

My Family's Sleeping Arrangements

A friend asked how, as a radical unschooling family, we handle bedtimes and sleeping arrangements. Here was my response.

My kids are 8 and 4, and both are a bit too scared to stay upstairs at night by themselves doing their own thing. Also, we have a family bedroom with 3 beds (in the basement). My wife's on her firm twin, My son's (8) on the top of a bunk-type bed (Ikea), and my daughter (4) and I are underneath that on a king. We've slept together for about two years now. Because my kids are still too scared to stay upstairs at night alone doing whatever they choose to do, they come down without a hassle when mom and dad are ready for bed. We get undressed, PJs on, do whatever "business" we each feel we should do (potty, teeth, reminding our kids, sometimes playfully and lovingly prodding, to at least go potty so that nobody gets pee'd on, and to think about brushing their teeth), then we do some reading, then we lay down, lights off, do some silly talking, giggling, whatever, and slowly fall asleep one by one.

That's *our* experience. We don't want to and don't have to enforce anything. My kids often get into physically active mode when we are trying to settle down to get the light off, so I'll either wrestle with them for a few minutes, or remind them how tired one of us is (parents) and that we would appreciate them settling down and getting in bed.

When my son is busy with something when mom and dad want to go to bed, he'll say things like, "Oh man!!" and then we'll encourage him to stay up and finish what he's doing, and remind him that just because we're going to bed, that doesn't mean that he has to. However, his fear always gets the better of him (for now) and he'll shut down whatever he's doing (usually the computer), and follow us down. I expect in the next couple of years he'll overcome that fear.

Each family needs to find what works for them, which necessarily includes determining what works for each person. We've had different bed spots, and even moved our bedroom from one place to another because the kids are growing and 3 on a king was becoming too much for me. We evolved, keeping in mind the needs of everyone. If we have another kid, we plan on co-sleeping mom and the baby on her twin from the beginning (and see where that goes).

The wife and kids wake up naturally every morning. I envy them. We usually get to sleep by 10 or 10:30. I wake at 6:30, and they'll wake anywhere from 8:30-10:30 depending on the season. When we need to wake up to go somewhere, such as a dental appt. or mom's Saturday morning Zumba class, we'll either let the dogs lick them awake (who sleep in their kennels just outside our room), or we'll turn on the light and slowly massage and

tickle them awake. They expect to be woken up, so they're never grumpy about it, but we respect that it takes time to be pulled out of slumber.

On family beds and co-sleeping, I'm sure you're wondering about spousal intimacy. I don't kiss and tell, but I will say that where there's a will there's a way. Love can't only be made in the bedroom (or lying down, or at night).

Here're some interesting resources on sleeping from an unschooling perspective:

<http://sandraddodd.com/sleep/>

<http://daynamartin.com/unschooling-blog/the-sacred-flow-of-the-family-bed/>

http://www.livingjoyfully.ca/unschooling/getting_settled/bedtimes.htm

<http://anunschoolinglife.com/sleep-freedom-letting-kids-find-their-own-sleep-pattern/>

Skyler.