



Starting Strong Connection

Making Life Easier—Bedtime and Naptime

Many families find bedtime and naptime to be a challenge for them and their children. It is estimated that 43% of all children and as many as 86% of children with developmental delays experience some type of sleep difficulty. Sleep problems can make young children moody, short tempered and unable to engage well in interactions with others. Sleep problems can also impact brain cells needed for her physical, mental and emotional development. Parents also need to feel rested in order to be nurturing and responsive their growing and active young children. Here are a few proven tips for making bedtimes and naptimes easier for parents and children:

- **Develop regular time for going to bed and taking naps, and regular time to wake up.** Young children require about 10-12 hours of sleep a day. Sleep can be any combination of naps and night time sleep.
- **Make sure your child has outside time and physical activity daily,** but not within the hour before naptime or bedtime.
- **Give your child your undivided and un rushed attention** as you prepare her for bedtime or a nap. This will help to calm her and let her know how important this time is for you and her.
- **Develop a bedtime and naptime routine.** Help your child be ready for sleep. Babies and young children thrive on predictability and learn from repetition. They like and need to know what is happening next. It is important to establish a routine that both you and your child understand and find calming and relaxing. Bedtime routines usually involve undressing, bathing, dressing in pj's, brushing teeth, toileting, story/prayers. Do and say the same things before naps and bedtime. This helps your child transition from active play to sleep. Establish a predictable place for sleeping.
- **Avoid certain foods and drinks six hours before sleep** (e.g., sodas, chocolate, fatty foods). A little tummy that is digesting sugary, caffeinated or fatty foods can keep a child alert and awake.
- **Talk with your child about his fears.**

For a young child, there really are monsters in the room. Your child might tell you he is scared or he

might not yet be able to tell you this. See your child's room as a 3 or 4 year old does. In the darkness of his room, shadows of toys or furniture might seem frightening. If your child expresses fear, let your child know that you understand his fears and then provide reassurance or comfort. Check in the closet and under the bed. If your child is afraid of the dark, put a dimmer switch on the light. Start with the light on and gradually dim the light over several weeks. Let your child know that you are nearby and that you will make sure she is safe. If you need to stay in the room to help her feel safe, keep the light off or dimmed and remain quiet. If your child gets out of bed, be supportive and let her know you understand you might say, "I miss you, too. I'll be in the living room and you will be fine. We'll have fun in the morning." Calmly return her to bed, make sure that she has a calming item, like a teddy bear, reassure her, kiss her goodnight and leave the room.

(Adapted from TA Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children)

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The Journey of Mixed Emotions— How to Help Your Child Learn to Share

Learning how to share is a big challenge for all children because it often means putting aside one's own needs in order to make someone else happy. Sharing is not a skill children have



Sharing is not a skill children have when they are born—they need to be taught how to share.

when they are born — they need to be taught how to share and how to see that their efforts have helped someone else feel happy or solve a problem. In order to learn this skill, children need adults to provide them with many different oppor-

tunities where they can practice how to share with others and see other children in the act of sharing. When a child learns how to share with others she feels more confident and is better able to play with other children independently. Additionally, learning how to share gives a child a very important and solid foundation of successful friendship skills she can continue to build on as she grows.

Try This at Home

- Read books about sharing with your child. Talk about how the characters might feel as the story unfolds. All feelings are healthy and normal. Check out the book *I can Share* by Karen Katz.
- Notice and point out when other children are sharing. "I see that those girls are sharing their snack."
- Notice and let your child know that you notice when he is sharing. "Thank you for sharing your crayons with me. I feel happy when you share." Or "When I came to pick you up from school, I noticed that you were sharing the toys with Sophie. What a good friend!"
- Plan ahead if sharing might be a concern. "Avery is coming over to our house today for a play date. I know how special your blankie is to you. We can put your blankie in a special place that is just for you and all the other toys will be shared with Avery."
- Find opportunities to teach sharing to your child. "Oh no! For dessert tonight we only have three cookies left for you, Joey, me and Daddy. I wonder what we can do?"

The Bottom Line

Sharing is a skill that your child will use throughout her life to get along with others during activities and to build friendships. Children who learn how to share are better able to understand other's feelings, negotiate difficult situations with confidence and feel secure in their ability to solve problems by themselves.



Growing Up Wild: What's Wild? From the Growing Up Wild program

My Favorite Animal: Help your child draw or paste a picture of his or her favorite animal in a Nature Notebook. Talk about how the animal gets its food, water and shelter. Is it wild or domesticated? Why is the animal your child's favorite? Would it make a good pet?

Pets and Wild Animals: If you have a pet, help your child take care of the pet (providing food, water, grooming, etc). Help your child draw a picture of the pet being cared for by people. Then help your child draw a wild animal getting the food it needs in the



Help your child draw or paste a picture of their favorite animal in a Nature Notebook.

wild.

Wildlife Lives Around My Home:

Wildlife is everywhere! Team up with your child to become a wildlife scientist. Put on your safari hats and look for animals in and around your home. Most that you find will be very small. Help your child record all the wild animals and animal signs you see in his Nature Notebook.



Corner

Read a rhyming story or nursery rhyme together with your child. Pause at the end of some lines to let your child fill in the rhyming words. "Hickory dickory dock, the mouse ran up the _____."



Letting children fill in the rhyming words in a story does several things. It encourages them to listen carefully, an important part of building oral language skills. It helps them recognize the different beginning sounds in words that rhyme, an important phonological awareness skill. And it makes reading active, which makes it more fun!

Play "I Spy" with your child. Ask your child to look for an object that starts with a particular letter of the alphabet. "I spy with my little eye something that starts with the letter P."

You and your child can play "I Spy" anywhere- at home, in the park, even in the car. Try using letter sounds, too: "I spy with my little eye something that starts with the sound ch." You can also play this game as a rhyming game: "I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with bear."

Make Up Rhymes about things you see in your home as you go about your daily routine. "That's a fat cat." Let's walk through the door to the store."

Rhymes—when words have the same ending sounds but have different beginning sounds- help children build an awareness of sounds and familiar words. Try rhyming

your child's name too. It's okay if you use nonsense words. Playing with the sounds of language is the important part.

Play "Simon Says" as you help your child get ready for her day, providing easy directions for your child to follow. "Simon says, put on your shoe." "Simon says, comb your hair." "Simon says, brush your teeth."

Listening is a skill that not only helps your child learn how language works, but also will help her all through her life! Learning to follow directions is important, too. When you connect listening games to your child's regular daily routine, she learns that literacy is something we use every day. Try playing "Simon Says" throughout the day, like when you pick up toys or set the dinner table together.



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Children who start early,
Start Strong.



Is My Child Getting Enough Sleep?

Age	Nighttime	Daytime
1-3 months	8.5 hrs—10 hours	3 naps (total of 5-7 hours)
6-9 months	11 hours	2 naps (total of 3—3.5 hours)
12-18 months	11.25 hours	1 or 2 naps (total of 2 -2.5 hours)
2 years	11 hours	1 nap (90 minutes—2 hours)
3 years	10.5	1 nap (20 minutes—2 hours)

Your child will probably transition out of naps between 2-5 years of age.



Kiss your children goodnight,
even if they are already asleep.
