

mama bear's bedtime tips

A Note to Parents

Dear Parents,

Mama Bear has a lot to teach us about parenting. Did you notice how she didn't have to nag Small Bear to get ready for bed, nor was there a tantrum when time had finally run out? Mama Bear was clear about what tasks Small Bear had to accomplish before bedtime. Small Bear knew if those tasks were done in time, there would be time left for stories.

Kids don't need to climb trees and fill up on nuts before bedtime, but they do need to pick up their toys, put on their pj's, or brush their teeth before they're ready for stories. And when they know that bedtime ends at 8:30 p.m., they learn that they have control over how much time is left for stories.

Mama Bear knew the Magic Formula for motivating small bear.

Motivation = I want x I can

Small Bear wanted stories and knew what she needed to do to get them. Reminding herself how much she wanted stories helped Small Bear curb her dillies and dallies.

Mama Bear's template can apply throughout the day, such as finishing homework promptly to leave enough time for computer games. It's a simple, powerful formula for promoting the development of self-discipline and self-regulation.



Sincerely,

Ashley H. Beitel, Ph.D.



the bedtime ritual



Set a time to begin getting ready for bed and a time when lights go out for sleeping.



Give your child set tasks to complete between those two times. For a young child, this may be to get pajamas on and cooperate with bath and teeth brushing. For an older child it may be bathing, picking up toys, and putting on pj's.



Make sure your child knows that once those tasks are taken care of, the remaining time before "lights out" is available for the fun stuff, like reading or telling stories. The sooner the tasks are completed, the more stories can be read.

what kids (and parents!) can learn from the bedtime ritual

Get Rid of Nagging – Put the Conflict in the Kid

Remember Mama Bear's magic formula for motivation:

Motivation = I want x I can

If you are nagging or threatening, it sounds like there's something you want rather than they want. For example, Small Bear wanted stories and knew what she needed to do to get them. This put the conflict inside her. Reminding herself how much she wanted stories helped her complete the tasks on time.

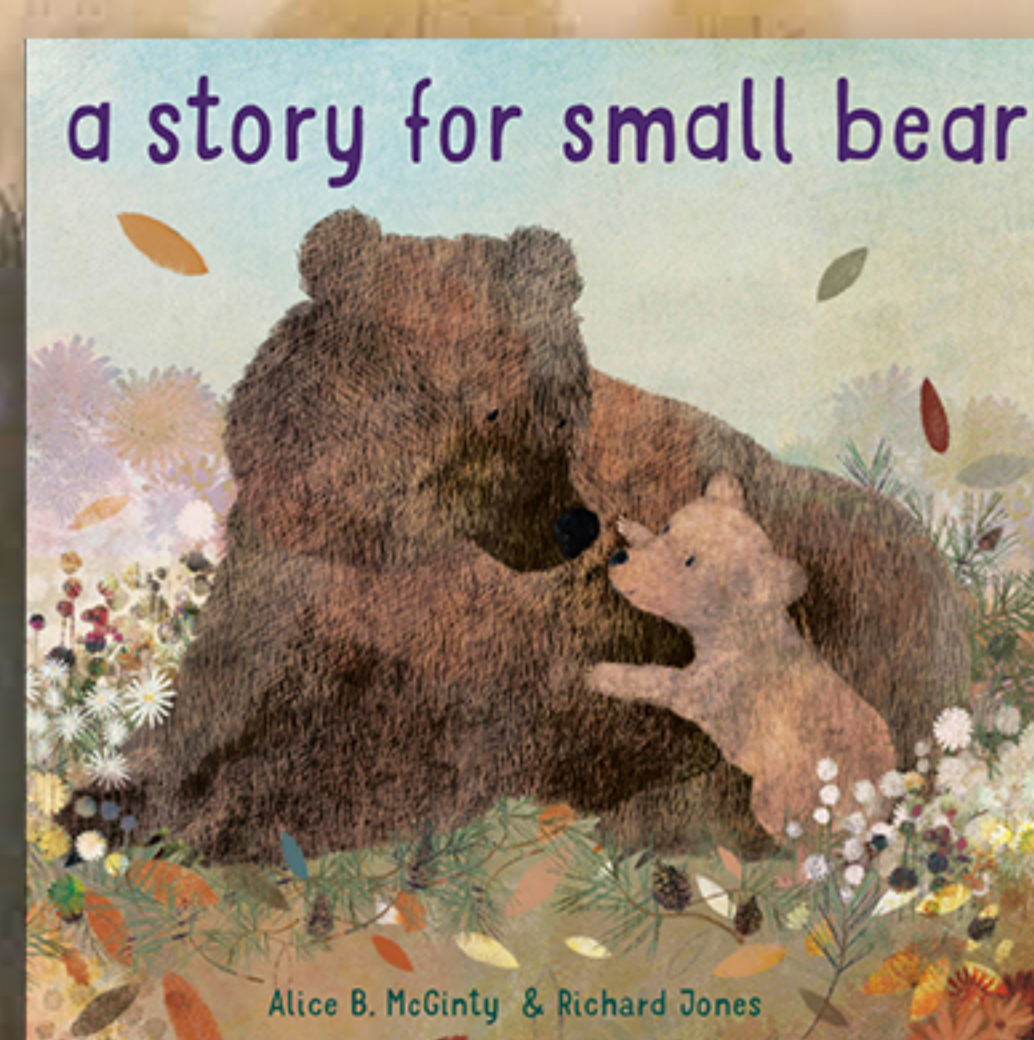
Another example is: Your child wants to play video games. They don't want to do homework. But if they have to finish their homework before they can play video games, then you will have put the WANT back in them.

Bargaining

Has your child bargained for more stories or a later bedtime? The desire to bargain is probably wired in from birth.

Limits and expectations can be adjusted according to your child's developmental readiness, so your response to the bargainer should be, "So show me."

External limits can be adjusted when there is evidence of internal limits, or self-regulation. For example, when a child can get up in the morning and get ready for school without the need for parental prompts and nagging, they're showing that they may be ready for a later bedtime.



Visit Mama Bear and author Alice B. McGinty at www.AliceBMcGinty.com

