

PHYSIOLOGY & DEVELOPMENT (Module 2)

Lesson 3: Development

Because developmental changes can have a profound effect on sleep, we want to give you an overview of how different developmental factors can affect sleep and how to account for them once you start to implement your sleep plan.

Lesson 3.1: Motoric development

Learning any new motoric skills often disrupts sleep, as babies actually practice their newly acquired skills before falling asleep, in the middle of naps, and during the night.

The most common developmental milestones that affect sleep are:

- Rolling
- Tummy sleeping
- Army-crawling
- Crawling (on all fours)
- Pulling to a stand
- Cruising
- Walking

How motoric developments affect sleep:

Practicing new skills at night may cause babies to wake up and cry, as they may suddenly find themselves in an uncomfortable position that they don't know how to get out of! Difficulty settling to sleep and sudden long awakenings (usually between 1am-3am) often signals an upcoming or ongoing motoric developmental leap. These middle-of-the-night parties usually last a maximum of 2-3 weeks (but could only be a few days), and will decrease as the child becomes more proficient in that skill.

If your child is showing signs of going through a developmental leap, we recommend waiting 1-2 weeks before starting the sleep training process.

Go to your worksheets now and answer the questions for **Module 2, Lesson 3.1 - Motoric Development.**

Lesson 3.2: Separation anxiety

Separation anxiety may begin between 7-9 months of age, made worse by over-tiredness, developmental leaps or teething. A lovey or cuddle toy for sleep time can give your little one comfort. **Also, be sure that you emotionally connect with your little one regularly throughout the day, and when you do have to be apart, reassure them verbally, "I will see you when you wake up/when I get back."**

Practice separations in a fun way throughout the day by playing games such as peek-a-boo, or reading board-books with flaps and hidden pictures, or doing role-plays with toys as they get older. This will make the real separations easier and more positive for your child, and help them grasp the concept of object permanence.

Separation anxiety often peaks at ~14-18 months. Be sensitive and responsive to your toddler's big emotions during this time, while still remaining calm. Practicing goodbyes, creating a "goodbye ritual", and leaving confidently without too much fanfare can be helpful tools to minimize stress at this age.

Helpful tips if you plan on doing sleep training, but your child is showing increased separation anxiety:

- Practice short times apart, where your little one is cared for by someone you trust and the child feels comfortable with. You can start with 10 minutes of separation, gradually increasing the time as you feel your child is ready.
- In the case where your child strongly prefers one parent or relies on one parent's assistance when settling (such with nursing to sleep), and you would like to increase the other parent's involvement, start by giving your little one lots of quality alone time with that parent, then involving them in bedtime rituals, and then eventually letting them put the child to sleep (starting with a nap and then moving on to bedtime.) Often, this is easiest when the preferred parent goes out

of the house.

Keep in mind that a lot of symptoms of separation anxiety are similar to those of a child struggling with overtiredness (clinginess, irritability, etc). So while we encourage you to be sensitive to your child's emotional needs, and adjust your sleep training plan accordingly, we encourage you to continue working towards better sleep habits. In practice we usually see that after sleep training the symptoms of separation anxiety have decreased, because the child is well-rested.

Go to your worksheets now and answer the questions for **Module 2, Lesson 3.2 - Separation Anxiety.**

Lesson 3.3: Sleep Regressions

Even though some experts don't believe that sleep regressions really happen, from our practical experience with families the evidence is clear. In contrast to motoric developments, which are primarily a development of physical skills, sleep regressions are generally more cognitive in nature, and often coincide with the mental leaps described as "Wonder Weeks". These leaps signify the development not of something that they can physically do but how they perceive and understand the world around them. Because their perception of the world changes with each leap, their behavior often "regresses", and this often causes sleep issues. Sleep regressions often happen around 4 months, 9 months, 12 months, 18 months and 24 months.

That being said, we also want to warn you against labeling every sleep trouble as a regression or developmental leap. Often, parents are too afraid to start the sleep training process, because the Wonder Weeks app says their child is going through a leap or they think it might be a sleep regression. Remember that sleep MAY be affected by developmental factors but that's not always the case! So we encourage you to assess the situation, but also to not wait for the "perfect" time to make changes.

Go to your worksheets now and answer the questions for **Module 2, Lesson 3.3 - Sleep Regressions.**