

“Of all the questions new parents face, none is more common than: ‘Does he sleep?’ If the baby sleeps well, the answer all too often is, “Yes, he’s a good baby.” By implication, those who don’t sleep are bad babies. The mother and father, already overwhelmed by exhaustion, must also deal with feelings that they are failing their first test as parents.

Of course, the millions of babies who don’t sleep through the night quickly are not moral failures. They are just new little people who have not yet learned to put themselves to sleep. Learn is the key word. **We all know that the need for sleep is biological but we don’t always realize that the ability to sleep is a learned skill. All children can learn it. All parents can teach them. But like everything else in life, some just need a little more help than others.**” -- “Good Night, Sleep Tight: The Sleep Lady’s Gentle Guide to Helping Your Child Go To Sleep, Stay Asleep, and Wake Up Happy,” by Kim West with Joanne Kenen. (CDS Books, New York, copyright 2005 by Kim West and Joanne Kenen.

www.sleep lady.com)

That’s the premise of a new book by Kim West, AKA the “Sleep Lady” , a clinical social worker who has worked with hundreds of families, helping them teach their babies, toddlers and preschoolers to sleep, usually in just two or three weeks. Joanne Kenen is a Washington writer who specializes in health. Both are moms – and they met when Joanne and her husband consulted Kim about their second son, Ilan, who was still waking up numerous times each night at age two. Joanne was looking for a gentle approach, one that would get her son sleeping better but wouldn’t require her to shut a door and leave him alone to cry in the dark. Kim provided her with it.

“I have spent more than a decade providing help to hundreds of weary and bleary families. I won’t promise you no tears but I do aim for fewer tears and I never tell you to just

shut the door and let your baby bawl alone in the dark,” Kim writes in her book. “My gentler method depends on step-by-step changes in bedtime, napping and overnight routines so that your child can develop sleep independence, go to sleep on his or her own, sleep more soundly and longer, while feeling confident that mom and dad will be nearby and responsive. A well-rested baby is usually an easier, less cranky baby. A well-rested mom and dad—in case it feels like it’s been so long that you can’t remember—is an easier, less cranky parent, able to show our children more joy and love and less of the irritability and frustration that’s inevitable when we are up with them ten times a night.”

The book tells parents everything they need to know about sleep from newborns up through age five. It helps parents gently guide their young babies into good sleep rhythms from the start, laying the groundwork so that they can learn to “sleep through the night” when they are older. It gives tips on night weaning older babies, scheduling naps, and helping children discard the “sleep crutches” that make them call for their parents at night. For older children, the book helps parents know when to move from a crib to a bed, when to consolidate two naps into one, or how and when to give up naps altogether. It even has advice on how to deal with all those “curtain calls,” when older children want Mom or Dad to come back and tuck them in just one more time....and one more time... and one more time.

The book includes not only Kim and Joanne’s experiences as real-life moms but also stories of many of the families Kim has worked with. They also include chapters on routine-busters – how to get back on track after travel or illness – as well as sections on nightmares, illness and even how to cope with more than one child at bedtime. And if you are one of the countless parents who finally get their kids sleeping only to find that they can no longer sleep themselves, Kim and Joanne also have a section on taking care of Mom and Dad.