



Norththorpe Hall

Child & Family Trust



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Sleep Z

Information Sheet



What is sleep?

This might be a bit obvious, but sleep is a bit more than sleep. When we talk about good sleep, what we really mean is good sleeping patterns.

Sleep problems may be one or a combination of the following:

- Dropping off to sleep.
- Staying asleep; so waking up in the middle of the night, or waking especially early and not being able to go back to sleep.

Good sleep patterns help with energy levels, improved concentration, general mood levels of alertness and routines.

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Who may experience disrupted sleep?

All of us at different times.

Sleep patterns change during our lives. As an example new babies sleep for 17 to 18 hours per day. Adults usually have 6 – 8 hours per day. Older people perhaps just 5 to 6 hours.

Young People (Adolescents) need approximately 8 hours.

When will disrupted sleep be experienced?

So typical examples for Young People are:

- During times of change or uncertainty.
- When ill.
- Times of worry such as: Exams or tests.
- Active late night socialising. Here an occasional one is OK, but lots will affect sleeping patterns.

If you do wake up in the night and struggle to get back to sleep:

Try a relaxation (often if you've tried one that works, then your body/brain knows it can manage it again). Some people really do count sheep!!

Write down your "worries" in a note book, then pop in an envelope and seal putting tomorrow's date on it. Often there's very little we can do in the early hours of the morning. Some people find it useful to have a note book and few envelopes handy if this happens regularly.

What strategies can be used to support ourselves?

Late evening: Make sure you have some relaxation time. Perhaps have a calming or milky drink, a bath, read for a while. *This is part of teaching ourselves to have regular routines. Settling ourselves and having some “wind-down” time. We may need to think about what relaxes us.

*Please consider content of reading material. Something that doesn't activate the mind is preferred.

Checking our sleeping areas are as comfortable as possible. This includes bedding and pillows.

It is sufficiently dark. This helps our brains / minds to switch off.

There are no distractions that will be irritating or distracting such as loud ticking clocks or very bright digital clocks. A cut off time for computing/gaming is recommended (as this keeps the brain stimulated, which is the opposite of what is required for settling down).

Trying not to have sugary or fatty foods late in the evening.

Fresh air is circulating; perhaps through air vents in windows.

Some people like calming scents: lavender and vanilla are popular ones, however, there are plenty of others to try.

In the morning – have breakfast (or drink) near the window, or walk to school/college. This helps with the waking process.

Try to avoid afternoon naps (as this confuses the body rhythm).

Try one of these to relax prior to sleep.

Relaxation: Good relaxation always starts with focusing on your breathing. The way to do it is to breathe in and out slowly and in a regular rhythm as this will help you to calm down.

- Find somewhere calm to sit or lay down and make yourself comfortable.
- Fill up the whole of your lungs with air, without forcing. Imagine you're filling up a bottle, so that your lungs fill from the bottom.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in slowly and regularly counting from one to five (don't worry if you can't reach five at first).
- Then let the breath escape slowly, counting from one to five.
- Keep doing this until you feel calm. Breathe without pausing or holding your breath.

Practise this relaxed breathing for three to five minutes, two to three times a day (or whenever you feel stressed).

Deep muscle relaxation

This technique takes around 20 minutes. It stretches different muscles in turn and then relaxes them, to release tension from the body and relax your mind.

Find a warm, quiet place with no distractions. Get completely comfortable, either sitting or lying down. Close your eyes and begin by focusing on your breathing; breathing slowly and deeply, as described above.

If you have pain in certain muscles, or if there are muscles that you find it difficult to focus on, spend more time on relaxing other parts.

You may want to play some soothing music to help relaxation. As with all relaxation techniques, deep muscle relaxation will require a bit of practice before you start feeling its benefits.

For each exercise, hold the stretch for a few seconds, then relax. Repeat it a couple of times. It's useful to keep to the same order as you work through the muscle groups:

- Find somewhere calm or quiet to sit and make yourself comfortable.
- **Face:** push the eyebrows together, as though frowning, then release.
- **Neck:** gently tilt the head forwards, pushing chin down towards chest, then slowly lift again.
- **Shoulders:** pull them up towards the ears (shrug), and then relax them down towards the feet.
- **Chest:** breathe slowly and deeply into the diaphragm (below your bottom rib) so that you're using the whole of the lungs. Then breathe slowly out, allowing the belly to deflate as all the air is exhaled.
- **Arms:** stretch the arms away from the body, reach, and then relax.
- **Legs:** push the toes away from the body, then pull them towards body, then relax.
- **Wrists and hands:** stretch the wrist by pulling the hand up towards you, and stretch out the fingers and thumbs, then relax.

Spend some time lying quietly after your relaxation with your eyes closed.

Other sources of help / support and information.

Primary:

Hands on Scotland / Troubling behaviours / sleep.

http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk/topics/troubling_behaviours_topic_frameset.htm

Sleep for Kids:

<http://www.sleepforkids.org/>

Secondary:

Mood Juice / Sleep Problems (self help guides).

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/mildmoderate/SleepProblems.asp>

College:

CALM – for the boys

<http://www.thecalmzone.net/>

For Parents:

Mind Mental Health

<http://www.mind.org.uk/>

The Sleep Council:

www.sleepcouncil.org.uk

Apps:

“Get connected” available free on iOS or Android.