

**A Game-Changing Approach
for Exhausted Parents of Nonstop,
Super Alert, Big Feeling Kids**

WHY WON'T YOU SLEEP?!

**MACALL
GORDON**
Gentle Sleep Coach®

**KIM WEST,
MSW**
The Sleep Lady®

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Chapter**

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CHAPTER 1

So, Every Sleep Training Method So Far Has Been an Epic Fail

If you have honestly tried every sleep method out there—Ferber, pop-ins, the Sleep Fairy, cold turkey, co-sleeping, melatonin, praying that it magically just gets better—and nothing (I mean, *nothing*) has worked, I have good news for you: Your lack of success has nothing to do with what you have or haven't done. The big reason that sleep training methods haven't worked so far has to do with *your child's temperament*—the way they are innately wired. Children who easily get with the program after a couple of nights of tolerable struggle or gentle encouragement are simply more easy-going and adjust to changes in familiar patterns without a lot of drama. I'm betting you don't have one of those children. You, dear pooped-out parent, probably have what I call a *livewire*.

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS A LIVEWIRE?

Livewires are children who have more physical, mental, and emotional juice flowing through their system. They are deeply feeling, highly sensitive,

keenly perceptive, incredibly engaged, insanely persistent, ridiculously smart, super active, interaction-addicted supernovas. Kim, in her work, refers to these little ones as “alert” . . . and boy, are they.

As a result:

- “Drowsy but awake” never has been and *never will* be in their vocabulary.
- Resisting sleep is their full-time job.
- They can go from calm to screaming faster than you can say “pacifier.”
- They are not “self-soothers.”
- They can be sound asleep, and the slightest noise will still make their eyes *pop* open.

A livewire temperament means that sleep training using the popular methods *isn't* a matter of a few challenging nights of tolerable crying. That first night was probably more like two straight hours of crying with no sign that your child was *ever* going to give in and go to sleep. Or maybe you never attempted it in the first place because you already knew it was a nonstarter. Instead, you've cobbled together something that barely kind of works but is completely unsustainable. I'm betting you're wondering why sleep training is so impossible for you. I'm also betting that you are exhausted, burned out, and more sleep-deprived than a human should be. You are not the only one.

Both Kim and I have worked with *a lot* of parents who needed help with sleep. Not because they'd never tried to fix things. No. They needed help because they had tried *every bit* of advice they'd gotten from books or their pediatrician or Instagram or their friends, and *none of it* worked. Nearly all these desperate parents had an alert little livewire.

Have you ever made any of these statements about your child?

“They go from zero to screaming bloody murder if I don't respond quickly.”

“We spend hours bouncing on the ball to get them to sleep.”

“Once they get really upset, it’s hard to calm them down.”

“They hate (H-A-T-E) the car seat (or swaddle).”

“They just do not want to sleep. It’s like they’re afraid they’ll miss something.”

“They’re either asleep or go, go, go like the Energizer Bunny. There’s no in-between.”

“We can get them dead asleep, and the minute we lay them down, their eyes pop open, and we have to start all over.”

“They’re my Sour Patch Kid—super sassy and sour but also just the sweetest.”

Does any of this sound familiar? If you’re thinking, *That’s my child . . .*

You, my friend, have a livewire.

Parents often know something is up right from the beginning or soon after. *“Is it possible for a newborn to fight sleep?” “How is it my two-month-old seems bored?”*

Did your little one express any of these traits right out of the gate?

Very early alertness (eyes *wide* open and focused just after birth)

Really vigorous crying (Did the nurses comment about it in the hospital? *“This one is going to be a handful.” “They’ve got some lungs on them.”*)

Totally sleep-avoidant, even as a newborn

Visually engaged (loved looking at faces, pictures, etc.)

Able to hold head up early

Preference for being bounced to sleep (versus rocked)

Livewires are just different from other children. I don’t have to tell you this; you are likely already living it. They’re fussier / more emotional. They walk or talk much earlier. They sleep so much less. There are so many ways that these little ones diverge from what you might have expected or seen

before. It's normal to wonder why your child (and your experience as a parent) is so different from the others.

