

# A consistent bedtime routine will help with toddler's night-time prowling

**Yvette:**

My son is 3 years old, and I still have trouble putting him to bed at night. I will put him to bed at a certain time, and he will constantly get up and run around the house. My mother lives with us, and he likes to sleep with her. I am trying to get him to sleep in his own bed, but I haven't been successful. Even when sleeping with my mother or me, he still wants to run around the house during the night. He never actually falls asleep until well after midnight. I have even compromised and allowed him to watch TV until he falls asleep. But still he continues to get up and run around the house. He has his own bedroom with a train bed, but he says that he doesn't want to sleep alone. What should I do to get my toddler to go to bed on time and stay there?

Tonya

**Tonya:**

When you allow your son to watch television or sleep with you or your mother, you're rewarding him for not staying in his bed. In order to change his behavior, I recommend establishing a new reality: No more television in his room or sleeping with you or his grandmother. Make sure that he has a consistent routine for meals and bedtime and that he is not being stimulated before bed. Remove toys and other distractions from his room. If he is not tired at bedtime, decrease his naps during the day. Try giving him a bath and some quiet time with a story before putting him down for the night. You might also introduce a favorite stuffed animal or toy with which he can sleep. The bath and story will give him an opportunity to relax and self soothe. He needs to learn how to put himself to sleep. Finally — and this is the toughest part — when he gets out of his bed, you

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must put him back in his bed and insist that he stay there. Do it every time and as many times as necessary until he gets the point. Once he understands that his night-time prowling will not be rewarded, he will stop. I know that this will mean some tired mornings for you, but it is better to handle the behavior now.

Yvette

**Yvette:**

I have four children between the ages of 2 and 12. For the past two months, the three older children have been fighting a lot. I know that siblings fight. How do you stop the fighting? I'm at my wits' end and don't know what to do. I try disciplining them by taking things away and putting them in time-out. Nothing seems to be working. I've even tried sitting them down and talking to them about fighting. They just argue with me about it, and I become upset. Help. What should I do? I'm lost.

Amy

**Amy:**

I can feel the frustration in your question. Part of the children's behavior may be related to the winter months and just being together too much. Look for ways to give each of them their own space. Arrange play dates for them with their peers.

Consider spending one-on-one time with each child. Most importantly, do not argue with your children or let them see you become upset or lose control. The children must understand that

hitting and abusive behavior will not be tolerated. Use progressive discipline and stick to it. The children need to know that you will protect them and set boundaries for their behavior.

Yvette

**Yvette:**

Our nephew hits others when he's frustrated. When other children taunt him, he retaliates by hitting — sometimes he hits without cause. He is 5 years old and has some speech impediments. He hit my daughter for no apparent reason. My daughter is 8 years old and doesn't start fights. My husband says that she should hit him back. I think that my daughter should tell my nephew's mother. His mom doesn't always hold him accountable, but she does make him apologize. I don't think this is enough; he gets off easy. Any suggestions? I am trying not to get too involved by giving advice to my sister.

Stephanie

**Stephanie:**

Please encourage your sister to discuss her son's behavior with his pediatrician. He may be striking out at others because of frustration or he because he is being teased over his speech impediment. Or, he could simply be a child who has not had limits set on his behavior. The pediatrician can help his mother determine the likely cause of her son's aggressive

behavior. If his behavior is not controlled, school will be a challenge for both of them. It's important that she deal with his behavior now.

Yvette

**Yvette:**

I have a 4-year-old son who refuses to potty train, especially pooping on the potty. He states what he should do but never does it. We have tried everything, including backing off, but he just doesn't make any progress. Is it ever OK to start taking things away as punishment for going in his pants? He knows what he should do; he just chooses not to.

Brenna

**Brenna:**

I spoke with Dr. Bruce Meyer, chief of ambulatory pediatrics for Columbus Children's Hospital. Dr. Meyer advises against punishment. He recommends reading *Potty Training in 24 Hours*. He suggests placing your son on the commode at regular times, four times a day while you talk or read to him for five or 10 minutes. Do not discuss potty training with him or his not going at other times. Praise him a lot when he goes in the toilet. You can also use a star system when he goes in the toilet. Give him a token reward for good potty behavior twice a week and more often if his progress continues. If this doesn't help, please consult your pediatrician.

Good luck.

Yvette



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