

*How to Help Sensory-Sensitive & Neurodivergent Kids
Wind Down, Regulate & Rest at Night*



SAY SLEEPY!

by Victoria Bricks

SENSORY-SMART BEDTIME ROUTINES

for Kids with ADHD, Autism & Big Feelings

by @victoria.bricks



Dear Parent, this book was written with love, for families like yours.

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This is not a medical or therapeutic manual, but a heartfelt guide based
on lived experience and gentle research. Always listen to your child's
unique needs and consult trusted professionals when needed.

First Edition - 2025

With kindness,
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SAY SLEEPY! SENSORY-SMART BEDTIME ROUTINES FOR KIDS WITH ADHD, AUTISM & BIG FEELINGS

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Introduction - You're Not Alone

There was a night I still remember with a lump in my throat.

It was past 10:30 PM. My son, all five years of him, was running laps across the room in his superhero pajamas. He was sweaty, wild-eyed, bouncing off the walls - literally. I had tried every trick I knew: singing, snuggling, being firm, being soft, begging. And then I snapped.

"JUST. GO. TO. BED!"

His face crumpled. Mine did too. I knew he wasn't trying to make me miserable. He just... couldn't shut down. And I didn't know how to help. That night ended in tears - his and mine. But that night was also the beginning of something new.

Because I realized bedtime wasn't just about getting him to sleep. It was about understanding his world. His needs. His brain. And most of all - it was about connection.

This book is for the parents out there who have whispered to themselves, "I love my child so much, but I hate bedtime."

SAY SLEEPY! SENSORY-SMART BEDTIME ROUTINES FOR KIDS WITH ADHD, AUTISM & BIG FEELINGS

Especially if your child has ADHD, SPD (Sensory Processing Differences), autism, anxiety - or just a body that never wants to slow down.

It's not your fault. You're not alone. And there are tools that help.

In this book, I'll walk you through the sensory-smart, child-led strategies that changed everything for us - from our bedtime routine to the games we play when everything's falling apart. I'll share how we went from yelling to laughing. From meltdowns to connection. From chaos... to calm.

And just like in Say Yummy!, this isn't just a parenting manual. It's a story - ours, and maybe yours too.

Ready?

Let's Say Sleepy! Together.



CHAPTER 1

Why Sleep Feels So Hard (for Kids Like Mine and Yours)

My son didn't hate sleep. He just couldn't get there.

And if your child has a brain that processes the world differently - whether it's ADHD, SPD, or anything in between - then bedtime isn't just "a routine." It's a sensory and emotional mountain.

It took me years (and many meltdowns) to understand this.

What We Think Is Happening:

- They're being difficult.
- They're stalling.
- They're ignoring us.
- They're testing boundaries.

What's Actually Happening:

- Their nervous system is overstimulated.
- They're scared to separate from us.
- Their body feels uncomfortable and restless.
- Their brain doesn't produce melatonin on time (especially common with ADHD).

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Sometimes, the more I said “calm down,” the more his body did the opposite. And once I started reading about sensory regulation, it all clicked.

🧠 **What the Science Says:**

- Kids with ADHD often have delayed circadian rhythms - meaning their bodies don't feel sleepy until way later.
- Kids with sensory sensitivities often feel itchy, too hot, too loud, or just “off” in their pajamas, sheets, or environment.
- Their brains are still buzzing from the day, and they need help slowing down - not pressure or punishment.

Once I stopped expecting bedtime to “just work” like it does for other families, I started creating one that worked for us.



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Our Turning Point

One night, instead of yelling, I said something different.

I sat on the floor. Looked him in the eyes. And whispered, “Your body feels wild tonight, huh? Let’s see if we can help it feel sleepy together.” He blinked. Then nodded. And just like that, the battle ended — not because he obeyed, but because he felt seen.

We started creating rituals. Playing sleepy games. Breathing together. Tuning into his body instead of trying to force it into mine.

It wasn’t perfect. It was real.

And it was the beginning of a new bedtime.

From Meals to Bedtime: It's All About Feeling Safe



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When I was writing *Say Yummy!*, I realized picky eating was never really about the food - it was about how my son felt inside his body. Bedtime was the same. The challenge wasn't "he won't eat" or "he won't sleep." The challenge was: he doesn't feel safe enough to relax.

And that's not something we can punish or rush. But we can connect.



Try This Tonight:

Before bedtime, sit beside your child and say:

"Your body's not bad. It's just having a loud night. Let's be on the same team."

See what shifts - even just a little.

*“Bedtime is not just the end of the
day - it’s the beginning of
tomorrow’s strength.”*

— Unknown



✨ CHAPTER 2

Creating a Sensory-Smart Sleep Space

I used to think the bedroom just needed to be “quiet” and “dark” - simple, right?

But for my son, that was never enough.

For kids with sensory sensitivities, ADHD, or big emotions, **the sleep environment is not just a background. It's a trigger. Or a tool.**

Once I understood this, I stopped trying to make his room look like a Pinterest post and started asking, “What does my child's body need to feel safe and settled here?”

And that changed everything.

What a Sensory-Smart Bedroom Really Means

Not all kids need the same kind of cozy.

Some kids need heavy pressure, while others feel trapped by it.

Some want complete darkness, others panic when the lights go out. One might crave soft sounds, another needs earplugs.

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Your Sensory Sleep Checklist

Let's break it down by sense, so you can experiment and find what works for your child:

👁️ Sight

- Use warm, dim lighting in the hour before bed (salt lamps or red bulbs are great).
- Try blackout curtains if light overstimulates them... or a soft night light if total darkness feels scary.
- Avoid strong colors or busy patterns on the walls or bedding.

💡 Sound

- Try white noise machines, calming nature sounds, or soft music.
- Some kids prefer ear defenders or silicone sleep earplugs.
- Be mindful of background noise like TVs, traffic, or a sibling playing in the next room.



✓ Your Sensory Sleep Checklist

👉 Touch

- Test weighted blankets (start light - even a heavy comforter can help).
- Let them choose their pajamas - itchy tags, tight cuffs, or rough seams can ruin the night.
- Use soft, breathable sheets. Cotton or bamboo usually work better than synthetics.



🧸 Hug Toys & Warmies: Soothing Through Touch & Warmth

A “hug toy” - like a stuffed animal or soft doll - is more than comfort. It’s a sleep partner, a self-soothing tool, and sometimes, the only way our kids feel safe closing their eyes.

For my son, it was a beat-up teddy named Max. Max came to dinner, to car rides, and eventually to therapy. I used to worry — “Isn’t he too old for this?” But honestly? I’m too old to not hold my coffee cup like a shield at 7 a.m. We all have our things.



Some kids love **microwavable plush toys** - soft animals that you warm in the microwave. Many are filled with lavender-scented grains, and they offer:



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- Gentle heat (like a mini weighted blanket)
- A calming scent
- Soft squishable pressure

They're especially magical for kids with restless legs, racing thoughts, or nighttime anxiety.

Let your child choose their "Sleep Buddy." Give it a name. Make it part of the routine:

"Let's warm up Bunny. He's getting ready to help you sleep too."

That turns bedtime from something they resist into something they look forward to.

🕯️ Smell

- Lavender, chamomile, or vanilla scents can signal "it's time to rest" — but avoid strong oils or sprays.
- A few drops of essential oil on a stuffed toy or pillow corner is enough.

NB But be aware of allergies



Taste

- Some kids sleep better after a light snack. Try warm milk, banana, or nut butter toast.
- Avoid sugary snacks or drinks near bedtime (even “healthy” gummies can spike energy).

What We Did

I let go of what I thought a “proper” bedroom should be. I asked my son, “What feels cozy to your body?” He picked a lava lamp. A worn-down blanket he’s had since he was a toddler. His favorite audiobook looping softly. And I stopped fighting him on it. Because his body knew what it needed.

We also created a Sleep Basket - a box by the bed with things that helped him settle:

- A sensory fidget
- Lavender balm
- His weighted lap pad
- A small flashlight for feeling “in control” of the dark



And just like we made peace with picky eating in Say Yummy!, we made peace with “picky sleeping” too. Because it wasn’t a flaw.

It was feedback.

And just like we made peace with picky eating in Say Yummy!, we made peace with “picky sleeping” too. Because it wasn’t a flaw. It was feedback.



Try This Tonight:

Before bedtime, ask your child:

“What helps your body feel safe and sleepy?”

Then let them help redesign their bedtime space — even if it’s just moving the lamp or adding a soft toy. Tiny changes can mean big wins.



✨ CHAPTER 3

Building a Bedtime Routine That Actually Works (Even for Sensory or ADHD Kids)

When my son was younger, bedtime routines felt like reading instructions written for someone else's child.

"Brush teeth. Read one book. Lights off."

Right. Sure.

