APPRENDRE À DORMIR

Transitional objects and sleep: one piece of the puzzle?

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Teddy bears and blankets, or transitional objects, are not a recent concept, having first appeared in scientific literature in the 1950s. The first studies on the subject were aimed at understanding how children interact with the outside world.

It's **any object** that children can use **safely**, to help them fall asleep **more easily and comfort themselves independently**, without the constant help of a parent.

Some children use one or more transitional objects:

- a stuffed animal or teddy bear,
- a piece of fabric,
- a pacifier,
- even certain parts of their bodies, such as their thumbs.

A number of studies have demonstrated the benefits of comforters for **self-soothing, both day and night**. For example, one study found that children who used a transitional object went back to sleep independently more often after night-time awakenings than those who didn't. But much remains to be studied, including the effects of transitional objects on long-term sleep. Finally, the impact of the maternal odor associated with the transitional object on sleep is not yet the subject of consensus.

How do you become attached to a teddy bear or blanky?

Around the age of 6 months, the **parent can introduce** an object that is safe for the child's age, and **present it under his or her supervision in a repeated and amusing way** to encourage the child's attachment to the object. **With time, repetition and fun,** the child will become attached to the object.

For example, during daytime playtime, a small blanket can be used to tickle the child, or to play peek-a-boo . It can be offered to children to help regulate negative emotions.

We strongly recommend that you check before introducing the **object that it is safe and suitable for night-time sleeping.** It's crucial to ensure your child's safety while sleeping, avoiding any risk of suffocation or choking.

Up to the age of around one year, the Canadian Paediatric Association recommends keeping objects out of your baby's sleeping space to prevent these risks, as well as sudden infant death syndrome.

Once this positive association has been created (and the risks associated have been greatly reduced such as the child beign older than one year old, has acquired the motor ability to roll over on his or her own, etc.), the toddler will be able to use it as a **means to self-soothe when falling asleep, waking up at night or soothing himself or herself during the day.** As such , after around one year of age, the favorite object can be incorporated into rest periods **as part of the routine**, for example.

Did you know? A North American study revealed that 72% of children aged between 3 months and 5 years had a favorite object.

The transitional object is just one tool among many. While beneficial, it does not replace the need for a well-established bedtime routine and quality time with your child. **Combine it with good sleep practices to maximize its soothing effect.**

Inspiration and scientific sources:

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