

SLEEPING IN SAME BED WITH PARENTS

PARENTING CHALLENGES ★ PAGE 1 OF 1

PARENT: I've gotten into the habit of letting my five year old sleep with me at night. It was comforting to do so when I got a divorce. Now it is bothering my sleep. What do I do?

SANDY: I do not think it is good for you or for the child to be sleeping together. A foot in your eye at two am definitely disrupts your deep sleep pattern. Sometimes, it helps to get the child a comfort toy (teddy bear) with which to sleep. Then you need to set boundaries and enforce them, "I need to sleep without children. You need to say in your own bed tonight. Mr. Bear wants you to sleep with him tonight. If you come into my bed I will bring you back here."

Be prepared to be challenged on your new rule. Hold your ground. If the child screams and awakens everyone, hold your ground. Be firm and kind, "It is time for you to go to sleep right now. Enough crying. Go to sleep." The child will use anything she can figure out to use to get you to give up your rule. If you waiver, you give the child the message that your power is powerless. Your parenting challenges will deepen greatly if you are inconsistent. Hold the line, even at the cost of one or more night without much sleep. Behavior that is rewarded continues; behavior that is not rewarded stops.