



Gentle Sleep Coach[®]
Trained and Certified by The Sleep Lady[®]

16 Common Sleep Myths + Facts

We're busting the myths and sharing the facts around sleep training and setting the record straight about The Sleep Lady Method.



SLEEPTENDER.COM



MYTH

The Chair Method means you sit by your child's crib or bed and do not respond in any way to their distress and you slowly move your chair away every night or two.

FACT

Over the last 20 years or so my method The Sleep Lady Shuffle or what some call either The Shuffle or SLS has also been referred to as the “Chair Method” and incorrectly explained. The Shuffle is a gentle, responsive sleep coaching method that includes initially sitting by your child's crib or bed and offering physical and verbal reassurance....so shushing, saying its okay, patting, humming and picking up to calm!





MYTH

The Chair Method or the Shuffle is basically “Cry-It-Out” while sitting next to your child.

FACT

“The Shuffle (and if the Chair Method is done correctly) entails you offering a lot of support and help while your child learns how to fall asleep in the crib or bed with progressively less active help from you. Remember, the ultimate goal: to transfer the work of going to sleep from you to them. You’re going to do that gradually in a way that stretches their skills by tapering off how much presence and support you offer over time.”

Excerpt from “Why Won’t You Sleep”- published in November 2024 by Macall Gordon and Kim West





MYTH

Gentle sleep training methods do not work. “Cry It Out” is proven to work.

FACT

“Gentle sleep coaching methods such as parental fading have been shown to be as effective as crying-it-out and it’s so much more tolerable for both parents and children (even the intense ones). It works so well because it’s congruent with how we teach children most skills: we help them a lot at first. Then, we let them practice doing more and more on their own. We don’t show a child a two-wheeler and say, “Good luck with this, kiddo. I’ll be inside. If I help you, you won’t learn to do it yourself.” No. You hold onto the back of the seat for dear life until the child starts getting a feel for it. Then, you start gradually letting go—with a hand hovering right behind to catch the bike if it starts tipping over. The better the child gets at keeping the bike upright, the more we let go.”

Excerpt from “Why Won’t You Sleep”- published in November 2024 by Macall Gordon and Kim West





MYTH

Sleep training helps babies learn how to self-soothe by not immediately responding to their distress, allowing them to develop this skill.

FACT

We don't talk about any other childhood skill in this way. The advice doesn't say, "Don't carry your baby. Give them opportunities to be mobile. If you hold or carry them, they will always expect you to do that for them." The notion that a baby can be screaming for any amount of time and when they finally fall asleep, we say they've self-soothed, just doesn't make sense. Once they have that felt experience, their nervous system has a template for regulation that they can later access as their skills develop. Like everything else in childhood, we help them until they can do it more independently.

Excerpt from "Why Won't You Sleep"- published in November 2024 by Macall Gordon and Kim West





MYTH

If you don't sleep train your newborn they will have lifelong bad habits.

FACT

There's no research on the need or benefit of starting sleep training early. No one has looked at whether its any harder or less effective to wait until the baby is older.

Research on preventing sleep problems in really young babies often found that improvements were very small (16)—and also wore off in just a few months. (17)





MYTH

There are ~~8~~, ~~15~~, ~~30~~ different sleep training methods.



FACT

There are only 3:

Extinction - put them in their crib/bed (calm but awake) and leave their room and do not return until the morning.

Graduated Extinction - put them in their crib/bed (calm but awake) and leave the room. You can go and check on them in timed intervals. What you do when you go in and how long you stay can be tweaked. Here are some of the ways to vary the approach: touch and how long, picking up, speaking to them and how long and what can you say etc.

Fading or Parental Fading - put them in their crib/bed (calm but awake) and stay by them offering physical and verbal reassurance until asleep. Slowly reduce your support and move away every few nights as they learn the skills themselves.





MYTH

You should never co-sleep or you should always co-sleep.

FACT

Let's remove "never" and "always" from our parenting vocabulary. One study showed that 60% of parents cosleep in the first year of life. So let's learn how to do it safely! Other cultures have been doing it for hundreds of years! And when and IF you want to end it there are gentle approaches to do so! There is nothing "wrong" with safely co-sleeping if it is working for you and your family!





MYTH

All babies are ready for sleep training at 3 months of age.

FACT

Every baby and family is unique. Consider your baby's health, growth, and temperament. Follow your baby's cues and YOUR gut. Can your baby roll, suck their hands, do small things to calm themselves? Rarely do "one size fits all" statements apply to babies.





