

Sleep Protocol

It is common for children who deal with sensory issues to have difficulty with sleep. The sleep challenges may be either difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. If a child is taking longer than 1 hour to fall asleep once they are put to bed, these are things you can do prior to bedtime to ease this sleep transition.

- Acknowledge and recognize that the child's body is having a difficult time shutting down/quieting for the transition to sleep. Do not misunderstand this as sleep avoidance, or the child's desire to manipulate a later bedtime. The child is tired and wants to sleep, as much as you want them to sleep.
- Know that exhaustion in children often looks like hyperactivity. The child's activity level may increase as fatigue increases. It isn't "a second wind," it is exhaustion, meaning that you most likely missed the first opportunity for bedtime, and now you are trying to assist and aid an exhausted child to sleep.

Start the bedtime routine/sleep protocol 60 minutes before bedtime.

1. One hour before bed, turn off TV's, computers, phones, and all screens.
2. 15 minutes of joint pressure activities 60 minutes before bed helps the release of serotonin which will aid in the transition to sleep. Joint pressure activities include hopping, jumping, running, playing catch with a weighted ball, etc.
3. 45 minutes before bed, have the child take a bath/shower with lavender oils (soap or diffuser or lotion).
4. When the child gets out of the bath/shower, wrap them tightly with the towel for deep pressure to help calm and settle their bodies. Apply lotion with deep pressure strokes, again to aid in calming the body. We are often tempted to tickle the child during these times, but tickling is an arousing activity and should be avoided as it could lengthening the transition time to sleep.
5. Complete teeth brushing, toileting, and the entire bedtime routine with lower light, lower activity level, lower sounds, calmer voices.
6. 15 minutes before bedtime, lay in bed with the child, turn on a lavender oil diffuser in the room, read a book quietly together, and let the child lie under a weighted blanket. They may want you to lay on top of them for a while before bed, hold them tightly, or have you wrap them up in blankets. The extra weight helps quiet and calm their bodies in preparation for the transition to sleep.

You may adjust the schedule based on your individual child's preferences – ie. longer bath time, shorter reading time, longer joint pressure time, etc.

This 60-minute routine typically decreases the transition to sleep almost immediately. Done consistently, it can create a nice, regular sleep routine for your child.