

Take a Break

We all have our favorite ways of falling asleep; for your child, that is falling asleep with you present. "Take a Break" is used to teach your child to fall asleep independently at bedtime with minimal protests. The following provides guidance on how to "Take a Break" with your child.

1. **Have a consistent bedtime routine and a consistent bedtime in place.** For your child this routine should include the following: _____ and should end at _____ p.m.
2. **At the end of the routine, you should place your child in bed awake.** If you are not already consistently staying with your child in her bed at bedtime, for the first few nights, you should simply stay with her until she falls asleep. This will help to solidify her bedtime and ability to fall asleep at this time.
3. **After bedtime and sleep onset are consistent, stay with your child for 5 to 10 minutes (or less than half the time it takes her to fall asleep), then take a break!** Tell your child, "I'll be right back, Mommy has to use the potty" or "Daddy needs to brush his teeth, I'll be back shortly." For the first few nights, this break should only be 1 to 2 minutes (or less if you have a highly anxious child or a child who won't stay in bed alone for a long time).
4. **Return from your break and praise your child for staying in bed and trying to fall asleep.** Then remain with your child until she falls asleep.
5. **Each night, your break should get a little bit longer.** The goal is for your child to fall asleep while you are not in the room.
6. **Always return to check on your child after a certain amount of time.** If she is not asleep, stay with her until she falls asleep.
7. **If your child wakes during the night, you should respond immediately and consistently.** For your family, this response should be _____.

Important Things to Remember

- As your break gets longer each night, be sure to set a timer to remind you to go back and check on your child.
- If your child gets out of bed before you return, return her to bed with minimal interaction, simply saying, "It's sleeping time, you need to stay in bed." The next night, you may need to shorten your break and then provide even more verbal praise for when the child does stay in bed as instructed.

Some children cannot fall asleep without a parent close by, whether in their bed or in their room. Take a Break is a gradual way to teach your child to fall asleep at bedtime without you present. Although it takes a little while to reach the goal of your child falling asleep independently, this approach reduces "curtain calls" and bedtime protests, making bedtime less stressful for everyone in the house.