IF YOU'VE ALREADY TRIED SEVERAL METHODS WITH YOUR (OVER SIX- MONTH-OLD) LIVEWIRE WITH ZERO SUCCESS . . . IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT

Authors of the most popular sleep books will say that if you follow their “easy” steps, you can lay your baby in the crib, leave the room, and barely hear a peep all night. They say that if you just leave your child alone to figure things out, they will learn to go to sleep without help in just a few days.

Here's a big secret you should know:

***99 percent of sleep books are not
written about livewires.***

In fact, they don't even consider temperament as a factor.

Most children (non-livewires) will, with a little nudging or even a few nights of tolerable distress, get on board with a new routine. Their path to sleep is clear and well marked, and they don't have that far to go. For these children, parents *can* mostly stay out of the way because it's not that hard for the child to figure out how to get from point A (awake) to point B (asleep). For livewires, the trail to sleep is *not* smooth, short, or well marked; it is steeper and rockier, and the destination seems a lot farther away. Livewires need a map, a GPS, and a couple of sherpas to help them get to sleep.

Trying to use methods that have been devised for non-livewires on your livewire child is like trying to use the manual for the wrong computer. You can read a Mac manual all day long, but if you have a PC, those instructions will not be helpful at all. What may be straightforward, effective, and doable for other parents is just not going to work the same way for you.

For less intense children, it's possible that just about *anything* will work. It's the opposite if you have a livewire. *Nothing* works like the books

or internet (or other parents) say it will. I remember reading parenting magazines about sleep training that made it sound *so simple*: “Make sure to put your baby down when they’re still awake so they can fall asleep on their own.”

Okay, here we go. Aaand cue head-spinning hysterics. Okay, sleep expert, what am I supposed to do now?

There was not one more word about it, like sleep was just supposed to—*poof*—happen. I constantly worried that I was doing something wrong. *If there were more to it, if it were potentially more of a challenge, they would have said something, right?* But the experts *didn’t* say anything, and I was left with a non-sleeping livewire and a nagging worry that maybe I wasn’t cut out for any of this.

Chances are, you’ve had well-meaning friends or family members tell you, “Oh, I tried the XYZ method, and in just a few nights, the baby was totally sleeping through! You should try that!” or “You just have to suck it up and let them cry it out. You’re too soft.” (How often have you heard *that one*?)

Let’s take it as a given that you have worked sleep up one side and down the other. If the straightforward behavioral advice had worked, you wouldn’t be reading this book.

THE DREADED “ARE THEY SLEEPING THROUGH THE NIGHT?”

Having a “good sleeper” has become a kind of crazy benchmark of parenting skill. It’s nuts. Everyone seems to have *that* friend who says that her three-month-old is sleeping six to eight hours straight without a feed, and it’s because she used that “great new method . . . that *you* should try.” At three months, I can promise you—that baby’s considerable ability to sleep had nothing to do with what their parents did (or did not do). The baby was wired for sleep. But because we mistakenly tell parents that sleep is exclusively about *behavior* (what parents do or don’t do) and that babies *can* and *must* be trained to sleep, parents of good sleepers can be

led to believe it was because of them. The truth is that this process is way easier for many babies and next to impossible for others—simply because of temperament.

The dividing line between children who sleep and those who don't isn't the sleep method you use—it's temperament.

This situation is not helped by the tone of advice that can make you feel like your child's future hinges on whether or not they are a "good sleeper." Parents are strongly warned that poor sleep affects brain development and can cause obesity, ADHD, behavioral problems, and a whole host of other worrying outcomes. (And just so you don't panic, sleep problems do not *cause* those outcomes. Just because two things are related in some way doesn't mean that one *caused* the other.) It's no wonder parents are tied up in knots about how to get their babies sleeping for long periods of time as early as possible.

Sleep advice in general is full of parent-shaming and gaslighting. If you try their version of cry it out, your baby cries for *hours*, and you finally respond because you can't bear it anymore, you are "caving," "weak," or "permissive." Believe it or not, in medical journals, there is now a diagnosis under "infant sleep disorders" called *limit-setting disorder* . . . and they're not talking about the baby. Reluctance to begin or complete sleep training is now a disorder? Bonkers.

