

WHY YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD IS WAKING AT NIGHT (AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT)

A COMPASSIONATE GUIDE FOR EXHAUSTED
PARENTS WHO ARE READY FOR CHANGE



Disclaimer:

By reading this handout, you understand that Liz Cahill is a Certified Behavioral Sleep Specialist and Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and the Owner of BetterSleep Behavior Consulting, LLC. Our purpose is to educate families on behavioral strategies that improve sleep-related behaviors, helping children and individuals sleep independently and through the night.

This handout is for informational and educational purposes only. The information and education provided is not intended or implied to supplement or replace professional medical treatment, advice, and/or diagnosis.

Although we do our best to make sure all of the information contained herein is up to date and/or accurate, we do not make any representation that all the information contained herein is accurate or free of errors at all times. We do not assume any responsibility for accuracy of the handout information, or its safety or efficacy as it applies to you. You should review any and all changes to your or your child's sleep routines, environment, or related behavioral strategies with your physician or qualified medical professional before implementing them.

We do not offer any representations, guarantees, or warranties, of any variety, regarding the handout in any way including, but not limited to, effectiveness, safety, harm, or results achieved as a result of your use of handout. The handout is offered "AS IS" and without representations, guarantees, or warranties of any kind, including but not limited to, implied warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose, neither express nor implied, to the extent permitted by law. We are not liable for damages of any kind related to your use of the handout or any information contained or discussed therein.

By using this handout, you implicitly signify your agreement to all of the terms contained herein.

If you have any questions about this disclaimer, please contact Liz Cahill at Liz@bettersleepbehavior.com. Thank you.

© 2025 BetterSleep Behavior Consulting, LLC. All rights reserved.

This resource is intended solely for personal, non-commercial use by the recipient. You may not reproduce, distribute, modify, sell, or otherwise share this material in any form without prior written permission from BetterSleep Behavior Consulting, LLC. By downloading and/or using this resource, you agree to these terms of use.



A NOTE FROM ME

If bedtime feels like a battle... and your nights are unpredictable, you're not alone.

Up to 80% of children with autism experience sleep challenges —and most families are left to figure it out on their own.

This guide is here to show you why sleep is so hard right now... and to give you hope that it really can get better.

— Liz Cahill, BCBA & Certified Behavioral Sleep Specialist



COMMON REASONS YOUR CHILD MAY BE WAKING

1. Sleep Associations (They Need You to Fall Back Asleep)

If your child needs rocking, co-sleeping, nursing, or a tablet to fall asleep—then wakes and cries for you—it's likely a sleep association is at play.

 Their brain doesn't yet know how to get back to sleep independently.

2. Irregular Sleep Timing

Bedtime and wake-up times that shift day to day (or naps that are too long or too late) can disrupt melatonin rhythms and cause night wakings.

 A consistent rhythm helps cue the body for sleep.

3. Sensory Arousal from Screens

It's not just blue light. Many autistic kids struggle to disengage from screen time. The transition to bedtime can cause stress, tantrums, and dysregulation.

 When stopping screens feels like punishment, bedtime becomes something to resist.

Autistic children want to sleep. Their bodies just aren't making it easy

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

You don't need to sleep train.
And you're not doing anything
wrong.

But your child does need a
plan—one that fits their brain,
sensory system, and needs.

Here's where we start:

- **Reset timing:** Align bedtime and wake-up time to match your child's natural rhythms.
- **Build new associations:** Create a simple, repeatable bedtime routine without external props.
- **Ease transitions:** Give warning before stopping screens; replace with calming rituals.
- **Adjust environment:** Use blackout curtains, sound machines, and weighted options only if your child seeks them (not just because the internet says so).



YOU DESERVE REST TOO

You can't keep giving from an empty cup.

Your child can learn to sleep.

You don't have to figure it out alone.

Whether your child is 3 or 12, their sleep can improve—and so can yours.

READY TO TALK?

Book your free 15-minute consultation
Let's talk about what's going on with your child's sleep and
what's possible with the right support.



Liz Cahill, M.Ed, BCBA
Certified Behavioral Sleep Specialist

✉ Liz@bettersleepbehavior.com

☎ (908)367-3020

🌐 bettersleepbehavior.com

📷 [@bettersleep_behavior](https://www.instagram.com/bettersleep_behavior)

