



Is There Life After Sleep Training?

“Now that my baby is sleeping through the night I can no longer meet you in the morning for coffee because it’s nap time.” Sound familiar? Have you ever felt envious of your friend because her not even 4 month old is sleeping through the night, but swear that you would never be tied to a routine, stuck at home while your baby sleeps all day? After all, that would mean missing out on having a life, right? Of course not! I want to explain a couple of simple strategies that allow you to respect your baby’s sleep routines, while prioritizing that very important time away from home – essential while raising little ones!

Give it two weeks. First, let’s understand where the misconception comes from. It is true that sleep training does take a commitment of a solid two weeks at home. During this time, parents are at home, forming a solid foundation for sleep. This means that there will be no naps on the go or later than usual bedtimes during this time. This allows your baby to come to know what happens at sleep times so that his body and mind will develop a strong cue around these routines. It needs to be consistent, otherwise, your little one can not separate sleep time from play time, etc.

It is also important to understand *why* sleep needs to be consistent. Think about where we sleep? Would you sleep as easily or as soundly if you slept in a new place every night – your car, then the couch, then in your bed once in awhile? Most of us would sleep best where sleep happens most of the time. Think of the last time you nodded off in a car or airplane....was it a restful sleep? Most of us sleep best in our own beds. With that being said, we still have to honour our own needs, and I am here to tell you that you can still have a life after sleep training!

The importance of getting out! It is a wonderful thing when a baby sleeps – finally! So many people are afraid of wrecking the excellent sleep habits. However, you do not have to worry; in fact, it is extremely important for the family, especially if the parent is at home on parental leave, to get out of the house! Go and visit friends or fit in a fitness class – there are some amazing strollers and carriers made to tote baby around in. Socializing and being out are sanity savers for many moms and dads! So how do you do it?

Here are my top tips...

- **Plan your outings for the week ahead.** Being flexible requires a bit of planning. I recommend deciding which activities you really want to do during the week and doing them! Pick two days out of seven that are going to be “off” days and enjoy them without worry about the short or missed nap. It may mean a short car or stroller nap, or if you are visiting friends or family bring along a pack and play and set it up in a separate room – this is always a great option! Also, try not to have naps on the go happening two days in a row but instead, allow at least 24 – 48 hours in between to keep a consistent schedule on track!
- **Choose wisely.** Try to only miss one nap during the day, if possible, so that at least one nap is happening in your baby’s normal sleep environment. If this is not an option, make sure that bedtime is at an appropriate time or vice versa – keep naps during the day at home and then go out in the evening and have bedtime a bit later.

Baby will still sleep well! Remember, a missed nap once or twice a week isn’t the end of the world! The key is making sure that the good sleep habits are happening most days of the week and that the late bedtimes are not the norm. Even as a Sleep Consultant, going to my fitness class with my baby was worth a missed nap once a week and when we came home, my little guy still slept great for his nap. If your little ones have excellent sleep habits 90-95% of the time, they will continue to sleep soundly!