Meanwhile, in our house:

- *The pajamas were "too hot."*
- *The toothpaste was "too spicy."*
- *He wanted to talk about dinosaurs at 9:27 p.m.*

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At first, I blamed myself. Was I not consistent enough? Not strict enough? But eventually I realized...

👉 **The problem wasn't that we didn't have a routine.
The problem was that the routine didn't work for his brain.
So we threw out the script - and wrote our own.**



Why Traditional Routines Don't Work for Neurodivergent Kids

For kids with ADHD, SPD, or anxiety, transitions are **hard**.

Going from movement to stillness, or from stimulation to silence, can feel like slamming the brakes at full speed.

Also:

- Their nervous systems take longer to downshift
- They often experience time blindness (5 minutes feels like 30... or 1)
- They may feel emotions physically - like buzzing, itching, squirming

So when a typical bedtime routine moves too fast, or feels too rigid, it's not calming – it's stressful.

And stress = no sleep.

What Experts Say

Dr. Mona Delahooke, child psychologist and author of *Brain-Body Parenting*, reminds us: “Challenging behaviors are the tip of the iceberg. What lies beneath is often a stress response.”

This changed how I viewed bedtime resistance. My son wasn't being difficult, his body and brain just didn't feel safe enough to rest.

It wasn't misbehavior. It was dysregulation.

Dr. Russell Barkley, leading ADHD researcher, says:

“They are not ‘won’t do’ children. They are ‘can’t yet’ children who need scaffolding.”

That insight made me rethink everything. Instead of expecting him to calm down on command, I started creating external structures - visual charts, step-by-step routines, and sensory tools - to support his internal calm.



Dr. Lucy Jane Miller, founder of the STAR Institute for Sensory Processing, explains:

“A well-fed sensory system during the day sleeps better at night.”

Once I started giving my son more sensory input earlier in the day - like jumping, heavy work, or swinging - bedtime meltdowns decreased. His body wasn't still hungry for movement.



What Works Instead: The 3-R Routine

Over time, we found that the routines that actually worked for us all shared these three things:

1. Repetition

- The exact same steps, in the same order, every night
- Fewer surprises = more safety
- Even the words we used stayed consistent (“Time to tuck in Bunny!”)

2. Regulation

- Built-in ways to release energy or calm the body
- Not just “do this” tasks, but sensory resets

3. Relationship

- A connection point - even 2 minutes of one-on-one “you and me” time
- A chance to feel safe, seen, and not “managed”

We call it *The 3-R Routine*:

Repetition + Regulation + Relationship.

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Our Actual Routine (Use, Adapt, or Rebuild Yours)

Here's what our current bedtime looks like
(this version worked for my son around age 5):

1. Visual bedtime chart

With pictures and magnets he moves himself
Gives him control and predictability



2. Warm bath

Not rushed. Add bubbles. Let him bring toys
Helps downshift his nervous system

3. Warm pajamas + hug toy

Usually microwaved Bunny or a soft, weighted lap pad
Warmth + deep pressure = calming magic



4. "Wind-down" play

5-10 minutes of something low energy but soothing:
puzzles, kinetic sand, or slow drawing

5. Snuggle + story

Always the same 2 books (yes, even if I'm bored of them)
Routine is more important than variety



6. Chat & chill

"What was the best part of your day?"
Sometimes he shares; sometimes I just tell mine

7. Sleep music or white noise

His body cues this as "time to close eyes now"



Your Routine Doesn't Have to Be Pinterest-Perfect



You don't need matching pajamas or a diffuser or a \$60 sensory toy. The best bedtime routine is the one your child helps build.

Ask them:

"What helps your body get sleepy?"

"What part of bedtime do you like best? Least?"

Even if they can't answer in full sentences - watch what parts they resist or melt into. That's information.

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Try This Tonight:

Draw (or print) a picture chart of 3-5 bedtime steps. Use photos or stick figures. Let your child move the steps around until they like the order. You can even let them choose what music or book is part of "step 4." Give the routine a fun name, like:

"The Great Sleep Mission"

"Operation Cozy Time"

"Project Pajama Power"

It makes the routine feel like play, not pressure.

✨ CHAPTER 4

Sleepy Tools: Games, Tricks & Movement Rituals That Help Their Body Wind Down (Even When Their Brain Is Buzzing)

Sometimes bedtime felt like trying to land a plane... in a thunderstorm... with an elephant for a co-pilot. My son would want to sleep - he really would - but his body had other plans. It was like his limbs had secret batteries I couldn't find.

After dinner, he'd get revved up instead of slowing down. His feet would stomp louder. His voice would pitch higher. He'd spin, jump, or suddenly decide to start a LEGO project at 8:47 p.m.

I used to think bedtime was just about "being tired."

But for kids with ADHD or sensory sensitivities, being tired doesn't always mean feeling sleepy. Their bodies may be dysregulated, and that means they need more than just quiet - they need tools to help them land.

Here's what helped us.



Sensory Games That Calm Instead of Hype

Play is powerful. But not all play is created equal before bedtime. We found these soothing sensory games helped my son's body downshift without turning into a battle:

1. *The Weighted Burrito Game*

- Lay out a blanket or weighted blanket
- Gently roll your child into a "burrito," applying pressure while singing a silly bedtime song
- Unroll them slowly and whisper: "You're the coziest burrito in the world"

→ **This gives deep pressure input (which helps calm the nervous system), plus laughter and connection.**

2. *Stuffed Animal Massage*

- Let your child "massage" their favorite stuffie's back
- Then you do the same for them with light or firm touch

→ **Bonus: narrate it like a spa - "Sir Lion, here is your warm sleepy back rub..."**

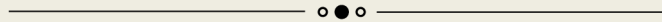




3. Toe-Touch Countdown

- Have them stand and slowly reach for their toes
- Count backward from 10 with each breath
- At the end, whisper “sleepy like a sloth” and do a big body flop onto the bed

→ **A calm movement ritual that cues the body for stillness.**



Hug Toys & Warm Buddies: Yes, They Really Help

My son resisted blankets, but he loved warm, soft toys that gave him pressure and comfort.

Some favorites:

- Microwavable plush toys (lavender-scented or unscented)

→ These provide gentle heat and a grounding scent — especially helpful for sensory seekers.

- Weighted stuffed animals

→ The pressure mimics a hug and can help settle an anxious system.

💡 According to Dr. Lucy Jane Miller, deep pressure input (like a warm weighted toy) triggers the parasympathetic nervous system - the “rest and digest” mode. We made a ritual out of heating up “Bunny” and choosing which part of his body would get the snuggle: tummy, neck, or feet.

Some nights, Bunny even “talked” and said: “Your body had a big day. Let’s rest together.”

Proprioceptive Tricks: Heavy Work for Little Bodies

Heavy work = movements that activate the body's muscles and joints. This input helps the brain feel organized and safe – which is perfect before sleep.

Try:

- Pushing against the wall like a superhero (count to 20)
- Carrying a stack of books to their room for storytime
- Jumping jacks in slow motion - then fall gently on a bed or mat
- Slow bear walks from the bathroom to the bedroom



*These don't hype kids up - they ground them.
It's like giving their body a final dose of "I'm safe now."*

Language That Soothes, Not Scolds

Here's the truth: I used to say things like:

"Come on, we're already late!"

"If you can't calm down, no story!"

"I'm done. I can't do this every night."

Totally human. Totally understandable.

But I started shifting my words. Inspired by Dr. Mona Delahooke's work on emotional co-regulation, I practiced saying things like:

"Your body's not bad. It's just haaving a loud night."

"Let's figure out what your sleepy body needs."

"Want help getting your wiggles out before storytime?"



Words became tools – not threats.

Build a "Sleepy Toolbox" Together

Let your child help build their own nighttime toolbox. Include:

- *A warm microwave toy or weighted plushie*
- *A "Calm Down" card deck or picture book*
- *A list of sleepy games they love (with pictures if needed)*
- *Their favorite bedtime song*
- *A soft brush for "sleepy hair strokes"*

Let them choose 1–2 items each night. The power of choice = nervous system safety.

Bonus Calming Games to Try on Tricky Nights

Some nights, our go-to bedtime tools just didn't click. My son would look at the weighted burrito blanket and say, "Not tonight."

So we built up a toolbox of backup calming games.

No pressure, no perfect – just options. Because the more keys you have, the more likely one will unlock calm.

1. Star Blower

- Hold up your hand like a birthday candle.
- Ask your child to blow "slow star wind" at each finger.

→ **Teaches controlled breathing and slows the nervous system.**

2. Cloud Squeeze

- Tell your child to imagine they're hugging a soft cloud.
- They squeeze arms, fists, shoulders - and then let it all melt.

