

Hello everyone!

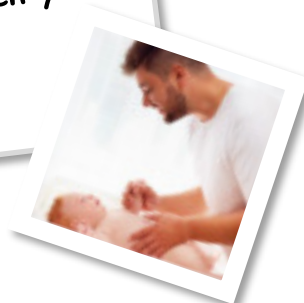
Hope you are all well and keeping safe during these challenging times. My name is Anne I am an Early Years Practitioner and trained Henry Facilitator and I run our Little Explorers sessions.

How are you all doing in these strange times? I miss working with you and your babies. I do hope you are enjoying these sessions and I would love to hear from you. I take every comment seriously and I think it would be nice to have this connection with you. We also have a short feedback survey and we'd be very grateful if you could complete it:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/GGJ9XP5>

I thought it would be a nice to keep in touch with you all by sharing some ways you can connect with your baby at home. We will be using the principles of **five to thrive**. Your baby's brain grows better when you do five simple things that feed it:

RESPOND. CUDDLE. RELAX. PLAY. TALK
Today let's look at **RELAX**



My brain grows better when you relax with me

"When I was born I had no way to calm myself or manage my own reactions. When we are stressed our bodies are full of chemicals which can be bad for the brain - we cannot control our stress. So, when I feel stressed I need you help me. My body works in tune with yours. When I am stressed, I need you to help me calm down. I know that having a baby is stressful. However, if you can find a way to relax when you are with me you can make a big difference to the way my brain works. When you relax, your heartbeat slows down and so does mine. As your breathing slows down, so does mine. As your blood pressure drops, so does mine. Your muscles relax, so do mine. Then you feel calm and comfortable, and so do I. This calm relaxed feeling fills my body with chemicals that help my brain to grow. Just remember that my brain works more slowly than yours, so it may take some time for me to respond"

Why is sleep so important for everyone in the household?

Sleep disturbance does not just affect a child's wellbeing. Family life with young children demands a great deal of energy, patience and resilience. Parents whose children wake frequently in the night are likely to suffer from sleep deprivation, making it much harder to cope well. If babies and children are awake for much of the evening, parents do not get those precious few hours at the end of the day to relax and have time to themselves. Parents describe how their child's lack of sleep (and therefore their own), comes to dominate daily life, resulting in; exhaustion, stress, relationship conflict, 'losing it' with the children and a reduced ability to enjoy life. It potentially affects their physical and mental health, as well as their ability to work. The impact of this sleep deprivation on parent's stress levels is made worse by other factors such as single parenting, isolation, relationships difficulties, financial and/or housing worries, a demanding work life and illness.

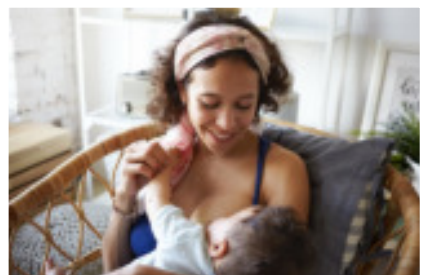
Making sure that babies and children get the sleep they need is essential for the health and wellbeing of your whole family.

Establishing consistent and effective bedtime routines can help both parents and children. Each family will develop their own routine, but parents find that the following tips and ideas can help to make bedtimes easier

How do I start a bedtime routine ?

Start a bedtime routine at the same time each day, about 30-40 minutes before you hope that the child will sleep, gradually adjusting this your child grows older.

- Each night repeat the same sequence of wind-down activities. This signals to the child that it is bedtime and helps them begin to relax.
- Have a bath.
- Breastfeed or give a bottle of milk.
- Brush their teeth.
- Have a bedtime story or look at a book together.
- Have a cuddle.
- Sing a song or play relaxing music.
- Stick to an agreed number of songs or stories before gentle and firmly saying goodnight.



I don't want to "spoil" my child by giving them too much attention. What does this mean?

There is lots of advice on "good" sleep routines out there but let me reassure you. You can't spoil a baby and your older children will not be spoiled by being close to you.

- Snuggling up with your toddler isn't a bad habit
- Laying next to your 6 year old so they feel safe is not a bad habit. It's instinctive to stay close to our children and for our children to stay close to us
- Don't deny them the comfort and safety they feel when they are close to you. Just snuggle them up and breathe them in.
- The security they feel from you will give them everything they need to be independent when the time comes.

How much sleep should my child be getting at each stage?

Although all babies and children are all different here is a handy table to refer to.

| Age | Optimum sleep | Changing sleep patterns and implications for parents |
|-------------|---------------|--|
| 0-3 months | 16-17 hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newborns sleep a lot in the early weeks, broken up, as they need to feed frequently. This can be exhausting for parents, but is completely normal and necessary. |
| 3-6 months | 15 hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleep patterns start to settle at about 4 months into shorter daytime naps and longer periods of night time sleep. At 4 months, babies need about 5 naps during the day, reducing to three or four by 6 months. |
| 6-12 months | 13-15 hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most babies start to follow a predictable daytime schedule, with morning and afternoon naps. As babies become more active around 8-10 months (learning to crawl, pull themselves up to a standing position and perhaps even take a few steps) it is not unusual for this to affect their sleeping patterns, this can feel as if things have gone back a step. Their baby may wake more frequently at night, have shorter or fewer daytime naps and take longer to get to sleep, but this is usually just a temporary phase. By 10 months the majority of babies will be sleeping through the night (or waking for just one night feed). Creating a predictable daytime sleep schedule for your baby (if they do not already have one) will help to ensure that they get enough sleep and will help night time sleep patterns too. |
| 1-2 years | 12-15 hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 18 months toddlers nap just once a day for 1-3 hours. As children grow older and become more aware, they may become reluctant to go to bed. Effective parenting skills and regular routines help parents to communicate consistent boundaries around bedtime. |
| 3-4 years | 11-13 hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most children have dropped their daytime nap by the age of 5 years. As their imagination develops, children may experience night time fear, nightmares, sleepwalking and sleep terrors. |
| School age | 9-11 hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children of this age may get less sleep than they need and/or have difficulty getting to sleep because of: demands of school and social/leisure activities, worries, TV computers and social media, food and drinks that contain stimulants such as caffeine. |

So far we've learnt a lot about sleep but how can I settle my baby on their own?

Here are some tips to help you settle your baby on their own, either in their own cot, bed or bedroom both during the day and at night.

Why not give them a try this evening or before their next nap?

Top Tips For Encouraging Independent Settling

- Try and avoid feeding or cuddling your baby to sleep, instead look out for signs that your baby is sleepy and put them down to sleep when they are drowsy but still awake.
- These signs might include becoming less active, making fewer noises sucking more slowly, eyelids drooping, becoming quieter and less interested in their surroundings.
- Try warming the cot before putting your baby down to sleep.
- Give older babies a toy, blanket or something that smells of you to take to bed with them (although it is best not to put objects in the cot if a baby is under 6 months to avoid the risk of suffocation).
- Make night-time boring by keeping the room dark and talking quietly and as little as possible.
- White noise can help a baby to settle. DVDs and downloads are available that have been specially designed to provide soothing background sounds.



Further Support

If you'd like further support on baby and child sleep here are some excellent resources;

The Lullaby Trust

www.lullabytrust.org.uk/file/Evidence-base-2016.pdf

The Baby Friendly Initiative (2016) Caring for your baby at night : a guide for parents (online) UNICEF UK.

Available at :

www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriend/baby-friendly-resources/leaflets-and-posters/caring-for-your-baby-at-night/

Infant Sleep Information Source (ISIS)

www.isisonline.org.uk