



The Sleep Lady®'s Good Night, Sleep Tight: Gentle Proven Solutions to Help Your Child Sleep Well and Wake Up Happy

Kim West, Joanne Kenen (Contributor)

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Kim West, LCSW-C, known to her clients as The Sleep Lady®, has developed an alternative and effective approach to helping children learn to gently put themselves to sleep without letting them “cry it out”—an option that is not comfortable for many parents. Essential reading for any tired parent or any expectant parent who wants to avoid the pitfalls of sleeplessness, *Good Night, Sleep Tight* offers a practical, easy-to-follow remedy that will work for all families in need of nights of peaceful slumber!

New material and updates include the following:

- New research on pacifiers and SIDS, the impact of sleep deprivation on postpartum depression
- Additional guidance on feeding your baby and toddler and how feeding relates to sleep
- What you can do to improve your baby's sleep habits before 6 months
- New information on breastfeeding
- Preparing a sibling for the birth of a baby
- Creating a secure attachment with your baby while instilling healthy sleep habits for the family
- How to read your baby's cries

The Sleep Lady®'s Good Night, Sleep Tight: Gentle Proven Solutions to Help Your Child Sleep Well and Wake Up Happy Details

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From Reader Review The Sleep Lady®'s Good Night, Sleep Tight: Gentle Proven Solutions to Help Your Child Sleep Well and Wake Up Happy for online ebook

gwen g says

Three weeks ago, I would have rated this book 15000000 stars. But after a nice long stretch of sleeping through the night, our six-month-old stopped again, so I'm taking it back down to four.

Maybe four and a half, though: I really like the thinking behind this book, which is sensible and also compassionate. The basic principles did work for our baby, too. I'd love a longer troubleshooting section, though, and a 99% reduction in the number of sanctimonious success stories.

Jennifer says

This book was helpful to us as a starting point, but in the end, you just need to do what you feel is right for your baby's sleep cycle, even if it means skipping "cry it out" in any form. With our baby, it simply didn't work, but following the steps in this book helped us to get to a better point- not a perfect point. We still pick her up and rock her to sleep on occasion, when she is really upset or not feeling well, and that's ok with us. No stage lasts forever, dear sleep deprived parents. Take heart!

Natalie says

Compared to the Weissbluth book I find this one to be much more realistic for most families. Mostly because it's less stress and less emotionally trying for both parent and child than complete CIO. I skipped parts for now that didn't apply to us (much later school age sleep problems, twins/siblings, nightmares) but may go back to them in the future. I feel like this is much more likely to help teach a child to fall asleep, whereas I think complete CIO / extinction mostly just has a child pass out from exhausted crying and/or stop crying out because no one will come to them, not because they've learned to fall asleep.

However, my criticism would be that it doesn't talk too much about problem solving tougher cases. The book assumes your child will cry only a little (and it doesn't specify how much 'some' or 'a little' is considered) or what to do if the normal soothing techniques presented don't work. In fact occasionally the book will reference a special case and then tell you it's so rare they're not even going to cover it.... which does not help those parents who DO have that case and the book does not even reference other resources for dealing with those cases.

Jane says

We followed this for my 2nd child after having read and tried every other approach with my first and him. This is the only approach I found to make sense, and therefore work. The idea of letting a baby cry it out,

except when you are ready to get him/her in the morning or after a nap, never made sense to me or my babies because they couldn't tell time or keep track of when is an appropriate time to be picked up. Plus, it was painful for everyone, and I hated causing this pain to them without them knowing what was going on. But my kids weren't able to figure this out without some intervention. This approach is to basically let the baby cry it out (if he needs) with the parent right there, to reassure the baby he's not alone, he just needs to learn how to go to sleep. And to move farther away every few day as the baby learns. Within 2 weeks, we were done. And if the baby forgets the whole thing, which mine did after vacations, etc., just do it again and it works pretty quickly. It is so intuitive, I really can't imagine it not working. I highly recommend it.

Lindsay Chung says

Plain and simple. The Sleep Lady is my hero. Hero, people. Do you understand me?

For those of you who do not follow my personal blog, I have two little girls. They are 2 and 3 years old with only 15 months separating them. I haven't had a decent night's sleep in 2 or 3 years. These girls, while they are magnificent children, are simply not the greatest of bedtime goers. I have never had a problem with them sleeping through the night...With the exception of a few months here and there where 2 am seems to be the time of choice for tears. Where I have problems is bedtime itself. Getting those butts in bed without tears and huge productions.

