

## SLEEP TRAINING PROCESS (Module 8)

### ***Lesson 4: How to adapt a settling method to fit your family and when to change method***

Sometimes in order to make a settling method work for you and your family, you have to adjust it a little bit! We know that every baby and every family is different, and so in this lesson we want to share a few of the main adjustments we've offered families regarding the settling method over our years of coaching, and hope that these ideas will help you create a sleep plan that really fits YOUR family!

#### **1) Adapting an out-of-room settling method while still room-sharing**

If you want to work on your little one learning to settle independently at bedtime with an out-of-room method, such as Intervalled Soothing, but are still room-sharing, you're left with the question of, what do I do in the middle of the night when I'm in the room and my baby wakes up?! In this case, you would basically hold to your set intervals of intervention, but without leaving the room (who wants to leave their room in the middle of the night?!).

*For example, you are using Intervalled Soothing to encourage self-settling at bedtime with your 5 month old baby. In the middle of the night, he is still waking up every 2-3 hours. You would lay on your bed quietly, and every 5 minutes go to the side of his crib and do your check and console, and then lay on your bed for another 5 minute interval.*

**\*\*NOTE:** If after 7 days of doing this, your little one is still waking frequently in the night or struggling to settle at bedtime with an out-of-room method, most likely you are disturbing their night sleep cycles when you come into the room at your bedtime AND they are feeling confused because of the intermittent reinforcement ("They want me to fall asleep at bedtime without mommy, but then she's there in the middle of the night! What's the deal?!). In this case, switching to an in-room method OR moving your little one to their own room may help.

## **2) Weaning sleep associations one by one, rather than all at once**

If your baby has multiple sleep associations, you may want to take it slow and remove them one at a time. This obviously takes longer, and for some parents this makes it harder to be consistent. However, if weaning all sleep associations at once makes you feel overwhelmed, this might be helpful for you!

*For example, your 6 month old baby is used to sucking on the pacifier and being rocked to sleep in your arms (which means your presence at bedtime is also an association!). Instead of removing the pacifier cold-turkey, and starting the process with settling in bed, you might first rock your baby to sleep without the pacifier for the first few days or even a couple of weeks. Once this pattern is established, you can start only holding to sleep, and decrease the rocking. After a few days of this, you could then start using one of the other settling methods (Intervalled Soothing, Gradual Retreat or Accompanied Settling) to teach your child to fall asleep in their bed, and slowly work yourself out of the room when you feel ready.*

## **3) Working on day sleep and night sleep separately**

Sometimes, it's possible to work on day and night sleep separately, starting with implementing the settling method only at bedtime and during the night for the first 5-7 days, before implementing it at the beginning of the morning and/or lunch nap. This way, your days are easier to manage and keep in the optimal day rhythm. However, this is only possible if:

- Your child uses a different sleep aid during the day than at night. For example, if they fall asleep in the stroller during the day (movement as a sleep aid), but then are nursed to sleep at bedtime and during the night.
- Your child can already do one long nap during the day.

Keep in mind that if you choose to work on day and night sleep separately, the sleep training process might be longer.

*NOTE: If the falling asleep at bedtime and nights don't improve during the first 5 days, this may be because your child is still getting help while settling for naps, which may act as intermittent reinforcement (sometimes they get help, other times not). Don't postpone working on naps because*

*you'd like the nights to improve first!*

#### **4) Bringing the other parent into the bedtime process**

Especially if your little one was used to nursing to sleep or settling with mom, having the other parent do the settling at bedtime with your chosen settling method can be helpful! It's hard for a baby to concentrate on settling when the very thing (MAMA'S MILK!) is right in front of them. With dad or a non-nursing parent, that's not so much of an issue! Sometimes it's even helpful for mama to leave the house for a walk so that it doesn't feel so stressful - it can be too easy for mama to take over if things are a little harder the first couple of times.

*If you are going to take turns settling your baby, keep in mind that the person who settled the baby to sleep in the first place should also be the one to do the settling method if baby wakes too early from the nap, or during the night (unless it's feeding time - then mom is a better choice!)*

**NOTE: If your little one is showing signs of heightened separation anxiety,** and they get hysterical when one specific parent takes over bedtime and night-time settling, then it's best to introduce that parent to the bedtime routine step-by-step. They might take over the reading story time, or have a calm playtime with the child on the floor in between the evening milk feed and bedtime. In this situation, it's best to focus on activities that nurture that specific parent-child bond, rather than adding more stress.

#### **5) How to adapt methods if there is hysterical crying**

If your baby gets very upset with the method you have chosen, you might need to adapt it.

**For example:**

- **If your baby does NOT calm down with the Shhh-Pat method,** but instead seems to get more worked up or agitated after 10 minutes of implementing it consistently, the patting may be too stimulating and distracting for your baby's particular temperament. In this case, you might just want to keep your hand still

and firm on their torso, while you make a shhhh noise or switch to the Accompanied Settling method.

- **When starting the Gradual Retreat Method**, there may need to be an extra phase of 2-3 days at the beginning where your child requires constant touch or hand-holding to soothe, especially when weaning from nursing or rocking to sleep.
- **When implementing Accompanied Settling**, your baby might become more angry in your arms after being picked up, or cries worse after being laid down again. This indicates that the pick-up is too stimulating or confusing for them. In this case, stop the pickups, and only console your baby in bed, or you might want to switch to Shhh-Pat or to Gradual Retreat.
- **When using the Intervalled Soothing**, if the time it takes your child to fall asleep doesn't decrease after consistently implementing the method for 2-3 days and there's still a lot of crying involved, perhaps changing the interval to be slightly shorter or longer could be helpful. Alternatively, you could do this method from a chair by the door inside the room, rather than leaving the room entirely. This way there is still distance (time and space) but your baby can hear your voice and sense you close.

## 6) Switching methods completely

Some parents feel they need to switch from an in-room method, like Accompanied Settling, to an out-of-room method such as the Intervalled Soothing after a few days, because they can tell their presence in the room is almost more distracting or frustrating to their baby than helpful, or because they themselves are getting too frustrated and overwhelmed by the crying when staying in the room.

Other parents realize after implementing an out-of-room method like Intervalled Soothing that their little one is struggling to self-soothe on their own, and might need a bit more hands-on assistance with an in-room method like Accompanied Settling. That's totally ok! Your baby will get there eventually, and it's better to take baby steps than overwhelm your little one with too much too fast.

**Here are some guidelines for assessing whether or not you need to switch methods. Only change methods if you can tick all 3 boxes below:**

- Settling is not getting easier in 5-7 days of consistently implementing your current method **OR** settling is getting increasingly harder each day (it takes longer and/or there is more crying involved)
- You have read the method description again and are sure you are implementing it correctly
- You have ruled out a sleep regression or motoric leap as a possible cause for the difficulties (check out Module 2, Lesson 3 - Development and the Troubleshooting Module for signs of developmental regressions, and how to handle these during sleep training).