

Sleep Is a State

An Introduction to Understanding Sleep
and Your Baby's Experience



ConsciousBaby™
WITH ELIZA PARKER

“State”

❖ Consciousness

3 main *states* of awareness:
waking, dreaming, and deep
sleep

To sleep (v.): be in a *state* of
sleep

Sleep (n.) a naturally recurring
state of mind and body

❖ Condition

State (n.): the particular condition
that someone or something is in
at a specific time

What influences your state of mind/being?

What effects does this have on you?

Our brains are at work while we sleep!

❖ “sleep on it”

Just like us, babies' state of being affects how deeply they can relax.

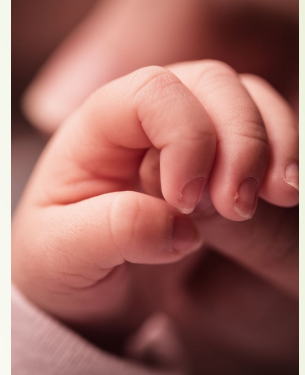
So, to help babies sleep:

We must address the experiences impacting them

→ Allows us to truly meet underlying needs

→ Then sleep comes more naturally

Goal? For baby to sleep based on internal motivation vs depend on external





What this work is about

Focuses on:

- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Relies on baby's innate wisdom and abilities
- ❖ Underlying needs, root causes
- ❖ Big picture
- ❖ Connection and communication

Sleep logistics??

- ❖ Legit need for closeness
- ❖ "Falling asleep on their own"



Key? What's affecting your baby's state and ability to relax...

Mom Amber's experience: Sleep issues tend to go beyond just sleep

"We found ourselves helpless most nights as our daughter woke up screaming, which would continue sometimes for 1-2 hours.

We were also struggling with daily transitions like getting into her car seat, getting dressed, and sitting down for dinner."

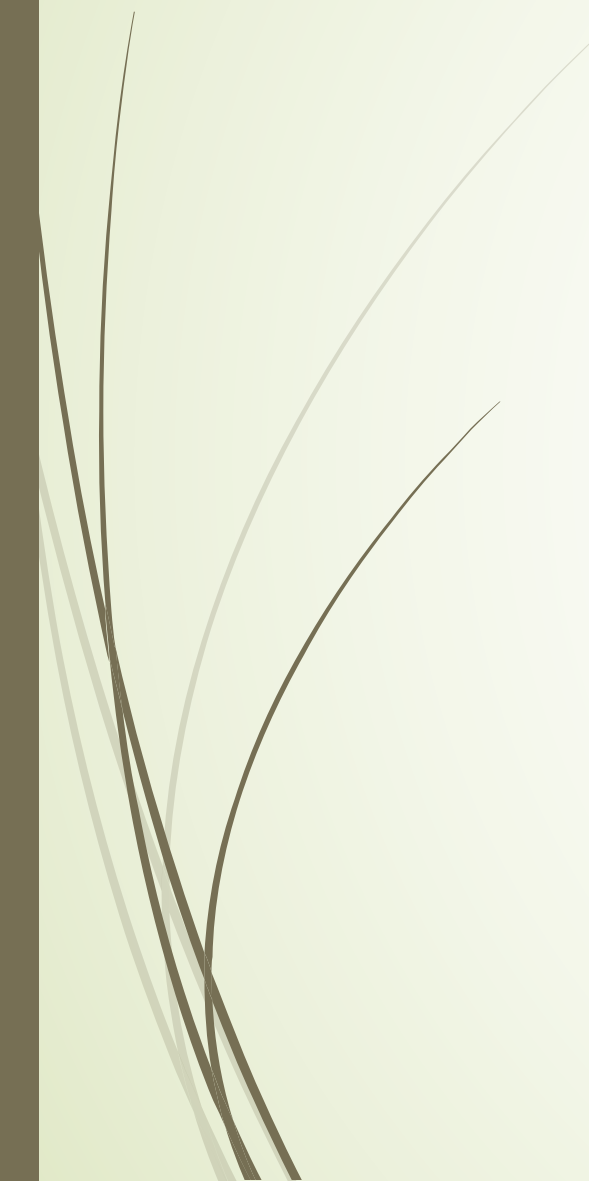
What we did:

- ❖ Helped her process early experiences
- ❖ Tools to support her through emotional releases

"We find ourselves much more patient and much less anxious, and never feeling helpless."