I actually planned on giving *Good Night, Sleep Tight* to my boss who, just the other day, asked me how she can get her newborn to sleep better. She was going to be my reviewer for this book. But, I thought I should read some of it, too to see just how wacky this "Sleep Lady" was (no parenting book is that good, right?). I read everything I needed to know that night. She had entire sections devoted to exactly what I never knew I needed. Special sections for my girls' ages (1 1/2 to 2 1/2 year olds and 2 1/2 to five year olds) were like the clouds parting and rays of sunlight straight from God.

I'm not going to spill all of The Sleep Lady's advice...you'll have to buy the book yourself for that. What I will say is that last night, for the first time in as long as I can remember, my girls went to bed without a fuss. No tears. No pleading. No stalling. And then....they slept until seven in the morning. You have no idea what that means. Normally, we are up and at it by five. Seven is like sleeping until noon as far as I'm concerned.

And so I say "Thank You" to the Sleep Lady. She is my hero

Andrea Paterson says

Some good ideas, but it didn't seem as "gentle" as the title claims. The author wants parents to resist picking up their children or providing any tangible "sleep crutches" in order to allow a baby to put themselves to sleep. Trying this method with my baby resulted in crying so hysterical that I couldn't continue with the program. I'm just nursing him to sleep peacefully and quickly (a big no-no according to Kim West!). However, I've been implementing some of the other ideas, like regular naps, enforced bedtimes, bedtime rituals, and the use of a "lovey" (stuffed animal, blanket, or other security prop). In just a few days I'm noticing improvement. I would suggest not using any method of sleep training as a bible, but mixing and matching in ways that feel comfortable to you. The other useful aspect of this book was the age breakdown

with chapters for each 2 month range that tell you how much sleep your baby should be getting and when the optimal time for that sleep is.

Meghan says

This book did not work at all for our son. The only benefit retained from reading this book, is that my husband and I learned to follow our instincts and what we know about our own child... since we stopped trying to implement the Sleep Lady's advice, we've been sleeping better and better each night.

I have heard that it really works well for a lot of people, so it may be worth a try, but if it doesn't seem to be working after a good faith effort, give up and try another method.

Kate says

Any book that gets my baby to go from waking to eat 3-4 times/night to sleeping 10 straight hours in just over a week WITHOUT me leaving her alone to cry herself to exhaustion gets five stars in my book! I chose this book after looking into a few "sleep training" methods because I felt like it was a very balanced approach. It doesn't ask to choose between never letting a child cry (and probably not sleeping for the next 5 years) or turning a deaf ear while she screams.

Kim West offers a guide to helping your child sleep - whether you are starting with a newborn or a 3 year old - but her plan leaves plenty of flexibility for parents to follow their own parenting style and encourages us to trust our instincts. Her advice made a lot of sense to me, I was comfortable trying her approach, and, the biggest test, it worked! I will definitely reference this book again (especially the sections on older ages that I didn't read) as my daughter's sleeping habits and schedules change.

Kjersti says

Kudos to the author for using tools that made the book easy to go straight to the parts I was interested in and didn't have to muddle through the whole 400 pages. I also liked how she has a section on twins as well as siblings sharing a room. Will use some of her tips tonight.

Beckie Taylor says

WOW! This book helped me to get Alden to sleep (he is currently 15 months old) after 13 months of no schedule and an insane Mom and Dad (probably kid too). It does not use the "cry it out" method so I was most comfortable with this approach to sleep training. I would strongly urge any parent to get this book. It is the most humane way to get a baby/toddler to sleep without letting them face their crying alone. It wasn't easy to do but it was well worth it. Now everyone in the house is sleeping! Yeppee!

Hannah says

People, all I need to say is: my baby has been sleeping glorious 8-9 hour stretches and putting himself to sleep in ten minutes without me even needing to be in the room AND without our family having to suffer through a cry-it-out technique. Thanks, Sleep Lady!

This book was listed on a handout from our pediatrician as a gentle alternative for giant hippies like us who can't hack the Ferber or Mindell methods, and I really appreciated how much time West spent reassuring parents about how her approach doesn't violate attachment theory and won't get in the way of extended breastfeeding. If you need some sleep but worry about Dr. Sears and all eight of his children coming after you with pitchforks for doing anything other than whipping out your breast every hour of the night until your kid turns three, this is the book to turn to.

I had my issues with this book--I wish it dealt more with night wakings in addition to bedtime and I would have liked a more scientifically-worded narrative--but overall, this is an excellent option for parents who want to stop walking around like zombies and don't want to resort to cry-it-out methods to get there.