→ **Releases tension and builds self-awareness of body cues.**



3. *Jellyfish Arms*

- Stand tall, arms up... then let them float down like jellyfish tentacles.
- Repeat a few times with slow breathing.

→ **Gentle proprioceptive input with rhythm = sleepy magic.**

4. *Feather Drop*

- Drop a tissue or lightweight scarf and try to blow it slowly to the floor.

→ **Fun breathwork without calling it “breathwork.”**

5. *“Say Sleepy” Freeze Dance*

- Play soft music, dance slowly... and then whisper “Freeze!”
- Freeze in a “cozy” pose. Hug yourself, curl up, or sway like a tree.

→ **Movement plus mindfulness = regulation through rhythm.**

💬 **Parent note: These games don't just help ADHD or SPD kids, they're calming for any busy child.**

You're not doing sleep wrong. You're learning together.



Bonus: Printable Game Mat



Try This Tonight:

Let your child pick a stuffed animal and say:

"Tonight, Bunny gets to teach your body how to rest."

Then warm up Bunny, do a slow stuffed-animal massage, and let your child hold it on their chest while you read or sing.

End by whispering:

"Bunny says: You're safe. You're loved. It's time to rest."



✨ CHAPTER 5

When It Still Feels Hard:

I thought once we had the tools — the warm toys, the sleepy games, the calming words - bedtime would finally become... peaceful.

But here's the truth: **some nights are still hard.**

Even when you do everything right, your child might still:

- Bolt out of bed six times
- Cry “I can’t sleep!” on loop
- Hit, throw, scream, spin
- Wake up at 3:47 a.m. and ask for toast and a dance party



And it doesn't mean you're failing.

It just means your child is human - and their nervous system is still learning safety.

So, let's talk about what to do when bedtime turns stormy, despite your best efforts.

What's a Meltdown – And What's NOT

It took me a while to understand that a meltdown

is not misbehavior.

It's not defiance. It's not "spoiled".

It's a nervous system in survival mode.

As Dr. Ross Greene (author of The Explosive Child) says:

"Kids do well if they can."

When they can't, it's our job to stay regulated so they can borrow our calm. Here's what helped when my son melted down at bedtime:

1. Lower your body. Literally.

Instead of towering, I sat down on the floor. Slowed my breath. Softened my voice.

2. Offer safety, not solutions.

I'd say:

"Your body feels really big right now. I'm here. We'll figure it out."

Sometimes he'd scream louder. But inside, he was hearing:

I'm not alone.



3. Co-regulate first, problem-solve later.

Once he calmed down - even slightly - I might whisper:
“Let’s try the sleepy squeeze game. Or should we curl up with Dino?”
Connection before correction.

What to Do About Restless Legs & Tummy Wiggles

For many neurodivergent kids, lying still feels like a punishment.
My son said:

“It’s like ants are running in my legs.”

Some tricks that helped:



- **Heavy socks or compression sheets**

→ The gentle squeeze gives proprioceptive input.

- **Under-the-blanket “Push Game”**

1. He pushed his feet hard into mine while I gave slight resistance
2. We counted to 10 with each push

→ This helped his legs get “heavy” and grounded.

-  **Cold water or ice chip trick**

→ A quick sip of something cold reset his sensory system.



💡 According to Dr. Lindsay Biel (occupational therapist & co-author of *Raising a Sensory Smart Child*), movement before bed should be **rhythmic and slow to help regulate restlessness – like bear walks, yoga poses, or light massage.**

What About Middle-of-the-Night Chaos?

When your child wakes up crying or energized at 2 a.m., here's what we found worked more often than not:

1. Repeat a known routine

We didn't start over. We did a shortened version of bedtime:

- Heated the snuggle toy
- Whispered a familiar sleepy script
- Dimmed the lights and played our soft lullaby
- Familiarity = safety.

2. Name the feeling, not the fix

Instead of “You're not scared,” I'd say:

“It feels scary right now, huh?”

Empathy settled his brain way faster than logic.



3. Offer one soothing option

“You can lay with Bunny in your bed or come snuggle in mine for 5 minutes.”

Choices = calm in the chaos.

What If You're the One Falling Apart?

You're tired. You're doing your best. And yes, sometimes you'll snap or cry or yell or whisper-scream into a pillow. I've done all of that.

But bedtime got better the moment I stopped asking myself:

“How do I get him to fall asleep?”

and started asking:

“How can I make this feel safe - for both of us?”

That shift changed everything.



Try This Tonight:

If your child melts down at bedtime, sit beside them and quietly hum your favorite song from childhood.

Don't speak. Just be present.

After 30 seconds, gently say:

“This is hard. But you're not bad. And you're not alone.”



✨ CHAPTER 6

Scripts, Routines & Calming Phrases for Every Bedtime Situation

Sometimes the hardest part of bedtime is knowing what to say. Especially when your child is overstimulated, dysregulated, or bouncing off the walls in socks and a superhero cape at 9:47 p.m.

When you're tired, your brain wants to shout:

"GO. TO. BED. NOW."

(And I've done that. Plenty of times.)

But I've learned: it's not about having a perfect voice - it's about having a few go-to phrases that create connection instead of chaos.

In this chapter, I'll share the exact words, routines, and scripts that worked for us - and why they help soothe kids with ADHD, SPD, anxiety, and even just garden-variety bedtime protest.



Calming Scripts for Common Bedtime Battles

When they say: "I'm not tired!"

"Your body might not feel sleepy yet, but we can still rest. Rest is just as important."

Why it works:

It removes the power struggle and reframes the goal. Rest becomes the win - not sleep

When they want "just one more" book / snack / hug / question:

"I love stories/snacks/hugs/questions with you. And right now, our bedtime clock says it's time to rest. We'll do more tomorrow."

Bonus tip:

Use a visual bedtime clock or timer. Kids trust pictures more than your words in the heat of resistance.



When they feel scared or say “don’t leave me”:

“You’re safe. I’ll check on you in 3 minutes – I always come back.”

Or

“Would you like Bunny or Dino to snuggle with you until I return?”

Why it works:

Predictability + transitional comfort builds trust over time.

When there’s a meltdown:

“Your feelings are big. I’m here. We can handle it together.”

And then: **say nothing else for a moment.** Let your calm speak louder than words.




Our “Say Sleepy!” Bedtime Routine

You don’t need 12 steps or 5 songs. Just **a simple, repeatable rhythm** that tells your child’s nervous system: “It’s safe to power down.”

Here’s what worked for us:

- **Warm bath or foot soak** (with calming lavender drops)
- **Stretch or bear hug game** (5-10 seconds of gentle squeeze + release)
- **Microwaveable cuddle toy goes into bed**
- **“Say Sleepy” script** (see below)
- **Same lullaby + goodnight phrase every time**



 Kids with sensory sensitivities rely on repetition to feel grounded.

The “Say Sleepy” Script (adapt this in your own words!)

“Tonight, your body did so many things!
It climbed, it played, it ate, it danced.
And now it gets to rest.
You don’t have to sleep yet - just rest.
You are safe. I am near.
Let’s say sleepy together.”

[Child and parent whisper]:

"Say sleepy... say sleepy..."

We'd say it three times in unison, with a little giggle. It became our cue to stop talking and let quietness take over.

Bonus: Phrase Bank for Tired Parents

When your brain is fried, keep these phrases nearby - on a sticky note, a wall chart, or the inside of your parenting soul.



- **"Let's help your body feel calm."**
- **"You're not in trouble. You're having a hard time. I'm here."**
- **"Let's do one sleepy squeeze and one goodnight song."**
- **"You don't have to fall asleep. Just close your eyes and rest your body."**
- **"I'm proud of you for trying. Even trying to rest is brave."**



Try This Tonight:

Make a 3-line script you can easily repeat each night. Use words that feel natural in your voice. Write it on paper. Put it by the bed. Use it even when you're running on 6% battery.

Example:

"I love you. Your job is to rest. My job is to keep you safe."

You don't need to say everything. Just something true.

Kid Sleepy Mantras (Empowering & Gentle)

(Use as a call-and-response or let your child pick their favorites)

Ready-for-Rest Phrases

- “I don’t have to fall asleep. I just need to rest.”
- “My body is safe. My room is safe. I am safe.”
- “I’m getting cozier with every breath.”
- “Sleep comes when I stop chasing it.”

Calming the Mind

- “My thoughts are like clouds. I can let them float by.”
- “I don’t have to think about everything right now.”
- “Worries can wait till morning.”
- “I can rest my brain and keep my heart quiet.”



Big Feelings = Still Loved

- “It’s okay to have big feelings.”
- “Even when I feel mad, I can come back to calm.”
- “Mom/Dad still loves me - even when bedtime is hard.”
- “I can be brave and soft at the same time.”

