

Your Village: Parenting Beyond Discipline

#202: Middle of the Night Tantrums/Wakeups & Screentime Power Struggles Transcript

Erin: Welcome to the Your Village podcast, Parenting Beyond Discipline. Your Village is the most comprehensive site for evidence-based parenting classes available on-demand at YourVillageOnline.com. Our classes give parents the foundation, steps and tools for creating strong, healthy relationships with their children, resulting in responsible, cooperative, happy and successful children and families! My goal is to help parents support their children in finding and reaching their own unique potential. The podcast is a place to learn about all things parenting and get your questions answered! I'm Your Village founder and your host, Erin Royer.

Hello everyone! I'm vicariously enjoying seeing some of my friends kids going back to school, most of them 2 days a week hybrid. I hope some of you and your kids are safely getting to participate in this as well. We've now been pushed out again to mid-November as a possible return date.

The questions for today are another middle of the night sleep wakeup question with big tantrums. The second question is about an almost 3 year old and some power struggles over tv. With parents allowing more screen time with being at home so much more, this is a common issue right now. So I'll get to those but first again I want to send big thank you for your support of the website classes and all the amazing positive feedback I get from you about how it's helping you parent better, the podcast, Instagram and the growing YouTube channel. I hit over 100 members this past week, which I know sounds funny, at least to me when my kids follow these you tubers with over a million followers. But hey, we all start somewhere! As a thank you, I put up the full class for 1-2-3 magic. IT covers the introduction, the steps, examples, the pitfalls and little genius tactics our kids will pull that render the tool ineffective and how to avoid those traps. So if you are interested in learning that technique and using it well, go to my YouTube channel and subscribe. You can just search your village and I believe the channel now comes up at the top. When I hit 500, I will put out another free class! I've decided when I'm getting close to 1000, I will put out survey video on youtube and you all can vote between like 3 different classes and whichever class video intro gets the most likes will be the one I will put up. Of course, all the full 58 videos, I counted them yesterday, I now have 58 classes up on the site, all the video handouts and the access to our free private Facebook private group where do live parent chats to answer questions can be found at YourVillageOnline.com. I do have our next parent chat coming up this Sunday morning. The more people who join the website and the group,

the more frequently I will do those chats. It's about every 2 weeks right now. The live parent chat groups are nice and small, usually averaging around 3-4 parents right now. So everyone gets a chance to get their questions answered.

"Hello, I love your podcast, I have a 2 year old who has always challenged us with difficulty falling asleep and nighttime wake ups. The waking up at night got better for a few months between 16-22 ish months (he actually slept from bedtime to morning). He started climbing out of the crib consistently at 18 months so the toddler bed definitely Italy created additional challenges. At bedtime we've worked a lot on me staying in there for about 15 min maximum and then leaving so he can fall asleep on his own. Every once and a while he tests boundaries asking for water, Elmo, me to tuck him in numerous times, etc. our main issue currently is nighttime wake ups requiring us to intervene. He wakes up and either insists we tuck him in with his blanket or tantrums until he finally lets us tuck him in and leave. This happens 2-3 times a night and it's not improving with us limiting interaction when we go in. We've tri ed not going into his room but often that is what leads to the tantrums or him pounding on his door, which I will not allow (I don't want him to feel trapped and also don't want him to break any th I gotta). How do we shift away from intervening even if it's just for a minute at a time? With a new baby on the way and potentially big sleep struggles to come there I'm really stressed about what spring will look like for our family. Any advice is much appreciated. Thank you so much for all you do. Your recommendations have greatly improved my days with him and his behavior is so good most of the time. Kelly"

So when it comes to sleep, what we do at bedtime, then becomes what they will expect in the middle of the night. So since he is used to having someone with him as he gets sleepy at bedtime, this is what he is looking for in the middle of the night. This is where you want to focus. The reason for this is that sleep pressure is strongest at bedtime. So creating a new habit is easiest at bedtime. So you want to greatly reduce this bedtime interaction, even if you aren't saying/doing much. You want to get this down to bedtime routine, tuck in and leave. There are two methods you can use for this, the check-in method and the mantra method. Whichever you choose, you want to have a couple of discussions about it before you implement. One in the middle of the day and a reminder close to bedtime. I've covered both in the past, but mantra is the one where you walk him back to bed, make no eye contact and say nothing or one sentence. "it's night time." tuck in, as in have him get in bed and put the covers on. No lovey, kissy, i love you stuff. When you give the coaching session and let him know how things are going to go, you can let him know "it isn't because I don't love you. I do. but it's night time and everyone needs their sleep so we need you to learn to put yourself back to sleep in the middle of the night. But I'll be happy and excited to do hugs and kisses in the morning. Get him into a good habit with this and then you can work on

