

Graduated Withdrawal

Key ways to help your child have a good night's sleep

Graduated withdrawal can help when a child wants a parent close by as they fall asleep. It is not about creeping out of the room over the course of one evening, but requires sticking to a new pattern for days or weeks before making the next change.

Plan ahead

- Select a chair, cushion or mat that you can use each evening.
- Set up a wind down hour so your child is feeling secure and relaxed by the time they are in bed
- Make the first steps small, slow and steady.

Separating yourself

If your child is used to you lying in or sitting on the bed, your first step will be to move on to the chair or cushion.

- Try putting a blanket or soft toy between you and your child.
- Use the same item next to your child every night, but add more items behind it to increase the distance and allow you to move away
- Keep at the each stage for days or even weeks until it becomes the new normal.

Tips

- *Never try moving away while your child falls asleep. This could make them more anxious and alert*
- *Be a 'boring parent (or carer) as you sit. Just repeat your goodnight phrase. Don't chatter, and avoid looking at your phone.*

Moving away

- Once you are no longer in contact with your child, move your chair just a fraction away from the bed. Keep this pattern for some nights. Don't rush!
- Then try another another small move, no more than a chair's width.
- As time goes on, you may find you can take bigger moves towards the door, but remain calm and patient so that your child's trust and confidence can build.
- Finally go from sitting in the doorway to sitting out of sight with the door open, and then gradually close the door.

Consistency is key.

Keeping to the same pattern, even using familiar words, can help children to feel safe and secure so they can fall asleep more easily.

Tip

If your child wakes in the night, sit in the same position and follow the same pattern.

