



All They Really Need: Trusting the Wisdom of Nature to Raise Resilient Kids

A GREAT NIGHT'S SLEEP

Review the list and check off the habits that you or your child are already implementing. Well done! Go through a second time and choose one or two practices that you think are feasible to try. Implement these practices consistently for one to two weeks before you evaluate if they are helpful.

During the day:

- Avoid caffeine in all forms after lunchtime.** Coffee, tea, chocolate, colas and some other soft drinks, aspirin and diet pills contain this stimulant, as do certain over-the-counter and prescription medications. Check the labels for contents. Nicotine in cigarettes is also a stimulant that may keep you up at night.
- Eat a healthy diet.** Aim for a well-balanced whole-foods diet rich in fruits and vegetables. Avoid stimulants (meat, alcohol, hot sauces, spicy foods, fried foods, fatty and rich foods, salty foods, caffeine, sweet foods, and sugar), especially in the afternoon and evening.
- Avoid more than one or two servings of alcoholic beverages at dinner time and during the rest of the evening.** Even though alcohol is a sedative, it can disrupt sleep.
- Exercise earlier in the day and avoid it at night.** A well-exercised body is less likely to experience insomnia, except when exercise is done within two hours of bedtime. Late night aerobic activity can generate too much energy to fall asleep easily.
- Avoid long naps during the day.** Naps decrease the quality of nighttime sleep. Even if you're very tired, do your best to put off closing your eyes until you're prepared to go to bed for the night. Younger children, of course, require naps; it is common for there to be a tricky transition period when kids are still sleepy in the afternoon, but napping makes bedtime challenging.
- Ban worry from the bedroom.** The idea is to associate your bed with sleep, sex, and relaxing activities. Avoid using your bedroom for stressful activities such as paying bills or doing work. Let your bedroom be a soothing, quiet, relaxing place to be at all times.
- Un-medicate yourself.** Many pharmaceuticals and natural health products can disturb sleep. Talk with your healthcare provider about reducing the dose or changing the product. Avoid regular use of sedatives to help you sleep; besides being habit forming, they can cause you to wake unrefreshed.

Note: Do not suddenly stop taking a benzodiazepine if you have been on it for more than four weeks. Work with your prescriber to gradually reduce the dosage to avoid serious withdrawal symptoms.



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Preparing for bed—start half to one hour before bedtime:

- Rhythm and routine.** Go to bed at the same time every night and rise at the same time every morning. Having a nightly routine, such as checking doors, brushing teeth, and reading primes you for sleep.
- Avoid stimulation for thirty minutes to one hour before bed.** Read a book or do a repetitive activity, like needlework. Avoid television or the radio before bed; banish phones or tablets from the bedroom.
- Have a small, protein-rich snack.** As blood sugar drops overnight, cortisol levels rise to compensate, which may wake you up. A protein-rich snack such as some nuts, some cheese, or some hummus can help keep blood sugar levels from falling too much.
- Take a bath before bedtime.** This soothes tense muscles, promoting relaxation. Add essential oils such as orange blossom, meadowsweet, hops, or lavender to the bath water for added calming.
- Herbal sedatives.** Steep one teaspoon each of valerian root, skullcap, and catnip, or chamomile, passionflower and hops for twenty minutes. One cup of this tea will relax the body and calm the mind.
- Journal or talk out loud to decompress your day.** Externalizing the things that are occupying your mind can help you set them aside for the night.
- Listen to relaxing music.** This will help to calm the nervous system.
- Play with different sleep/relaxation guided meditations for deep sleep.** There are plenty of apps and YouTube videos, both free and paid subscriptions.
- Make your bedroom as comfortable as possible.** Create a quiet, dark atmosphere. Use clean, fresh sheets and pillows, and keep the room temperature comfortable (neither too warm nor too cool).
- Sleep in a dark room.** Artificial light or even a bright moon can impair the release of melatonin, which helps to regulate the sleep wake cycle. If your room is not dark, try sleeping with an eye mask.
- Remove/reduce electromagnetic fields** (i.e., clock, electric blanket, TV, computer). These may also reduce the pineal gland's production of melatonin.

At bedtime, or if you wake in the night:

- Hide or cover your alarm clock.** Staring at your clock worrying about the sleep you're not getting will only increase your stress levels, making it more difficult to sleep.
- Induce relaxation.** Starting with your feet, sequentially tighten, then relax different muscle groups.
- Count sheep!** Counting slowly is a soothing, hypnotic activity.
- Only go to bed when you feel sleepy.** If you are not tired, get out of bed, do something quietly until you feel sleepy; avoid turning on lights or a screen (try using a red bulb if you need to see).