

Pointers For Parents

Putting Children's Sleep Issues To Bed

(NAPSA)—If your child rarely seems tired when bedtime comes around, he or she might need to go to sleep *earlier*.

Sound counterintuitive? Maybe, but that's just one of many proven ways Jennifer Waldburger, a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) and pediatric sleep specialist, says you can deal with children's bedtime issues.

"Most young kids should go to bed between 7 and 8 p.m.," says Waldburger. "If children stay up past then and become overtired, they can produce a hormone called cortisol that has a stimulating effect. Once it's kicked in, they'll act like they drank a pot of coffee."

According to Waldburger, these are some of the most prevalent bedtime challenges and ways to address them:

Problem No. 1: The Stall

Toddlers and preschoolers are notorious for stalling at bedtime. Here's what you can do:

- First, rule out any major issues like separation anxiety or fear of a big transition—starting preschool, say—that might explain the behavior.

- Next, offer lots of pre-bedtime choices so the child feels more in control. Which pajamas does he or she prefer? How many kisses does he or she want? Should the bedroom door be open or closed? It might also help to offer a stuffed animal to cuddle with after you've left the room.

Problem No. 2: A "Second Wind"

Even with an early enough bedtime, young kids have energy that often seems to kick in later in the day. Here's how to channel it:

- Structure some active, after-dinner playtime before their bath—chasing or tickling, for instance—to help them blow off any extra steam.



Apollo from the "Pajanimals" helps preschoolers with bedtime issues every evening on the Sprout television channel.

- Guide kids through a calming, predictable bedtime routine that includes reading or watching an appropriate TV program like "Pajanimals," a new show produced by The Jim Henson Company and 4Kids Entertainment that airs on the 24-hour, preschool TV channel Sprout. It entertains and comforts preschool viewers with cuddly puppets singing original bedtime-themed songs that focus on typical issues like sleeping through the night and being comfortable with the lights out. Waldburger, along with fellow sleep specialist Jill Spivack, LCSW, served as consultants on the show.

Problem No. 3: Monsters

An imagined monster or other scary character can keep kids awake. Here's what you can do:

- Be supportive. Tell children that monsters aren't real and that they're always safe in their room.

- Don't accidentally reinforce their beliefs by setting up pretend ways to "protect them," such as "force fields" or "monster spray."

For more information, visit www.SproutOnline.com.