

Study Finds That the Cry It Out Method is Actually A Okay

By Paige Towers • May 24, 2016 at 3:24pm

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For new parents, the choice between letting babies “cry it out” and leaving bed to check on them can feel like a catch22: Lie there feeling guilty or sacrifice your own sleep. But there may be a bit of hope for exhausted moms and dads everywhere. A new study , published in the journal Pediatrics,

says the cry itout method is fine, explaining that letting babies shed tears for short spurts throughout the night won't leave them with extra stress or emotional scars.

Researchers from Australia monitored a group of 43 healthy infants, six to 16 months old, chosen based on one unifying issue: sleeping troubles, identified by their parents. The researchers then split the babies into three random groups.

Both sleep training methods — “graduated

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In the first group, parents were instructed to follow the “graduated extinction” sleep training method, where babies are allowed to “cry it out” for increasingly longer intervals throughout the night. The second group received instructions to try a method called “bedtime fading,” in which babies’ bedtimes are delayed in 15minute increments until they grow more and more tired. The remaining babies made up the control group, meaning their parents received basic information about sleep but didn’t follow any set sleep training method.

Researchers measured babies’ cortisol levels using saliva swabs, as well as collected selfreported information about their mothers’ moods and stress levels. Furthermore, twelve months after the study, researchers evaluated parentchild attachment and asked mothers to assess their children’s emotional and behavioral problems.

In the end, both sleep training methods — “graduated extinction” and “bedtime fading” — decreased

the time it took babies to fall asleep in comparison to the control group, with

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the “graduated extinction” group falling asleep faster than the “bedtime fading” group. And, although cortisol levels were normal for babies in all three groups, babies in sleeptraining groups exhibited decreased levels over time, whereas control group babies remained steady.

Based on the findings, there may not be one right or wrong way to sleep train — or not sleep train — your baby.

How did the babies seem one year later? Fine. The initial differences in stress levels disappeared, meaning that new parents should consider taking a deep breath. Based on the findings, there may not be one right or wrong way to sleep train — or not sleep train — your baby.

The findings could serve as a bit of relief for parents concerned about how they’re putting their wee ones to bed, especially those who feel guilty about or wary of “graduated extinction” (aka “crying it out”), which

critics have warned could harm parentchild attachment

. As Perri Klass, MD said in a

New York Times

article

about this same study, parents should take comfort in the fact that “there’s some good evidence that the various methods of ‘sleep training,’ none of which should involve letting a small infant cry for hours in

a dark room,

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work for many children and many families. There's no evidence that they do lasting damage to the child or the parent child bond and, in fact, some reassuring evidence that they don't."

Klass goes on to say, "All these researchers agree that parents shouldn't do anything that makes them uncomfortable; parents know best what their children need." Although this Aussieled study may highlight the possibility that "graduated extinction" doesn't cause increased stress or longterm effects for your baby, at the end of the day — as Klass states — it's probably best to do what's most comfortable for you and your baby's sleep. To this we say: here, here.

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