

Understanding Sleep

Sussex Road
Primary school
January 2025



EMOTIONAL WELLBEING TEAM KENT
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TEAM
MEDWAY



Equity and Diversity



- Better representation
- Celebrating difference and diversity
- Anti-racist and anti-discriminatory stance



Why is sleep important?

- Sleep is important for the wellbeing of children & young people (CYP), and their parents and caregivers.
- The amount of sleep needed will generally differ depending on the age of the child.
- Lack of sleep impacts upon us in many ways including our physical health, emotional wellbeing & mental health, educational attainment, and decision making ability.

Significance for Sleep



The average under 5 spends half of their time asleep



Sleep problems are high on the list of concerns to paediatricians



Sleep problems can have an impact on a child's development and the well-being of the family.



Activity

Why do you think
sleep is
important?

What do you
notice when your
child doesn't get
enough sleep?



Functions of Sleep



To restore and refresh



Bolster Immunity



Brain Functioning



Memory & Thinking



Manage our mood and emotions



Recommended Sleep Time by Age

Your child's age	Recommended sleep time in 24 hours
Infants 4 to 12 months	12 to 16 hours including naps
Children 1 to 2 years	11 to 14 hours including naps
Children 3 to 5 years	10 to 13 hours including naps
Children 6 to 12 years	9 to 12 hours
Teenagers 13 to 18 years	8 to 10 hours

Preparing to Sleep

Tired

Circadian rhythm /
body clock

Dark

Quiet

Familiar

Temperature

Not too
hungry/too full

Relaxed- rather
than experiencing
pain, stress,
anxiety

Melatonin release



Differences in attitudes towards Sleep

Culture

Family Values

Individual Preferences

Timings

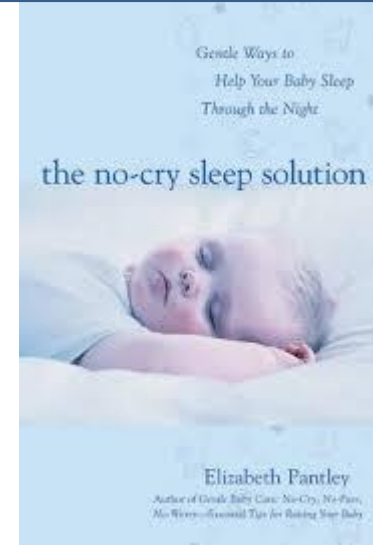
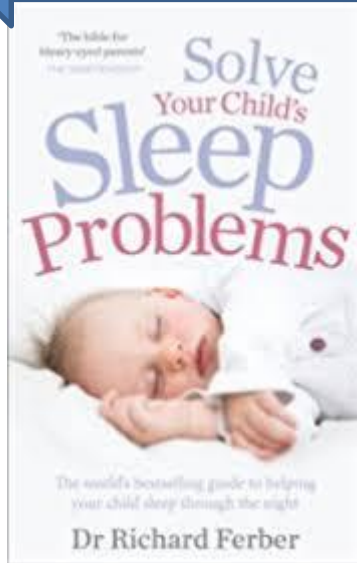
Co-sleeping/Room Sharing

Different contexts

If it works for you then 😊



Early Childhood Approaches



Extinction

Controlled Crying

Gradual retreat

Pick up, put down

Co-sleeping

Parent led

Child led



Sleep and Autism

“Sleep was not a secure place. Sleep was a place where darkness ate you alive. Sleep was a place without colour or light. In the darkness you could not see your reflection. You couldn’t get ‘lost’ in sleep. Sleep just came and stole you beyond your control. Anything that robbed me of total control was no friend of mine.”

Somebody somewhere, Donna Williams via NAS website



Autistic children commonly experience sleep difficulties

An estimated **40-83%** of autistic individuals have some form of sleep disturbance (1).

Research found that autistic children slept **17-43 mins** less than same age peers (2) and experienced poorer sleep quality (3).

Comorbidities such as **ADHD** alongside Autism can also contribute to sleep difficulties (4).