When we focus exclusively on behavior—what parents *do* or *don't* do in response to crying—then the blame falls on the parent if it doesn't work. But "Just try harder" should not be the only response to "This isn't working." There are so many factors that can influence a child's sleep, and we're going to be looking at the big picture—*everything* that influences sleep: development, physiology, temperament, your bandwidth, and your preferences or needs (you want to continue co-sleeping, you don't have another room for the baby, etc.). With children as complex as livewires, a simple one-size-fits-all approach isn't going to cut it. We need

to address all the moving parts—starting with the big one that sets the tone: temperament.

WHAT DOES TEMPERAMENT HAVE TO DO WITH SLEEP? EVERYTHING.

It's surprising that sleep research and advice don't consider temperament more than they do, since just about everything related to the process of going to sleep and staying asleep is directly affected by it. *Temperament* refers to the hardwired neurological system we use to monitor and process input from the outside world. For most children (non-livewires), this system can detect some input and buffer out the rest. About 20 percent of children (though I believe this is a low estimate)—livewires—have an internal system that is *much* more sensitive to input (they pick up on a lot more) and that reacts much more strongly to that input. Basically, it takes less input to get a stronger reaction.

This hardwiring isn't theoretical. Biologists have found that there are genetic components to the sensitivity we see in livewires and that children can be roughly divided into two types: *dandelions* (non-livewires) and *orchids* (livewires).³ Dandelions, as plants, grow pretty darned well in a wide variety of environments. They can thrive almost anywhere (really—*anywhere*). Most children are dandelions, wired to adapt to a wide variety of environments. Their internal fight-or-flight systems are not easily alerted, and they are able to thrive even under some stress or adversity. They do pretty well in a very wide range of contexts, and they are fairly resilient in the face of negative events.

A much smaller group of children are orchids. If you've ever tried to grow an orchid, you know that they need a *very* specific set of circumstances to really flourish. Outside of this tiny niche of *just* the right amount of light, humidity, and water, they can fizzle. Children who have orchid-type wiring (livewires) are genetically more reactive and sensitive to their environment. They are much more likely to struggle in the face of much smaller challenges and disruptions.

This means that two children—one an orchid and one a dandelion—who experience the same event will respond very differently. The dandelion may be able to buffer out the stress of it and recover fairly well. The orchid, on the other hand, may be much more deeply affected and will have a much harder time bouncing back. The big research term for this is *differential susceptibility to environment*.⁴

Here's some really good news: The flip side of an orchid's strong reaction to *negative* experiences is that they also respond more strongly to *positive* ones. While it's true that orchids need master gardener-level care and handling, if they get it, they really, really bloom. Researchers Michael Pluess and Jay Belsky call this *vantage sensitivity*.⁵ While dandelion children do equally well in a variety of environments, orchid children are more vulnerable to negative events or environments *and* benefit even *more* from positive ones.

This notion that strengths and challenges are a package deal is going to be an ongoing theme of this book. Orchids require a ton of work, but they produce amazing flowers. Same with livewires. You may have an incredibly fussy, non-sleeping baby who is also incredibly social and verbal. You may have a toddler who comes up with every reason in the book for why they can't go to sleep at bedtime who is also hilariously funny and creative and can name every species of dinosaur. Pluess and Belsky call these strengths the "bright sides" of temperament.⁶ Their perspective (and mine too) is that research is overly focused on the difficult sides of a more intense temperament and overlooks the significant abilities that go along with it. My research on temperament bright sides shows that, sure enough, while a more intense, sensitive temperament was related to *tons* of sleep problems (like *all* of them), there were also impressive strengths in that package, like empathy, perceptiveness, and engagement.

Parents don't need research to tell them this. They already know. Talk to any livewire parent, and they will tell you that, yes, they are about to fall over from fatigue, but their little one is "so social," "early on their milestones," and "knows more than they should be able to at this age." As Kim says, "It was like Gretchen had an adult soul in a tiny body." Having a live-wire is both incredibly challenging and completely amazing.