3 crucial aspects that affect sleep:

- ❖ **Emotional key: stress release**
 - ❖ **Core key: processing birth/early experiences**
 - ❖ **Physical key: baby-led milestones and handling tips**
- 



The Emotional Key: Stress Release

This information is from Aware Parenting (Dr. Aletha Solter)

Why babies cry

- 1) Basic needs
- 2) Still crying? Natural, healthy mechanism for releasing stress

You're not doing it wrong! Your baby is communicating, what a wonderful thing to foster!

Pressure release valve—they need to get it out!

Current daily stimulations or prior events

Not a bad thing! Inevitable part of life



Problem or solution?

Dad's experience: Had tried bouncing, shushing, & nursing to sleep.
We let Baby have good cry in his parents' arms, then he fell asleep.
"It's like crying is actually a solution!"

Emotion habits ("control patterns")

= The go to when baby cries

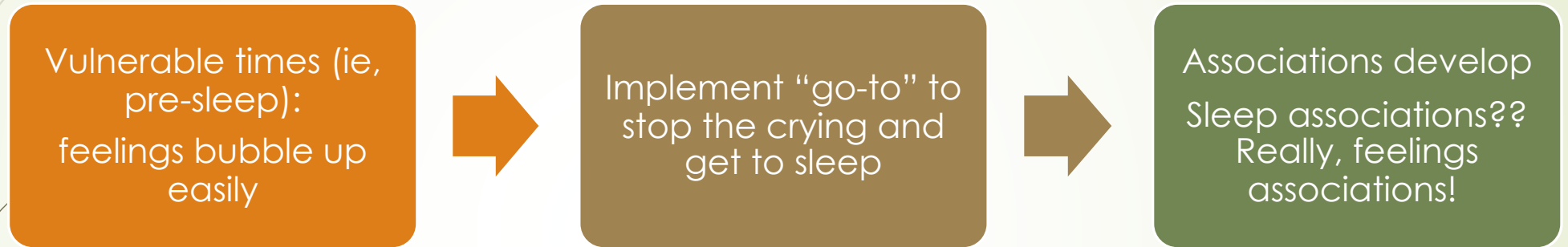
Are these "bad"? No, but they're not meeting the true need.

How they get set up: by choice, felt "instinct," assumption, or out of necessity

Habits begin in wisdom!



Why crying is connected to sleep



Hence, "fighting sleep"

Feelings trying to come out

Or child (or parents 😊) struggling to keep them in



What you can do now

“Crying In Arms” (CIA) = Allow your child to cry in your loving, listening presence, in arms.

- 1) Start by opening up to the idea of letting feelings out
- 2) Explore holding space and listening. Don't worry yet about the details.
- 3) Notice *your* response

Typical responses post-cry:

- ❖ fall asleep
- ❖ or awake but serene and connected



The Core Key: Processing Birth and Early Experiences

What is this?

How do you make sense of your experiences and work through stress?

Babies need to process their experiences, just like we do

They remember...

Through story, play, movement, photos, etc

Why is it important?

Most pivotal part of all this!

Wired for expectations of connection; often gets disrupted

Not about blame or guilt. → *How it was from baby's perspective?*

Babies need to

- ❖ Understand information/why
- ❖ Process feelings

How to recognize if your baby needs this

We can see their communication through:

- ❖ Movement
- ❖ Big feelings
- ❖ Play
- ❖ Behaviors that seem stuck or intense





Laura's experience:

Baby (14 mo) “confident, well-adjusted, happy”

Several wakings overnight, even though already resolved a lot.