The prevalence of insomnia in autistic children has been researched to be around **60–86%**, which is two to three times greater than typically developing (TD) children (5).

1) Schwichtenberg et al. (2022) 2) Humpheries et al. (2014) 3) Tse et al. (2020) 4) NHS – ADHD 5) Souders et al. (2017)



Neurodivergence & Sleep

See Carmassi et al. (2019) for review

Poorer sleep
quality

Difficulties
falling asleep

Restless sleep

Wake earlier

Wake more
frequently in
the night

Shorter sleep
duration

Daytime
sleepiness

Nightmares



What are sleep difficulties?

- Some CYP have difficulty relaxing and falling asleep
- Some CYP need less sleep than others; however, some CYP may be “over-tired” making it more difficult for them to relax and fall asleep.
- Some CYP may find it difficult to stay asleep (e.g., frequent night-time waking)
- During childhood there a number of different factors that may contribute towards sleep difficulties.

Types of Sleep Disorder

Insomnias- not sleeping enough

Hypersomnias- sleeping too much

Parasomnias- unusual experiences during sleep

Circadian Rhythm Disorders- internal body clock problems

Sleep related breathing disorders

Sleep related movement disorders



Sleep Hygiene

Dark, quiet, cool bedroom

No screens

Consistent bedtime

Falling asleep alone

Daytime exercise

Calming down in the hours before bedtime

School aged children-shouldn't have naps



Falling Asleep & Sensory Associations

Sense	Strategy example
Sounds	Play the same calming music before going upstairs/ read Harry Potter to them before bed
Smells	Spray lavender on PJs
Sights	Have bedroom organised in the same way before bed, have the same duvet etc
Texture	Have the same PJs/duvets etc
Tastes	Sleepy foods like bananas before going upstairs to bed



Activity

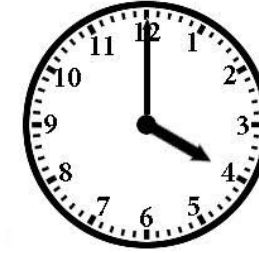
What strategies
do you / your
child use to fall
asleep?



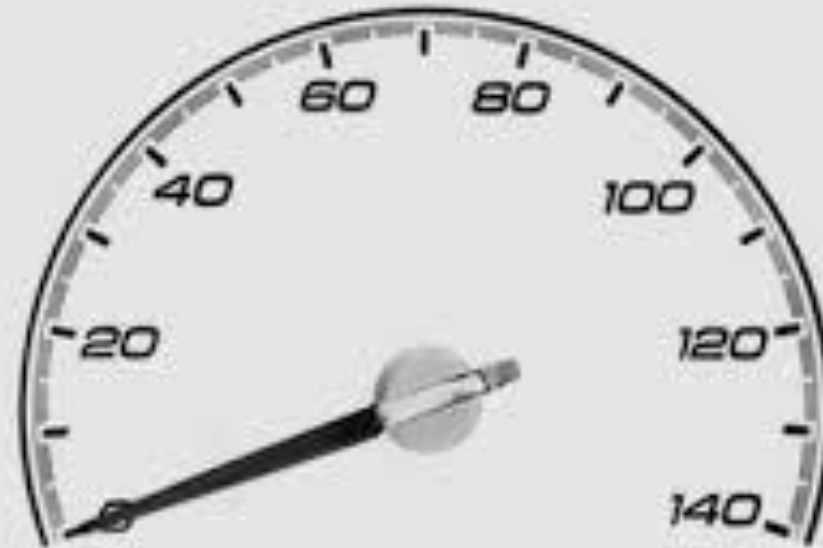
How fast is your motor going?