If you have been really struggling for a while, it may feel like you're living full-time in the hard, dark side of temperament. It may be difficult to detect even the *possibility* that a bright side exists. I know that feeling. There can be long stretches where the upsides are hard to detect. I promise the silver linings are there. They really are. They just masquerade as a lot of unsettled crying and upset at first, before your livewire develops the capacity to drive their brain. It's like putting a new driver in a Ferrari. They just don't have the skill to manage that amount of horsepower . . . yet. Eventually, they will. And then stand back. They are going to really take off.

PARENTING A LIVEWIRE IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT BALL GAME

If you have a livewire, you are on a path that's different from most, or even all, of your peers. How often have you already wondered what other parents are doing to have a child who plays contentedly in their high chair or who can sit in a carrier while their mom gets her hair cut? It's incredibly important for us to acknowledge and validate that your road as a parent is harder, and you've probably second-guessed yourself a million times. Making sure that *you* are seen and that your struggles are understood in this process is key.

Kim and I, combined, have worked with tens of thousands of parents of livewires who have shared surprisingly similar experiences and concerns. See if any of these sound familiar.

"This is not at all like I thought it would be."

This one is a biggie. Parents who have livewires often know right out of the gate that they're not in Kansas anymore. It's not uncommon for them to report a long, difficult, or even traumatic labor and/or birth. (We don't know why this is, but my survey also found this relationship.) If, after that, you also had a really unsettled, nonsleeping newborn, you might already be wondering what you have signed up for. This is no Pampers ad.

Having a livewire can throw you off your center as a parent because the reality is so drastically different from what we expected or were told to expect. It's not at all helped by others around you who think there's an obvious, no-brainer reason why your baby acts this way.

"He cries so much because you just keep picking him up."

"Have you tried gas drops?"

Then, there's the advice from books or your pediatrician that you should "just" . . . well, anything.

"Just swaddle her."

"Just let him cry a little, and he'll learn."

Or the one that really gets me, *"It's just colic."*

If you have a newborn who isn't sleeping and is screaming for most of the day, you know that saying *"It's just colic"* is like saying *"It's just a tidal wave."* We are not talking about the normal and expected levels of fussiness. Livewires tend to be at least one notch (or ten) above "normal." For many parents, when their baby cries and they respond, the baby is soothed, and the parent gets the message, *I know my baby. I think I know what I'm doing.* When you have a newborn livewire, on the other hand, you don't get many moments of *I've got this.* This bumpy start can be the first step in a long road of feeling like you have no idea what you're doing. If you had this really, really difficult start or are still in the midst of it—know you are a warrior, and you've got this more than you think you do.

"There's so . . . much . . . crying." (Your baby, but also you.)

Livewires can express themselves much, much more intensely and urgently than other babies. My newborn daughter never "fussed." When she cried, it was like she had been stuck with a pin—it was intense and urgent. I remember almost panicking and thinking, *Do I need to take her to the emergency room?* One mom on Facebook admitted: "I would hear other babies' cute, sweet 'cries,' while my daughter's regular normal cry sounded like her limbs were being ripped off her body."

The inconsolable nature of the crying is something that's particularly hard on new parents. Some researchers suggest that, evolutionarily, these babies would have done really well. As hunter-gatherer newborns, these squeaky wheels would have received a lot of extra parental attention, closeness, and care. Livewires demand a higher level of parenting investment and effort.⁷ And the good news, wiped-out mamas, papas, and others? You are ponying up. Well done, you.

"I'm beyond exhausted."

Across the dandelion–orchid spectrum, all parents are pooped. As a parent of a livewire, you are guaranteed to be emotionally and physically *beyond* pooped. Sleep problems can be intense and, almost always, have been around practically from birth. Additionally, livewires don't just struggle at night; they require more from parents during the day, too. Oh, boy. "Tired" doesn't even describe it.

It's important to know that this book is going to take your level of exhaustion into account. You won't be able to make this journey if you are completely out of gas. Together, we'll figure out a plan for getting where you want to go even if you're running on fumes.

"My child isn't like the other children I know (or even like the other children I have)."

