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## 5 Reasons Your Child Woke Last Night

### 1. Too late of a bedtime:

An age-appropriate bedtime is key when it comes to having your child sleep through the night. When a child is overtired, their body responds by secreting cortisol which acts like a mild form of adrenaline, making it difficult for them to fall asleep. A late bedtime can also give rise to restless sleep, overnight wake ups and early rising. It sounds counterintuitive; however, an earlier bedtime will help children to sleep longer and sounder. Keep an eye on your child's sleep cues!

### 2. Nap deprivation:

Short naps or missed naps will give rise to an overtired child. As mentioned in point #1, when a child is overtired, their body responds by secreting cortisol which acts like a mild form of adrenaline, making it difficult for them to fall asleep. It can also give rise to restless sleep, overnight wake ups and early rising. If your child has had poor naps during the day, they may need a short back-up nap in the evening or an earlier bedtime, to avoid becoming overtired. Keep an eye on sleep cues and the wake window from last nap to bedtime – if naps have been poor, the wake window likely needs to be shorter and therefore an earlier bedtime.

### 3. Your child was put down already asleep/very drowsy:

If your child is assisted to sleep by rocking, feeding, motion etc., and then placed in their cot/bed, they can easily become dependent on this assistance. Like adults, children experience partial arousals throughout the night, when transitioning from one sleep cycle to another, giving rise to very subtle wake ups. If a child has been assisted to sleep, they will require the same assistance to return to sleep when these partial arousals occur.

### 4. Inconsistent responses overnight:

If you are inconsistent in your responses, your child will not know what to expect or what you are trying to achieve. This will cause confusion and may inadvertently create more crying. For example, when your child wakes overnight sometimes they are rocked back to sleep, sometimes fed back to sleep and sometimes you bring them into your bed. It takes longer to change inconsistently reinforced behaviour! Consistency is key!

### 5. Environmental factors:

- **Noise:** External noise can wake your child – particularly in the early hours of the morning when they are in the lightest sleep state. Consider using white noise to act as a barrier for frequent noise disruption e.g., a dog barking, bin lorry or a sibling.
- **Temperature:** Your child will not sleep well if they are too hot/cold. Consider the clothing they wear to bed, the tog of their blanket/sleeping bag and regulate the bedroom temperature.
- **Light:** Ensure your child's bedroom is adequately dark. Melatonin is the hormone our body creates to help us sleep. If a child's room is too bright, this can inhibit the production of melatonin and lead to overnight wake ups and early rising. Ensure there is no light spilling into your child's bedroom and if you use a night light ensure it is dim. Consider blackout blinds – these are a great sleep aid, particularly in the summer months.

