

SETTLING METHODS (Module 7)

Lesson 2: Key principles for using settling methods

Although each settling method is different in approach, they all have similar principles. Sometimes you also have to adjust a settling method to better fit your family or child's needs (more on how to do this in Module 8), but by keeping these main principles in mind, you'll be able to develop an approach that will not only be successful but also minimize tears at the same time.

Principle 1: Give reassurance, but not constantly

We encourage you to be observant and responsive to your child, regardless of which settling method you are implementing. However, if you need to soothe your little one, keep these interventions intervalled, not constant. This looks different depending on whether you are doing an in-room or out-of-room method. For example, with an out-of-room method, such as the Intervalled Soothing Method, all soothing techniques are intervalled at one time - you stay out of the room your set amount of time, and then go in for a 1-2 minute interval to soothe your baby (e.g. picking up baby, comforting touch, verbal reassurance). On the other hand, with an in-room-method, such as the Gradual Retreat Method, you decrease soothing gradually by intervallling one soothing technique at a time (e.g. slowly reduce from needing picking up, comforting touch and verbal reassurance to only giving verbal reassurance over a few days).

Principle 2: Keep interventions short

All calming interventions must be short (1-3 min depending on method), regardless of the outcome. Don't extend the time of your intervention, even if your child doesn't calm down during it as this can lead to even more tears in the long-run! *(Your child will learn the cause-effect of "if I stop crying, I will be put back into bed. If I cry longer and harder, Mama will stay in the room / keep patting me.")*

Principle 3: Emotions are allowed

The way your little one reacts to the sleep training process will depend largely on their personal temperament - some children hardly cry at all, for others it's very emotional. Regardless of how your child responds, try to remember that simply stopping the frustration and crying is not the end goal → walking them through the tough emotions, while still creating new patterns IS. Frustration toward change is normal and to be expected! Try to keep a reflective and observant perspective. WHY are they crying? What are they trying to express? **Reflect back to Module 5, Lesson 4 on how to support your child before and during sleep training.**

Principle 4: Be confident

If you're unsure about the method you're using or how to apply it, your little one will sense this hesitation and have a harder time settling. Your child will also mirror your emotions, and if they can feel your stress, frustration and impatience, will also react more emotionally and stressed - they can't tell what exactly is bothering you, but they can sense it all the same. On the other hand if you are able to regulate your own emotions, you will create a calm atmosphere that feels safe, a space where learning can occur - this is known as co-regulation - and is an important part of helping your child regulate their feelings, especially in the first 18-months of life. **Refer back to Module 5; Lesson 4, as well as the workbook exercises for Module 5 on how to make co-regulation easier on yourself.**

Principle 5: Stay consistent

Pick one method and stick with it for at least 5-7 days, even if things seem to get worse in the beginning. Switching from method to method, or occasionally responding to a behavior and other times not, will only confuse your child and lead to more problems! This is called intermittent reinforcement and we will explain this in more detail in Lesson 2 of Module 8. Intermittently reinforced behaviors are very difficult to change, often involving lots of tears. There are situations where it's necessary to change methods, but switching methods too quickly can do more harm than good. If you do

feel like the method you initially chose doesn't work well for you, there's a lesson in Module 8 to help you make the necessary shift.

Principle 6: Be patient

Changing any ingrained habit, such as sleep habits, takes about 2-3 weeks. Don't give up if you don't see improvement immediately, or if things seem to get worse in the first 3-4 days. Ups and downs are a normal (and very common) part of the process. Rest assured that the needs of your child are being met! If, however, you don't see significant improvement within 7-10 days, take advantage of the group coaching calls we offer so that we can have a look together to see if there may be something that still needs to change in order for things to fall into place.

Principle 7: Give your child space to learn

Don't rush to intervene, but rather allow space and time for your child to practice new sleeping skills. Whenever your child wakes too early from a nap or in the middle of the night, it's best to wait 5 minutes before you intervene with your chosen settling method. This gives them a chance to re-settle independently. Sometimes going in too early can actually interrupt the settling process and wake a child up even more! Moreover, if your child isn't crying, there's actually no reason to intervene at all. Remember, you can't make your child sleep! You can only offer them a chance to sleep by putting them into their bed at the right time for sleep and providing a sleep-conducive environment.