

THOSE BED TIME BLUES

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Who hasn't struggled to get their kids to bed without them having to be told twice? Why is bedtime such a problem? There is always something else little Johnny has to do first. "Just let me finish watching this program p-l-e-a-s-e!" "I haven't done my homework." "Jason won't get off the computer so I can have my turn." "It's not fair. Why do I have to go to bed now when Jenna doesn't?" I think most parents have heard every excuse to stave off bedtime - and then some! What about, "I try to go to sleep Mom, but I'm just not tired." Or, "I'm scared there is someone under my bed when you turn the light off."

Here are some suggestions that will make bedtime a much happier event in your home. Create a routine and a schedule for your family - and stick to it. Small children, especially, feel more secure when they know what is happening at any given time. Here is an example: Dinner is to be followed by a bath or shower, putting on pajamas, and cleaning teeth. At 7.30 p.m. Johnny goes to bed for story time. After one story, one song and prayer for the family and especially for Johnny, Mom or Dad tuck him in and turn off the light. Jenna follows the same routine, but she is 2 years older than Johnny and may stay up till 8 p.m. She may read a story quietly herself in her room but at 8.30 p.m. the light is turned off.

If there's a hassle over TV programs, then perhaps a good idea might be to play a fun video that will finish within the timeframe. If TV becomes a problem, turn it off after dinner and encourage the kids to play a quiet game or read until it is their allotted bedtime. If unfinished homework is a problem, ensure that this is completed before dinner at night. It is important for children to have a short free time when they get home from school. A break is as important for them as it is for us after a busy day. We just want to sit back and kick our shoes off, and our kids need to unwind, too. If they need to take turns on the computer to complete homework assignments, prioritize projects to make sure that each child has enough time to get their project done. This will teach your children how to plan ahead so they do not constantly get caught doing work at the last minute - and often not giving it the required effort.

If your child can't go to sleep when they go to bed, think about their activities and food and fluid intake prior to bedtime. Are they playing roughhouse games, or drinking sugar-laden, highly caffeinated fluids or eating junk food? Our lifestyle has become so sedentary these days that kids don't participate in enough physical activity. Kids need hard out exercise on a regular basis.

Is your child afraid of the dark? Then leave the bedroom door open, buy a little night-light, and put on some soft music for them to fall asleep to. Do not read them scary bedtime stories or let them watch scary programs at any time. The mind never forgets. If your child continues to be fearful and does not want

you to leave them alone, then there could be a serious problem that needs to be investigated professionally. They may be legitimately afraid of someone at home, or may be being bullied.

We need to protect our kids' minds by monitoring their media exposure. We need to keep them healthy by making sure they get lots of exercise, but not prior to bedtime. They need to feel secure by living in a peaceful, loving and safe environment. They will rest more easily when they know they are valued and when they experience unconditional love.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.