

# Bedtime Independence Guide

## Detailed Implementation Strategies for Gradual Transition

Children with processing speed differences often have nervous systems that take longer to transition between states (awake to sleep). The goal isn't to remove support overnight, but to gradually transfer the regulation skills to her while honouring her processing style.

### Key Principles:

- Use her strengths (leadership, memory, organisation) as tools
- Respect her need for predictability and gradual change
- Frame independence as an achievement, not a loss
- Maintain connection while building autonomy

### Phase 1: Foundation Building (Weeks 1-2)

#### Sleep X Introduction Protocol

**Days 1-3:** quarter scoop mixed in water (start slow for sensitive nervous systems)

**Days 4-7:** half scoop mixed in water if no adverse reactions

- this dose should be enough given her weight but feel free to reach out if there have been no improvements by week 2 and I'll provide specific recommendations

**Timing:** 30-60 minutes before routine starts

**Her involvement:** She can measure and mix it herself (independence building)

**Track together:** Note how she feels - tired, calm, any changes

#### Bedtime Routine Checklist Creation

##### Week 1: Design Together

Have Olivia create her own visual bedtime checklist. Use her organising skills:

##### Sample Checklist Items:

- Take Sleep X with water
- Put on special sleep clothes (PJs)
- Brush teeth (2 minutes with timer)
- Organise tomorrow's clothes
- Read/quiet activity (ideally alone) (10 minutes) – things to try
  - **Colouring:** Use a "more grown up" colouring book with intricate patterns or nature scenes [something like this](#)

- **Easy puzzle:** Simple jigsaw (50-100 pieces max) or word search - nothing frustrating
- **Poetry writing:** Write a poem about her day, friendships, family members, soccer, gymnastics, or dance
- **Gratitude journal:** Write 3 good things from today
- **Tomorrow planning:** Write or draw 2 things she's looking forward to tomorrow •
- **Gentle reading:** Poetry books or inspiring stories

- Lights dimmed to "sleepy level"
- Snuggle time with mum (current duration)
- Practice [3 balloon breaths](#)
- Mum says goodnight and turns off light

#### *Balloon Breathing Instructions (3 breaths):*

1. **Get comfortable:** Lie down with a small stuffed animal or soft toy on your tummy
2. **Watch your friend:** Your stuffed animal is going to take a ride on your breathing
3. **Breathe in slowly:** Count to 4 while breathing in through your nose, watch your "friend" rise up like a balloon filling with air
4. **Hold gently:** Count to 2 while holding your breath, your friend stays up high
5. **Breathe out slowly:** Count to 6 while breathing out through your mouth, watch your friend gently float back down
6. **Repeat 2 more times:** Each breath helps your brain get more ready for sleep
7. **Final thought:** Say to yourself "My brain is ready for amazing sleep" or "I am safe and calm"

#### *Her Leadership Role:*

- She decorates the checklist
- She decides the order (within reason)
- She checks off items as "bedtime manager"
- She can modify it if something doesn't work

### **Week 2: Master the Routine**

Focus on her becoming the expert at following her checklist without being rushed. Use her excellent memory to help her memorise the sequence.

### **Phase 2: Gentle Reduction (Weeks 3-4)**

#### **5-Minute Weekly Reduction Strategy**

**Week 3:** Reduce mum's presence by 5 minutes

- If current time is 30 minutes, aim for 25 minutes
- Use a timer that SHE controls (empowerment)
- Explain: "You're getting so good at helping your brain get ready for sleep"

**Week 4:** Another 5-minute reduction

- Continue building her confidence
- Celebrate the achievement: "You're becoming a bedtime expert!"