Sensory-Aware Support

- “I can squeeze my stuffie and help my body slow down.”
- “Warm toys help me feel safe.”
- “My wiggles don’t scare me - I can help them move out.”
- “I’m learning how to rest. That makes me strong.”

WHEN FEARS ARE HIGH

Bedtime Phrase Bank

ANXIOUS NIGHTS

- I'M RIGHT HERE. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE.

- YOU ARE SAFE. NOTHING BAD IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.

- LET'S GIVE YOUR WORRIES A BEDTIME TOO.

- EVEN BIG FEELINGS CAN REST.

- LET'S TUCK YOUR THOUGHTS IN WITH A SOFT BLANKET.

- IT'S OKAY TO FEEL SCARED. LET'S BREATHE THROUGH IT TOGETHER.



WHEN DYSREGULATION IS HIGH

Bedtime Phrase Bank

TANTRUM OR MELTDOWN NIGHTS



- YOUR BODY'S HAVING A HARD TIME. THAT'S NOT THE SAME AS BEING BAD.

- WE'RE ON THE SAME TEAM. LET'S FIGURE THIS OUT TOGETHER.

- LET'S MOVE THE LOUD FEELINGS OUT - THEN COME BACK TO CALM.

- YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIX IT ALL. YOU JUST HAVE TO BREATHE.

- I LOVE YOU WHEN YOU'RE CALM, AND I LOVE YOU WHEN IT'S HARD TOO.



Bedtime Phrase Bank

WIGGLY NIGHTS

WHEN THEIR BODY WON'T SETTLE

- IT'S OKAY IF YOUR BODY ISN'T READY. LET'S HELP IT LAND.

- WE CAN'T FORCE SLEEP - BUT WE CAN HELP IT FEEL WELCOME.

- EVEN SUPERHEROES NEED REST. LET'S POWER DOWN TOGETHER.

- LET'S GET THE WIGGLES OUT WITH OUR SLEEPY SQUEEZE.

- YOUR BODY FEELS LIKE IT'S FULL OF BUZZIES. LET'S FIND OUR QUIET.





Bedtime Phrase Bank

AFTER BUSY DAYS, LOUD PLACES
OVERSTIMULATED NIGHTS

- IT WAS A BIG DAY. YOUR BODY IS STILL HOLDING IT ALL.

- LET'S GIVE YOUR BRAIN A HUG WITH SOME STILLNESS.

- YOU DON'T NEED TO DO ANYTHING. JUST LET YOURSELF MELT INTO THE BED.

- YOUR SKIN, YOUR EARS, YOUR HEART — THEY'VE WORKED HARD TODAY. LET'S HELP THEM REST.

- THIS IS YOUR QUIET BUBBLE. YOU'RE SAFE HERE.





Bedtime Phrase Bank

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

- NOTHING CAN STOP ME FROM LOVING YOU -
NOT EVEN TRICKY BEDTIMES.



- I'M PROUD OF YOU FOR TRYING. EVEN TRYING
TO REST IS BRAVE.

- EVERY NIGHT, YOU GET BETTER AT LISTENING TO
YOUR SLEEPY BODY.

- BEING HERE WITH YOU IS MY FAVORITE PART
OF THE DAY.

- YOU DID YOUR BEST TODAY. THAT'S ALL THAT
MATTERS.





Bedtime Phrase Bank

Kid Sleepy Mantras

- MY BODY IS SAFE. MY ROOM IS SAFE. I AM SAFE.

- MY THOUGHTS ARE LIKE CLOUDS. I CAN LET THEM FLOAT BY.

- IT'S OKAY TO HAVE BIG FEELINGS.

- MY WIGGLES DON'T SCARE ME — I CAN HELP THEM MOVE OUT.

- SLEEP COMES WHEN I STOP CHASING IT.



✨ CHAPTER 7

Sensory Tools That Help Sleep Come Easier

I used to think bedtime was just about turning off the lights and reading a story.

But if you have a sensory-sensitive or ADHD kid, you already know: bedtime isn't just about sleep. It's about regulation. It's about calming a body that feels too big for its skin. It's about turning the volume down... gently.

Some nights, my son would flop on the floor, yelling that his socks were "itchy" or the blanket was "too loud." He wasn't being difficult. He was overwhelmed. And we didn't need more discipline - we needed better tools.

Here are the sensory helpers that made the biggest difference in our home. Many are simple. Some you already have. But together, they create a bedtime routine that feels like a soft landing, not a crash.



1. Weighted Blankets & Stuffed Animals



Why they help:

Weighted objects provide deep pressure input - the kind that tells the nervous system:

you're safe now.

My son had a small weighted lap pad we used as a "bedtime blanket." He also loved his weighted sloth named "Sleepy Sam." He said it felt like a hug that didn't go away.

Try this:

- Let your child choose where to place the weight: chest, legs, or feet.
- Use during storytime, not just sleep — it helps the transition.



2. Bath Time with a Twist

Why it helps:

Warm water is like a full-body exhale - it relaxes muscles and works as a giant sensory reset. But what truly turns bath time into a sleepy magic trick is adding just the right amount of texture, scent, and imaginative play.

Kids who are sensory seekers may not slow down with a simple rinse - but give them something to swirl, scoop, or stir, and suddenly... their body begins to downshift.



Sensory Boosters to Try:

- 🧴 Epsom salts (unscented or lavender-infused) for muscle relaxation and mineral absorption
- 🫧 Calming bubble bath - opt for scent-free if your child is smell-sensitive
- 🧽 Soft loofah or sponge to provide gentle tactile input (not scratchy!)
- ⭐ Glow sticks or LED bath lights to create a soothing, magical atmosphere
- 🌀 Water-safe sprayers or pipettes for fine motor play and sensory feedback.

Add a Little Texture Magic

For some kids, it's slime or jelly baths that unlock the calm. We tried a slime bath once during a rough bedtime week, and it turned into the most peaceful 30 minutes of decompression we'd had all month. The squish, the slip, the laugh-out-loud giggles - and then, surprisingly, the deep calm.

Try this:

- Use a pre-made slime or jelly bath powder (safe, non-toxic, and dissolves fully in warm water)
- Narrate it: "Let's stir the sleepy potion... oh look, it's turning into jelly!"
- Add a storyline: "You're a sleepy jellyfish in a soft ocean cave"
- Let them squish and swirl, then rinse in warm water to end the session





✨ Make-Your-Own Jelly Bath Powder

While simple warm baths are wonderful, adding a bit of sensory magic can make the routine special. One way to do this is with a DIY jelly or slime bath - a calming, playful ritual that feels like a tiny spa treatment for kids. Instead of reaching for synthetic bath products filled with unknown ingredients, here's a simple, gentle recipe you can make at home with pantry items. It's great for toddlers, sensory seekers, or anyone needing extra calming before bed.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cornstarch (or potato starch)
- 3 tablespoons unflavored gelatin powder
- ½ cup Epsom salts (optional - relaxes muscles)
- A few drops of food coloring (optional - for fun)
- A few drops of lavender essential oil (optional - for calm)

How to Use:

1. Mix all the dry ingredients in a large jar or container.
2. Add coloring and essential oil if you'd like (be aware of allergies).
3. When it's bath time, sprinkle ½ to 1 cup of the mixture into a tub of warm water, swirling gently.
4. Let it sit a few minutes, it thickens into a soft, jelly-like texture.
5. Let your child enjoy the soothing, squishy feeling.
6. Rinse off with clean water afterward.



💡 Tip for Parents:

You don't need to use this every night - just having a "magical bath" once a week can be something your child looks forward to. You can even name it something fun, like "Cloud Bath," "Moon Goo," or "Sleepy Slime."

⚠️ Important Tips:

- Do not let kids drink bath water!
- Always supervise - it can be slippery!
- After the bath, rinse off with clean water.
- To dissolve before draining: Add baking soda or pour in extra warm water and swirl gently.



by @victoria.brick *Pro Tips for Sensory Success*

- **Let your child lead:** They can choose their "sleepy bath" from a visual menu (see below!)
- **Keep it short & sweet:** 10–15 minutes is plenty — end before they get overstimulated
- **Prep towels & rinse water** ahead of time for easy cleanup
- **Only slime when you've got the bandwidth** - a once-a-week treat works great!

3. *Dim Lights & Visual Soothers*

Why they help:

Bright overhead lights can be jarring. Soft light cues the brain: “It’s time to wind down.”

We got a night projector that showed floating stars and played white noise. Sometimes he’d fall asleep watching the “sky.”

Try this:

- Use Himalayan salt lamps, soft LED strips, or dimmable bulbs.
- Let your child “turn on sleepy light mode” to give them agency.

•••

4. *Headphones & Calming Sounds*

Why they help:

Many kids find it easier to rest with a steady background sound - it drowns out the “brain noise.” We used wireless sleep headphones with a playlist of ocean waves, brown noise, or gentle lullabies. He even had a playlist called “Sleep Like a Dinosaur.”

