

Bedtime Routine—Background

You will come up with a bedtime routine that works for Morgan's new situation and schedule, so this is really just background information so you know where Morgan is coming from (and what fights have already been fought... and lost lol—no need to butt your head against a brick wall).

Sleep has never been high on Morgan's priority list. When she was younger, she rarely slept for more than 2 hours at a time. Ever. (It was exhausting!) Even on sleep medication, it seems as if her body wants to be on a 48 hour clock instead of a 24 hour one—it wants to be awake for 30 hours and crash for 18.

There are a lot of nights where she will fall asleep initially for a few hours, then be up all night. She has been taught that she must remain in bed though. She may go to the bathroom a few times. She may also demand a "fresh water" (just to double check that she isn't alone—telling her she already has one does no good—just get it and be done with it.) But she knows she has to stay in bed (watching her videos) until morning. (This may change in her new situation—but I doubt she will try to leave her room).

We consider the "bedtime routine" (which is what Morgan calls it as well) to begin when she takes her night meds. Because there are sleep meds involved, timing is important. You have approximately an hour and a half window of opportunity to get her through her bedtime routine and into bed. If it takes longer than that (which is often her goal), she can fight through the sleep meds and stay awake.

It is kinda like dealing with a drunk once the sleep meds start to take effect: gentle herding and calm tones work best. Now is not the time to discipline her or escalate an argument, because a) she has less control [violence—the behavior we work hardest to avoid— is closer to the surface]; b) her getting emotionally worked up burns off the sleep meds; and c) she probably won't remember it in the morning anyways, so any "win" is a pyrrhic victory.

As a final piece of background info, for whatever reason, she tends not to eat much at all during the day. She saves up all her food to eat after her sleep meds kick in. She eats her main meal as part of the bedtime routine. We aren't sure if this is an anxiety thing or what—but no amount of behavior modification or bribery has been able to change it. That is when she is really hungry, and she insists on eating a full meal and dessert as part of this routine.

Begin the routine 1 1/2 hours before your target bedtime, and allow for at least 8 hours of sleep. (Note: if she hasn't woken by herself in the morning, you will have to wake her and give her a few minutes to "go potty" and acclimate before she'll agree to take her meds. She will not wake up to an alarm clock.)

Prepping for Bedtime— You will need:

Talking timer

Food/dessert on table

DVD AC adapter handy to table

2 bottles of water on bedside table

Nightlight on in her bedroom and in bathroom

In Bathroom:

Washcloth

Fresh pajamas and undies

Put toothpaste on toothbrush

Fill a disposable cup half full of water

Powder puff and 1/2&1/2 Zeasorb powder mix

Bedtime Routine

- 1) Give bedtime meds (spoon feed in Motts Strawberry Applesauce—you can pair up the smaller pills 2 at a time so there are less bites needed)
- 2) 30 minutes later, set the talking timer for 10 minutes—tell her: “Ten minutes until dessert”
- 3) The transition can be difficult. When the talking timer goes off, she’ll usually ask for “10 more minutes!” Tell her “5 minutes and then brush teeth!” Argue about it a bit. Give it a minute, then tell her it is time, and if she doesn’t “get a move” you will put away the food. Pretend to put away the food. She will finally come to the table. (The difficult part is over—she goes on autopilot from here)
- 4) Let her eat. She will want the DVD player at the table with her (and it may need “plugger please” [i.e. the AC adapter plugged in]—we keep one handy to the table)
- 5) She will get up and head to the bathroom when she is finished
- 6) She will use the toilet if needed (not always)
- 7) Help her strip off her pajamas and undies. She will insist on leaving on her socks if she is wearing any
- 8) Use a wet washcloth to wipe off her face (especially the corners of her mouth) and hands. Clean off any stray food bits that might have gotten on her chest or legs. Finish by wiping the back of her butt (usually there is fecal matter to clean)
- 9) Use the powder puff and liberally apply 1/2 & 1/2 Zeasorb powder mix in armpits (ask her to lift up, and point to what needs to be lifted), under each breast, in the fold under her stomach (especially on her left side [right side as you face her]), and in the leg folds on either side of her crotch. Note: Look at each area carefully as you apply, and get down in there to the bottom of each crevasse. This is really important! Get down in there and get it powdered—this is the number one defense against really (really) awful skin breakdown
- 10) Help her into fresh pajamas and undies
- 11) Let her brush her teeth. After brushing teeth she will make her way to bed. Remind her to put laundry in the hamper if she doesn’t do it automatically
- 12) Make sure she has 2 bottles of water on her bedside table, the remotes for her TV/VCR, and plug in her DVD player (slyly turning down the volume as you do so)
- 13) She may ask for a bedtime story. Don’t tell her no (you don’t want to upset her at this point) but don’t say yes either—just remind her that she has them on YouTube, and that you’ll come back in a few minutes (I tell her I have to do the dishes and get into my pajamas first). Usually she will fall asleep quickly once she is in bed (with no story) (Note: be wary of letting her talk you into stories or staying with her. You run the risk of having it become part of the routine after she is over her initial nervousness—and once something is “in the routine” it is hard to get it back out)
- 14) Once she is asleep, sneak in and switch her portable DVD player to “off” so that it will recharge. Turn off any videos playing on the laptop and close the cover. Make sure the VCR isn’t playing (but leave the blue screen “on” on the TV) Note: if you get “busted” - i.e. she wakes up lol—just leave them on... it means it is going to be a light sleep night, and she’ll be up playing them most of the night any ways
- 15) Make sure nightlights are on in her bedroom and in the bathroom, and close the bedroom door.