

GUIDE TO REGRESSIONS

COMPLIMENTARY REFERENCE GUIDES

Whilst "regression" is a negative expression, for babies it means that they are developing (cognitively, emotionally, socially, physically or psychologically) - which is of course a good thing! In terms of sleep, it refers to unsettled periods with more frequent night awakenings, fussiness at bedtime, resisting naps and a need for more comfort.

You may be lucky and not notice drastic changes. For others, sleep during these phases can be tough and can last between 2 and 6 weeks. However to look at this positively - in the long term these developmental changes mean your little one will become deeper sleepers, more independent therefore we should really call it a "pro-gression"!

The following page describes the key regression periods, when they may occur (average) and an understanding what's going on. However first, some useful tips to help ride it out and not resort to habits you wanted to avoid! It is worth noting that babies and children may also experience regressions due to other factors such as teething, travel and common coughs and colds. The tips below are also relevant in these situations.

5 TIPS TO SURVIVING A REGRESSION



1 MAINTAIN GREAT SLEEP HYGIENE

Activities /practises during both the day and bedtime will help foster a calm bedtime and better sleep.

These include:

- Exposure to broad daylight
- Optimal exercise
- Check bedroom temperature and lighting (consider blackout blinds)
- White noise
- No screens before bedtime
- Healthy diet
- Bedroom has a positive and calm association



2 MAINTAIN CALM & CONSISTENT ROUTINE

Particularly during a time of change and development, maintaining a consistent routine is very comforting.

- Keep to a consistent order. E.g. the components of bedtime, or meal timings
- Ensure total sleep is optimal to prevent over tiredness (see my Sleep Guide, downloadable from my website)

That said, there will be times when bedtime will need to be pulled forward to catch-up on lost sleep.



3 RESPOND TO THEIR CUES

They may need a little more ...

- love
- cuddles
- food (milk or solids)
- patience

Don't be afraid to give them and worry you are "spoiling them" or they will get intoned habits. They need your help and guidance through this stage.



4 CONTINUE TO LAY THE RIGHT FOUNDATIONS

These are the right foundations for your family. For example, if you are happy bed-sharing - great. If it is not something you intended but it seems the easy way to get sleep in the short term, avoid and remember its just a phase!

Some ideas:

- instead of rocking to sleep, rest your hand on their tummy until the fall asleep
- if they are waking at the same time every night, set an alarm 5 mins before to assist them into the next sleep cycle.



5 TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

When people offer to help, its because they genuinely want to (& they will feel great for it too).

Perhaps a friend could take your little one on a walk to the park, your partner could do a night-shift at the weekend, grandparents come to play whilst you go out.

Do something which makes you feel you. Whether its a nap, having a bath, reading a book, going to the gym, browsing some shops. Filling your needs enables you to fill your child's a whole lot better.



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THE "4 MONTH REGRESSION"

This can be one of the toughest, as the biggest sleep development occurs during this phase.

Occurs Sometime between 3-6 months.

Expected behaviour

- More frequent night wakings with assistance required to get back to sleep.
- Shorter daytime naps.

Key reason(s)

- Babies are adapting from having lots of light sleep to sleep cycles which look a lot more like an adult's. As this shift happens, they will likely wake up a lot more and need support in falling into their next sleep cycle.
- Rapid development of physical strength as they can grasp and move their body with purpose.

THE "9 MONTH REGRESSION"

This regression overlaps with the dropping of the third nap.

Occurs Sometime between 8-10 months.

Expected behaviour

- More frequent night wakings
- Separation anxiety
- Shorter daytime naps.
- Irritability.

Key reason(s)

- Rapid growth and new skills such as crawling, scooting, sitting up, pulling up, and/or cruising.
- Rapid brain development, as they absorb language and beginning to put things into categories
- Separation anxiety, as they are going through many changes they want more reassurance.

THE "12 MONTH REGRESSION"

A less common regression, mostly related to naps.

Occurs Around their first birthday .

Expected behaviour

- Begin to resist the afternoon nap or have two shorter (~45 minute) naps. Don't be too impulsive to drop that second nap just yet, as they are likely to need it a little longer.

Key reason(s)

- This is around the time they begin to walk, a big physical development.
- Related to the above, they can become over-tired as they are doing a lot more exercise!

THE "18 MONTH REGRESSION"

Related to new-found independence and socio-emotional growth.

Occurs Between 17 and 19 months.

Expected behaviour

- Temper tantrums, not wanting to go to bed / stay in bed.
- Return of separation anxiety, needing more assurance getting to sleep.

Key reason(s)

- A growing strive for independence
- Emergence of canine teeth!

THE "2 YEAR REGRESSION"

Related to the development of physical capabilities, social and language skills.

Occurs Around their second birthday .

Expected behaviour

- Return of separation anxiety
- Conflict as they want to do things "by themselves"

Key reason(s)

- Start to have "fears"
- Strive for independence

e. katie@gentlesleepcoach.uk
i. gentlesleepcoach.uk
m. 07788617357