

ADEQUATE SLEEP CHAPTER 6-2

# PARENTS GUIDE TO TEACHING CHILDREN TO SLEEP ALONE



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— wellness —

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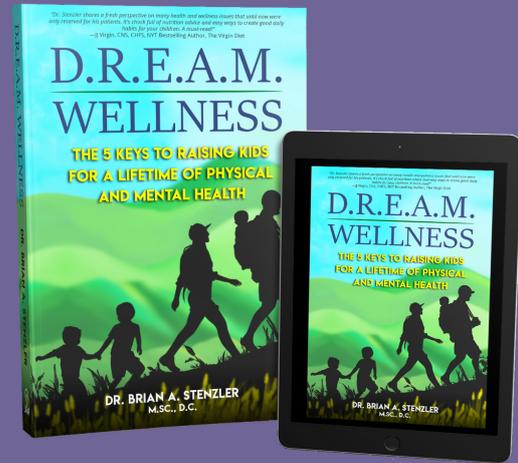
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This guide is a bonus supplement to go with Chapter 6-3 "Adequate Sleep" in the book, *DREAM Wellness: The 5 Keys to Raising Kids for a Lifetime of Physical and Mental Health*.

If you do not have a copy, you can order your Kindle or printed version now at [www.DREAMWellnessBook.com](http://www.DREAMWellnessBook.com).



Who's been sleeping in your bed? If your child is waking you up at night wanting to climb under the covers with you, you could be missing out on the rest you need to handle your responsibilities at work and home. More importantly, it's important for your child to develop the confidence to become more independent.

As long as you're prepared to withstand some fussing and crying, you can stop battling over bedtimes. Consider these suggestions for helping your child to stay in their own room so your whole family can enjoy a good night's sleep.

## Steps to Take with Your Child

- 1 Provide reassurance.** Fear of monsters, burglars, and other imagined dangers are often the reason why your child wants you by their side. Validate their feelings. Comfort them after a nightmare and give them a stuffed toy to hug.
- 2 Spend time together.** Your child may also need more attention. Schedule one-on-one time during the day for baking a healthy treat or taking an outing to the zoo.
- 3 Talk it over.** Ask your child what would help them sleep in their room. If they have trouble putting it into words, try making drawings or acting out the scene with sock puppets.
- 4 Start early.** Naturally, it's easier if you begin the process before they can walk to your room on their own. It's simpler to prevent the habit than to break it.
- 5 Train in intervals.** If your son or daughter is already used to late night visits after scary movies or thunderstorms, you can still create new routines. Tell them you'll check on them every 10 minutes if they stay in their bed. Increase the intervals over time.
- 6 Proceed gradually.** If your child needs more persuading, there are interim steps you can use. Sit by their bed until they fall asleep or let them sleep on an air mattress on your bedroom floor temporarily.
- 7 Be boring.** This is one of those rare occasions when you want your kids to shun your company. Limit conversation and cuddling so hanging out with you isn't much fun anyway.
- 8 Add lighting.** Often times, the child is just be afraid of the dark. A night light or flashlight they can control could be a quick solution.
- 9 Offer rewards.** Going to sleep on their own is a big achievement. Give your kids praise or small "prizes" for the nights they cooperate.

## Steps to Take Yourself

- 1 Examine your motives.** Be honest with yourself about the role you might be playing in the situation. Parents sometimes encourage their kids to share their bedroom, especially when they like their company or want to avoid communicating with their spouse. It may be time to bond more during the day with your child or see a counselor about your marriage.
- 2 Create a barrier.** Do you wake up in the morning surprised to find that your child slept in your bed? Hang a bell on your bedroom door or keep it locked so you can monitor the situation more closely.
- 3 Be firm.** Persistence pays off. If you refuse to make exceptions, you'll be able to reclaim your bedroom faster.
- 4 Model good sleep habits.** Once each family member is enjoying their own bed, you can help them have sweet dreams. Stick to consistent bedtimes and limit late night snacking and TV.

It's easy to drift into bedtime habits that compromise your rest. Almost 24% of parents say their kids sleep in their beds sometimes, according to the National Sleep Foundation. However, if you're consistent and positive, you can turn things around so you and your children sleep peacefully and apart.