Try this:

- Explore calming soundscapes: rain, forest, heartbeat, or even whispered affirmations.
- Make a bedtime playlist together.



5. Scented Tools (If Tolerated)

Why they help:

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Try this:

- Explore calming soundscapes: rain, forest, heartbeat, or even whispered affirmations.
- Make a bedtime playlist together.



7. Cozy Clothes Without Surprises

Why they help:

Sensory kids notice everything - scratchy tags, tight waistbands, seams in the wrong places.

We switched to tagless pajamas made from bamboo or soft cotton. One pair became “magic sleepy pants.”

Try this:

- Let them choose their own “sleep uniform” from a few soft options.
- Use language like: “This helps your body feel safe and quiet.”

8. Brushing and Stroking

Why they help:

Light, predictable touch can calm an overactive nervous system. Children with sensory processing differences — especially those with tactile defensiveness — may feel overwhelmed by certain types of touch. This can show up as resistance to hugs, flinching at clothing seams, or even becoming dysregulated after a sudden tag scratch or a sticky hand.

We had a soft-bristle brush (like the Wilbarger Protocol uses) and a silky makeup brush we called “the butterfly.” This palm-sized brush provides Deep Touch Pressure, which stimulates specific nerve endings in the skin. That input helps recalibrate the body’s response to touch, bringing grounding and calm.

Try this:

- Brush their arms or legs gently, in one direction.
- Or run the brush slowly along their back while you tell a “body story”:
“The sleepy mouse climbs up your spine...”

Benefits of Sensory Brushing:

1. Helps with transitions (like getting ready for bed, leaving the playground, or entering school)
2. Improves body awareness and regulation
3. Targets overactive touch receptors and calms the sensory system
4. Can reduce tactile defensiveness - a common sensory response in children with autism and other neurodiverse conditions
5. Encourages emotional self-regulation through consistent, safe input

Bonus: Create a “Sleepy Sensory Box”

Let your child help choose items to keep near the bed. Ours included:

- A lavender-scented microwavable plush
- Weighted sloth toy
- Soft bristle brush
- Sleepy playlist QR code
- Sleepy story deck



Let them decide which tool to use. Empowerment reduces bedtime resistance.

A Personal Note

One night, after a long, rough bedtime, I collapsed on the couch and cried. I felt like I was failing. Then my son peeked in from the hallway and said:

"Don't forget my butterfly brush. It helps my heart go slower."

That's when I realized - the tools were working. Not perfectly. Not every night. But consistently, like little anchors in the storm.



Try This Tonight:

Before bedtime, ask:

"What does your body need tonight to feel sleepy?"

Then offer a few tools from the list. End with:

"Let's help your body land gently."





Sleepy Bath Menu



BUBBLE BATH



SLIME BATH



BATH LIGHTS



WARM RINSE



CHAPTER 8



The Power of Sound:

Audio Tools That Support Sleep (When Silence Is Too Loud or Noise Is Too Much)

For some kids, bedtime silence feels eerie. For others, even the smallest creak or distant noise sends their nervous system into alert mode. Sound - used intentionally - can be a powerful bridge into sleep

1. White Noise, Pink Noise & Beyond

Why it helps: Predictable, non-threatening background noise helps mask sudden sounds (like barking dogs, distant traffic, or clunky heating systems) and gives the brain something repetitive and gentle to tune into. This can help kids fall asleep - and stay asleep - more easily.

What's the difference?

- White noise is like a steady “shhh” sound - all sound frequencies playing at the same intensity, like a running fan or TV static.

 *Best for blocking out sharp or unpredictable noises.*

- Pink noise is gentler - like soft rain, wind through trees, or distant waves. It emphasizes lower frequencies and sounds more natural to the brain.

☞ *Often more soothing for sensitive kids who find white noise too harsh.*

- Brown noise goes even deeper, like a low rumble or distant thunder - soothing for some, overstimulating for others.

Try this:

- Use a white noise machine or free app (many include multiple sound types)
- Test which noise feels most calming to your child: white, pink, or nature-based sounds
- Keep the volume low and consistent - not too loud, just enough to fill the background gently

Parent Tip:

Use the same sound every night to build a strong “sleep cue” your child’s brain begins to associate with winding down.

2. Bedtime Stories and Audio Adventures

Why it helps:

Engaging the imagination with a calm story gives their brain something to focus on besides worry or sensory overload.

Try this:

- Gentle audio story apps (like Moshi, Calm, or Sleepiest)
- Record your voice reading their favorite bedtime book
- Create a story ritual: “Tonight, you get one adventure story and one sleepy song.”

•

Bonus Idea: Let them help invent the story - “Once upon a time, there was a sleepy dinosaur named...?”

○○○

3. Guided Sleep Meditations for Kids

Why it helps:

Calms both body and mind by guiding breathing, relaxing muscles, and slowing thoughts.

Try this:

- Short, kid-friendly meditations (YouTube or apps like Insight Timer for Kids)
- Make up your own:
“Breathe in like a balloon... now slowly let it out...”

BREATHE



“Imagine a cozy blanket wrapping your feet... your legs... your tummy...”

Extra Support:

Add a warm toy or favorite blanket during the meditation for layered sensory grounding.



4. *Soothing Songs and Sleepy Playlists*

Why it helps:

Slow tempo music (60–80 beats per minute) can synchronize with the heartbeat and signal the nervous system to relax.

Try this:

- Create a “Sleepy Songs” playlist (include favorites or soft lullabies)
- Use instrumental tracks with nature sounds or gentle hums
- Sing the same lullaby each night as a ritual

 **Kid Song Hack:**

Try made-up lullabies based on your child’s name, favorite toy, or even their pet.

“Goodnight Robbie, the stars say shhh... even your trucks are resting too...”

Lullabies are more than just sweet songs - they're powerful tools for winding down. The gentle rhythm and repetition signal safety and calm to a child's nervous system, helping slow the heart rate and quiet busy thoughts.

Singing the same lullaby each night also creates a comforting routine that cues the brain: "It's time to sleep." For babies and toddlers, the sound of a familiar voice in a soft melody can feel as soothing as a warm hug.



Meet: "Classic Twinkle Twinkle Little Star Remix"

A calming, cozy lullaby to help little bodies and minds settle into sleep. This one started with Twinkle Twinkle Little Star - my child's favorite - but after singing it a hundred times (okay, maybe more), I needed a little change. So we made our own remix!

I kept the gentle melody he loved, but added new, dreamy words about stars, clouds, and bedtime magic. It was my way of saying: "You're safe, you're loved - and it's time to rest."

Now it's become our lullaby.

He knows it by heart, and I love that it feels familiar but still fresh. Because when bedtime is warm and predictable, sleep comes a little easier - for everyone.

Classic Twinkle Twinkle Little Star Remix

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
Shining brightly from afar.
Up above the world so high,
Like a lantern in the sky.

Twinkle, twinkle, night's delight,
Guide us safely through the night.

Glowing softly, here and there,
Spreading magic everywhere.
Silver beams in skies of blue,
Dreams come true because of you.

Twinkle, twinkle, little friend,
Lighting skies until the end.

When the moon begins to rise,
You will sparkle in the skies.
Rest our heads, close our eyes tight,
Twinkle on, sweet star of light.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
Shining softly where we are.



Scan the QR code to hear
the song on YouTube and
sing along with Tim &
Robbie!
Or visit:

[https://www.youtube.com
/@TimKoKid](https://www.youtube.com/@TimKoKid)



5. Sound Sensitivities: When Quiet Is the Safe Zone

Important:

Some children with SPD or noise sensitivity feel more regulated with minimal sound.

Try this instead:

- Use ear defenders or silicone earplugs during high-noise evenings
- Offer choices: “Do you want sleepy music or just quiet tonight?”
- Add comforting pressure (weighted plushie, blanket) if removing sound makes them feel too exposed

“Sleepy Words” to Try Tonight

Let’s practice using our voice as a sleep tool. Say aloud to your child:

- “Let’s turn the music down to sleepy volume.”
- “This story is like a soft cloud carrying you to dreamland.”
- “Your ears can rest now too — everything is calm.”

Empowering mantras your child can say:

- “I can let the sleepy sounds help me rest.”
- “My brain loves cozy stories.”
- “Even my ears are getting quiet now.”

Shhh...





Try This Tonight:

Put on a gentle lullaby or white noise. Then say:

"Let's listen together while our toes get sleepy... then our legs... then our bellies..."

Or:

by @victoria.bricks

"Let this song be your soft blanket. You don't have to do anything. Just let it carry you."





