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Bedtime Pass

Meltzer / McLaughlin "Pediatric Sleep Problems - A Clinician's Guide"

Children rarely want to go to bed, preferring instead to stay up and play or simply spend time with parents. The result can be bedtime protests, stalling, or "curtain calls" (getting out of bed over and over to ask for something). The Bedtime Pass is one way to teach your child to stay in bed and fall asleep independently with minimal protests. The following provides guidance on how to use the Bedtime Pass with your child.

- **Have a consistent bedtime routine and a consistent bedtime in place.** For your child this routine should include the following:

and should end at _____ p.m.

- **Following the bedtime routine, your child should be placed in his own bed and given a Bedtime Pass.** A Bedtime Pass is a notecard that he can decorate or some other type of tangible ticket or token. The first few nights, you may want to give your child two or three Bedtime Passes until he fully understands how the Bedtime Pass works.
- **Your child should be reminded that if he calls out or gets out of bed, he will have to give up the Bedtime Pass.** Otherwise, if he keeps the pass, it can be exchanged in the morning for a small age-appropriate prize (e.g., sticker, small toy, 15 extra minutes of screen time). One of the best rewards is not food or money but special time with a parent doing a favorite activity (e.g., bike ride, painting fingernails, going to the playground).
- **Once he is in bed, you should leave the room.** If your child calls out or gets up, you should respond to his request (e.g., another hug, a drink of water), return him to bed, and remove the Bedtime Pass.
- **If your child calls out or gets up after he no longer has a Bedtime Pass, you should return him to bed with minimal interaction, ignoring any other requests.**

Important Things to Remember

- The Bedtime Pass can also be a Nighttime Pass for those children who wake you up in the middle of the night for an unnecessary reason.
- The rewards you and your child choose need to be motivating enough that he will want to hold on to his Bedtime Pass. Over time, the rewards may have to change to keep your child motivated. In addition, after the first week, you can require your

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child to earn more than one Bedtime Pass in order to earn a prize.

- When responding to your child, your interactions should be very brief, minimal, and boring. Otherwise the requests and curtain calls will continue as he is getting the attention he desires.

Parental attention is very motivating to children, this is why they will make “curtain calls” or protest at bedtime. The physical presence of the Bedtime Pass allows him to decide whether he would rather have immediate attention or a reward in the morning. That said, once the pass is gone, your child will quickly learn it is better to keep the pass, as he will not be getting your attention as desired.