



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. VII, No. 8

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ **Provide a safe environment**
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Provide a Safe Environment

Understanding Sleep

In *Brain Rules for Aging Well*, Dr. John Medina lists **sleep** among the 10 principles for **staying vital, happy, and sharp**. In fact, Dr. Medina explains that some scientists believe that sleep is the *single most important* daily (nightly) experience for optimizing health in both body and brain.

By the time we reach 85 years of age, we would've spent an average of 29 years sleeping. It turns out that sleep is incredibly important for our cognitive functioning. In fact, during sleep, the brain actively forms new connections – impacting learning and memory; focus and attention; cognitive performance (e.g., problem solving, creativity); physical health, including healthy growth; the immune system (providing protection against illness); and behavioral and emotional health.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, one in three children ages 2–5 years have trouble falling asleep or sleeping through the night on a regular basis. As a child care provider, it's important to partner with parents to ensure that children get better sleep. Here are some things you can do:

- Share information about the importance of sleep;
- Find out how their child sleeps at home (do they have difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep?); ask what kind of sleep routines are followed at home;
- Inform parents of the naptime routines and how long their child naps each day.

If problems with sleep persists at home, encourage parents to talk to their child's pediatrician.

In this newsletter, we will discuss daytime activities that promote healthy sleep in young children and help them sleep better at night. We will also discuss the importance of sleep for adults and ways we can get more of it.



Healthy Sleep for Children

Daytime Activities

What happens during the day affects night time sleep. Many childhood sleep problems can be linked to daytime behavior. The Sleep Foundation and American Academy of Pediatrics offers the following advice:

- **Infants.** At birth, a baby has not yet fully developed a consistent sleep-wake pattern. As a result, sleep will likely occur in segments throughout the night and day. As a baby develops, talking and playing with her during the day will help lengthen her awake times, which help her sleep for longer periods during the night. Exposing infants to sunlight during the day is also a good way to help their internal clock lock onto a nightly sleep pattern.
- **Toddlers and Preschoolers.** Make sure children have interesting and varied activities during the day, including fresh air and a good amount of physical activity. Regular physical activity prevents restlessness at night and helps to decrease stress levels. Natural light, especially in the morning, helps children feel awake and alert during the day and sleepy toward bedtime.



Why Naps are Important

Consistent daytime naps can make night time sleep easier. Naps provide children the down-time that aids important physical and mental development. It also keeps children from becoming overtired, which can affect their moods and their ability to self-soothe, making it harder for them to fall asleep and stay asleep at night. Help children settle for a nap by establishing a daily routine so they can expect to have a nap at a certain time.

For a child who has outgrown a nap, giving her a structured quiet time, (e.g., books or puzzles) can help with memory consolidation and recharging for the rest of the day.

Create a Naptime Routine

Naptime often occurs after lunch, a time when children are talkative and social, so they need a way to slow down before going to sleep. Sleep time routines signal to the body that it's time to slow down.

Research shows that a consistent bedtime/naptime routine is also helpful for making sure children get enough sleep. Establishing a pattern of activities done in the same order before nap time (e.g., brush teeth, story time, back rubs) lessens anxieties, helps children relax, promotes a sense of security and helps them get ready for sleep.

Healthy Sleep for Adults

The CDC reports that one in three adults do not get enough sleep on a regular basis. This is alarming because sleep is critical to our health and everyday functioning and well-being. Practicing good sleep habits not only leads to better body and brain health, but will also help you function optimally as you provide care for children.

Dr. Medina explains why sleep is good for the adult brain. Here are two breakthrough findings on why we sleep:

- **We sleep to learn.** During deep sleep our brain reactivates the memories laid down during the day, strengthens connections, and consolidates information. This reactivation process is how we store things in our long-term memory.
- **We sleep to sweep.** With all the energy our brains consume during the day, toxic waste builds up in our brain tissues. If not flushed away, toxic waste buildup can damage brain tissues and can lead to cognitive decline and dementia. One system that helps our bodies flush this waste away is the glymphatic system, which removes the toxic waste from our



brain while we sleep and we eliminate it when we urinate in the morning.

Now that we know why sleep is important, here are ways to help us sleep better:

- **Pay attention to the afternoon.** What you do 4-6 hours before you go to bed can help you get a good night's sleep. Stay away from caffeine, nicotine and alcohol. Exercise has a profoundly positive effect on our ability to sleep, but try to do that earlier in the day or evening.
- **Create a stable sleep routine.** Go to your room to sleep at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every day.
- **Pay attention to your body cues.** If you can't fall asleep after 30 minutes, get up and read a non-electronic book, especially one that's boring.
- **Stay away from blue light** at least an hour before you sleep. This means laptops, TVs, mobile devices, etc. Blue light has been shown to trick our brain into thinking it's daylight.
- **Visit lots of friends during the day.** Social interactions give our brains a real workout, preparing it for sleep at night.

Other practices that can lead to better sleep include eating a light snack containing protein (e.g., nuts, eggs) and a complex carbohydrate (e.g., whole grain crackers, fruit) within 2 hours before bed, taking a warm shower or bath an hour before bedtime, or natural remedies such as herbal tea or turmeric. If you face persistent sleep problems, please talk to your health care provider.

Training Opportunity

This online training offers a certificate for 2 training hours. Cost is \$5.00 for the certificate.

A Good Night's Sleep: How Sleep Affects Health

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/lessons/a-good-night2019s-sleep-how-sleep-affects-health>

Featured Activity

Sleep Time Rituals: Breathe Deeply

Adapted from: *Rituals and Traditions* by
Jacky Howell and Kimberly Reinhard



What You Need:

- None

What to do:

1. While children are sitting up on their blankets before naptime, ask them to hold up their two fists in front of their faces with their thumbs pointing up.
2. Have them “smell a flower” as they inhale over one thumb.
3. Then have them “blow out the candle” as they exhale over the other thumb.
4. Repeat 3 times.

Citations

Medina, J. (2017). *Brain Rules for Aging Well*. John J. Medina: United States of America.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). *1 in 3 Adults Don't Get Enough Sleep*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/p0215-enough-sleep.html>



Join us on Facebook!
University of Hawaii Learning to Grow
www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii/

Learning to Grow Quality Child Care for Registered Home-Based Providers is a project of University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services ★ 808-462-4700 ★ www.learningtogrowhawaii.org

Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org

Infants and Toddlers

Goodnight Moon

by Margaret Wise Brown

“Goodnight stars...
Goodnight air... Goodnight
noises everywhere.”

These poetic words from
this classic children's
story has prepared many young
children for sleep time.



Time for Bed

by Mem Fox

Soft, cozy illustrations of
sleepy baby animals and
their soothing parents are
accompanied by rhyme
destined to lull wakeful little
ones to sleep.

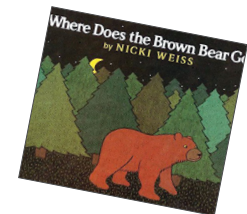


Preschoolers

Where Does the Brown Bear Go?

by Nicki Weiss

“When the lights go down
on the city street, where
does the white cat go,
honey? Where does the
white cat go?” The gentle
cadence of each verse and rich,
textured color-pencil illustrations makes
this a perfect sleep time book that will win
the hearts of young listeners.



Happy Birthday, Moon

by Frank Asch

Moonbear comes up
with the perfect birthday
gift for the moon in this
charming beloved classic
by award-winning author
and illustrator Frank Asch, who has
authored other Moonbear stories, including
Mooncake and *Moondance*.