Quick Sound Tips for Bedtime

Best Times to Use Each Sound

SOUND TYPE

BEST FOR

WHY IT HELPS

WHITE
NOISE

Noisy environments
(city living, shared
spaces)

Creates a steady hum that blocks
sudden changes in sound (like
car horns or siblings talking).
Best for light sleepers.

PINK
NOISE

Ongoing rest or
middle-of-the-night
wakeups

Mimics natural sounds like rain or
ocean waves. Helps the brain
enter deep sleep phases.

BROWN
NOISE

Kids with anxiety,
sensory overload, or
ADHD

Lower-frequency rumbles feel
like a soft weighted blanket for
the ears. Grounding and calming.

LULLABIES

Wind-down routine
(before lights off)

Soothes and emotionally
connects. Best used during
transition from active time to
calm time.

GUIDED STORIES

Busy minds,
imaginative kids

Helps shift focus from worries to
calming visual scenes. Use just
before or as they lay down.

Rotation Ideas for Kids Who Get Bored Easily

✓ Use a theme per night:

“Tonight is Rainforest Night (pink noise + nature sounds)!”

“Tomorrow is Space Night (brown noise + astronaut story)!”

✓ Let your child pick:

Make a laminated choice card with icons or drawings of each sound type.

✓ Combine sounds thoughtfully:

Try white noise with a soft lullaby layered on low volume.

Test different mixes to see what sticks!

✓ Seasonal swaps:

Winter: crackling fireplace sounds

Summer: ocean waves or cicadas



When Silence is Better Than Sound

Sometimes the absence of sound is more supportive than any noise machine. Here's when:

☾ **Child is hypersensitive to auditory input**

Even soft noise can feel overwhelming. Choose silence and focus on other sensory tools like dim lights or weighted blankets.

☾ **There's natural ambient sound (e.g. countryside, birds, soft wind)**

No need to layer extra input - let the calm environment do the work.

☾ **After overstimulation (travel, busy day, big emotions)**

Too many layers can cause the brain to stay alert. A quiet room with deep breathing or a body scan may work better than sounds.

☾ **If your child says they "just want it quiet"**

Trust their instincts — this is a powerful way they self-regulate.



*Sleepy Coloring Pages
"Cat Sleeps on Moon"*

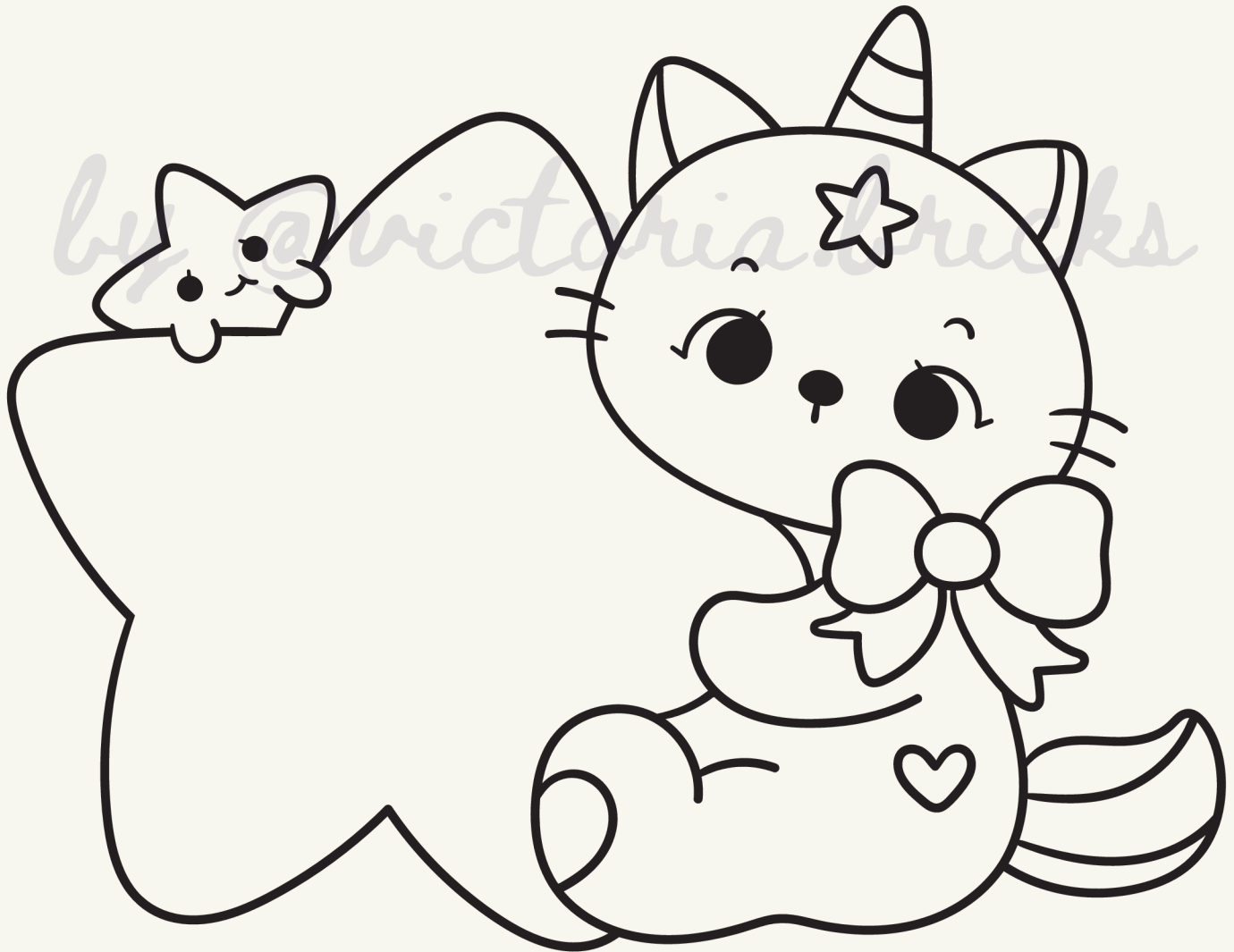
by @victoria.bricks



Parent Tip:

Kids who color and draw before bedtime often fall asleep more easily - especially if the activity is calm and screen-free. Gentle coloring helps slow down their busy minds, ease transitions, and shift their body into "rest mode." Bonus: When they color sleepy scenes (like stars, beds, or animals yawning), it helps prepare their imagination for dreamland, too.

Sweet Dreams



Teddy Bear Reads a Book

by @victoriaabricks



Catch a Magic Star



Teddy Bear on the Moon



CHAPTER 9

Emotional Anchors: Calming Feelings Before Sleep

Evenings aren't just about winding down the body — they're also about grounding big feelings.

Some nights, your child might not be bouncing off the walls... but they're brimming with something inside. Worry, sadness, overstimulation, or even leftover excitement can all bubble up right before bed.

This chapter explores tools that help kids:

- *Recognize what they're feeling*
- *Express it safely and clearly*
- *Feel emotionally anchored before sleep*

Emotional Anchors: Calming Feelings Before Sleep

When kids carry stress, excitement, or big emotions into bed, their nervous system stays activated. That “tired but wired” feeling? Often it's emotional.

Even simple rituals can help shift them from a state of alertness to rest:

- Gentle verbal check-ins
- Drawing out the day
- Creating "emotional release" tools (like jars, plushies, or pretend potions)

1. The Bedtime Feelings Check-In

Try this short script:

"Can we check in with your heart before we close our eyes? What was your biggest feeling today?"

Offer feelings choices if needed:

- **Happy**
- **Frustrated**
- **Silly**
- **Lonely**
- **Proud**
- **Worried**



Normalize all answers.

"That makes sense. I'm so glad you told me. Let's give that feeling a cozy place to rest now."

2. Draw Your Day

Offer a notebook or dry erase board. Ask:

"Can you draw something your heart wants to let go of tonight? Or something it wants to remember?"

Drawing helps make emotions concrete and movable.



3. Feelings Thermometer

A visual feelings scale that helps kids locate how big or small their emotions feel.

- **0 - Calm & Sleepy**

"I feel relaxed, ready for cuddles or sleep."



- **5 - A Little Wiggly**

"I'm okay, but my body's still moving a bit."



- **10 - Big Energy or Worry**



"My thoughts are racing or I feel jumpy inside."



- **15 - Volcano Feelings**



"I feel upset, overwhelmed, or need help calming down."



Use it like this:

"Where's your body on the sleepy scale? Let's see if we can bring it down a few notches together."

4. Emotion Potions

Create a pretend sleepy "potion" routine using water, glitter, or just your words.

Try this:

- Mix a drop of calm
- Stir in a giggle
- Sprinkle in bravery



Let your child decide the ingredients:

"I want to add a tiny happy dance and a dragon yawn!"