Suzy says

After reading "Baby Whisperer" and "Baby Wise" and having no success getting my child to sleep on his own, I finally went to the library and found this book. BEST BOOK EVER. It helped me to get my 15 month old to go to sleep on his own, and the best part was that I didn't have to walk out of his room and let him cry. I hated that part. I always felt so mean and guilty. In this book, it gives you "The Sleep Lady Shuffle." It allows you to stay in the room and to be with your child as he/she cries and then eventually goes to sleep. After 3-7 nights, I was able to put my baby boy into his bed, say goodnight and then walk out. It was that easy. When we had our second baby boy, I did the same thing. It took a little longer because we moved and we traveled a lot, and then of course, this baby's personality was more demanding, but after about a week, he grew to LOVE sleep. Now when I put him in his bed for naps or bedtime, he tells me "thank you" and "night night." Everyone should have this book.

Shannon says

AJ started sleeping a lot better when I returned this book to the library.

Neligh says

This book is made of 3 parts. The first (p. 1- 50) is the foundation of her system, excerpts of which can be found below. The second, (p. 53-236), is age specific advice and solutions which are organized as follows: Newborn to Five Months, Six to Eight Months, Nine to Twelve Months, Thirteen to Eighteen Months, One and a Half to Two and Half Years Old, and Two and a Half to Five Years Old. The third (p. 239-334) discusses Co-sleeping and the Family Bed; Twins and Siblings; Nightmares Sleepwalking and Night Terrors; Medical Problems; Routine Busters; Problem Solving and Taking Care of Mom and Dad.

When I look for a parenting book, new insights are only part of what I want. Whether or not I like a parenting book otherwise depends on the extent to which it agrees with what I already think and how well it expresses those thoughts. I want, basically, something that backs me up. For me, this book seems to fit perfectly with how I feel and many parts had me exclaiming "Exactly!!!!" Here are some bits below:

Chapter One: The Sleep Lady System

"Keep A Log. Tracking his sleep patterns will help you better read the cues he sends when he is tired, and to know when to **seize a sleep opportunity before the lethal second wind of infant or toddler energy kicks in.**" (p. 18)

UPDATE: this step turns out to be rather asinine, mostly because you are led to expect the log to eventually stabilize in a way that conforms to the clock, for example that bedtime should settle as a particular time with minor deviation (less than 15 minutes), to the extent that it doesn't you must shape them, nudging them onto a schedule, because she recommends doing this from day one, and because instead of revealing my baby's sleep cues it made them much harder to see because they were completely at odds with each other.

I originally concluded the following:

For the first three months don't bother with a sleep log:

You'll have reams of raw data with no time to plot the points, to aggregate them into anything meaningful (I even recorded info in a compact, highly visual way where I could easily see and compare four or five days at a time and it still didn't amount to anything informative). And they can't exactly be meaningful anyway because of extraneous influences, like wondering if you should add the notation "She fell asleep at 9:30 am today; however this may only be because we happened to be in the car at that time and not represent a trend in her natural sleep windows" or if you should just neurotically never leave the house so as to avoid corrupting your data in this fashion. And none of this matters anyway because....

At best, only the last two or so days at any given time seem to be relevant. You could try to review four weeks of information, but the sleep of a six week old has nothing to do with the sleep of a two week old so most of your log at any given time is already obsolete. This doesn't matter either though because....

All the data will tell you is that newborn sleep is disorganized and random. To whatever extent there was a pattern, it was a 48 hours cycle where for one day she'd eat way more often than the book says she's supposed to while not napping even half as much and then the next day she'd sleep a lot and we'd fret that she wasn't eating enough. **She herself in the book tells you (but not until you get to week 12) that "the morning nap is just now falling into place with the stubborn afternoon nap taking shape some weeks after that." So to whatever extent you're hoping to find a pattern, that's the earliest there would start to be the shadow of one. Therefore, keeping a log any sooner than week 12 is an exercise in frustration and futility.**

In the end, all it did was make it hard to enjoy the baby. I just had this record of how she wasn't doing quite what she was supposed to be doing and that I was supposed to be doing something about it, that I should be managing her to adjust her nursing, her sleep, and you might as well add when she makes what faces because it's not really in my control anyway.

