



REST FOR THEM. RELIEF FOR YOU.
A LITTLE DREAMERS PARENT TOOLKIT

The Stay-in-Bed Reset

A 7-night toolkit for repeated exits, call-backs, and bedtime stalling
One clear boundary. Warm support. A plan you can repeat when you're tired.
Designed for children ages 3-7 who can leave bed independently

Rest for them. Relief for you.
www.littledreamerssleep.com

READ FIRST

Is This the Right Tool for Your Family?

This toolkit is for children who are physically able to leave bed and repeatedly come out, call for extra requests, or prolong bedtime after their needs have been met.

- ☐ Use only when your child has a safe sleep space and can reach a caregiver in an emergency.
- ☐ Never use a pass to deny bathroom needs, illness care, pain, breathing concerns, or genuine safety needs.
- ☐ This plan may need adapting for children with developmental, sensory, trauma-related, or medical needs. Ask their clinician when unsure.
- ☐ The original bedtime pass research studied mainly typically developing children ages 3-6, paired with a consistent response after each use.

NOT A LOCK-OUT PLAN: The goal is a concrete, predictable boundary — never to isolate, frighten, restrain, or block a child from reaching help.

***In the app:** Game Plan in the app builds this same structure around your child's age and your family's approach, then reminds you what tonight's step is.*

WHY IT HAPPENS

What Repeated Exits Are Communicating

The routine never fully closes

Your child has learned another request might restart books, cuddles, snacks, or conversation.

Bedtime is too early

They're not sleepy yet, so leaving the room fills time and creates stimulation.

They need reassurance

Fear, separation, change, or a new room can create real distress that needs a planned response.

The response keeps changing

Sometimes the exit earns a long talk, sometimes a snack, sometimes anger. Uncertainty invites more testing.

THE RESET HAS TWO PARTS: First, meet predictable needs before lights-out. Second, make the after-lights-out response calm, brief, and consistent enough that leaving the room no longer opens a new evening activity.

PREPARE

Set the Plan Before Night 1

- ☐ Choose a realistic bedtime based on when your child actually gets sleepy.
- ☐ Complete bathroom, water, comfort item, and one final question before lights-out.
- ☐ Tell every caregiver the same return phrase.
- ☐ Decide one pass or two — start with one for most children; two may help a very anxious child.
- ☐ Decide what the pass covers: one bathroom trip, one hug, one drink, or one brief check-in.
- ☐ Decide what happens after it's used: a brief, low-conversation return to bed.

Our bedtime is:

The pass can be used for:

Our return phrase:

The morning encouragement we'll use:

EXPLAIN IT

Introduce the Pass During the Day

SAY THIS: *"After our bedtime steps, you'll have one bedtime pass. You can use it for one quick thing: bathroom, water, hug, or a question. When you use it, you give me the pass. After that, I'll always help you back to bed because bedtime is finished."*

Practice once

- ☐ Pretend the routine is over.
- ☐ Let your child practice handing you the pass.
- ☐ Respond to one small request.
- ☐ Practice the calm return phrase.
- ☐ End with encouragement, not a prize negotiation.

Keep the rule concrete. Don't promise they'll "never need you." The promise is that genuine needs are met, the pass allows one ordinary extra request, and the bedtime boundary stays steady.

NIGHT 1 & NIGHT 2

Teach the Sequence, Not Perfection

Expect testing. Night 1 is information — your child is finding out whether the plan is real and whether you can stay calm inside it.

- ☐ Complete the routine and final-call checklist.
- ☐ Hand over the pass; briefly restate what it covers.
- ☐ Honor the pass promptly and neutrally.
- ☐ Return your child to bed with the same short phrase every time.
- ☐ Record exits without discussing the score with your child at night.

Return phrase: *“The pass is finished. It's sleep time. I'll help you back to bed.”*

Make Your Response Boring and Safe

You're not trying to “win.” You're showing the same boundary enough times that your child stops needing to test for a different answer.