5. Calming Mantras for Emotional Anchoring

Use these like emotional lullabies:

- *"All my feelings are welcome here."*
- *"It's safe to rest now."*
- *"I did my best today."*
- *"My heart is full. My body is ready to rest."*

Let kids pick their favorite each night. Or write their own!

Emotion Potion Recipe Cards



Sleepy Sea Dream



- 1 scoop of dolphin giggles
- A drop of cozy waves
- A puff of jellyfish calm
- Sprinkles of star sparkle

- Stir **3** times!

- This potion helps me feel... **floaty and calm.**

Brave & Sleepy Brew

- 1 scoop of lion yawns
- A drop of quiet thoughts
- A puff of ninja stillness
- Sprinkles of soft moonlight

- Stir **5** times!

- This potion helps me feel... **strong and sleepy.**



Emotion Potion Recipe Card - DIY

These playful, fill-in-the-blank recipe cards invite kids to invent their own silly “potion” to help prepare their heart and body for bed.

Each card includes

- A title: “Tonight’s Potion”
- Spaces to fill in:
 - 1 scoop of ... (e.g., giggles)
 - 💧 A drop of ... (e.g., calm)
 - 🐉 A puff of ... (e.g., dragon breath)
 - ✨ Sprinkles of ... (e.g., bravery / hugs)
 - 🔄 Stir ... times!
-
- Final spell: “This potion helps me feel ...”

A Title

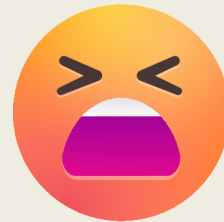
- 1 scoop of ...
- A drop of ...
- A puff of ...
- Sprinkles of ...
- Stir ... times!
- This potion helps me feel...

Bedtime Feelings Thermometer

Volcano Feelings



Big Energy or Worry



A Little Wiggly



Calm and sleepy



Mantra Card Set ✂



**It's safe to rest
now.**



**All my feelings
are welcome
here.**



**My heart is full.
My body is
ready to rest.**



**I did my best
today.**



**Big feelings, soft
pillow, calm
heart.**



**I can breathe out
the day and
breathe in calm.**

Mantra Card Set ✂



**Tomorrow is a
new start.**



**Even brave kids
need rest.**



**I'm wrapped in
love and peace.**



**Sleepy thoughts,
float away like
clouds.**



**My bed is my
safe, cozy nest.**



**Peace begins
with a sleepy
sigh.**

**Let kids pick one to say or keep under their pillow!*

CHAPTER 10

Bedtime Stories to Soothe the Body and Brain

Some kids need more than stillness and quiet - they need a calming journey to bring their brain and body into rest mode.

In this chapter, you'll find two gentle bedtime stories designed for children with active minds or ADHD traits. These stories include sensory language, rhythmic pacing, and soft emotional resolution - all leading toward sleep.

Each story ends with:

- A simple breathing prompt
- A parent cuddle cue
- An optional printable version to color in bed

More Tips for Parents:

- **Choose Predictable Rhythms:**

Repetition and gentle rhyme help the brain settle. Familiar patterns feel safe and soothing.

Use Soft Sensory Descriptions:

- Words like “warm,” “soft,” “slow,” “quiet,” help shift attention from busy thoughts to calming images.

- **End on a Resting Image:**

Let the story close with stillness - like a bear curling up in a den, a boat floating on calm water, or a star shining quietly.

- **Keep the Voice Slow and Low:**

Reading slowly with soft intonation can naturally help regulate your child's breathing and heart rate.

- **Avoid Cliffhangers or Exciting Plots.**

Instead of high adventure, choose gentle journeys with no rush, no urgency - just peaceful moments.



✨ Story 1

The Night Bunny Who Couldn't Slow Down



Benny the Night Bunny had the biggest, bounciest legs in the meadow.



All day long, he zoomed,
dashed, and

bounced.





But at bedtime, Benny had a hard time slowing down. His thoughts kept hopping like he did.

*"I forgot to finish my carrot drawing! What if I left my rock outside?
Did I say goodnight to the moon?"*

Mama Bunny gently scooped Benny in her arms.

"Let's tell your body it's safe to rest,"

she whispered.

She started stroking his ears...

*"Let's take one big breath like a sleepy bunny sniffing a flower... and
blow out like you're cooling your carrot soup."*



Benny breathed in... and out... again... and again.
Soon, his bouncing legs got heavy. His thoughts got quiet.

And Mama said:

*"Now tuck close and feel my arms. You're safe. You did enough. It's
time to rest."*

by @victoria.bricks



Breathing Prompt:

Inhale like sniffing a tulip. Exhale like blowing on warm soup.

Cuddle Cue:

Wrap arms gently around your child and hum softly.

by @victoria.bricks





Bonus: Printable coloring page version included: Let your child color Benny while you read.

✨ Story 2
Kira the Koala's Gentle Climb



by @victoria.bricks

Hi!



Kira the Koala loved the tall eucalyptus trees in Moonlight Grove,
She loved feeling the soft leaves brush her fur
and the cool night breeze sway her branch like a cradle.



But sometimes, even when the stars twinkled above, Kira couldn't fall asleep.

"I didn't finish counting the stars... I forgot to whisper goodnight to the butterflies... What if I'm too little for dreams?"

Mama Koala gently wrapped her soft arms around Kira and held her close.

"Your dreams know just the right way to find you," she said.

"Let's take a slow, gentle climb to dreamland, one breath at a time."

Mama guided Kira's breathing.

"Breathe in like you're smelling a sweet eucalyptus leaf... and breathe out like you're blowing a soft breeze through the trees."





by @victoria.bricks

Kira breathed in... and out... and slower... and softer.

Each breath felt like a little step up the tree, toward a warm, leafy nook. Mama whispered:

"Feel my cuddle. You're safe in our tree. You don't need to rush. Dreamland is waiting for you."



Bonus: Printable coloring page version included: Color Kira's tree while you snuggle.



✨ **Breathing Prompt:**

Inhale like smelling a sweet eucalyptus leaf.
Exhale like blowing a soft breeze through the trees.

Cuddle Cue:

Slowly rock your child side to side as you hold them.



CHAPTER 11

Morning Routines That Stick (Even for Sensitive Sleepers)

While bedtime sets the tone for rest, mornings set the rhythm for the day. For children with sensitive nervous systems - whether they're neurodivergent or simply need a gentler start - chaotic or rushed mornings can lead to overwhelm.

This chapter offers tools to make mornings calmer, more predictable, and even joyful, for a wide range of kids, including those with ADHD, sensory processing differences (SPD), autism spectrum traits, or just strong feelings about putting on socks.

Why Mornings Can Be Tricky

Some kids wake up ready to run. Others need time, space, and structure to feel safe stepping into the day.

Sensitive or neurodivergent kids may face challenges like:

- Trouble shifting from sleep to action
- Overwhelm from sounds, textures, or transitions
- Difficulty remembering multi-step routines
- Emotional dysregulation when rushed

But with a consistent rhythm, visual supports, and playful connection, mornings can feel safer and smoother.

1. Create a Predictable Flow

A simple, repeatable routine helps kids feel secure. Keep it consistent and visual.

Use:

- **Routine charts with pictures**
- **Checklists they can mark off**
- **Songs or rhymes to guide steps (e.g., “Brush and wash and zip and go!”)**

● Keep it to 3–5 steps max to avoid overwhelm.

Example:

1. **Wake and stretch**
2. **Bathroom & teeth**
3. **Get dressed**
4. **Eat breakfast**
5. **Shoes & go**



2. Use Visual Cues & Gentle Timers

Visual schedules, picture cards, or a dry erase checklist can turn chaos into clarity.

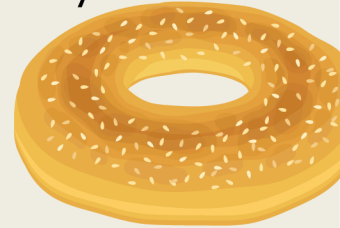
Pair with:

- **Gentle visual timers (hourglass or color-changing clocks)**
- **Predictable transitions: “In 5 minutes, we’ll change clothes. Let’s pick your socks now!”**

Avoid loud buzzers or jarring alarms. Calming music or visual countdowns work better for sensitive systems.

3. *Morning Sensory Reset*

Some kids need sensory input to regulate their body before they can focus.



Try offering:

- Deep pressure: hugs, a tight blanket roll, or a body sock
- Movement: jumping, climbing, scooter board races to the bathroom
- Oral input: chewy or crunchy breakfast (apple slices, bagel, yogurt with a straw)
- Aromatherapy: A drop of lemon or peppermint oil on a cotton pad nearby

Let your child choose their favorite “wake-up tools.”

4. *Morning Song or Anchor Ritual*

Start the day with a gentle moment that grounds your child emotionally.

