

Bed Time Strategies for Children with Sensory Processing Disorder

Bed time can be a difficult time for any child. It can be even more of a struggle for a child with [Sensory Processing Disorder](#) (SPD).



Throughout the day, all children engage in various activities that excite them, including interacting with peers, playing on the playground and fighting with siblings. It can be a challenge to calm kids down from a daytime of activity. This can be even more of a challenge for a child with SPD.

As adults, we are able to engage in various tasks to relax our bodies after a busy day. Children with SPD need the same input, but they are not cognitively aware of their body's needs. For example, if an adult has a stressful day, he or she may drink a hot cup of tea, read, or place a hot towel on their face as self-calming techniques. A child that had a rough day may act out or refuse to go to bed because he or she doesn't understand what his or her body needs.

The following strategies can help your child with SPD calm down and improve the process of getting to sleep:

- **Have a Strict Nightly Routine-** Completing a predictable bedtime routine decreases anxiety, gives your child control and establishes healthy habits. A visual schedule of the routine can assist the little ones with understanding the steps.
- **Incorporate Rocking-** Typically, slow linear (back and forth), vestibular movement creates a calming effect. Rocking in a rocking chair or swing is a great activity to help your child wind down.
- **Enjoy Bath Time-** Warm water is calming. Incorporating a nice, warm bath at night not only provides your child with calming sensory input, it also provides an opportunity for you and your child to bond over bath play time. This special, nightly, one-on-one time will also ease the minds of children who may worry about separating from their parents.
- **Read a Favorite Book-** Reading your child's book of choice provides your child with some control. It is also another great way to relax mind and body.

- **Avoid Excitatory Activities**-Avoid engaging in alerting activities before bedtime, as this might make it difficult for your child to calm his or her system down and go to bed. Spinning and jumping movements are excitatory and alerting. In regards to proprioceptive input or heavy work, light touch, such as tickling, is excitatory and alerting.
- **Avoid Screen Time**-Create a rule: 1-2 hours before bedtime no electronics or TV. This will promote a smoother transition into quiet time.