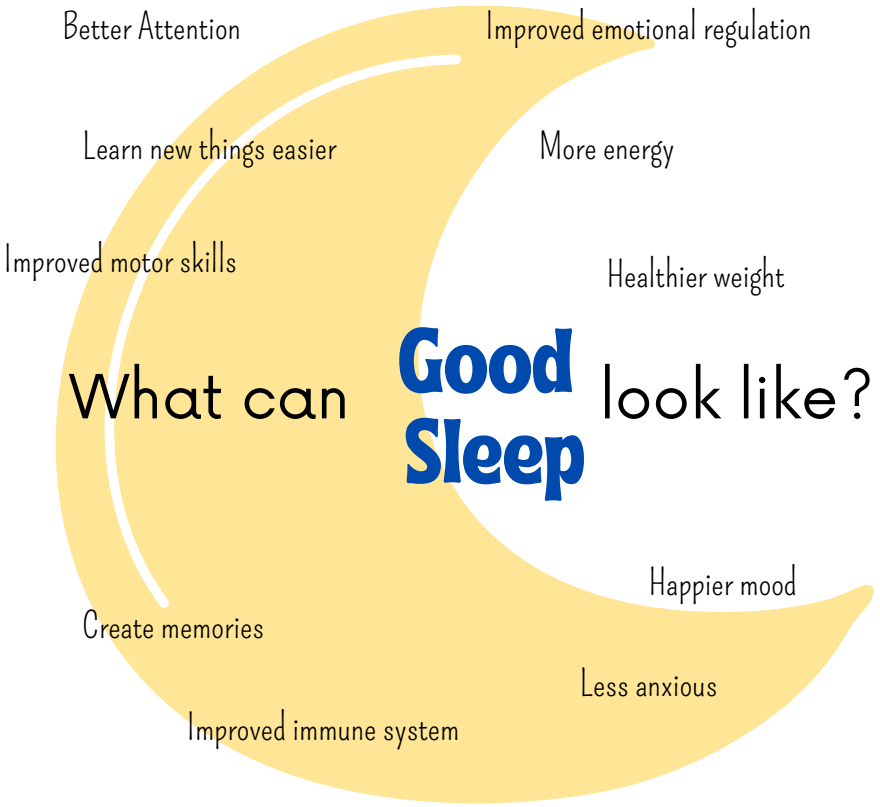
Sleep impacts almost EVERY aspect of life!!





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Getting to Sleep...

Requires a skilled transition from awake to asleep.



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Which is MUCH MORE difficult when experiencing overload or you are actively ALERTING your body & brain!

When you are overstimulated, anxious or overwhelmed...



It can also be difficult if your nervous system is UNDERAROUSED or you haven't had enough physical activity or stimulation during the day! When you are zoned out and less engaged but not "sleepy" or "tired".



Supporting Sleep

Routines and predictability are important in developing a bedtime rhythm. Set a bedtime routine and try to STICK with IT (including the same TIME! The predictability is calming for your child. If parts of it aren't working, you can shift one thing at a time. Try using pictures to show your child the routine such as the one below:



Find what is calming to support your child for sleep:

Vision - Eyes



- Dim lights 30- 60 minutes before bedtime (create a darker environment).
- Turn ON bright lights after waking up in the morning (this helps the circadian rhythms throughout the day)
- Stop using screens at least 1 hour before bedtime (blue light). Limiting electronics is VERY important to support smoother bedtime transitions and falling asleep
- Watching a lava lamp
- Doing a puzzle, blowing bubbles or looking at a book
- Some children enjoy sleeping in a tent or shelter to block out the visuals and light around them
- Some children like pitch black, others like a small night light
- .....
- .....
- .....

Auditory - Ears



- Play quiet music (try out this Spotify playlist)
- Use a white noise app, system or fan to block out other noises.
- Read book(s) together.
- Use a quiet, calm voice when talking
- Sing quiet songs to your child, or sing together
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- .....
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Supporting Sleep

What is calming for your child?

Oral - Mouth



- A small snack can be part of the bedtime routine, try to avoid sugars, fatty foods or caffeine products. **NOTE:** Too big of a snack will trigger the digestive system, which is an active system and can delay sleep.
- Warm drinks can be calming
- Some children enjoy using chewlery to calm their body and brain as they prepare for sleep
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- .....
- .....

Nose



- If you take deep, slow breaths it can be regulating and calming for your child. Try to be conscious of how fast you are breathing, and slow it down.
- Encourage your child to do belly breathing (breathe in and raise tummy, breathe out and lower tummy)
- Calming essential oils are helpful for some people (NOTE: lavender is actually alerting or noxious for some people) - use with caution.
- Ensure the smell of the lotion or shampoo isn't bothering your child, try unscented products
- .....
- .....

Touch



- Cuddling together can provide soothing touch
- Ensure the temperature is not too hot or cold
- Use a "heat bean bag" for soothing warmth
- Explore using weighted products for falling asleep (less than 10% of child's weight, and only if they can remove it on their own) and remove once they are asleep.
- Rub your child's back or just place your hand with a heavy touch to help your child calm and settle
- Wrap your child in a blanket, or make cozy with pillows or stuffies all around them like a cocoon
- Ensure your child feels safe
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Supporting Sleep

What is calming for your child?

Vestibular



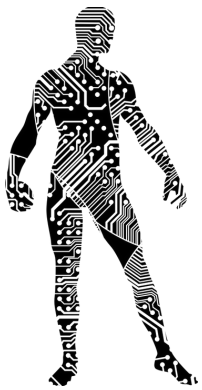
- Rock slowly on a rocking chair or swing, or rock child in your arms
- Ensure movement is slow and steady as this is most calming for the nervous system.
- Ensure your child has enough opportunity to run, jump, play and move LOTS during the day.
- Spending lots of time outside moving is regulating and helpful in preparing the body for sleep (in sun, rain, shine, snow or cold!)
- .....
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Proprioception



- Provide a sustained and strong cuddle if holding your child and trying to get them to sleep
- Massage your child before sleep to try and calm them down
- Sucking is a form of deep pressure (see oral tips)
- If you “pat” or tap your child's back, try to do it in a rhythmic fashion (you can combine deep breathing with the rhythm)
- .....
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Interoception



- Ensure your child isn't hungry, thirsty, in pain, has to go to the bathroom, and is a comfortable temperature.
- Look for signs of constipation or difficulty with digestion as these can impact a child's ability to settle to sleep if they are uncomfortable!
- Ensure the room is set-up for sleep (dark lighting) and your child falls asleep in bed.
- .....
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- .....

Be a detective and try to maintain your calm as you explore the tools that best support your child!

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