If this livewire is your first child, you may have doubted your own assessment: *Is my baby actually different from other children? Or am I just totally out of it? How do I even know?* It's easy to feel like the odd duck in a group of other parents and children. Yours seems to be the only child that gets so upset or can't calm down. They always seem to need special handling. Livewires just don't inhabit the world in the same way as other children. I remember talking to a neighbor who had her eight-month-old sitting in a pram next to us. She gave the baby an empty plastic water bottle to play

with, and that baby played with it for *a full forty-five minutes*. I kept staring and wondering what kind of strange magic this was. If it had been either of my children, that bottle would have been tossed out of the pram in fifteen seconds flat (“Done with that. Next?”). I hear parents of livewires admit a certain amount of envy of parents with easier kids. This is normal and understandable. “Easier” can look pretty good. But remember, your live-wire is an orchid. The payoffs from the time and energy you put into them may be farther down the road—but I promise you, they’re there.

“It’s just a lot.”

Livewires require more from their parents around the clock. Even when they’re happy, they want and need lots of engagement and interaction. There are so many questions and stories and thoughts and ideas. When they’re not happy or when they’re tired, it’s a different kind of rodeo. Add to this the amount of worry and struggle you may have around sleep, and it’s hard on the nervous system. You may be at a point where you will do just about *anything* to have less crying and conflict. You have probably given in on so many limits or done what’s “easy” just to stop the crying for one brief moment. I get it. I’ve been there. It’s okay. We’re going to start from wherever you are now and work to get a leg up on sleep.

“I worry that I just suck at parenting.”

This is one of the *most important* messages of this book:

You do not suck at parenting.

Single, divorced, stay at home, full-time job with childcare, work at home—whatever your situation, you are a rock star. You may not feel it. You may not believe me. You may not be able to see evidence of it in your daily life. But I promise you, you are a dedicated, roll-up-your-sleeves,

in-for-the-long-haul parent. Livewires don't give you the same in-the-moment confirmation that what you just did actually worked, the way other children might. You mostly have to go on blind faith, which can feel discouraging. It's hard to see the proof that you're making good choices, but you are.

Struggles with sleep may be at the very heart of these feelings of suck-iness. Most parents of livewires have tried several gadgets, programs, and "guaranteed" methods to get better sleep. We wouldn't blame you if you were skeptical about whether *anything* will work. Plus, you've seen too many books that promise an effective, gentle approach only to trot out the same old "*You have to leave the room, or they'll never learn to self-soothe.*" I am happy to say that we are going to take a different approach.

HOW THIS PROCESS WILL BE DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER METHODS YOU'VE TRIED

You already know that the road to better sleep is not simple or straightforward. And the way we're going to approach it will be different from much of what you have already tried. This is why we use the term *sleep coaching* instead of *sleep training*: It's not about "habits" that need to be "broken." We're going to be helping and encouraging new patterns. We are also going to help you understand *all* the moving parts involved in making sleep happen so that you can make choices that will work for you and your unique livewire. We're going to validate and acknowledge *you* and the boatloads of effort you put into your parenting. We're going to understand your livewire's specific temperament traits and how those are affecting their sleep (and your attempt to get more). We're going to rule out anything that could be getting in the way of sleep. And we're going to break the process into manageable pieces. Most importantly:

***We're not going to have anyone crying by
themselves in a room (you or your livewire).***

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE WE DIVE IN

Chances are, you're coming to this work already battle-scarred, probably exhausted, and feeling defeated. We can't let you start from there. Here's some validation and reassurance, and a little straight talk before we take the plunge.

The crazy stuff you have had to do up to this point to get sleep is okay.

In the absence of having anything that *actually worked*, you may have had to cobble together something resembling a strategy from snippets of what *did* work, at least temporarily. Parents who have resorted to nontraditional shenanigans to get their child to sleep are often carrying a truckload of shame around it.

I hear it from parents all the time:

"I know I've probably encouraged a lot of bad habits."

"I know that was probably a bad decision, but we just had to sleep."

"I've probably really screwed things up by doing this, but . . ."

"I know it's bad, but we have to co-sleep / nurse all night / sleep in their room . . ."

If you feel like you have made really "out there" choices in the service of sleep, you are not alone. In addition to all the nursing and rocking and lying in a toddler bed and driving around for hours, you probably had to reach for any shred of traction you could get.