Options:

- A family “good morning” song
- A hand-clapping or finger-play rhyme
- A 10-second cuddle ritual: “Ten-second squeeze to start the day!”
- A mirror mantra: “I am strong, I am kind, I’m ready for today.”

5. Emotional Check-In (Just Like at Night)

Add a quick feelings check before or during breakfast:

"Where's your heart today?" or "Which color is your brain this morning?"

Use a simple mood chart:

- Red: Angry or frustrated
- Yellow: Wiggly or unsure
- Green: Calm and ready
- Blue: Tired or sad



This helps your child feel seen - and gives you insight into what support they might need that day

6. Prepare the Night Before

Reduce decision fatigue and transitions by prepping:

- *Clothes (let them choose PJs and tomorrow's socks)*
- *Breakfast options*
- *School bag by the door*
- *Favorite fidget or sensory item in the backpack*

This makes mornings feel less like a puzzle - and more like a smooth glide.

CHAPTER 12

Calm Afternoons: After-School Routines to Regulate and Reconnect

Afternoons can feel like a second shift - full of tired brains, hungry tummies, and lots of emotions trying to find a landing spot. Whether your child is coming home from school or kindergarten, they're often holding it together until they see you - their safe place.

This chapter is about helping children - especially those who are sensitive, neurodivergent, or just worn out - transition smoothly from their structured day into the more open, emotionally rich space of home.

Why Afternoons Can Be a Meltdown Zone

After a long day of listening, waiting, sharing, and masking (especially true for autistic or ADHD kids), kids often arrive home exhausted. Their nervous system might be:

- Overstimulated from noise, lights, or social pressure
- Underfed or dysregulated from skipped snacks or rushing
- Emotionally full — and not sure how to process it all

That's why even a "good day" can end in big feelings the moment shoes come off.

1. Create a Soft Landing

Instead of jumping right into homework, chores, or dinner prep, start with a soft, sensory-friendly reconnection. Think:

- Cozy corner with soft pillows or a body sock
- A favorite snack and water
- 5 minutes of quiet cuddling
- Their favorite stuffed animal or fidget ready at the door

Try this instead of asking questions right away. **Let the body settle before the brain talks.**

2. Offer a Sensory Snack

Just like food, sensory input helps regulate the nervous system. Offer choices:

- **Oral:** crunchy carrots, chewy granola bars, sipping from a straw
- **Movement:** swing time, trampoline jumps, bear walks across the room
- **Tactile:** kinetic sand, water play, or soft fabric bins

Let your child lead. You can say:

"Want to stomp it out or snuggle it down?"

3. Keep a Predictable After-School Flow

Use a consistent, low-demand routine:

1. Arrive home
2. Snack + sensory time
3. Play or rest
4. Homework (if applicable)
5. Family dinner

Use visuals or checklists for kids who thrive on structure. Keep transitions gentle: “Five more minutes, then we’ll go wash hands together.”

4. Gentle Reconnection, Not Interrogation

Instead of “How was your day?” try:

- *“Did anything make your brain feel big today?”*
- *“What was one fun moment and one tricky moment?”*
- *“Did you feel more like a tiger 🐅 or a turtle 🐢 today?”*

Or try a non-verbal check-in: let them choose a color, facial expression, or animal card to represent their mood.

5. Offer Calm-Down Choices Before the Crash

Help your child recognize when their “storm is coming.” Create a Cool Down Menu with visuals:

- **Weighted blanket snuggle**
- **Coloring or sticker books**
- **Calming music corner**
- **Bubble breathing or pinwheel**

Hang it on the fridge or in their room. Let them know it's okay to take space - before things explode.

6. Create a Safe Transition Ritual

Choose one simple thing to do every day after school/kindergarten that signals: **"You're home. You're safe."**

Ideas:

- Sit together with a snack and a song
- A 10-second hug at the door
- A secret handshake or silly handshake routine

These micro-rituals can be magic.

♥ *A Note from Me*

My 4-year-old son often came home from kindergarten overstimulated - especially after loud or busy days. One day, instead of heading straight inside, I sat with him on the front steps, offered his favorite granola bar, and said, "Let's sit and watch the clouds first." That moment of pause made a huge difference. Now, our "cloud stop" is his favorite part of the afternoon.

Try This After Pickup:

Start a 3-minute "reconnect ritual" right after school or kindergarten. It doesn't need to be perfect - it just needs to feel familiar and kind. Create a simple script or action you repeat every day after pickup. This helps your child transition from the outside world back into your safe bubble.

Example:

"Your body worked hard today.
Now we slow down together.
I missed you."



You might hold their hands while saying it, trace a heart on their back, or just sit beside them quietly.

Even a tiny pause can change everything.

CHAPTER 13

For the Mama in the Storm: How to Survive (and Feel Like Yourself Again)

This chapter is for you, the mom who's Googling strategies at midnight, crying in the bathroom after yet another meltdown, and wondering, "Is it always going to be this hard?"

If you're parenting a child with **Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD), ADHD, Autism, or big, unpredictable feelings**, you already know: **it's a full-body job.**

Your brain is on 24/7 alert.

Your heart breaks and blooms 50 times a day.

And your needs? Probably buried under snack wrappers and emergency emails from school.

Let's name it first: this is **exhausting**, even when you love your child more than anything on this earth.

But you are not broken.

You are not failing.

You are carrying more than most people can see.

And you deserve support, not shame.

What Experts Say: The Invisible Load of Parenting Neurodivergent Kids

Studies show that moms of neurodivergent children - especially those with SPD, ADHD, and Autism - are more likely to experience:

- Burnout
- Depression or anxiety
- Sleep deprivation
- Isolation from friends and community
-

Not because they're doing something wrong, but because the support systems often don't exist - and our society expects moms to be the solution, not the ones who need care.

What Helps (From One Mama to Another)

Here are some practices, mindsets, and life-rafts that have helped me - and many others - survive (and even grow) in this beautifully intense life:

1. Tiny Rituals for You

Forget hour-long bubble baths. Try 60-second check-ins:

- A hand on your heart: "I'm doing my best."
- A cup of tea you actually finish.
- 3 breaths before you scroll or snap.
- Whispering, "This moment is hard, but I'm still here."

2. Have a Safe Person (and Use Them)

Whether it's a therapist, a partner, your sister, or a friend online - have one person you can text just "🔥 meltdown again" or "need to scream." Find someone who doesn't offer advice - just witnesses without judgment.

3. Lower the Bar (Then Lower It Again)

Did you feed your kid?

Did you keep them safe?

Did you survive the day without disappearing?

That's enough. Truly. Let the rest fall.

4. Name the Hard Out Loud

Saying "This is too much" doesn't make you weak. It makes you honest.

And honesty is a doorway to getting support, asking for breaks, and modeling self-awareness for your kids.

5. Let Yourself Grieve

It's okay to grieve the parenting experience you imagined.

To feel jealous of moms whose kids sleep easily or don't scream at socks. That grief doesn't mean you don't love your child - it means you're human.

6. Learn to Say No (Without Guilt)

No to that playdate.

No to the birthday party.

No to that judgmental advice from the neighbor.

Protect your peace. Let people think what they want.

7. Celebrate the Tiny Wins

Your child fell asleep without screaming?

They brushed their teeth without a full sensory shutdown?

You didn't yell even though you wanted to?

That is heroism. Mark it. Celebrate it.

8. Remember: You Deserve Regulation Too

We talk so much about regulating our kids. But who's regulating you?

Your nervous system matters.

You can't pour calm from an empty bucket.

Even 2 minutes of breath work, stretching, or humming can shift your body back into you.



Try This:

Tonight, before bed, write down 3 things you did well today.

No matter how small.

Write them like they're medals - because they are.

What Helps (From One Mama to Another)

I see you.

On the floor of the hallway, holding your kid through a meltdown.
At the IEP meeting, fighting for accommodations with shaky hands.
Googling “Why does bedtime make my child wild?” at 1:47 a.m.

You are doing the bravest, hardest work I know: loving a child who needs more - and giving it, even when you have nothing left.

You deserve rest.

You deserve help.

You deserve to feel like yourself again - not someday, but soon.

We're in this together.



Final Words

You don't need to "fix" your child.
You don't need to be supermom.
You don't need to do it alone.

You need gentleness.
You need community.
You need reminders that this storm won't last forever - and that even now, you are enough.

Let this chapter be your breath. Your pause. Your reminder that you are seen.
You're not just surviving, mama.
You're showing up - and that is the bravest thing of all.

Let's Stay Connected

There may be more long nights ahead, but there will also be more songs, more soft giggles, more quiet triumphs.
Come back to this book whenever you need a boost - or just a reminder that you're doing great.
Thank you for letting me walk this bedtime journey with you.

With so much care,
Victoria Bricks