

A man with dark hair, wearing a grey t-shirt, is sitting on a couch and reading a large open book. A baby, wearing a white shirt and blue and white striped pants, is sitting on his lap, looking at the book. The scene is lit with soft, natural light from a window in the background, which shows green foliage. The text "Bringing your partner into the bedtime routine" is overlaid in the center of the image in a large, black, sans-serif font.

Bringing  
your  
partner into  
the bedtime  
routine

## INVOLVING YOUR PARTNER/ USING YOUR VILLAGE

“When a father spends significant amounts of time in contact with his infant, oxytocin encourages him to become more involved in the ongoing care in a self-perpetuating cycle.”  
Palmer, L.

### A REMINDER THAT THIS IS TRUE FOR ALL PARENTS/PARTNERS

Often, it can start to feel like you are the only person who can do everything with your baby in the first six months of life if you are the breastfeeding parent or even the birth parent. This is absolutely not the case. The more your partner can be involved, the better it is for the whole family. One of the most important things you must accept is that you **CANNOT DO IT ALL ON YOUR OWN**. Knowing that you are **NOT** selfish for needing time for yourself is essential.

Bringing your partner into the bedtime routine



Sleep routines are a great time to involve your partner from day one. Allowing the two of them to create a peaceful bedtime routine that may involve a bath, pj's, a song, and then a feed (this is where you can step in if you EBF); otherwise, your partner can do everything, including the feed from beginning to end. This allows that special one-on-one time that will not only build a strong connection, but will allow your partner to feel more confident in their parenting and feel like they can help. The earlier this starts, the easier it will be. Before the age of 3 months, babies are indiscriminately attached, meaning that they are predisposed to attach to any human, and most babies in this time will respond equally to any caregiver. When couples tell me their baby won't go to the other parent at this age, it's usually because the parent they are going to has a hard time with tears and emotions. Babies mirror your emotions from day one and prefer the more relaxed person in the room.

Bringing your partner into the bedtime routine



After four months, they will tend to have a preference for certain people and will learn to distinguish the primary caregiver from the secondary caregiver but will still continue to accept care from anyone. Involving your partner (or anyone else in your village) from the very beginning is going to help your baby accept care from others before they hit their peak in separation anxiety. It is easiest to build up involvement with your village before they start to show a preference towards one caregiver (around seven months) so that you do not become the only one who can put them to bed.

There is no need to worry if you have an older baby who has already created a preference for sleep and care. One of my favourite ways to bring your partner in is to introduce them slowly at bedtime. If your routine is play, bath, books, bottle/feed and bed, have your partner start with doing play on their own, then join you for bath, books, bottle/feed and bed (if your baby is easily distracted, this might lead to feeding challenges so your partner may need to step out for this part until they are the one doing it.)

Bringing your partner into the bedtime routine



Every few days, have your partner take over the next part of the routine with you in the room, walking your baby or toddler through the routine and how important and special it is to have your partner do it, too. While your partner is in the middle of that certain point in the routine, let your baby or toddler know you are stepping out, but you will be right back. Make sure you always come back but leave for longer and longer until your partner has done the next part of the routine entirely by themselves and then join for the rest. Keep going until your partner is doing the whole routine on their own, and make sure to tune into your baby to know how fast/slow to move. It is important to note that for highly sensitive little ones, you may need to move really slowly, and you may not be able to have them do the feed at the end without some supported tears. Purchasing my webinar, the Process of Adaptation, can help you and your partner when you are making changes to your baby or toddler's sleep patterns and are met with the hard but normal emotions that come when we make changes and set boundaries.

Bringing your partner into the bedtime routine



It is important to remember that your night is built during the day. Take some time before bed to give your little one some quality connection between the two of you before expecting them to be ok with you no longer doing their bedtime routine every night like you once did.

Other ways your partner and baby can work on strengthening their bond before concurring the bedtime routine solo. Consider having them take your little one for a walk or even have dinner for two while you take some much-needed time for yourself. A weekend date on Saturday morning with just the two of them to an activity or the park is also a great way to get your partner more involved. The more time they spend together, the more connected they will be and the easier it will be for them to be part of something so important like the bedtime routine. Bedtime needs to be a sacred, special time focusing on attachment and connection before parting ways for the night.

Bringing your partner into the bedtime routine



@littlevillagesleep