Organising activities:
learning, talking,
helping, eating



Calming activities:
Bathing, resting,
listening to stories, sleeping



Alerting activities:
running,
jumping,
chasing, dancing



.....'s Bedtime Routine



Playing



Dinner



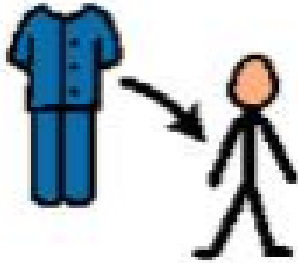
Quiet time



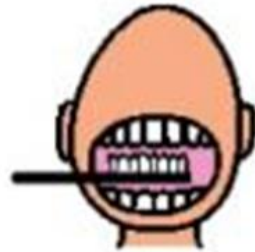
toilet



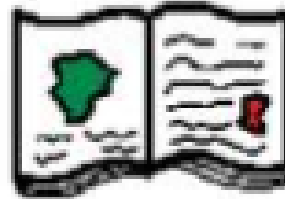
bath



Pyjamas



Brush teeth



Story



Sleep



Social Stories

Bedtime

My name is Rosa and I am 6 years old. After dinner, mummy or daddy can say 'it's bath time'. Then we will go and have bath time.

Mummy or daddy will be there with my bath toys.

After I have had a bath and dry off, I can put on my PJs and brush my teeth.

Then I can choose a story for mummy or daddy to read.

When the story is finished I can lie on my bed.

Mummy or daddy can give me a cuddle and say 'goodnight'. I will see them in the morning

I can close my eyes and wait to fall asleep, it may take some time to fall asleep, but that's ok. If I don't fall asleep right away I can think about Peppa Pig, until I fall asleep.





When it is time for bed, mom and dad will let me know. It will be time for me to go to my



room and put on my pajamas. Then I need to go to the bathroom and brush my teeth. It is important



to keep your teeth clean so that they are healthy. Mom or dad will read me a book then I will close

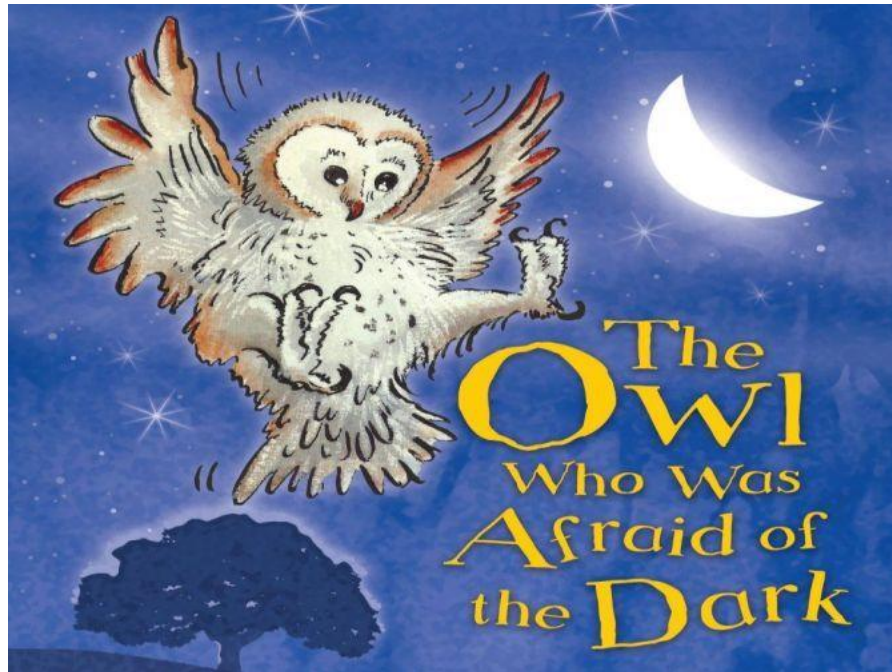


my eyes and go to sleep.

