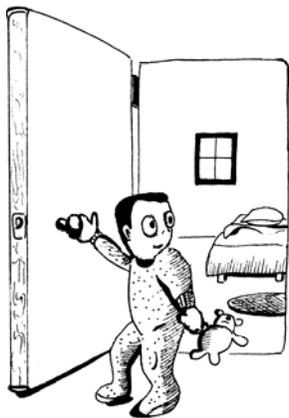


SLEEP WALKING AND SLEEP TALKING



Sleep walking and sleep talking, along with night terrors (discussed in another handout) make up a group of sleep disorders called parasomnias. It is not known for sure why children walk and talk in their sleep. Sleep walking and sleep talking are not, however, considered to be serious disorders. Both occur during deep sleep, usually one to three hours after falling asleep.

Parasomnias tend to run in families, and children may experience one, two, or all three types. Sleep talking

is more common than sleep walking, but the two often occur together.

Sleep Walking

The main concern for parents with sleep-walking children should be safety. Sleep walkers do not have the judgment that people who are awake have, and they run the risk of getting hurt. It may be difficult for parents to protect their sleep-walking children. Often, sleep walkers don't make much noise, so it's difficult for parents to tell when their children are sleep walking. However, sleep walkers are in danger of getting seriously hurt. They may stumble or fall over something, which could result in a serious injury.

Though it can be difficult, there are ways for parents to protect their sleep-walking children. First of all, they should prepare for the episodes. Before going to sleep at night, parents should check their children's room for hazards. It's not a good idea for sleep-walking children to sleep on the top bunk of a bunk bed or in a bed that's high off the ground. It is a good idea to put away anything that sleep-walking children might trip over should they get up and walk around. Another idea is to close the bedroom door, and to lock all windows. This will

help ensure that children stay in their rooms instead of wandering around the house. Another alternative is to install an alarm system on sleep walkers' beds or bedroom doors.

The only danger with sleep walking is the physical danger children are in while roaming around the house at night. Otherwise, sleep walking should not be a cause for concern. It is not linked with any physical or psychological problem. It usually stops by the time children reach adolescence. In the meantime, all that can be done is to take safety precautions to make sure that sleep walkers do not hurt themselves.

Sleep Talking

Sleep talking is much more common than sleep walking or night terrors. Children who talk in their sleep may speak very clearly and be easily understood, while others may mumble or make noises. Sleep talking is not a cause for alarm. It is not associated with any kind of physical or psychological problem. There really isn't anything that can be done to prevent it. If children are speaking loudly and seem upset, it might be a good idea for parents to go to their children and comfort them. If they're simply talking, it's

best just to leave them alone. The episode will probably end within a short period of time. In either case, it's not necessary to wake sleeping children, as they will quickly fall back into quiet sleep.



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