## Bedtime Reward Systems She Manages

### Option 1: The Bedtime Business

- She earns "bedtime points" for following her checklist independently
- She decides what points can be "spent" on (special breakfast, extra story time, etc.)
- She tracks her own points on a chart she designs

### Option 2: The Achievement Ladder

- Each week of successful bedtime independence earns a "rung" on her ladder
- She decides what the reward is at the top (within family guidelines)
- Visual progress tracking appeals to her organising nature

### Option 3: The Bedtime Expert Certificate Program

- She's working toward becoming a "Certified Bedtime Expert"
- Each phase completion earns a certificate she can show friends/family
- Appeals to her desire to help and teach others

#### *Implementation Tips:*

- Let HER choose which system appeals to her
- She manages the tracking (builds ownership)
- Celebrate progress, not perfection
- Adjust if one system isn't motivating

## Phase 3: Transitional Objects & Self-Soothing (Weeks 5-8)

### Comfort Item Selection & Setup

**Her Organisational Project:** She gets to organise her own "bedtime comfort station":

#### **Possible Transitional Objects to Choose From:**

- **Photo comfort:** Special family photo by her bed
- **Scent connection:** Small cloth with mum's perfume
- **Texture comfort:** Specific blanket or stuffed animal
- **Light comfort:** Special lamp or nightlight she controls
- **Sound comfort:** Soft music or white noise she chooses

### Additional Independent Calming Activities

#### *Creative & Expressive Options:*

- **Poetry corner:** Keep a special bedtime poetry journal for writing about her day, sports, friends, or family
- **Art therapy:** "Grown-up" colouring books with intricate mandala or nature designs
- **Gratitude practice:** Write or draw 3 things that made her happy today
- **Dream planning:** Write or sketch what she hopes to dream about

#### *Quiet Mental Activities:*

- **Easy puzzles:** 50-100 piece jigsaws, word searches, or sudoku for beginners
- **Reading corner:** Poetry books, short inspiring stories, or nature magazines
- **Tomorrow visioning:** Write 2 things she's excited about for tomorrow
- **Memory lane:** Think through her favorite moments from the day

### Gentle Physical Activities:

- **Stretching sequence:** Simple yoga poses like child's pose, gentle twists
- **Breathing variations:** Different counts (4-7-8 breathing) or breathing with music
- **Sensory comfort:** Arrange her comfort items, test different pillow positions

**Choice Strategy:** Let her pick 2-3 favourites to rotate through, so she doesn't get bored but maintains routine. She can change her selection weekly if desired, using her organising skills to plan her calming activities.

### Self-Soothing Techniques (Age-Appropriate)

#### Technique 1: The "Balloon Belly" Breathing

- Place stuffed animal on tummy
- Watch it rise and fall with breathing
- Count 5 slow breaths
- She can teach this to her stuffed animal friend

#### Technique 2: The "Cozy Body Scan"

- Starting with toes, tense and release each body part
- "Tell your toes it's time to sleep, now tell your legs..."
- Appeals to her verbal and memory strengths

#### Technique 3: The "Gratitude Garden"

- Think of 3 good things from the day
- "Plant" them in her imaginary gratitude garden
- Appeals to her creative and caring nature

#### Technique 4: The "Tomorrow Planning"

- Briefly organise thoughts about tomorrow
- Appeals to her leadership and planning strengths
- Helps contain worries by addressing them

### Implementation Strategy:

- Introduce ONE technique per week
- Let her choose which one becomes her "specialty"
- Practice during calm times first, not just at bedtime
- She can teach the technique to family members

### Mum's Gradual Transition During This Phase

**Week 5-6:** Reduce to 15 minutes, but now spent teaching/practicing techniques

**Week 7-8:** Reduce to 10 minutes, with her demonstrating the techniques she's learned

### Phase 4: Independent Routine with Check-ins (Weeks 9-12)

#### The Expert Bedtime Manager

##### Her New Role:

- She manages her entire bedtime routine independently
- She demonstrates techniques to family members
- She troubleshoots her own bedtime challenges
- She helps design bedtime solutions for others

## **Celebrating Her Expertise:**

### **Week 9: The Teaching Opportunity**

- She teaches her bedtime routine to a family member
- Create a "How to Have Amazing Sleep" guide she authors
- Photo documentation of her expert bedtime setup

### **Week 10: The Problem-Solving Expert**

- If challenges arise, she gets to suggest solutions first
- Frame any setbacks as "expert consulting opportunities"
- Her ideas are valued and implemented when appropriate

### **Week 11: The Bedtime Consultant**

- She could help design bedtime routines for cousins/friends
- Create certificates for others she's "trained"
- Appeals to her caring nature and desire to help