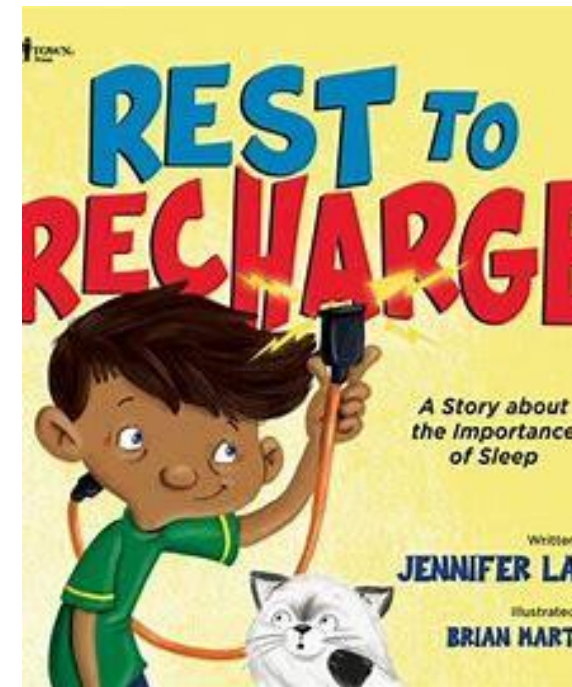


Books to check out

The Owl Who was Afraid of the Dark by *Jill Tomlinson*



Rest to Recharge by *Jennifer Law*



a GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Learning from Autistic Young People



Leaflet

Sleep is important

It affects how we feel and what we do when we are awake. It affects how we learn at school. Our body and our brain need sleep. No one is exactly sure what work the brain does when you're sleeping, but some scientists think that the brain sorts through and stores information, replaces chemicals, and solves problems while we snooze.

Lots of autistic people have difficulty sleeping.

They might find it hard to fall asleep.

They might wake up a lot in the night.

They might sleep for less time than other people.

There is a lot of advice about how to get a 'good night's sleep' but we don't know whether it is helpful for autistic people. The first line of advice for many autistic young people who struggle to fall asleep, or to stay asleep during the night, is introducing general sleep rules, for example not viewing screens before bed and making sure a bedroom is dark. For some autistic young people this might feel like one more pressure to comply with rules written by, and for, non-autistic people.

To find out more, a researcher worked with 54 autistic young people to understand what helped them sleep. They worked together using photo taking, talking, writing, and drawing to understand their sleep-related activities during the day and before bedtime that contributed to a good night's sleep.

Full research paper:
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.583868/full>



If you need to talk to someone, these organisations can help:

Samaritans: call 116123

Shout: text SHOUT to 85258

Childline: children & young people call 0800 1111

For mental health advice and support in Kent & Medway, please contact **NELFT** Single Point of Access (SPA):

Call: 0800 011 3474

Email: nem-tr.kentchildrenandyoungpeoplehealthservices@nhs.net

Website: www.nelft.nhs.uk/single-point-of-access-referral

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A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

LEARNING ABOUT SLEEP FROM AUTISTIC YOUNG PEOPLE



Recommendations made with and for autistic young people, and for all supporters of autistic young people.



AUTISTIC YOUNG PEOPLE MADE TWO TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is important to work out sleep routines that work for you, even if that is different from the general sleep advice. Maybe your parents/carers and supportive adults can work out with you what will help you sleep.
2. It is important to consider the following daytime and bedtime "feelgood" factors that may have an impact on the quality and quantity of sleep.

Focussed interests

Many autistic young people said that they feel happier and more relaxed when they focus on their special interests (themed books, animation, playing an instrument, chatting about favourite movie characters or nature). Time spent on special interests helps them sleep. Some said they plan some time for special interests in the day and at bedtime. They prefer to have a visual agreement with parents/carers on when it is time to stop doing favourite activities, and a few reminders so that they don't get interrupted suddenly.

Physical activity

Lots of autistic young people said it helps to exercise or play sports. Choosing a time and way that feels alright was important to them (playing basketball alone, being able to change clothes or join a group as much or as little as you want).

A chance to choose

Lots of autistic young people said that being able to choose how to spend some of their time at home/school helped them sleep. This helped make a balance between things they have to do and things they like to do. They slept better after talking through problems or just sharing their favourite hobbies or achievements with people who listen to them. Being able to make choices at bedtime was also important

Being kind to your senses

Autistic people can be sensitive to what they see, smell, taste, touch and hear. Many autistic young people said that before bedtime they get rid of things that feel bad (uncomfortable labels, unwanted noise) and choose things that feel good (creams that smell good, familiar food, soft clothes).

