

BEDWETTING BLUES

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Are you tired of changing sheets or waking up to a warm wet sensation as your toddler snuggles closer to you?

Bed-wetting in the early years is normal, however what happens when your toilet-trained child suddenly start bed-wetting?

“No sooner does my four-year-old son crawl into our bed, than he wets it. He seldom wets his own bed, and this has happened enough times to make me realize that it is now a habit. Why does he do this when he has perfect bladder control at all other times?” Anne mother to Gary (4).

The clue here was that he seldom wet his bed, which indicated that emotional issues were behind his behaviour rather than physical ones.

WHAT URINE AND WATER IN OUR BODY REPRESENTS

For centuries sailors have regarded the sea as a maternal presence, one moment calm and alluring and the next wild and tempestuous. The sea relates to the female and female issues, such as feeling, as opposed to thinking. Water represents both our emotions and the unconscious. When we cry, we release

these emotions in the form of tears, just as a build up in electrical static in the air causes thunderstorms and rain.

CRYING AND BED-WETTING

It is extremely healing to cry, however we are brought up in a society where many little boys still have the words drummed into them: "Boys don't cry." Even if not consciously verbalized, the message remains an unspoken rule in many households, if boys are to win their father's approval. So what happens to these repressed feelings in a child? They build-up and the subconscious finds an alternative way of expressing them, through bed-wetting.

Just as the tears they represent, bouts of bed-wetting, indicate that there is something in the child's life that is upsetting him/her deeply. In the case mentioned, by releasing this angst or emotional backlog in his parent's bed, he was unconsciously seeking to draw their attention to his fears. It was a cry for help that his understandably irate parents were unable to hear, and so the pattern repeated itself.

WHY AT NIGHT?

The fact that bed-wetting occurs at night is an indication that the child may not be conscious of his/her fear, which makes it all the more confusing for the child. Asking a child what is the matter may not bring about any indicative response as the fears may be subconscious.

Fear is often masked as anger, like animals who when cornered attack. A dog cornered, will attack another dog or person who comes near it. Likewise, a child

can be afraid and angry at the same time. The phrase, "*pissed off*," combines both anger and release in one expression. The child may be extremely angry at whoever has caused them so much angst. Bed-wetting is a way to release both the fear and the anger.

CHILDREN EXPRESS WHAT ADULTS REPRESS

As uncomfortable as it might be for us adults, children often express, through habits, the emotionally suppressed issues of their owners or parents. "Oh my goodness," you may respond as images of your five-year-olds' perverse habit of eating snot come to mind! The truth is in a family environment we are not separate islands floating in a vast sea of indifference. A sensitive child may pick up on a parents anxiety and being unable to interpret it, release the fear at night by bed-wetting.

SIX QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

1. Why or with whom may your child be angry?
2. Examine their playgroup/school environment. Could they be afraid of someone? Are they being bullied?
3. Has there recently been a divorce or major upheaval that may have threatened their security or cause anxiety in the home?
4. Is it possible the child may be suffering some form of abuse? There may be deep guilt or shame involved that the child has no other means of expressing.
5. Is the child being victimized by siblings?

6. Could the child be afraid of one of its parents? Commonly this is the father. If the parent is very strict and authoritarian, the child may be very scared of causing displeasure, which causes fear and tension. The emotional pressure that the child experiences during the day builds up and if the child has no other means of releasing it, bed-wetting provides a solution. It also allows the child to turn the tables on its' empowered parents and dis-empower them.

If you answered yes to any of the questions above this could give you a clue as to why your child is bed-wetting.

WAYS TO COPE

When we are afraid, both animals and humans may urinate spontaneously. As the urine is released, so is some of their fear. Bedwetting is similar, consequently if it occurs regularly, it should be treated with compassionate concern and opportunities created for the child to express their feelings, perhaps with the help of a therapist. Sensitivity to the child's needs must be of prime concern. It must be emphasized that discipline is the worst possible reaction and will only add to the shame and fear.

We must not forget though, that like tears, bed-wetting is a cry from the subconscious for help.