Here are just a few of the "extra" strategies I've heard from parents:

Walking on a treadmill while carrying the baby

Letting the child fall asleep with their finger in the parent's mouth or
playing with the parent's eyebrow

Running (not walking) outside with the baby

Lying on the floor out of view while jingling a set of bells
 Getting in the crib with the baby
 Doing squats with the baby while singing or humming “Jingle Bells”
 Singing “Stand by Me” while bouncing on a yoga ball and with a hand
 vacuum running on the floor (this was me)
 Letting the child fall asleep on the parent’s arm and then carefully
 extracting it once asleep (the child, and possibly the arm)
 Almost violent bouncing on an exercise ball
 Turning on the dryer and the vacuum and rolling the vacuum back
 and forth while bouncing the baby over a shoulder and singing a
 particular pop song

Having to perform this level of gymnastics to get your child to power down can add an extra layer of “I suck” on top of the sleep troubles you already have. I am giving you permission to ditch that now. Whatever parenting gymnastics you’ve had to perform to get sleep up to this point made sense in the sleep-deprived, desperate moment you were in. Maybe some of it even worked—at least for a bit. Do not feel bad for what you tried or for how you got here. Offload the guilt. You were responding to the child you have, and you needed to do *something*. Now, we are going to figure out a different way that will make sense for your unique livewire. Keep reading.

We’re not going to sugarcoat it.

We’re not going to use terms like *sweet sleep* or *peaceful slumber* or *a little bit of protest*. Nope. We’re going to call it like it is. We are not going to be afraid to say how insanely hard this can be. We’ll be honest about the fact that it’s going to get worse before it gets better.

Wait, what? Worse? I can’t do worse.

I hear you. It’s okay. Take a breath. We’ve got you.

We’re also not going to gloss over the fact that parenting an intense / sensitive livewire can get dark more often than we’d like: eruptions of rage, massive desperation, feelings of wanting to run away. Parents often

judge themselves for those feelings. But when you are pushed to the edges of your stamina, there can be monsters in that closet. We're going to look those beasts right in the eye. Having a livewire is never what you expect. It can come as a full-frontal assault to every expectation you have. Sweet moments sitting in the rocking chair? Nope. Lunch with friends while the baby naps in the stroller? Nope. Feelings of calm contentedness while your baby coos happily on their play mat? Nope, nope, nope. The reality of parenting one of these tornados can be a desperate, sweaty, dirty, tearstained affair. I remember all that bubble bath nonsense you'd hear and see on TV: *"A bubble bath can be great self-care."* Me: *"But I just have to come back to my life once I get out!"* (dissolves in sobs). As parents, we have to (and do) hold both: Our kids are bright, incredible, amazing creatures, and we're so overwhelmed, we just might collapse.

We're going to base what we say in research (but with a little bit of side-eye).

Research is a powerful tool, but not all research is our friend. There are many, many ways that research can ignore critical pieces of information or can be set up in ways that work for research but don't map at all to real life. It can also be (shocker) biased. We will refer to research but will not hesitate to call it out on its shenanigans.

You are not a parenting Pez dispenser.

Sleep and parenting advice consistently make it sound as if you are just a passive dispenser of parenting strategies. I remember reading about positive parenting strategies, trying to use them in a tough moment, and thinking, *How am I supposed to be "positive" when I feel like I'm about to jump out of my skin?* Whatever parenting we do is absolutely filtered through our own temperament and experiences, and it's powered by how much energy we have in the moment—which I'm betting is not usually a heckuva lot.

In working on sleep, we *have to* take your bandwidth into account. Having to confront a lot of around-the-clock intensity (meltdowns, tantrums, cranky-pants screaming) can cause you to be—honestly—a little shell-shocked. I know you sometimes would seriously do *anything* to make it stop. I get that, and it makes sense. By the time many parents find their way to me, their stamina and energy stores have been ground down to a powder. They literally can't tolerate the situation getting even a tiny bit worse. While it's better when parents reach out *before* they're rock-bottom adjacent, if you feel like that right now, it's okay. I will show you how to break sleep and temperament down into actionable steps that feel doable. The goal is to work on sleep in ways that don't blow you (or your child) out of the water.

We're going to wait to work on sleep until babies are at least six months old.