Things that help in the evening & at bedtime

Personalised sleep routine

Choosing things that feel, taste, smell, and sound good helped some autistic young people to feel relaxed and safe before they went to bed. For example: special smells from clothes, toys, oils, or body creams; eating certain foods; wearing comfortable clothes; putting things along the edge of the bed; blocking out noises, for example, by turning on a fan.

Relaxing before bed

Many autistic young people felt more relaxed when they had time to themselves to choose what to do. Some said they find it easier to sleep on days that they do not have extra clubs and activities. Relaxing activities included: listening to music; watching familiar videos; using a self-help exercise; taking a bath; meditating.

Spending time with family

Spending time with people in a way that is comforting and supportive helped many young people sleep. For example: relaxing in the same room; playing a rule-based game; talking about the day; planning the next day; having familiar bedtime conversations.



Things that help during the day



Physical activity

Some autistic young people said that physical activities during the day helped them to feel happier at bedtime. Activities included: swimming; riding a bike; doing gymnastics; or having a short drumming session. They like to do this in a way that feels comfortable (e.g. riding a bike alone to have a feeling of freedom).

Things that make you feel good

Many autistic young people said they sleep better when there are things that make them feel good during the day. It helped to: plan nice activities for the future; see what interesting lessons they have the next day; talk through schoolwork so they know they can do it; have a good relationship with a teacher; prepare for activities; attend a club they have set up; talk about good things that have happened.

Focused interests

Spending time on special interests helped many autistic young people relax so that they slept better. It helped to: spend some time doing activities that they enjoy; talk about their favourite topics with family; plan time for their special interest the next day.



Additional resources



A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

When we make a sleep routine it is important to see if it is working.
Try your routine for two weeks and track your sleep to see if it works.
After two weeks you can choose to use the routine or make changes to improve it.



My Sleep Tracker

Put an x on the line to show how well you slept each day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5. I had a great night's sleep	-----						
4. I slept most of the night	-----						
3. I woke up a bit but i did sleep	-----						
2. I slept a bit but woke up a lot	-----						
5. I was awake most of the night	-----						
What did you do in the day and before bed to help you sleep?							





A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

When we have trouble sleeping it can be useful to think about what helps us feel relaxed and ready to fall asleep.

These worksheets will consider what helps you sleep and put those ideas into your own personalised sleep routine.

Stick pictures of things you like in this box

What are your interests?

Spending time doing things that interest you can help you get a good night's sleep. Write down some of your interests on the lines below:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How do you stay active?

Some physical activity in the day can help us sleep at night. We all stay active in different ways. Some people like sports or yoga, others prefer to take a walk. Write down some ways that you like to get active on the lines below:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Things that make you feel good

Many autistic people said they sleep better when there are nice things to enjoy during the day: perhaps a club they like, favourite lesson or teacher, time with a friend or pet. Write three things you look forward to.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

A chance to choose

There are lots of things we have to do, so it is important to plan how we do them. It helps to save some time for the things we want to do too!

Who can help you plan and solve problems?

When can you have some free time?

Who can you discuss your day with?



★ Being kind to your senses

Our senses are important. They tell us about the world around us. Being kind to our senses can help us feel happy and calm so we can get a good night's sleep.

What do you like looking at?	What smells do you like?
What don't you like looking at?	What smells don't you like?
What do you like to touch/feel?	What tastes do you like?
What don't you like to touch/feel?	What tastes don't you like?
What do you like to listen to?	There are two extra senses that people often forget. We sense how we are moving and balancing. We also sense where our body is and what it is doing without looking. The activities below use our extra senses.
What do you like to listen to?	

Circle any that you enjoy. Cross out any that you don't like.

a big squeeze/hug sit under a heavy blanket massage yoga
 move something heavy (e.g. weights) balance
 hang upside-down swinging jump pull a stretchy band
 scooter/skate rocking chair bounce (e.g. on a yoga ball)

Are there any other sensory activities you enjoy?



A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

When we have trouble sleeping it can be useful to think about what helps us feel relaxed and ready to fall asleep.

These worksheets will consider what helps you sleep and put those ideas into your own personalised sleep routine.

