



The TOOLBOX

TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS

ABCs OF SLEEP

TOOL: Prevention | Intervention

TARGET AUDIENCE: 2-to-10-year-old children

TOOL INTENDED FOR: Parents

DESIGN

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– Details: All caregivers (e.g. parents) and children.

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NEEDS AND BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATIONS

NEEDS:

– Sleep is a vital need for humans, as it is essential for the optimal functioning of various developmental spheres (i.e. physical, cognitive, motor, psychological, behavioural and social). Conversely, these spheres also influence sleep. In addition, the routine associated with sleep also aims to fulfill children's need for safety.

BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATIONS:

- Lack of sleep may express itself differently in children depending on their age. **Signs of sleepiness** in preschoolers are usually expressed by behavioural problems, irritability, tantrums and hyperactivity. In older children, signs of sleepiness also result in loss of interest and motivation, loss of pleasure, fatigue and lack of energy, as well as attention and concentration difficulties;
- When the parent has to stay with the children until they go to sleep, or if the children regularly ask for the parent in order to fall asleep, this is sometimes referred to as **bedtime resistance**;
- **Difficulties falling asleep** are reported by children or observed by parents who complain that they have difficulty falling sleep;
- **Frequently waking up** reported or not to parents.

SPECIFIC GOALS

GOAL 1: To learn to prioritize your children's natural need for sleep.

GOAL 2: To learn to recognize signs of sleepiness in your children.

GOAL 3: To implement the winning formula to facilitate your children's sleep.

DESIGN

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Your children don't want to go to bed? Does it take them long to fall asleep? Do they wake up several times every night?

LEARN TO PRIORITIZE YOUR CHILDREN'S NATURAL NEED FOR SLEEP

It is known that good sleep is essential for the optimal functioning of various developmental spheres (physical, cognitive, motor, psychological, behavioral and social) in your children.

WHAT'S GOOD SLEEP?

In general, sleep is optimal when the number of hours is sufficient for children to function properly during the day. These statistics are provided to help you determine the expected standard based on your children's age.

- The **total duration of sleep over 24 hours** declines as children grow: usually 14-15 hours of sleep for 16-week-old infants; 13-14 hours at 6 months; 13 hours for 2-year-olds; and up to 10-11 hours at 6 years. This decline is mainly explained by the decrease in sleep associated with naps.
- However, **the duration of sleep at night** remains nearly constant (approximately 10-11 hours). In the Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD, 1998-), parents reported that the majority of children slept between 10 and 11 hours every day between the ages of 2.5 and 10 years old.
- At the same time, the waking period gradually increases during the first months of children's lives. **Sleep during the day** is then limited to well-defined naps: from about 2 to 3 naps per day until the age of 6 months; 2 naps around 9 to 12 months; then 1 nap in the afternoon after the age of 18 months. About 7 out of 10 children stopped taking naps at age 4. The average duration of daytime sleep is approximately 3.5 hours at 6 months and 2.5 hours until the age of 18 months.

A NATURAL NEED THAT VARIES FROM CHILD TO CHILD

However, it should be noted that the need for sleep varies from child to child; the natural need is unique to each child. The best way to determine whether your children are getting enough sleep is to see if your children show signs of sleepiness.

LEARN TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF SLEEPINESS IN YOUR CHILDREN

But how do you recognize the signs of sleepiness in your children? Unlike teens or adults, a lack of sleep in young children may be expressed through agitation, hyperactivity, behavioural problems, irritability and tantrums. In older children (6 to 10 years old), sleepiness also results in loss of interest and motivation, loss of pleasure, fatigue and lack of energy, as well as attention and concentration difficulties. In addition, children who resist bedtime or who frequently wake up at night also adversely affects the parents' quality of sleep, which may have an impact on family dynamics and, as a result, lead to more conflict.

FOLLOWING SOME SIMPLE TIPS CAN ENSURE A HEALTHY, RESTFUL SLEEP:

TIP 1: Create a winning environment

One hour before bedtime, reduce the pace associated with physical and cognitive activity. During the evening, we gradually move from the most stimulating activities to the least stimulating activities. Also, try to avoid any type of screen for at least an hour before going to bed. The light generated by a screen and the stimulation associated with tasks overstimulate the brain and can cause problems falling asleep. Instead, opt for quiet activities such as reading, drawing, playdough or relaxation exercises. Give your children a healthy snack if they have eaten early or not much (for example: a glass of milk, a slice of toast). This will prevent nocturnal awakening due to hunger. Also, avoid stimulating foods (chocolate, soft drinks, etc.). Finally, the environment in which your children sleep also plays a role in their sleep quality. Make sure the place is quiet (avoid ambient noise, keep animals out of the room), dark (installing an opaque canvas or sheet on the windows prevents them from waking up too early) and cool (the ideal temperature should be between 18 and 20° Celsius).

