

Bedtimes

Sherene Cauely

Originally Published by Rhythm of the Home

When I had my first daughter there was no community of mindful mamas in my neighborhood, and no blogs for me to follow. I was twenty-one, the first of my friends or family with a baby. I didn't realize there was "natural parenting" or "attachment parenting", but I had always been a follower of the natural path. I wanted natural childbirth, a sling, to make my own baby food- I was feeling my own way, following my instincts.

So, when my baby screamed every time I laid her in her crib. I picked her back up and let her sleep on my chest. I tried, really tried, to put her to sleep on her back, in her crib, with no covers and no comfort. Really. I tried. But it eventually dawned on me that my little girl was in danger of me falling asleep driving or just plain losing it. One tired cold and lonely night- I brought her into bed to nurse. And then the next evening, I didn't even try to put her to bed in her crib. We felt so happy and cozy, and sleepy and content.

Now I have two little girls and two family beds. We have the queen in the master bedroom and a mattress roll on the floor of one of the girls' rooms. I go back and forth, depending on who needs me. We've had a lot of different arrangements over the years, but this is what we need right now. My husband needs me as much as my girls. He also needs his sleep, not to be the only one displaced at night. If the girls are in bed together I can go to them and comfort both at the same time, with enough room to sleep myself. Ah, everyone is happy- and asleep.

I know lots and lots of mamas now. Many of them with new babies and sleepless nights, and they all want to know should they co-sleep, should they let the baby cry it out, should they do something in between. Yep. Probably all those things. There are a thousand options and the one that works is the one that works for you. Right now. Because next year you may need something different, and so might your baby. That's what mindful parenting is, the ability to see and change when needed. Withholding judgement of the situation-and ourselves. So many times the "thing" that makes us unhappy about a situation ( like a child not sleeping) is just that we have other expectations.

Now beside the girls bed, there is a little shelf with their thankful candles and their thankful book. Every night, we light the candles, and a little lantern above their bed. Snuggle down and record their thankfals for the day. And mine too. Then the girls blow out their candles and whisper their wishes in my ears- at the same time, so the other

can't hear. I get a record of our days, my children's thoughts and dreams. Beautifully, because it is a part of our rhythm, I don't have to do any thing extra. As a mother, I get a two for one- a lovely bedtime ritual for the girls, and a memento of this treasured time in our lives, all the sweet and funny, sad and crazy, whirly twirly events of childhood.

### **sleep training for grown-ups**

#### **Spend your days outside.**

Small and large humans need lots of time outdoors. Spending the majority of our day outside not only trains our bodies to nature's wake/sleep schedule, it also creates an opportunity for exertion and exploration.

#### **Be flexible and creative**

Meditating on what your family really needs and wants from your rest will help you recognize your intuition when in a challenging situation.

#### **Read, talk and explore**

Reading all those advice books, talking with friends (your parents about your childhood habits) and trying different methods are all great ways to find YOUR method. You can still do whatever you want with all that information.

#### **Try to make the trying times work for you**

If you have decided to stay with your child until they are asleep, reading your own book (out loud to little ones) may be one of those two for one moments. Your child becomes conditioned to your reading voice at bedtime, you get some personal time before joining your spouse downstairs. If you are up a lot at night, what can you do to make it more comfortable. Special morning coffee, slippers, lighting. Getting out for a walk, or the gym, or a class. Your family making space for these makes late nights easier for you.

### **Little people express gratitude in the most indirect ways.**