

Could the Bedroom Be the Source of Your Child's Sleeping Problems? By Marie Elena Rigo

You've read every book on the subject...ruled out any medical issues...tried routines, lullabies, rocking...and nothing works. Could your child's bedroom be to blame for his/her sleeping problems?

According to Los-Angeles based Feng Shui expert, Marie Elena Rigo, the answer is a resounding, "yes." Having worked with many frustrated parents – and cranky children, she's seen first-hand that the interior of a child's bedroom has a significant impact on whether the baby sleeps or not.

What's the trick? Rigo says, "It's important to create a feeling of safety and security when we sleep – especially for a child."

"While many things activate our nervous system such as impending danger, loud noise, bright colors, and sharp edges, there are specific physiological responses that we can directly address through the principles of Feng Shui," she added. "With a focus on reducing fight or flight response and minimizing over-stimulation from patterns and objects, we can calm the environment so the child's nervous system can relax – and so can the child."

Discovered by Harvard physiologist Walter Cannon, fight or flight response is our body's physiological reaction to stress – internal or external. In our environment, the "fight or flight response" can be activated by sitting with our backs to a door, walking by a coffee table with a sharp edge, maneuvering around wires on the floor, or brushing up against a rose bush laden with thorns on a walkway.

In a child's bedroom, this response can be activated by a variety of circumstances. For example, if the crib or bed is underneath a window, the child may not feel safe and secure. While we all know that impending danger (from a storm, an earthquake or a person outside) is unlikely, the subconscious mind triggers this response system whether there is a rational or irrational threat to our survival – even as a child.

Now, what about all those stuffed animals? Believe it or not, they can actually appear like monsters to a child when the lights are off. And, perhaps being a good mom, you purchased bedding displaying your son's favorite toy: "Power Rangers" – and didn't know that busy patterns activate our minds and our nervous system as well.

Following are practical Feng Shui tips on how to set up a child's bedroom to calm the environment and your child's nervous system to optimize sleep.

- Is your child's bedroom filled with toys, stuffed animals and games? If so, containerize these items or store them in closets – especially at night. Sometimes the eyes of a friendly bear can scare a child in the dark.
- If you have mirrored closet doors, curtain them off or flip them around. Mirrors activate energy in the space and reflect objects and light – often frightening children and disrupting their sleep.
- Minimize the number of books and other objects on bookshelves. Leave a shelf or two empty for future items and to "lighten" the feeling of it.
- Choose warm, simple and calm fabrics and colors; bold patterns and colors often activate a child's nervous system.
- Use window treatments to increase the feeling of protection from the outside.
- Reduce electronic equipment like CD players, clocks, heaters, etc. in the room. And, keep them at a distance from where the child is sleeping to reduce exposure to electromagnetic fields.
- Keep a family photo in the room to comfort the child.
- Put the bed in the command position where the child has a full, or at least a peripheral view of the door. And, put the headboard against a solid wall. This will reduce fight or flight response and help the child feel supported while he/she sleeps.

Even young children feel the impact of their surroundings. By employing these simple Feng Shui tips, you may find that your child not only sleeps better, but so do you. © Marie Elena Rigo, MER Life Design 2006