



“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

‘parent-lite’ settling

Many parents find the discussions about infant settling confusing in that there is little consistency. Authors argue different philosophies and present their point of view with varying degrees of evidence, experience, dogma and emotion. This can be quite disturbing and makes making your own parenting choices often difficult.

One of life's skills is in describing what is a reasonable compromise which will maximise benefits and minimise risks. How do we decide as parents what is a reasonable choice whereby we can maximise the benefits for child, mother, father, siblings, the family unit and ultimately society as a whole?

To mention a couple of parenting extremes: One is 'total attachment parenting' where the mother is encouraged to “wear her baby” for up to the first two years. In our view, this is impractical for the mother,

destructive for parental relationships and, despite its advocates' assurances, clearly and unambiguously holds back a child's emotional development, socialisation and self-confidence. Another extreme is what is commonly called (or perceived as) “controlled crying” or even uncontrolled crying where a baby is just left to fend for themselves. In the medical literature there are multiple examples where prolonged and extreme emotional detachment for children has life long and sometimes irreversible negative outcomes. A human infant needs the experience of love to thrive.

So what is a fair and reasonable compromise? As a parent you are extremely attractive to your child. From the babies perspective the parents are life's ultimate reward objects. There is a time in life

“How do we decide as parents what is a reasonable choice that will maximise the benefits for child, mother, father, siblings ...”

where contact with the parents is more important than food, sleep or any other person. For us as parents of course it is quite attractive to be so important to the child's emotional wellbeing. It is one of life's great rewards to be so central to the wellbeing of another person particular one whom you love so much.

Secondly we need to understand that because humans are intelligent creatures that we have the ability to modify our behaviour. In fact humans are undoubtedly the species most able to alter behaviour based upon altered circumstances. Babies are intelligent. If a baby behaves in a particular way and that behaviour is rewarded it will become more common. Thus if a baby cries and you attend that behaviour is rewarded. It is very,

continued overleaf

Dr Brian Symon
 MD, FRACGP, MB BS, DipRANZCOG, BSc
 e: drbrian@thebabysleepdoctor.com.au
 p: (08) 8332 4077 f: (08) 8431 1101
 w: www.thebabysleepdoctor.com.au
 f: www.facebook.com/thebabysleepdoctor



“Think of yourself as a reward object and reward your baby with your company for appropriate behaviour not behaviour which is driving you crazy right now.”

Background series



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.

very easy to train a baby for crying skills. Just attend every time. This is not kind on the baby.

So what is the key point in this information sheet? We need to create a balance which is appropriate for your family where the baby or child receives the correct, healthy and nurturing balance of parental contact, sleep and play, but can function alone and independently when appropriate. The philosophies which you will find outlined in The Babysleep Doctor resources teach a 'Parent-lite' approach. Love your baby to the full but beware of rewarding negative behaviours.



the baby's view

My Mummy and I have been together for some months.

The first few months were great. I cried, she picked me up and fed me, any-time, day or night.

Then something happened.

Over the last few weeks, she has been trying to sleep through the night. At first, I thought it was just a phase, but it is only getting worse. I've talked to other babies, and it's pretty common.

Here's the thing.

These Mummies don't really need to sleep. It's just a habit. Many of them have had some 20 – 30 years to sleep! What she really needs is time with us. They tell us all the time how much they love us. How can it be good for them to be away from us all night?

So I am implementing a plan. I call it the Cry-baby Shuffle:

Night 1 – Cry every 3 hours until you get fed. I know, it's hard work. It's hard to see your Mummy upset over your crying. Just keep reminding yourself, it's for her own good.

Night 2 – Cry every 2 hours until you get fed.

Night 3 – Cry every hour.

Most Mummies will start to respond more quickly after about 3 nights. Some Mummies are a little slower and may resist the change. These Mummies may stand in your doorway for hours, shhhh-ing. Don't give in. **CONSISTENCY IS KEY!!**

If you let her sleep through the night, just once, she may expect it every night.

I KNOW IT'S HARD! But she really does not need sleep, she is just resisting the change which you and I know is good for her.

If you have an especially slow Mummy, you can stop crying for about 10 minutes, just long enough for her to go back to bed and start to fall asleep. Then cry again. It WILL eventually work. My Mummy once stayed awake for 10 hours straight, so I know she can do it!

Last night I cried every hour. You just have to decide to stick to it. **BE CONSISTENT!**

I cry for any reason I can come up with.

- My sleep sack tickled my foot
- I felt a wrinkle under the sheet
- My mobile made a shadow
- I burped; it tasted like pears (I hadn't eaten pears since lunch - what's up with that?)
- The dog "woofed"
- I like how my cry sounded when it echoed on the monitor in the other room
- Too hot, too cold, just right-- doesn't matter! Keep crying!!

It took a while, but it worked. She fed me at 4am. Tomorrow night, my goal is 3:30am. You need to slowly shorten the interval between feedings in order to reset your Mummies' internal clocks. Remember, she deserves and needs your company ;-)

Dr Brian Symon
MD, FRACGP, MB BS, DipRANZCOG, BSc
e: drbrian@thebabysleepdoctor.com.au
p: (08) 8332 4077 f: (08) 8431 1101
w: www.thebabysleepdoctor.com.au
f: www.facebook.com/thebabysleepdoctor

