

SLEEP SMART THINK TANK

Is your child having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep?



THINK ENVIRONMENT

We can improve our sleep by setting our body clock and syncing it with our environment!

- Sleep problems can occur when our body's internal clock is out of sync with our environment.
- Our body's internal clock, called a circadian clock, cycles about every 24 hours and tells you when it's time to sleep or wake.
- Our brain sets our sleep-wake cycle to signals from the environment, such as when it gets dark or light outside, when we eat and when we are physically active.



Day light releases the hormone cortisol, an alertness boosting hormone.

Cortisol helps us wake up in the morning and keeps us alert .

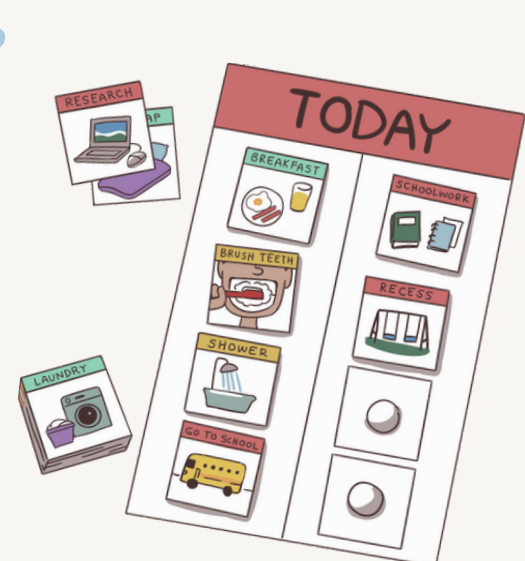


As evening and darkness sets in, our sleep hormone called melatonin is released. Melatonin eases us into sleep and helps us stay asleep.

Remember the brain syncs its clock to daylight, so when exposed to artificial light late at night from devices, it can push our biological clock toward the night-owl end of the spectrum.

THINK ROUTINE

Establishing a routine AM/PM, activities for set times during the day and at bedtime, can help improve sleep.





GOODNIGHT SWEET DREAMS



THINK ROUTINE CONT...

Routines help establish our “circadian clock” -our 24 hr clock in our brains that regulates cycles of alertness and sleepiness. Sticking with routines, such as keeping to the same bed and wake times as well as meal times, can put the brain and body on a schedule that makes sleep easier.

Tips During the Day

Help your child get plenty of natural light and exercise- they help the body and brain set its clock and differentiate between night and day.



Tips Before Bed

Avoid exercise and stimulating activities before bed time-instead place these in the day time or earlier in evening.

Keep meals and snacks early in the evening. Eating before bedtime can send signals to the brain to rev up digestion and stay awake.

Reduce screen time- blue light from devices can interfere with the natural release of sleep hormone, melatonin which helps us fall asleep.



THINK VISUALS

Having a visual schedule for bedtime can help your child understand what happens at bedtime, reduce anxiety and keep things consistent.



- Create a visual schedule that works best for your child, focusing on their age/stage/understanding.
- Some children will do better with words, some with pictures and some with objects.
- Object boards are great if your child is not able to follow a visual schedules with words or pictures.

Model the schedule and encourage involvement from your child.

- Place schedule where routine is performed
- Time limit activities (30mins)
- Chose one consistent cue - First/Then, Now/After.

Useful links for visual supports;
www.milestones.org
www.autismni.org



OFF TO THE LAND OF NOD



THINK SENSORY

Being aware of your child's sensory needs can make bedtime a more relaxing time and help with easing your child into sleep.

Engage your child in relaxing activities at bed time.

Remember what may be calming for one child may not be for another.

Use your 5 senses-touch, sound, movement, smell, vision.



Create a comfortable sleep environment;

Keep bedroom cool

Reduce/block light and try to eliminate noise.

Night lights may be calming.

Ensure clothing and bedding is comfortable

Consider using a weighted blanket following proper advice from GP-

Pressure can help some children to feel calm, safe and secure.



THINK SUPPORT

Help your child stay in bed using a bed time pass and/or social story!

A **bed time pass** is a simple card that is given to your child at bed time and can be exchanged for one free trip out of bed or one parent visit after bed time.



Give your child the pass at bedtime.

Help them understand it can be exchanged for

e.g.,

- one visit from parent
- one drink of water
- one night-time hug

If your child doesn't use the pass then it can be exchanged for a reward in the morning.

If your child gets out of bed after surrendering the bed time pass, you should take your child back to bed with a little reassurance.



Social stories -Use a social story to embed the bed time routine. A social story can also be used to support the bed time pass. They are a great tool in promoting growth in our children.

Some examples and templates to create your own social story can be found on the following;

www.andnextcomesl.com

www.happylearners.info

www.autism.org.uk

www.youtube.com

PARENTLINE NI ARE HERE IF YOU NEED US ON 0808 8020 400

MONDAY-THURSDAY 9AM-9PM, FRIDAYS 9AM-5PM AND

SATURDAYS 9AM-1PM