



How to Help Children to Get Over a Fear of the Dark

Fear of the dark is very common in both adults and children. It likely survived an evolutionary purpose, helping in the survival of our shared ancestors as they needed to be cautious and wary of their surroundings when they couldn't see easily.

If your child is scared of the dark, it's good to remember that this is an instinctive fear that can increase as a child's imagination develops. Your understanding, empathy, and patience will help your child to cope with this common anxiety.

These 6 simple strategies can create a sense of safety for your child when they have to deal with the darkness at night-time:

- First, let your child know that it's okay to be scared of the dark and that lots of children and even sometimes grown-ups can be a bit scared when it's really dark. Knowing that their fears are not unusual will help them feel more at ease.
- Encourage your child to talk about how they feel and reassure them that you are there or nearby to support and protect them.
- Fear of the dark often occurs when the lights go out in the home so it is helpful to create a comforting bedtime routine. Activities that promote feelings of security and comfort include reading a happy bedtime story, singing lullabies, or cuddling together with a favourite soft toy that stays with your child at night.



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- A night-light can be reassuring for some children who fear the dark as the light provides a soft and gentle glow.
- Making their bedroom a safe and comfortable space: shut wardrobe doors, put away masks or anything that could be seen as a bit scary and cut back any outside branches that might loom or scratch a window.
- Remind your child of how safe they are, such as by reminding them that doors are locked or that there are no dinosaurs in the world.

About the author

Dr Rebecca Chicot is one of the founders of [Essential Parent](#), a digital child health and development platform that works with the NHS and Local Authority Early Years Teams across the UK to deliver digital parent packs of evidenced based videos and information direct to a parent's smartphone.

She has a doctorate in child development and parenting from Cambridge University and is the author of [The Calm and Happy Toddler: Gentle Solutions to Tantrums, Night Waking, Potty Training and More.](#)



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