### **Week 12: The Graduation Celebration**

- Official "Bedtime Expert" certificate ceremony
- Photo for her portfolio of achievements
- Special recognition of her leadership and independence

## **Mum's Brief Check-in Protocol**

### **5-Minute Connection Routine:**

- Quick review of her checklist completion
- Brief chat about the day (connection maintenance)
- Express pride in her independence
- Goodnight hug and affirmation
- Leave room with confidence in her abilities

### **What to Say:**

- "You're amazing at taking care of your brain's sleep needs"
- "I'm so proud of how you've become a bedtime expert"
- "Your brain is going to have such good rest tonight"
- "I love you and I'm right nearby if you need anything"

## **Troubleshooting Common Challenges**

### **"I'm Scared" or Separation Anxiety**

#### **Response Strategy:**

- Acknowledge the feeling: "Your brain is telling you to be scared, and that's okay"
- Redirect to her expertise: "What would the bedtime expert do in this situation?"
- Use her techniques: "Which self-soothing technique helps your brain feel safest?"
- Remind of her capabilities: "You've been amazing at this for X weeks now"

### **Regression During Stress (School, illness, etc.)**

#### **Temporary Support Protocol:**

- Brief return to previous phase support level
- Maintain her identity as "bedtime expert taking a break"
- Resume independence gradually as stress resolves
- Frame as "even experts need extra support sometimes"

## Resistance to Reduction

### Problem-Solving Together:

- "What would make this step feel easier for you?"
- "How can we modify this to work better for your brain?"
- Let her suggest timeline adjustments
- Maintain forward momentum while respecting her input

## Night Wakings Continue

### Her Role in Solutions:

- She tracks what helps vs. what doesn't
- She practices techniques during night wakings
- She reports back on what worked
- Medical consultation if no improvement after 6 weeks

## Supporting Family Dynamics

### Maintaining Dad's Successful Approach

#### When Mum is Away:

- Dad continues to leverage his natural boundary-setting ability
- Olivia practices techniques with dad as well
- Different approaches with different parents is normal and okay
- Focus on her growing skills rather than parent differences

### Brother's Role

#### Positive Integration:

- He can be proud of sister's growing independence
- Reduced disruption to his sleep
- Possible helper role in celebrating her achievements
- Maintain his comfort presence upstairs while building her independence

## Family Stress Management

### During Challenging Nights:

- Remember this is temporary and developmental
- Focus on long-term skill building vs. short-term ease
- Celebrate small wins and progress
- Maintain perspective: she's learning lifelong skills

## Success Metrics & Celebration

### Weekly Check-ins

#### Questions to Ask Her:

- "What part of your bedtime routine are you most proud of?"
- "Which technique helps your brain feel most calm?"
- "What would you like to adjust or improve?"
- "How does it feel to be getting so independent?"

## Progress Indicators

### Signs of Success:

- Follows checklist independently
- Uses self-soothing techniques during stress
- Takes pride in bedtime management
- Fewer calls for mum after routine completion
- Improved morning energy and mood

## Ongoing Celebration

### Monthly Recognition:

- Update family on her growing expertise
- Document progress with photos or journals
- Share achievements with extended family/friends
- Build portfolio of her independence skills

## Long-term Perspective

This gradual approach teaches Olivia:

- **Self-regulation skills** she'll use throughout life
- **Problem-solving abilities** for managing anxiety
- **Confidence in her own capabilities**
- **Understanding of her brain's needs and how to meet them**

The time invested now in building these skills properly will pay dividends throughout her school years, adolescence, and adult life. You're not just solving a bedtime problem - you're building a foundation for lifelong emotional regulation and self-advocacy.

**Remember:** Every child's timeline is different. These phases are guides, not rigid rules. Trust Olivia's pace and your own instincts while maintaining forward momentum toward independence.

If you have any questions regarding your treatment plan, please email me at [wellness@janayakarlocinaturopath.com.au](mailto:wellness@janayakarlocinaturopath.com.au).

This guide complements but doesn't replace any medical advice. Always keep your healthcare team informed of your wellness journey.

If you feel unwell at any point, become pregnant or start taking new medication(s)/supplementation(s), please stop taking your prescribed supplements and contact me ASAP at 0415 575 788 AND seek urgent medical attention if required.