"Routines. When I talk about routines, I don't mean rigid, inflexible worship of the schedule gods. I mean a degree of predictability and stability, which study after study has shown that children need. I

will give you detailed suggestions of what an age-appropriate daily structure should look like for a newborn, an infant, a toddler, and a preschooler. ... Although I usually recommend making these adjustments gradually, thirty minutes or so at a time, sometimes with a child under age three **you can make the changes quite quickly if you learn to recognize his natural patterns.** For instance, if your twenty month old is used to going to bed at 10:00, but you can see he is drowsy at 7:30, you don't need to spend days gradually adjusting. Just put him to bed at 7:30 and make sure you do so again the next night and the night after that. ... All children need a comforting and predictable bedtime routine, and they need it from early infancy right up through the school years." (p. 19)

The idea is to sync activity with his circadian rhythms, to dovetail routine with what she calls "sleep windows" so that play occurs when the baby is alert and well rested and that sleep is available and facilitated when the baby is winding down. Then these things work in concert, each enhancing the other, instead of fighting tooth and nail. This makes sense, but it doesn't work the way she sets it up. What DOES work is the 90 minute sleep plan which relies on the clock not from one day to the next but from one nap to the next which turns out to make A LOT more sense.

Chapter Two: Sleep Basics

"Sleep begets sleep. ... well rested children find it easier to sleep and stay well rested. ... Overtired children have trouble falling asleep and staying asleep. They have more nap difficulties, more bedtime resistance, more night awakenings, and more early risings. Sleep deprivation becomes a self-perpetuating cycle of exhaustion, for you and your child." (p. 30)

"When babies experience partial arousals (as everyone does throughout the night), they may cry out, thrash around, become startled. If they have negative sleep associations or sleep crutches, **if they need us to get them back to sleep, the partial arousal will become a complete arousal.**" The goal then is remove the sleep associations that make them dependent on us and give them associations such as their thumb, white noise, darkness, a lovey and so on. "They can get themselves back to sleep. The partial arousal stays partial." (p. 33) Better sleep for everyone.

"Clocks and Windows. They need us to protect their sleep by paying attention to the clock -both the external time and the baby's internal rhythm." You may notice a point early in the evening when your baby becomes calm and still in your lap, perhaps even rubbing his eyes and yawning. Twenty minutes later, he suddenly becomes hyper and irritated. What's happening? **"If you miss your child's 'sleep window,' that natural time to sleep, his body won't be pumping out calming melatonin. Precisely the opposite will occur. His adrenal glands will send out a rush of cortisol, a stress-related hormone that will overstimulate your baby, make him 'wired,' and create a second wind. ... He will be more agitated, more difficult to console, more likely to need a lot more of your time and energy to help him wind down again and get to sleep.** So if, by natural rhythm and habit, he is ready for sleep at 7:00 but you keep him up until 8:00, he is going to have a hard time getting to sleep. **And even after he does get to sleep - often with more tears and resistance than normal- the cortisol and overtiredness team up to make it harder for him to stay asleep.** He is more likely to wake up at night, and to wake up too early in the morning before he is truly rested. This cycle can then lead to poor naps the next day, which will lead to an overtired baby at bedtime, which leads to poor nighttime sleep." (p. 34)

So, missing a sleep window is a disaster of epic proportions, not just screwing up that particular nap but probably ruining your night as well. Tell this to any sleep-deprived parent while making it sound mysteriously hard to recognize the sleep window (newborns are not rubbing their eyes) is stupid. Referencing the 90 Minute Sleep Plan here's how you recognize a sleep window: it's ninety minutes after the last time she woke up (or increments of 90 minutes, like 3 hours after they last woke up). This has been

revolutionary, but more on that in that book's own review.

Chapter Three: The Right Start for Newborns and Infants

The Sleep Lady's Eight Rules of Infant Slumber

1. Create a flexible feeding and sleeping routine.

"Lots of parents in our generation cringe at the word *routine*, but by routine I don't mean a rigid minute-by-minute regimen. I mean a commonsense framework with time mapped out for eating, napping, sleeping, playing, or awake time -a framework that you can adapt as you grow more adept at reading your baby's signals and cues. Even very young babies like predictability. They find it calming; they sleep better, and they are more capable of soothing themselves. Many new parents fear a routine eliminates their freedom. To the contrary, you will find that a flexible routine enhances your freedom. You can't do whatever you want whenever you want, but you will be able to better plan your day. You'll know when you can get out of the house, run errands, meet a friend for coffee ..." (p. 39)

I found this to be so true when I was a nanny. With the children who had a nap time, I did all kinds of things and went all kinds of places. With the three year old who had no nap time and no routine that I could replicate, it was impossible. He only knew how to fall asleep with his mother and so, when he was with me, he would stay awake unless we took the stroller or the car somewhere, at which point he might or might not drop off. Nap time could be any time and that made it difficult to pick up his older sibling from school, take him to music class or the children's museum, or even go to the park or grocery store. If the car or stroller stopped moving, he would wake up whether that was 15 minutes after he fell asleep or 90.