 **MYTH**

You need to stop breastfeeding your baby to improve their sleep.

 **FACT**

You can continue to breastfeed and improve your child's sleep without sacrificing either one. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.





MYTH

Sleep training will always ruin an attachment between parent and baby.

FACT

Attachment is a construct that is established through a reliable pattern of response over time. A secure attachment results from parents keeping distress at a tolerable level.





MYTH

Letting them “Cry-It-Out” always works.....you just have to be strong.

FACT

Even in research, crying-it-out often took WEEKS to work (14). So, this idea that it works in just a couple of days is only true for a very small number of parents. Let's move away from words like “always” and “never” in parenting.





MYTH

Sleep Training is always bad for your child and can harm their attachment with you.



FACT

“Attachment is not the action of soothing. Soothing is the result of parents reading signals and trying to interpret them. Is your child wet? Hungry? Overtired? Frustrated? This is called mentalizing and is the secret sauce of attachment. When you try to interpret your child’s cries, you are using your adult emotion processing system to translate your child’s raw emotional communication. Then, the way you respond to them helps wire their own emotional regulation system. This is the beginning of emotional communication between you and your child which is the foundation of secure attachment. This does not mean that you know what to do every time your child is upset, it means you are trying.”

Excerpt from "Why Won't You Sleep"- published in November 2024 by Macall Gordon and Kim West





MYTH

The earlier you sleep train your newborn the better.

FACT

“Younger infants can’t rely on motor skills to even get their hand to their mouth. They can’t divert their attention away from distress. Because their little regulation toolbox is virtually empty, the amount of distress they can capably handle on their own is really, really small. They need help calming down and can’t do it on their own. Newborns need you to help them get to a calm regulated state until they can learn to do it on their own. Don’t worry...you are not spoiling them. “

Excerpt from "Why Won't You Sleep"- published in November 2024 by Macall Gordon and Kim West





MYTH

Routines and strict schedules enslave us and our child, they go against their natural rhythms.

FACT

Routines are often comforting to babies and children as it gives them a sense of predictability and helps them learn what is coming next. Although I don't recommend a strict schedule, I do recommend you look for a rhythm appearing in even your newborns day. If you base your decisions on your child's rhythms instead of a strict schedule, taking notice of when your baby wants to feed, sleep, play, be held, burp or tends to whine you may discover a natural routine. Be flexible with it as your baby's needs change at the same time enjoy the predictability it may bring to your day too!





MYTH

You should never cuddle, snuggle, talk softly to, or reassure your baby as you prepare them for sleep.



FACT

Dr. Teti, a professional at Penn State, found in his study that parents with high emotional availability had fewer bedtime disruptions and woke less during the night. Examples of emotional availability are parents cuddling and talking softly to their infants at bedtime and speaking reassuring phrases such as “It’s okay” or “There, there” as they prepare them for sleep. Emotional availability is about more than putting the baby to bed; it’s about how we relate to our children overall. When we are fully present with our babies, they feel secure, and that helps them feel safe falling asleep—and staying asleep. Referenced in “The Sleep Lady’s Gentle Newborn Sleep Guide”.



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MYTH

Anyone who calls themselves a Gentle Sleep "Consultant" or Gentle Pediatric Sleep Consultant is not trained by The Sleep Lady and may NOT be teaching her Shuffle aka Chair Method correctly.



FACT

Look for the logo above for a sleep coach who is trained by The Sleep Lady and her faculty panel. The Gentle Sleep Coach Program is the FIRST in the world and the most comprehensive certification program available. The program involves over 80 hours of advanced training specifically focused on how to gently work with babies 0-5 months of age using Baby-Led Sleep Shaping and Coaching. This gentle approach aids families to first shape their baby's sleep and then when appropriate (and according to their baby's unique temperament) offer alternatives to the "cry it out" method for newborns, based on an infant's developmental readiness to self soothe.

RESOURCES

14 Chadez & Nurius (1987); France et al. (2003); Rickert & Johnson (1988)

16 Fangupo et al. (2021); Sleep et al. (2002)

17 St. James-Roberts et al. (2001); Stremler et al. (2013)

Several of the myths and facts in this guide are excerpts from "Why Won't You Sleep"- published in Nov. 2024 by Macall Gordon, MA and GSC and Kim West, MSW.



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