



“A healthy sleeping baby is key to a flourishing family. Our sleep strategy combines medical research with practical routines which assist parents achieve optimum sleep, feeding, growth and happiness in babies and children.

Background series

## let's talk about women

“There is no place for anxiety and guilt in providing care to families experiencing the challenges of a new baby.”

The principal focus of The Babysleep Doctor strategy is families with young children. It is exciting, fulfilling and rewarding work. One important aim of our work is to develop a woman's confidence and self-esteem. It is important for the care that she can give to those that she loves that she believes in her skills, her intuition, her commitment and her simple ability to do it well.

It amazes us how many women come with low scores for self-confidence and joy in their parenting. Using validated scores for depression, anxiety and stress, we have found that up to 32% of women at their first visit have a positive result for some degree of depression.

It can be tough being a mother and there is no place for anxiety and guilt in providing care to families with a new baby.

### Evidence

As a traditionally trained doctor, The Babysleep Doctor believes in the value of 'evidence' through appropriate research.

Something should not be taught unless there has been research to demonstrate that the strategy of care is effective and safe. Evidence comes in various strengths. It is important that the advice you are receiving has a basis in 'evidence' and that the quality of that evidence is strong rather than a reflection of a range of opinions. In recognising evidence-based research one of the characteristics will be an absence of emotion. The material being taught is just simply 'proven'. Conversely in the absence of evidence emotion rapidly comes to the surface.



Dr Brian Symon is The Babysleep Doctor. He has more than 30 years' experience working with parents and babies experiencing sleep, feeding, growth and/or behavioural issues. He is a specialist medical practitioner with a MD (PhD) in infant sleep. Dr Symon is well published in national and international medical and research journals having researched infant sleep problems throughout his medical career. He is the author of *Silent Nights, Overcoming Sleep Problems in Babies and Children* and has another book due for release in early 2015.

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The  
**babysleep**  
 Doctor  
 ... helping babies to sleep  
 and families to flourish

## let's talk about women

### The words 'may' and 'might'

A common finding is the use of the words 'may' and 'might'. The context here is “may cause a problem” or “might be dangerous”. The author is being guarded in that there is not sufficient proof of the information being put forward but the overall message will be that despite the absence of evidence you avoid their advice at your peril.

The most common examples of this are articles, books and television articles that so-called “crying” (or “controlled crying”) causes emotional damage. There is **no evidence** that this is the case. Look carefully for these words 'may' and 'might'. This is particularly so where the writing contains a lot of emotion and there is a strong implication that if you use that particular technique you will cause emotional damage.

### Are you the 'right stuff'?

Self-esteem is often low in the mothers that we see for the first time. Take a different perspective: your mother succeeded in raising you. Her mother succeeded, as did her mother before her. This success continues into the depths of time in an unbroken line.

You belong to a line of women who, without exception, raised their children successfully. No further evidence required. You are highly likely to be good at this, it has been bred into you, you are made of the 'right stuff'.

### Are you committed?

In recent times the advent of MRI and PET scanners (very sophisticated images of the body) have demonstrated more and more about the brain's functioning. One of these has been the profound changes that occur in the functioning of the brain as a consequence of pregnancy and childbirth.

This process includes a number of elements. Love. You will love your child in a way which is amazing. There is a strong desire to make this child safe. Your mind will think about the baby and its wellbeing all the time – it is a new state of mind and the scanners reflect this.

As a child moves to adolescence and views the world differently so a woman becoming a mother undergoes a similar transformation. This is an irreversible process and you will know without ambiguity that this

is a superior state of mind. A mother with a child who is thriving feels a sense of “wholesome completeness”. It just seems totally correct to be looking after this wonderful human being who is your child.

### Are babies resilient?

Just as a mother has been bred for success, our children have been designed to survive. They love us despite our flaws. Their ability to cope with life's ups and downs is amazing. While delicate in many ways they bounce back as long as we get it sort of OK most of the time. Of course there are mistakes to be made and skills to be learned but the baby will come along for the ride – in the area of emotional wellbeing, they are resilient. Long term emotional wellbeing is not created by one event but by the sum of interactions between the child and the whole family and even to society over a long time.

### Remember

**You are a loving and committed mother.**

**You come from an unbroken line of women who have succeeded in parenting – so will you be a successful parent. You were born to be a successful mother who finds joy in her parenting and raising children you can be proud of.**

**Your baby is resilient and his/her future is not defined by the events of one night or week, but by the sum of all your interactions over many years.**

**We are imperfect parents and that is just fine. Your child will remember your loving, your care and the time spent together doing simple things.**

**If someone or (something you are reading) is giving you advice leaving you feeling inept or guilty perhaps they are not the right people to be talking to.**

**Move on to better places for advice.**

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