If you have a younger little one, don't freak out. There is good information in this book that will be useful to you both now and moving forward. We know that there's a lot of information out there that says you can (and should) start training newborns to sleep for long periods of time and that if you don't start early, it will be harder.

First, please don't worry about sleep training your newborn. There's no research on the safety or effectiveness of sleep training at this age and very little on using cry it out on babies under six months. In this first half of infancy, there is a lot of critical brain and nervous system development that has to happen, and trying to establish patterns or letting them cry to "help them learn" doesn't make any sense. A newborn has none of the skills or coordination necessary for managing their sleep. So, we wait until they do.

There's a lot more on this point in chapter four. (If you want some non-sleep-training strategies to improve sleep for younger babies, however, you can check out *The Sleep Lady's Gentle Newborn Sleep Guide*.)

This isn't a cry it out approach (and it isn't completely "no cry," either).

Real talk? There is no way to change a livewire's sleep patterns in ways they won't notice. They *will* notice and then they will let us know that they notice. While it's possible to do some of the steps in smaller pieces or at a slower pace, when children are this aware and perceptive, the change you make would have to be microscopically small for it to fly under their radar.

That said . . . here are a few promises we will make to you:

- We're not going to talk you into leaving your child alone to figure things out without help.
- We're not going to place any value on crying as a "learning experience."
- We're going to do everything possible to set everyone up for success and minimize distress.
- We are going to scaffold skills gradually and offer your livewire a lot of presence and support at first.
- We are not going to let them get hysterical and then say they've learned something when they finally fall asleep.
- We're going to make sure that you feel as good as possible about the strategies you use (because, spoiler alert, you'll probably have to use them again at some point).

Sleep is just one small part of the larger experience.

More real talk here: Your parenting challenges are not going to disappear once sleep is handled. The road with a livewire does not magically become flat and smooth once they are sleeping. *You* will feel like a whole new person once you get some sleep, and your child might be a little less frazzled. But they will still be the same active, alert, sensitive livewire they were before. The great news is that the concepts we cover in our work on sleep (predictability, consistency, support) will also come in super handy in the long-term.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

So, with all of that in mind, we're going to set aside what you may have already read about sleep. That information and those strategies work for parents on a totally different (flatter, shorter, more well-marked) path. You are not on that path. Though the destination is the same, your path is longer, steeper, and rockier (but with some amazing views from the top).

In the coming chapters, we are going to get you loaded up with everything you will need to take on this journey. We're going to do a lot of preparation before you even hit the road. We're going to check to make sure your child is ready and that *you* are ready. We're going to ensure you know what the terrain looks like and what the potential road hazards are along the way. Then, we are going to give you the right map and the right equipment to help you get to your destination in a way that makes sense and is tolerable for both you *and* your livewire. We're also going to give you a set of tools to assess whether you're off course and, if so, how to get back on track. We're going to go step by step.

To this end, we've created a set of downloadable worksheets that will help you better understand where you are now and the best way to get where you want to go. As we move through the material, watch for the callouts about which sheet to use for each section.

WORKBOOK TO DO

Download the Workbook by going to whywontyousleep.com/workbook or scanning the QR code:



So take a breath, relax your shoulders. We've taken lots of parents up this mountain. Ready to go?

OUR TRIP CHECKLIST

- ☒ You know you are on a different path.
- ☐ You understand your livewire's temperament strengths and challenges.
- ☐ You understand the link between temperament and sleep issues.
- ☐ Your child is ready:
 - ☐ Over six months
 - ☐ No upcoming disruptions
 - ☐ No physiological issues that affect sleep
- ☐ You are ready (or as ready as you can be).
- ☐ You understand the Big Four sources of sleep issues.
- ☐ Big Strategy #1: You know how to avoid that second wind.
- ☐ Big Strategy #2: You have a solid, consistent bedtime routine.
- ☐ Big Strategy #3 and #4: You know how to change the go-to-sleep and back-to-sleep patterns and are prepared to be more consistent than you've ever been before.
- ☐ You know how to track progress.
- ☐ You know how to diagnose and fix any problems that arise.
- ☐ BETTER SLEEP!

Thank you for reading this sample chapter.

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