

Sleep

The bookends of a healthy day



The importance of sleep

Sleep - It's what starts and ends each day. We all know what it is, but do we know how important it is to what we do? To our health? To our overall well-being? Sleep is



foundational. It impacts, and is impacted by, every area of daily life. Did you know that [restorative sleep is essential to both physical and mental health](#)? Lack of sleep leaves you drowsy, lowers your brain's performance, and makes it harder to remember things. It also increases the risk of serious health issues, like obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. [The National Sleep Foundation](#)

recommends that adults get between 7 & 9 hours of sleep; teens 8 to 10 hours; school-age (6 to 13 years) 9 to 11 hours; and even more for preschoolers, toddlers, and infants (who need up to 15 hours of sleep per day!). Dr. Suresh Kotagal, M.D., pediatric neurologist at Mayo Clinic, provides important tips in this [one-minute video](#), including how much sleep kids need, how to gradually adjust to a fixed morning wake-up time.

We can improve our sleep!

Everyone wants a good night's sleep, but sometimes the harder we try, the less we accomplish it (don't you get annoyed by those people who just easily fall asleep!?) Our daily choices help determine our quality of sleep (how quickly we fall asleep, how well we stay asleep, and whether we reach that deep, restorative sleep-state). This is great news! We can make better choices, in how we *Move*, *Think*, and *Be Together* in many areas of life which, in turn, can lead to better sleep. We hope you enjoy this, and each of the [InPACT \(Interrupting Prolonged sitting with Activity\)](#) at Home Challenge pages, that will provide insights and information on [Family Discussions](#), [Family Team-Building](#), [Feeling Good](#), [Focus](#), [Nutrition](#), [Resilience](#), and Sleep.

Move Together!



Sleep and exercise are connected; as one improves, so does the other. Exercise and movement impact how quickly you fall asleep, how long you stay asleep, and the amount of time you spend in deep, restorative sleep. It also lessens the number of times you wake up at night. Exercising is important, but be sure to enjoy active exercise during the day, avoiding evening hours. In the hours surrounding bedtime, choose quiet activities that also help you to, “wind down” at the end of the day.

Active play during the day

It is important to include exercise & fun activities into your day. We need active large-motor movement every day! Exercising as a family activity makes it that much more fun and creates opportunities for Family Team Building. What to do? Play a game of tag! Dance! Play tug-of-war! Take it to the next level at home, & visit [InPACT](#), where your children can access exercise videos, keep a log of their exercise, and participate in Weekend Workouts provided by the Detroit Lions! For more ideas, [here is a list of 50 large motor activities](#) to try. Plan your activities so that vigorous play ends one to two hours before bedtime. This may help you & your child more quickly settle in and relax.



Calmer play near evening



The hours before bedtime are great for planning calm, yet enjoyable family activities. Instead of cardio workouts, think of activities such as nature walks, (in the woods, along the beach) building sandcastles, and other low-key outdoor activities. This will still give you fun family time, but in a more settled way. Quiet times also provide you with opportunities to practice mindfulness and taking time to become mindful/aware of your surroundings, such as noticing the sound the leaves

make, or listening to the birds. Making a game of remembering sounds noticed while on your walk could make for fun bedtime conversation at the end of the day. Some wonderful mindful activities can be found in the [Resilience Challenge](#) page.

Think Together!

Throughout the day, there are many opportunities to *Think Together* about all of the things that impact sleep. When having [Family Discussions](#), planning for sleep can become part of those conversations. Helping children to become aware of some of the essentials for good sleep (for example, turning off electronics an hour before bedtime), allows them opportunities to have conversations based on healthy practices, rather than simply having a rule imposed upon them. Involving them in opportunities to help plan a fun family game, or to arrange their sleep environment could become a [Family Team Building](#) activity. Giving them a part in the family menu-planning could provide them with knowledge of how [Nutrition](#) impacts sleep, and the importance of healthy eating. Talking with them about the importance of the timing of meals and drinks may also help them to understand parents' reasoning behind their choices. Exploring ways of [Feeling Good](#) provides opportunities for your child to think about what makes *them* feel good - is it running and playing hard, or getting a big hug from a favorite person? Time spent together as a family is often what children express to me that they wish they had more of. Conversations about celebrations & learning moments during the day provide rich opportunities for problem-solving, playing games, and creating memories together.



Planning Bedtime Routines

When the day winds down, having a *routine* way of settling in for sleep is helpful for children and adults alike. Routines are important in helping children to prepare for sleep, and to fully relax. Repetitive and predictable, they give them a sense of security at bedtime. For our own children, we chose a fairly simple routing of giving them a bath, reading or reciting a story or poem of their choice, singing a lullaby (for the little ones), and leading them quietly and calmly through [progressive muscle relaxation](#), to help them fully relax. Involving older children in developing their own bedtime routine will make it more meaningful and personal for them. Deciding, together, which (and how many) books to read, a relaxing activity to practice, and choices of relaxing sounds (such as [the beach](#), [woodlands](#), [classical music](#), or [white noise](#)) to listen to as they drift off to sleep, are all ways to include them in building a personalized routine. If you want to formalize your routine, you & your child could create a poster, or a chart. For additional information, [Bluebell](#) provides a simple, six-point plan, along with in-depth information that will help you to put this to use in your family. Once the children are settled, you can [begin your own](#) end-of-day routine to help you to relax and unwind. Routines are for you, too!