- ☐ Use low light and little conversation.
- ☐ Skip new snacks, screens, or long cuddles after the pass unless a real need requires care.
- ☐ Walk your child back — don't argue in the hallway.
- ☐ Keep your face and voice neutral. Calm isn't coldness.

NIGHT 3 & NIGHT 4

Check Whether Timing Is Fighting You

A child who's calmly awake for an hour may need a timing adjustment. A child who exits because exits create attention needs a boundary adjustment. Both can be true.

- ☐ Look at the last three nights — when did your child actually go quiet or fall asleep?
- ☐ If bedtime is much earlier than sleep onset, move lights-out later temporarily.
- ☐ Once sleep onset gets easier, shift earlier by 15 minutes every few days.
- ☐ Keep wake time steady while adjusting.

Support Fear Without Reopening Bedtime

Reassurance should be short enough that it doesn't become a new ritual.

- ☐ Discuss fears before the routine begins.
- ☐ Choose one comfort object and one short reassurance phrase.
- ☐ Offer one planned check-in only if you can deliver it reliably.
- ☐ Skip repeated room inspections after each call unless there's a real safety concern.

Return phrase: *“That feeling is scary, and you are safe. I checked the room. Your job is to rest; my job is to keep you safe.”*

NIGHT 5 & NIGHT 6

Align Every Caregiver

For a solo parent: choose the simplest version you can repeat while exhausted. One book, one pass, one phrase, one calm return is enough.

- ☐ Put the plan in writing for grandparents, co-parents, or babysitters.
- ☐ Don't criticize another caregiver in front of your child.
- ☐ If routines differ between homes, keep the closing boundary and safety language as consistent as possible.

Fade the Pass if Exits Are Improving

If exits return, bring the pass back temporarily — no shame attached.

- ☐ If your child regularly keeps the pass, celebrate the skill in the morning.
- ☐ Continue offering it for several successful nights before removing it.
- ☐ Try: “You know how to stay in bed now. We're putting the pass away, and the bedtime rules stay the same.”

Return phrase: *“You stayed in your sleep space and handled bedtime with less help. Your body is learning the routine.”*

NIGHT 7

Review the Pattern and Choose the Next Step

Keep the plan another week if progress is partial but real.

- ☐ Count progress: fewer exits, fewer calls, shorter settling, less parent interaction.
- ☐ Adjust bedtime timing if your child is consistently awake a long time.
- ☐ Contact the pediatrician if sleep stays severely disrupted or red flags appear.

TRY THIS TONIGHT

Whichever night you're on, pick just one line from that night's checklist to focus on. Seven nights of one small thing beats one night of trying all seven.

NIGHT 7 REVIEW

What Changed This Week

The biggest improvement:

The part that still feels hard:

The one adjustment we'll make next week:

TROUBLESHOOTING

Common Situations

"I have to use the bathroom."

Allow it — keep it quick, dim, and boring. If it becomes a pattern, ask the pediatrician about hydration timing or constipation.

"I lost my pass."

Keep a backup in a consistent place. Don't turn the search into a new activity.

They refuse to hand it over

Say: "Using the request means the pass is finished." Take it calmly after honoring the request.

They become very distressed

Slow down. Offer calm, low-stimulation presence. Consider a more gradual support-fading plan and seek professional guidance if distress is intense or persistent.

Siblings share a room

Explain the plan to both. Use quiet returns, and if possible start the reset when the sibling has extra sound support or a temporary alternate sleep spot.

The child wakes overnight

Decide in advance whether the pass covers only bedtime. For most families, use a separate, brief nighttime response instead of a full new pass system.

PRINTABLE PASS

Cut Out One or Two Bedtime Passes

Print this page and cut along the lines — or copy the text onto index cards.

LITTLE DREAMERS BEDTIME PASS

Good for ONE quick need: bathroom · water · hug · question

Name: _____

LITTLE DREAMERS BEDTIME PASS

Good for ONE quick need: bathroom · water · hug · question

Name: _____

Cross out options that don't fit your family. The pass should cover ordinary small needs, not emergencies or health concerns.

SEVEN-NIGHT TRACKER

Track the Boundary, Not Your Child's Worth

One line a night: was the pass used, how many exits after it, minutes to quiet, and what helped.

Night 1

Pass used? ____ Exits after pass: ____ Min. to quiet:

What helped: _____

Night 2

Pass used? ____ Exits after pass: ____ Min. to quiet:

What helped: _____

Night 3

Pass used? ____ Exits after pass: ____ Min. to quiet:

What helped: _____

Night 4

Pass used? ____ Exits after pass: ____ Min. to quiet:

What helped: _____

Night 5

Pass used? ____ Exits after pass: ____ Min. to quiet:

What helped: _____

Night 6

Pass used? ____ Exits after pass: ____ Min. to quiet:

What helped: _____

Night 7

Pass used? ____ Exits after pass: ____ Min. to quiet:

What helped:

- ☐ Use numbers to spot patterns, not to shame.
- ☐ Praise effort and skill in the morning.
- ☐ A hard night doesn't erase earlier progress.

In the app: the Sleep Log does this counting for you — it'll show you the trend across all seven nights without you doing the math by hand.

CELEBRATION

I Practiced My Bedtime Routine

This celebrates _____ for practicing staying in their sleep space, using their bedtime tools, and learning a calmer nighttime routine.

Date:

Grown-up:

Keep celebrations simple: a special breakfast, choosing the morning music, a proud phone call to a loved one, or time together. Recognize effort without making sleep dependent on big prizes.

EVIDENCE & SAFETY

Sources and Important Notes

This guide is educational. It doesn't diagnose or treat a sleep disorder and isn't a substitute for your child's pediatrician.

Sources: Journal of Pediatric Psychology / PubMed — Evaluating the Bedtime Pass Program for Child Resistance to Bedtime: A Randomized, Controlled Trial. Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis / PubMed Central — Treating Bedtime Resistance with the Bedtime Pass. Nationwide Children's Hospital — Bedtime Problems. American Academy of Pediatrics / HealthyChildren.org — Toddler Bedtime Trouble, Healthy Sleep Habits, Sleep Apnea in Children.

WHEN TO CALL: Talk with your pediatrician if sleep difficulties are persistent, disrupt daytime functioning, or come with frequent snoring, breathing pauses, gasping, or pain. Seek emergency care for severe breathing trouble, blue/gray lips or face, or a child who can't be woken.

KEEP GOING

More Help When the Struggle Changes

Every Little Dreamers guide is free and stands on its own. Grab whichever one fits tonight.

- Bedtime SOS — quick-match fixes for 10 common bedtime struggles, ages 2-7
- The 14-Day Back-to-School Sleep Reset — shifting the schedule before the first school morning, ages 3-8
- The Single-Parent Bedtime Survival Kit — a simpler routine built for doing bedtime alone
- Two Homes, One Familiar Bedtime — keeping bedtime consistent across co-parenting households
- Don't Wait Until the Night Before — a gradual 14-day plan for travel, time changes, or any schedule shift

All free at littledreamerssleep.com

YOUR NEXT CALM STEP

When the Night Changes, Your Plan Can Change With It

This guide gives you a starting plan. Little Dreamers, our app, keeps building it with you — a routine that adjusts as your child grows, a log that spots patterns you're too tired to notice at 2am, and a place to loop in every caregiver so the plan doesn't reset every time someone new is on duty.

Little Dreamers — the app

- ☐ Personalized routines that adjust to your child's age and your family's approach
- ☐ Bedtime stories and calming sounds, in English and Spanish
- ☐ Sleep logs that turn tonight's notes into a pattern you can actually see
- ☐ Caregiver sharing, so grandma and the babysitter get the same plan you do
- ☐ Step-by-step guided support for the nights a printable can't cover alone



Scan to try Little Dreamers

Rest for them. Relief for you.
www.littledreamerssleep.com

© 2026 Little Dreamers. Personal use only. No redistribution.