the middle of the night. This method takes 3-5 days to get into a good solid habit. Regardless of the method, I would recommend, leaving the door open/unlocked so that he isn't feeling trapped. He can come out. He can come get you. So this fixes that issue of tantruming because he's feeling trapped. You are going to work on his behavior changes so that he is learning to fall asleep or back to sleep on his own and then the door open/closed becomes a non-issue. For the check in method, this is when you tuck in and then promise to return in 5 minutes if he stays in bed. You come in stay for up to 1 minute and no more, a quick back rub, head rub, kiss, what have you and then go on your way. Repeat until the next time you come in, he's already asleep. Then you make the time between visits longer 7 minutes, ten minutes until soon you are only visiting one time. This method takes a couple weeks. Then you decide if you are dropping that last visit altogether. Once you have this set up sell into a new habit, then you work on middle of the night, just walking him back and tucking in quickly. If he is expecting a checkin like bedtime, then you can decide if you want need to get rid of those at bedtime so he doesn't expect it in the middle of the night.

Once you choose, have a coaching session before bed. So here are your options, first is the quick way. When he gets up at night to come get you, you walk him back to bed, make no eye contact and say nothing or one sentence. "it's night time." tuck in, as in have him get in bed and put the covers on. No lovey, kissy, i love you stuff. When you give the coaching session and let him know how things are going to go, you can let him know "it isn't because I don't love you. I do. but it's night time and everyone needs their sleep so we need you to learn to put yourself back to sleep in the middle of the night. But I'll be happy and excited to do hugs and kisses in the morning. the other option, is to walk him back, tuck him in. Still no lovey, huggy kiss but you can stay for a few minutes as he gets sleepy but leave before he falls asleep. This mean you are up longer, and getting more woken. But if there are meltdowns and it's more than you want to deal with in the middle of the night, this may be a better method, of giving him a little more support at first and then pulling it away over the coming weeks as he gets better at falling back to sleep in the middle of the night. The quick method, known as the mantra method because you have a mantra either in your head or the one you say to your child "it's nighttime" is quick. It's 3 nights to significant improvement and 5 nights it should be done completely. It may be a miserable 3 nights but it's done after that. That was always my choice because I could get through the 3 nights knowing it was going to be done soon. But everyone has a different tolerance for these things!

Next I'm going to cover some general information about behavior and bedtimes when it comes to making decisions about how to best handle a situation in the moment and for the longer term, after a word from our sponsor.

Now that we're back after the break, I'm going to talk about the general information about shaping behavior and some tips to keep in mind for changes in bedtime/nighttime behavior specifically.

So for some general background information, I cover this really well in the intro to discipline class. But it's important for us to consider when we are rewarding behavior and if we are ok with it and sometimes that answer is yes and that's fine. Once we are aware that's what we are doing we can then decide is this a one time thing because I need to get through tonight and tomorrow I will re-group and figure out a better solution? These habits can get disrupted, meaning the good habits during certain big growth or development spurts, teething or illness. So it's really good to keep in mind that if your kids are in a good habit and then they change because they got sick or are teething or something like that, once you hit that third night of comforting them you are into a new habit and you'll have to break it again once things calm down. This is fine. I remember going through this a few times when one of them got sick. When they were sick, I would comfort them back to sleep, rock them, cuddle them. On night three I remember telling myself "this is your new habit. You will have to break this again next week once he's better." that was ok. I was ok with that and prepared and usually it was only a night or two. But other times, with teething or something I'd hit night two and on night three I was back to setting the boundary because I didn't want to create a new habit I'd have to break. So I'd be comforting for a night or two and then on night 2 or 3, I'd be back to boundary setting at bedtime. It's good information to keep in mind so you can just decide how you want proceed.

