

## How do I get my child out of bed in the morning?!

### (Or... for that matter, how do I get out myself?)

Some people seem glued to their bed in the morning. The alarm can go off three times, you can keep calling them, but they roll over and pull the duvet over their heads. A very pleasant mood is generally not part of this procedure, with the average 'not-getting-out-of-bed-person'. Perhaps the following information will help:

The pace at which 'starting up' in the morning happens, is different for everyone. There are people who jump out of bed right after their alarm clock activates, right into the shower, where they go over the planning of the day and while toweling dry, put their laundry in the machine. Hopefully they don't try to discuss their schedule with people at the other end of the waking-up-spectrum. It's better not to talk to them for a while. Until after their first cup of coffee or juice, there is little room for thinking in this group. The body and mind are still in the process of 'warming up' and far from awake and alert enough to communicate with the outside world.

It's the same with children. Some wake up by themselves and have a craft or building project ready before you even enter the living room. For others, it takes a little more time.

How come? A part of it has to do with sensory processing. Sleeping means spending a long time with very little sensory input. During the night, the brain ensures that most activity is on the back burner. It does this by allowing fewer input to pass through to the cortex. When you wake up, things have to be put in gear and that takes longer for some than for others. How long it takes your brain to go from 'sleep-mode' to 'awake-mode' is in part a matter of how sensitive it is to sensory input. Other influences include your age and circumstances, such as your health and the amount of sleep you had that night and previous nights.

Slow to get into gear? You could use some tricks, like:

#### **General**

- Add light slowly. You could use a 'wake up light', which automatically spreads more and more light. Do not immediately turn on a bright light and/or open the curtains little by little;
- then add sound, for example a radio station where talking, advertising and music alternate;
- once out of bed, stretching and shaking your arms and legs is an excellent way to wake up the muscles;
- music in the background while dressing and eating is easier to process than when you are being spoken to. It requires less concentration, but you do experience sound input;
- television provides even more (visual) stimuli, but can also distract from things like eating and getting dressed;

- a crunchy cracker with chewy peanut butter builds more alertness because you have to work harder with the muscles of your lips and tongue than with warm porridge or a sandwich;
- orange juice gives stronger sensations in the mouth than milk (keep in mind that there should be at least half an hour between eating and drinking acidic products and brushing your teeth because acid temporarily weakens the enamel).

### **Specific for children**

- Give your child a toy to play with, which they can fidget with;
- when you are in the bedroom with your child, you can give deep pressure by gently giving whole hand pushes on, for example, the arms, shoulders and legs;
- jumping on one's own or their parent's bed is fun for children and good for awakening the muscles. Counting together to 10 is one way to give this activity a clear end;
- short sentences are more effective for children who are still sleepy, than long stories. Omit the words in parentheses from: '(Do you want) orange juice or milk?' or '(Go put on) your shoes.' Where you can emphasize the most important words; juice, milk, shoes, on;
- if they can prepare their own food and drink; please let them! Because that means extra movement;
- when you help your child get dressed, you can wake up muscles by pushing or rubbing firmly on shoulders, legs and arms;
- using a straw is fun and ensures that more muscle strength is needed to drink;
- if possible, ask your child how he or she thinks his or her body can best be awakened. Together, you can set rules about how long it may take.

With these strategies you gradually activate different brain areas and build up alertness.

If you have any questions, tips or ideas about getting out of bed, you can email us at [monique@dutchsensorysolutions.nl](mailto:monique@dutchsensorysolutions.nl).

Kind Regards,  
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