What we did:

- ❖ Went through her birth story; nothing triggering
- ❖ ...until we investigated womb history
- ❖ Activated, feelings bubbling, very engaged
- ❖ Explained what happened and how everyone felt

Wakings started resolving.

What you can do now

- ❖ Start observing your child's play symbolically
- ❖ “Remember when...”

**Sleep is
like a
separation**



The Physical Key: Baby-led Milestones and Handling Tips

*This information is from Infant Developmental Movement Education
(Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Body-Mind Centering)*

Did you know... that babies will find sitting, standing, and walking on their own?

We (adults) learn on purpose by practicing.

They “happen to” learn via reflexes and gravity.

What is “baby led”

Letting them discover milestones/positions completely on their own, without propping/‘teaching’

Propping devices are very common! Or holding them up by hand

No judgment! This is new for most parents.

Upright* (vs inclined)



The difference baby-led makes

- ❖ Baby's body and brain are ready!
- ❖ Acceptable to be where they are
- ❖ Parent-led is different
- ❖ Is what we're doing having the intended effect?

It's related to relaxation!

When the body is put in a situation not ready for = compensation patterns

Ever had an injury or procedure that took a while to heal?

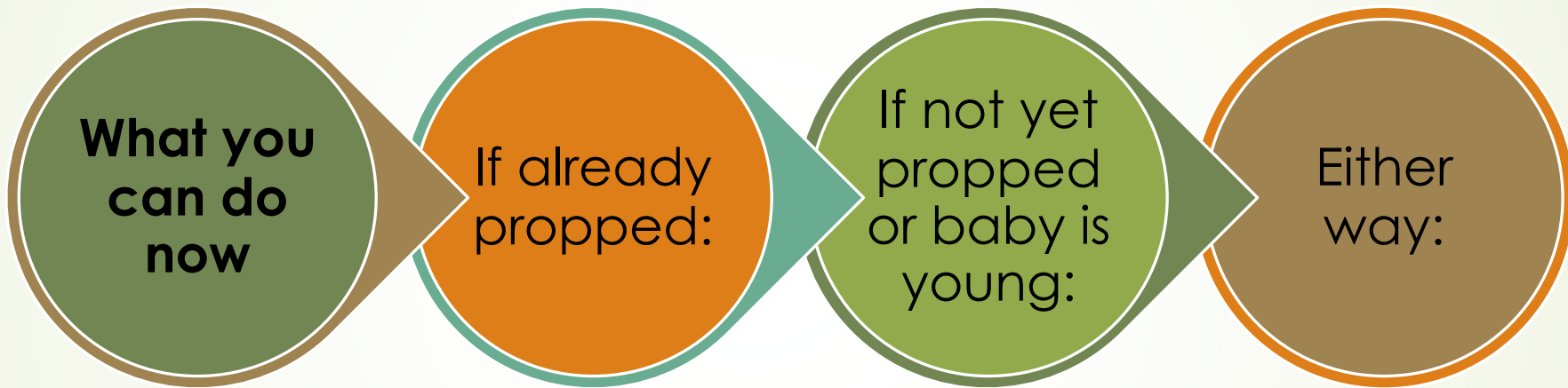
Babies' bones/joints are still forming.

Sensory integration

Movement quality

So... if they can't do it on their own yet, activates nervous system

Heightened alert vs calm and grounded



**What you
can do
now**

If already
propped:

- Begin by reducing time spent propped upright

If not yet
propped
or baby is
young:

- Keep going!
- Avoid if can or aim for 90%

Either
way:

- Come down to baby's level



Wrap up

Impact on sleep of...

Emotions:

Pent up feelings and stress make it hard to let go and relax!

Unresolved birth/early experiences:

When there's a riff in our expectations or experience, we continue subconsciously looking for resolution until we find it or somehow satisfy it. Can "keep us up at night"!

Body and movement habits:

Babies develop body habits by how we hold and move them—which can unintentionally trigger into high alert or help them stay calm and grounded.