punishment on Trial,* for further information on arranging consequences). You should track this weekly information on a calendar (or other data sheet such as the one below) to review progress.

Bedtime Star Chart:

If child went to bed and stayed (using bedtime pass only once), place a star on that date

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date: