



Case study

Evelyn, 2.5 years old:

A case of gaining 100% more sleep and saving a family from break-up

Background and key challenges:

This family is a blended family: Dad, a civil engineer has two older children from a previous marriage, who come and stay regularly over week ends. Mum, a Reiki therapist, is a first time mum. She scrupulously respected her daughter's sleep needs according to the NHS new-born guidelines to feed on demand and go with the flow. By the time Evelyn was 2 ½ years old, it was impossible to get her to sleep before 1am. Evelyn had grown into an intelligent and playful little girl whose *only* coping mechanism was breastfeeding, which was demanding and exhausting for her mother. Her father would not be able to go to sleep before 2am every night, making his life a misery. The couple was unhappily bed sharing with their daughter who would breastfeed continuously through the night, waking her parents every hour. The couple was never able to enjoy any quality time together. It put such a strain on their relationship that separation was a serious option.

Problems:

- Parental fear of doing something wrong, born from a high level of care and respect
- An insecure parental attachment
- Out of synch body clock

Aims and objectives:

- Restructure Evelyn's sleep to synchronise it with sociable living hours
- Build a secure parental attachment
- Improve the little girl's confidence
- Get rid of separation anxieties
- Introduce independent sleeping
- Carry on breast feeding
- Lengthen her night-time sleep

Solutions:

- Produce day time exercises to build and strengthen Evelyn's resilience
- Introduce gentle behavioural and physical boundaries to Evelyn.
- Teach new coping mechanisms for parents and child
- Teach parents about Evelyn's developmental needs and how to support them
- Combine the 4 previous points to transform a dysfunctional attachment into a secure attachment.
- Retrain Evelyn's body clock
- Teach parents to assert a respectful authority
- The rest will fall into place

Results:

- Within one week, Mum was less panicky and Within two months, she had a calm and confident demeanour.
- Evelyn's behaviour totally transformed for the better in the process.
- Her level of patience, empathy and appreciation increased dramatically
- Evelyn didn't stop breastfeeding but doesn't need it anymore as a coping mechanism
- Evelyn goes to bed at 8pm and has become an independent sleeper
- She sleeps in her bed, in her bedroom, she sometimes wakes once in the night .
- The parents enjoy predictable evenings
- Dad's sleep intake has doubled.
- The parents enjoy their new family dynamics and a little brother is on the way

Prevention:

This situation could have been avoided by learning about key elements* before their daughter's second birthday:

- The developmental needs of toddlers and how to support them
- How to build a child's resilience
- How to instigate a respectful authority
- How to reinforce a secure attachment with a toddler
- The importance of behavioural and physical boundary to a toddlers' mental health.

** All covered in the toddlers/preschoolers workshops*