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## Setting A Bedtime Ritual

By Brandon C. Hall

Any casual glance at child rearing guides will reveal that particular attention is paid to baby sleep

habits. The reason is fairly obvious: one of the most difficult things for a new parent to get used to is dealing with constantly being awoken in the night by a newborn. There are no hard and fast rules to getting your baby to sleep well, as all newborns are different. There are, however, some baby sleep tips you can employ that will help. The important thing is to understand that your judgment as a parent is paramount: don't get stubborn with tips that don't seem to work, and try a wide variety and things to find out what works best for you and your baby.

A good place to start, in terms of baby sleep tips, is to establish a bedtime ritual for your baby. The reason that your newborn doesn't sleep well through the night at first is because he is used to falling asleep with his mother. When he awakes in the night he naturally cries for his mother – the only way he knows how to go back to sleep. As your newborn grows older a slow transition will occur whereby he learns to go to sleep on his own, and – more importantly – when he wakes in the night he can learn to fall back asleep on his own. Your goal as a parent is to try and speed up this transition as much as possible, the result will not only be a good night's rest for you, but a development of better sleeping habits for your child in the long term.

To get your child to sleep well on his own, focus on a consistent bedtime routine. Babies are very dependant on routines – their world is so narrow that they generally focus on only a few things throughout the day – the way to create transitions in their day, therefore, is to change how these things are presented to them.

For example, your bedtime routine may consist of a warm bath, a feeding and changing, and some rocking before bed. If you repeat this every night your baby will slowly begin to associate these things with sleep. Every night, then, your child will naturally start to fall into a "sleeping mode" when you do these things. If you are inconsistent, however – if, say, you only bathe him on odd nights, or change the order of bedtime events – you will confuse the child and he will be unsure of what happens next: he won't know whether he's going to sleep after his bath, or being read a story.

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A bedtime routine should also employ spending a good amount of time with your baby. Even from a very young age, babies will learn to manipulate their parents, and if you don't spend enough time with your baby before he falls asleep, he will start to stretch out the bedtime ritual in order to spend more time with you.

In establishing a bedtime ritual for your child, your primary concerns should be to make it consistent. To ensure better sleeping habits for your baby, don't focus so much on what you do before bed, rather, pay attention to doing the same things in the same order every night.

Brandon C. Hall maintains (

<http://www.freeinfoblog.com>

) which contains many articles and resources

on baby sleep tips at (

<http://www.freeinfoblog.com/category/baby-sleep-tips>

). There is also information

on dozens of other topics.

## **One Word Can Bring Your Family Closer Together And Create Memories To Last A Lifetime**

**By Deanna Mascle**

Every parent hopes their family will build a close and loving relationship. Every parent hopes when their children are grown that they will have many fond memories of their childhood. But how do families create those bonds and memories? That is by creating rituals.

It is so hard in today's fast-paced, overscheduled world to find time to spend together as a family. It is too easy when a gap appears in the family schedule to simply collapse in front of the television and meditate for the evening. It is too easy to wait for the perfect opportunity for bonding. If this describes your family's current pattern then you need to find a way to break it now.

One of the best ways to bring your family closer together and create memories that will last a lifetime is to create some family rituals. Perhaps there can be some small ritual that is a part of your greetings or goodbyes. Perhaps there can be a small daily ritual that could be part of bedtime. Certainly you can create a ritual that takes place either weekly or monthly. It might be a family dinner night, a family movie night, or a family game night. It really isn't important what you do so long as you do it together on a regular enough basis so it does become a tradition.

One of the assignments I give my college freshmen is to write about their definition of the word "home". While they frequently begin describing a specific place what often comes through are the traditions of

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their family. Holiday meals, outings, and vacations are all wrapped up in their definition of home. I see this in my own child as well. We have morning rituals and bedtime rituals that he clings too rigorously. While some, such as the bedtime story, will eventually fade into oblivion I hope others stick with us. One of those is the way I ask him every night what was good about his day. If I forget or am tardy with the question he is quick to remind me so it is clear the ritual is important to him, but it is also important to me because I love seeing what really matters to him. Sometimes I can guess but sometimes I am surprised.

Another tradition I hope we will preserve is the way we express our love to each other. While he is currently young enough to let smooches (kisses), squishes (hugs), and snuggles occur on a frequent basis and he is happy to tell me that he loves me and hear that I love him, I know the day is coming when he won't be so eager for this affection and certainly not in any public display. However I am paving the way for a new tradition when that time comes. Today, we play a giggly little game of describing our love (I love you as much as 10,000 walruses). My hope is that in the future when I can't tell my teenaged son how much I love him because I might embarrass him then I can at least whisper in his ear: "1 million elephants" and perhaps get a smile at the inside joke.

Deanna Mascle shares more articles for families at

<http://AnswersForYourFamily.com>



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