TIP 2 : Aim for the optimal sleep window

To make it easier to go to bed and fall asleep, the children's biological clock should synchronize with sleep. To do so, consistent bedtime and wake time is essential. In general, children need 10 to 13 hours of sleep per day. However, the need may differ from child to child, as there are big and small sleepers. Observe when your children naturally wake up in the morning and their behavioural signs during the day (sleepiness, irritability, etc.) to determine when your children should go to bed at night. Once you've found the right "formula," i.e. bedtime, wake time and optimal sleep time for daytime functioning, stick to this schedule every day and, preferably, weekends as well.



TIP 3: Establish a brief, predictable pre-bedtime routine

Children who know what awaits them will feel safer. Establishing a pre-bedtime routine allows them to anticipate bedtime and prepare their body for sleep. For this routine to be truly effective, three criteria are important:

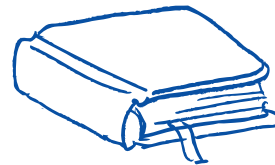
- 1- Short duration: 15-20 minutes maximum;
- 2- Same every night: same activities, done in the same order;
- 3- Interchangeable: Can be done at home or elsewhere and by any of the children's relatives (dad, mother, grandparents, caregiver, etc.).

To establish a routine with your children, prepare pictograms with them (depending on the age) representing each step and display them, for example, in their room. Whenever they make efforts to follow the routine, congratulate them! Above all, consistently stick to this routine; it will definitely pay off within a certain period of time, which may vary from child to child. The ultimate goal is for the children to be able to learn their routine on their own and be able to integrate it in order to promote their autonomy.

Example of a 20-minute routine

Same order every night -> Click on the "ABCs of Sleep" song

- 1- Put on pyjamas (5 minutes)
- 2- Drink water (1 minute)
- 3- Brush teeth (2 minutes)
- 4- Read a story (while rocking) (10 minutes)
- 5- Go to the bathroom (2 minutes)



*Alternate the parent responsible for the routine. This way, it can be done if mom or dad are absent or when someone comes to babysit!

TIP 4: Teach your children to fall asleep alone when you feel your children are ready

If you want your children to learn to fall asleep alone after a night-time awakening, it's important to be consistent and caring in this learning. The context for this learning is first practised at bedtime, when you feel that your children are psychologically and biologically ready (i.e. their needs to be fed at night are no longer essential to their physical well-being). Consequently, this learning varies from child to child. The instructions must be consistent from night to night so that the children can understand the rules. A great help for parents is the introduction of a "transitional object" (for example, a stuffed toy). The transitional object should preferably be introduced during the children's first year of life while breastfeeding or bottle-feeding, which will help the children to later feel safe during the transition from being awake to sleeping. This object replaces the presence of the parent and can reduce the normal separation anxiety that children may experience when going to bed alone. Sleeping autonomy at bedtime will also help to limit the amount and duration of night-time awakenings, since the children are able to fall asleep by themselves without calling their parents during the night... Better sleep for the entire family!

USEFUL RESOURCES



Short meditation sessions

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqSk7Cu0HAF54zStfBWR2jGkGLco4dFTN>

Pre-bedtime activity suggestions

<https://coloriage.info/>

<https://papapositive.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Astuces-sommeil-des-enfants-2.pdf>

Relaxation before bedtime

<https://papapositive.fr/mon-paysage-apaisant-un-exercice-pour-faciliter-le-sommeil/>

<https://www.yourcalmspot.com/home>

<https://www.educatout.com/activites/yoga/activites/une-routine-de-yoga-pour-favoriser-le-sommeil.htm>

Petit rituel zen : 30 histoires relaxantes pour s'endormir en douceur (2017). Auteurs : Pascale Pavy, Oréli Gouel.
Éditeur : Mango.

Support for parents (website and helpline)

<https://sleeponitcanada.ca/all-about-sleep/age-specific-dos-and-donts/>

https://naitreetgrandir.com/fr/etape/1_3_ans/soins/fiche.aspx?doc=ik-naitre-grandir-enfant-sommeil-dodo-refus-dormir

https://www.ligneparents.com/LigneParents/Tous-les-themes/Etapes-et-defis/Sommeil?gclid=CjwKCAjwrcH3BRAPeiwAxjdPTYut9VwVYZbrPyJq6xtxd-xekl2lw70CZwP4TDNrBxMVtINMOIYx9xoCmGUQAvD_BwE

Sleep hygiene for 2-12-year-old children

https://www.chusj.org/getmedia/e7af6f74-0a00-4816-ab78-c66a9a184bc9/depliant_F-592_Hygiene-du-sommeil-2-a-12-ans_web.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf

Bedtime routine (games, posters and pictograms)

<https://papapositive.fr/jeu-de-loie-routines/>

<https://agirtot.org/media/489664/routine-dodo-affiche.pdf>

<https://agirtot.org/media/489663/dodo-adecouper.pdf>

