

Bedtime Battles




Little Village Sleep

Why do they happen?

When I work with families whose babies are fighting bedtime, I often see babies fighting bedtime because they are not tired enough or exhausted and have their second wind (therefore, a schedule change might be needed). I also find that if you are really anxious and stressed, your baby is panicking at bedtime because they are learning from their primary caregiver that bedtime is stressful and not safe. If you think this might be happening, you really need to reflect on how you feel about bedtime and sleep. Both you and your baby's temperament is a huge factor when it comes to sleep. **My Temperament and Sleep course is great for understanding all of this.**

For example, highly sensitive children may often need more time in the dark to wind down and be quiet and calm, while really physical babies may need more rough-and-tumble play. If you are afraid of emotion and you are rocking and bouncing for hours, this may also be leading to overstimulation when what your baby really needs is to release emotion and be heard, not silenced. Another thing that can lead to your baby not falling asleep when breastfed is that dip in milk supply that can occur in the early evening. Being hungry will often lead to babies wanting to tank up before bed, and if there is any reason that mom's supply has dropped, it may also lead to bedtime challenges.

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Other Possibilities

Low ferritin can also cause restlessness and difficulty falling asleep, and any breathing-related issues may contribute to your baby's inability to drift off, especially while lying flat, as I discuss in my **False Starts guide**. Physical discomfort can be the main reason a child might have trouble falling asleep.

If you have an older baby or toddler with difficulty falling asleep, the number one reason is feeling disconnected. As a reminder, a baby at any age needs to have their cup filled with love and connection all day, especially at the end of the day. They need to feel loved and safe and like they had time to be with you one-on-one without any distractions. If you are rushing bedtime, or you have been separated all day, or your little one spends most of their awake time busy exploring or playing. Your little one may feel disconnected and use bedtime to play with and connect with you. If this situation happens in your home, consider adding a "special time" before bed, where you create a box of activities or special books that only come out at bedtime. Then, before bed, let them choose who they want to spend the activity time with and what they want to do. This time should never be taken away as a punishment; it must happen every night.

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Gentle Reminders

Make sure to put away your phone and spend some time really connecting without distractions. These 15 to 20 minutes before bed (or at the beginning of your bedtime routine) can be a great way to help your little one feel connected, relax, and go to sleep.

Most of the "fighting sleep" happens when one of the foundations listed below is out of place.

- Setting realistic expectations around sleep for their age.
- Understanding your child's temperament and sleep needs
- Routines that support your child's temperament.
- Developmental milestones
- Connection
- Sleep environment
- Sleep science and sleep schedules
- Discomfort (gas, constipation, indigestion, muscle soreness from new movement, mattress, teething, illness)
- Feeding & New foods
- Parental self-care (parents taking care of their needs)
- Birth trauma
- **The Emergent Process, The Process of Adaptation, All About Attachment** (Webinars)
- **Toddler Bedtime Battles** (Complete Guide)

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