How do you relax?

Feeling relaxed can help us get a better night's sleep. For example, might do something we enjoy, take a bath or listen to music. What do you do to relax before bed?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Time with family

Spending time with people in a way that is comforting and supportive helped many young people sleep, like playing games or planning the next day. How do you like to spend time with people?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



My Personalised Sleep Routine

Stick or draw pictures

What I will do



Online Support Intervention (OSI)



OSI COULD HELP YOU

OSI (Online Support and Intervention) is an online platform designed to help parents to learn tools and techniques to help their child (aged 5 to 12 years old) to overcome difficulties with anxiety.

Parents work through weekly online modules that contain videos, quizzes, and interactive worksheets. Parents are also supported by a weekly telephone/videocall appointment with a clinician.

You can access OSI at a convenient time for you using any electronic device!



My son's anxiety has noticeably declined, and I feel much more confident...we worked together on a specific goal and I have to say it was life changing. I can say that it worked for her too.



GET IN TOUCH:

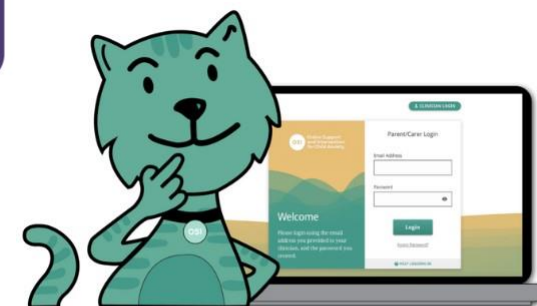
Scan the QR code for more information on OSI.
If your child attends one of our schools, and you are interested in learning more about OSI and whether this is the right support for you, please email our team at:
EWTanDESTenquiries@nelft.nhs.uk
Currently available until end of October half-term 2023

EWTanDESTenquiries@nelft.nhs.uk



Online Support Intervention (OSI)

- OSI is an online platform that supports the delivery of a parent-led intervention for child anxiety problems (aged 7 – 12).
- Modules are completed by the child's parent/carer.
- There is weekly telephone support from a practitioner/clinician.



Parents can now self-refer via our website.

<https://osiresearch.org.uk/osi/the-parent-carer-role/resources-for-parents/>

Best care by the best people



Countywide online workshops

These are the workshops we run for **primary** school parents/carers:

Introduction to Autism

Understanding ADHD

Understanding your child's behaviour

Understanding Anxiety

Me and My Child: Understanding resilience

Sleep and Autism

[Link to Primary
School Workshops
Terms 3 & 4
Poster](#)



Find out more about us

Individual support

for young people experiencing worries or low mood. As this is a low intensity approach, it is most suitable for young people who are experiencing mild to moderate difficulties

Parent work

is the primary offer of support for primary aged children who are experiencing mild to moderate difficulties with anxiety, low mood, or behavioural difficulties. We can offer both digital and face to face support to parents, with the aim of equipping parents with the skills to support their child to overcome their difficulties.

Groups and workshops for young people on topics such as coping with exam stress, poor eating habits (not eating disorders), sleep problems and how to look after your emotional wellbeing;

Groups and workshops for parents on topics such as understanding their child's behaviour and/or anxiety, poor eating habits (not eating disorders), sleep problems, supporting their child with exam stress.

Supporting the school to develop a 'whole school approach' to emotional wellbeing and mental health.

<https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/kent-emotional-wellbeing-team/>



We welcome your feedback!

Your feedback helps us improve these workshops and enables us to host them more.

From previous feedback we:

- Have added extra content and created new workshops in line with parent requests.
- Considered the timing of the workshops and time to talk within them.





Thank you for listening



Best care by the best people



Disclaimer

The purpose of this workshop is to share information about local resources/support. The Emotional Wellbeing Teams/Emotional Support Teams cannot comment on the suitability/quality of these resources and whether it would meet the needs of your family.

If there are additional sources of support that you would recommend, that are not listed here, please email us at:

ewtandestenquiries@nelft.nhs.uk

We would love to hear about them.

