

1 Introduction: If I Can, You Can!

1.1 Welcome

For the past twenty years I have been lucky enough to have had a great life. I had a happy childhood, a successful school life, a fantastic career as an academic, policy maker and lecturer and I married a marvellous man.

However, in 1999 my cosy existence was turned upside down with the arrival of my first son, Ben. I had an unpleasant pregnancy, a terrible labour and suddenly found myself holding a tiny baby that screamed a lot.

For the first three weeks my darling bundle of joy seemed to be awake and crying 24 hours a day and I was physically and emotionally exhausted. During this time I had signed up to the top 4 myths about baby sleep as identified by the Millpond Children's Sleep Clinic (2005):

1. Sleep problems in babies and young children are inevitable.
2. Sleep problems are difficult to solve.
3. Children will eventually grow out of sleep problems.
4. You must grit your teeth and put up with continuous night time waking.

I gathered the little strength I had left, thought this can't be right and with a befuddled brain started to research what I could do about my dire situation.

The first book I read appeared to have been written by Mother Earth incarnate. Her solution was to strap the baby to your front and devote yourself to it entirely. That's fine if you need nothing else to satisfy you

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in life and have a team of staff to cook, clean, wash, iron, shop and do everything else that needs to be done in a family home. There was no way that I could physically do what this woman required of me.

I guiltily searched for another book and found an example of the second baby care genre – ‘let your baby dictate to you’. By now I had been trying this for six weeks. My baby was indeed telling me what he wanted to do – sleep all day (permanently attached to my breast) and play all night. In fact he was all in favour of the Mother Earth approach outlined previously. This was not the routine that I wanted, so again I looked for another baby sleep guru.

Eventually after reading about twenty baby behaviour and care books (it’s easy to do this with a baby permanently attached to your boobs making it impossible to do anything else!) there seemed to be no one perfect solution.

What was needed was a system that ‘fitted’ with my needs and personal set of circumstances. By being systematic I was able to work out what sleep my son and I were getting, why there wasn’t enough of it and what action I could take to address the issues. By going through the process that is set out in the remainder of the book, I came up with my own system and set about trialling it on my small son.

Within two weeks he was sleeping through the night and was a delight to be with during the day. In addition, I was getting all of my housework done, we were eating something other than ready meals and I was spending time with my husband, friends and family. Believe me this was a miraculous turn around.

Since that time I have helped thousands of families who have suffered as I have. The Dream Team and I have helped them work through their child’s issues and with this support they have come out of the other side.



1.2 The System

Sleep problems can be very complex in nature. The tricky bit is getting to grips with the root of the problem and then treating it with one of the effective techniques that are available. I have not invented these techniques, but they have been researched and used by many professionals around the world. The aim of this book is to help you plan a strategy to get more sleep, but one that fits with the needs of you and your child.

The success of The Baby Sleep System relies on two things; being able to implement a behaviour management strategy and developing and sticking to your own routine. It can be a very emotional and difficult process to tackle a child's sleep problem which is why help and advice is also available online through the forum at: www.babysleepanswers.co.uk.

1.3 Overview of the Book

Chapter 2 will look in more detail at baby sleep patterns, why problematic sleep patterns can happen and help you to determine if your child does indeed have a sleep problem.

Chapter 3 will outline the importance of routine and help you to put together a routine that fits with your family ethos and commitments.

Chapter 4 will provide a number of examples of routines, designed for different aged children. These are not intended to be prescriptive and can be adapted to fit around individual family dynamics.

Chapter 5 examines the importance of naps during the day and how these can be incorporated into a routine.

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Chapter 6 looks at the specific issue of night feeds and how to lengthen the gap between feeds though the night.

Chapter 7 provides options for managing naps, bedtimes and night time waking. It is up to you to choose the approach that best suits you and your child.

Chapter 8 sets out how to handle specific sleep issues around settling your baby into bed, night time and early waking. There are specific sections for different aged children.

Chapter 9 looks at how to manage siblings when implementing The Baby Sleep System.

There is additional help and advice in Chapter 10 for parents of twins and multiples.

Chapter 11 summarises the key advice referred to throughout the book with 14 top tips.

Chapter 12 gives details of how to access extra support via the online forum and your Health Visitor.

The final section of The Baby Sleep System takes the form of a Workbook which allows you to design your own routine and plot your progress. Additional workbook pages can be downloaded from the Baby Sleep Answers website.

The book also has case studies at the end of key sections demonstrating how “real” families have used the Baby Sleep System to solve their baby’s sleep problems.