Be Together!

Our time together, as a family, is short. Helping your children settle in for the night is an opportunity to slow down the pace, and to be calm and intentional with each step of their routine. Preparing for that routine will happen throughout their day.



Wake up at the same time each day, even on the weekends. Keeping wake-up time consistent will help them to be ready for bed at night, adjust more quickly to a morning routine, and start their day refreshed. Being consistent helps them to get into a rhythm, making it automatic. Even if their sleep cycle becomes disrupted over a vacation, or travels, it is much easier to adjust their bedtime by getting them consistently up in the morning than it is to let them sleep in, only to struggle getting them to settle in at night.

Laying or hanging out their clothing (and, if they're in school, putting their backpack near the door) for the next morning will give them (and you) a jump-start when they wake up. Taking the extra few minutes to prepare each night will help your morning go a little smoother, giving you one less detail in a sometimes-rushed start to the day.

A word on napping. Did you know that a [10-to 20-minute mid-day nap](#) can help you feel refreshed, and better able to focus? Extended naps, however, can leave you feeling groggy.

Brushing their teeth, followed by a warm bath, and getting into their pajamas makes dental hygiene an automatic part of their night, and helps them to relax. Just some safety reminders: check the water temperature, do not leave your children unattended in the tub, and be sure to let out the water once they're done. Keep bath-time happy, but low-key. Talking about their day, singing songs, drawing on the walls with bath crayons.



Turn off electronics, and if possible, remove them from the bedroom. Light interferes with sleep, with blue light being especially disruptive during the evening and night-time hours.



The [Sleep Foundation](#) reports that blue light interferes with our natural 24-hour rhythms (our circadian rhythms), and suppresses the production of melatonin (that chemical that makes us feel tired at night). Smart phones, tablets, computer and television screens, game consoles, LED and fluorescent lights - all give off blue light, and interfere with sleep, both in onset and duration.

Read (or listen to) a book, tell a story, read a poem, sing (or play) a lullaby, play soft music or soothing sounds.

Your child may have a favorite book, or you may have one of your own. Create that quiet time where they can disconnect from their day, hearing your voice as they do. Keep the stories and music calm and soothing, helping them to relax. You can hold them in a chair, sit next to them on their bed, or cuddle next to them as you read. Your goal is to help them to soothe and relax for the night.



Soothing sounds. Create a relaxed atmosphere with continuous soothing sounds. Whether soft music, nature sounds, or white noise, quiet and consistent noise in their bedrooms will help to mask noises outside their rooms (conversations, for example) that could keep them from falling asleep. Below

Here are some links to recordings of soft music options for you:

For Babies and Young Children					
Any Age					
	Classical Selections	Instrumental	Vocals	Books	Soothing sounds
Disney Deep Sleep Piano	Beethoven	Guitar	Louis Armstrong - What a Wonderful World	The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Beach Sounds
Lullabies for Babies	Debussy	Piano Music		Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me	Ocean Sounds
Mozart for Babies	Chopin - Nocturne Op.9 No2	String Music - "Autumn Colors"		Read Aloud Books - Pre-K (20 minutes)	Relaxing Wind Sounds
Mozart for Babies - piano		Disney Deep Sleep Piano		How Do You Sleep?	Rain Sounds for Sleeping
Orchestral Music Box Lullabies	Classical Music Collection	A Thousand Years - Piano & Cello		Readaroo Kids	Rain on the Roof
Piano Lullabies					White Noise
Relaxing Sleeping Music - Mindful Kids					Woodlands
You are My Sunshine					
Disney Deep Sleep Piano					

Help them relax to fall asleep through [Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#), or [baby massage](#).

Progressive muscle relaxation is easy to learn, and a great way to help your child relax and fall asleep faster, relaxing their muscles through tensing and releasing them, to feel the “weight” and release the tension. Especially helpful at night, you can quickly learn the steps, and lead them through the major muscle groups with or without music or noise in the background.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation Resources:

- [Progressive Muscle Relaxation- Written Instructions](#)
- [Progressive Muscle Relaxation- Recorded Instructions](#)
- [Muscle Relaxation Recording - Trevor](#)
- [Muscle Relaxation Recording - Anna](#)



Nancy Jaskiw, MA, S.Psy.S., is a School Psychologist serving Reeths-Puffer Schools at the elementary level. Completing her studies at Central Michigan University, the focus of her graduate research (completed with her husband, Nicholas Jaskiw) was on Infant Sleep Disorders. The mom of five adult children, she has put into practice the strategies presented in the Sleep Challenge. Nancy serves her local school community through psychological services aimed at prevention, early intervention, and intensive supports. Within the wider community, she provides early literacy coaching, family

engagement workshops, and suicide prevention trainings. At the state level, she has served on the School Based Mental Health Provider’s Coalition, the Special Education Advisory Committee, the Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition, and as a member of the Michigan Reading Association Board of Directors. Currently, she co-chairs the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support workgroup within the Michigan Association of School Psychologists. Nancy believes that learning is a lifelong, joyful pursuit, that problems are best addressed through prevention, and that serving others is a privilege to be pursued.