Of course the toddler sleep class does address all these issues, 3 methods for creating smoother bedtimes, middle of the nights, naps, early wakeups, nightmares and night terrors, etc. Also the intro to discipline class is a really good basic class for understanding reward systems and how they can really undermine positive discipline and how different parenting styles affect outcomes in children's behaviors and our relationships with them and even their success and happiness in life. So you can see those at YourVillageOnline.com.

The next question from Rene who wrote,

"Hi Erin, I am hoping you could help me with a recent problem that has emerged since being stuck at home. My son is 33 months. We have typically only allowed him to watch tv as a small treat maybe 2-3 times per week for 10-20 minutes. In the past week that has changed as we have used the tv for activities such as story time, yoga, etc. Every time we turn it on he thinks he will get a show and it takes a lot of convincing to get him to understand the difference of these activities vs. his show. In addition he is

now waking up early and begging to watch tv. Any ideas as to what we can do? On a separate note, his sleep has been affected as well. He has been refusing to nap. I have watched your toddler sleep course and have tried some tactics at night, but don't know how to deal with his naps. I really want him to nap so we can get a break! Thanks so much!"

So I think we've all or most have been dealing with some kind of screen time struggles. It's just really hard. There's not much happening. I think for most of us. Still so many things remain closed and for me, the most important thing is to just keep distancing as much as possible so our numbers can reach where we need to get these kids back to school!! lol! So with increased screen time, it is definitely making it more difficult to set those boundaries. They, especially our boys seem to become more easily addicted to these screens. The younger they are, the less they understand. Working from home or even just needing some time to ourselves or to take care of things at home and not having kids in preschool means for many screens become the go to just to get a little break.

So for Rene I'm not convinced that it's actually the screen time that is interfering with nap times. It could just be that he's outgrowing them, early. Some kids are ready to drop naps at 3 and your son is getting very close to that. The key indicators would be how much sleep is he getting overnight? How is waking up and doing throughout the day? If he's falling asleep every day on a car ride, then he needs a nap. If he's falling apart at dinnertime because he's emotionally spent due to being physically spent, then yes, he needs a nap. But if he's getting 12-13 hours overnight 7:30 to 7:30 then likely he's done napping. So those are all clues as to how/if he's done napping. Even if he's getting 11 1/2 hours a night but staying relatively happy through the afternoon and not getting drowsy or overly grumpy (moderately to significantly moreso that his usual temperament throughout the day) You can tell when a toddler is overtired, falling apart at everything, falling asleep at dinner. What you can implement is quiet time. 20 minutes in your room. You don't have to sleep but you need to stay in your room and play quietly with your stuffed animals, looking at books. We will come get you after 20 minutes. I know it's not what parents want to hear. We want this nap time! WE need this nap time! But some kids are just done early. My oldest was already skipping naps at 2 1/2. He hated naps. By 3, he basically never napped again. On the rarest of occasions, I can count on one hand the number of times he's napped since he was 3. That was days where he did something particularly physically taxing that morning, like a play place birthday party for 2 hours, then maybe he would crash out later that day.

As far as screen time. Here are some tips, Set rules and solid boundaries around screen time and make sure everyone understands: How much you will watch and Who gets to

pick the content. This means explaining what you are watching at what time, story time after morning snack, yoga after lunch and playtime, his show after afternoon snack, whatever that is. Now 3 year olds do not understand time so this is why it's likely something he's struggling with. It isn't until about 4 that they begin to understand the concept of time. So this is why I say to explain it as part of the daily schedule. Because that they can begin to grasp, after the morning walk. After lunch. So once you have a schedule for when each thing is, you can remind him, your show is after afternoon playtime. So there's no need to convince. It just is what it is and it's a reminder. If he keeps going, you stop engaging. I've already reminded you Your show is after our afternoon snack. Did we just have afternoon snack? No? we just had our morning walk so it's time for story time. OK That's the last reminder. So I'm sure at what time he's watching during the day. But to curb the morning issue and asking so early in the morning, I would make sure the first stint of screentime, regardless of what it is, at least 2 hours after wakeup at 7AM. so get up, get ready, have breakfast, free play, take a walk, whatever the morning schedule is. Then the first stint of screen time, whether it's yoga or sesame street, doesn't happen until 9AM. This way there's no associating waking up with getting to get onto the tv.

If you have a parenting question you'd like answered, send an email to Podcast@YourVillageOnline.com.

Thanks for listening and see you next week!