I also think that while parents do fear a routine will further cramp their lifestyle, they also fear that giving a baby a routine will create a need for routine that wasn't previously there, the same way people used to think that picking up a newborn would create a baby that needed to be carried all the time. They may think, therefore, that keeping the baby's life unpredictable will make for a more easy-going child. But this is like saying the way to create an independent toddler is to leave him alone as often as possible as a baby. We know that a loving attachment now is what creates the security necessary for independence later. In my experience, the need for predictability is innate and it is the child who never knows what is coming next who later freaks out if he isn't served his mac and cheese with his purple fork, not the child whose life has some kind of rhythm. The need for rhythm is so integral to their development that they will make sleep associations even if you try not to give them any kind of bedtime routine. They will still be dependent on cues; the only difference is they probably won't be ones you wanted.

2. Encourage soothing techniques other than nursing

Here (and 3) she refers to Happiest Baby on the Block

It is amazing though the extent to which she and Harvey Karp disagree with her (she'll be urging you to get the baby out of that swing and into a crib as early as three weeks while Harvey Karp says "3 weeks isn't too early to start them sleeping in the swing!") Of the two, Harvey Karp will get you through the first three months. She will just make you crazy that today the baby is napping at 8 am when yesterday it was 9:30.

3. Offer a pacifier for soothing and sucking, but not as a sleep crutch.

4. Sometimes feed your baby when he wakes up after a nap -not just when you are trying to get him to sleep.

5. Put him down drowsy but awake at least once every twenty-four hours

6. Introduce one bottle a day -even if you are committed to breast feeding, as I was with my own children- by the second or third week.

7. Create a sleep-friendly environment. Past two months or so she is of the opinion that babies shouldn't be sleeping "on the go" as a habit anymore. After what Harvey Karp calls "the fourth trimester," pairing motion and sleep is no longer making use of a reflex and is now possibly creating a learned behavior, a child who needs to be moving in order to sleep. She also makes the case that, after the newborn phase, sleeping in motion is never as restful and restorative as stationary sleep. The other reason for wanting to limit or eliminate sleeping on the go is to create the association of the crib (or whatever you're using) with sleep. She discusses using the environment in addition to a bedtime routine to signal sleep.

8. Carefully think through the whole question of co-sleeping and the family bed. If you do it, do it because you like the philosophy, not out of the hope that it will put your child to sleep like magic. And make sure your child can still fall asleep on his own, otherwise you will have to nap whenever your toddler naps and go to bed when he goes to bed (or keep him up until your bedtime). Even if you wanted to do this, it would become much harder with the arrival of a second child, since the sleep requirements of a six month old differ from those of a three year old which in turn differ from yours.

Danielle says

This is the only baby sleep book I own, and it's because I found it for \$1 at the Good Will. A lot of people really like it, so I read it before my son was born and tried to implement her strategies as he grew.

+ Pros: West's delineation of the amounts of sleep that are normal for different age groups and the types of routines/schedules that work for different age groups were the clearest I found, and the most accurate to what my son was doing. We didn't try her "Sleep Lady Shuffle," but it didn't seem like a terrible idea and I think it would work well for some families.

- Cons: West says she breastfed her own children, but it seems like she's not well-educated about breastfeeding and what's normal for breast-fed babies at *all.* This is bad, because a lot of babies won't be able to be night-weaned nearly as early as she seems to think they should be, and she sometimes suggests formula feeding over breastfeeding for sleep purposes, which is just baloney. If a mother's willing to breastfeed, she should be supported in that, not told that she's ruining her baby's sleep.

- Another huge problem for us is that West does not address sleep regressions, common at 4 and 9 or 10 months, as a normal part of development, and she certainly doesn't devote any time in the book as to how to get through them. Sleep regressions are really challenging times for everyone, and she completely ignores the existence of that challenge, potentially making parents feel like they're doing something wrong when their kid is just going through a normal, difficult stage. She addresses some sleep issues like teething and regression in the last chapter, but it needed to be front-and-center in the age-appropriate chapters to be meaningful.

I have such mixed feelings about this book, but I think overall, it doesn't really fit with my parenting philosophy and nothing she says is evidence-based. Some of the advice seems actively harmful. I do not recommend.
