

SLEEP HANDBOOK

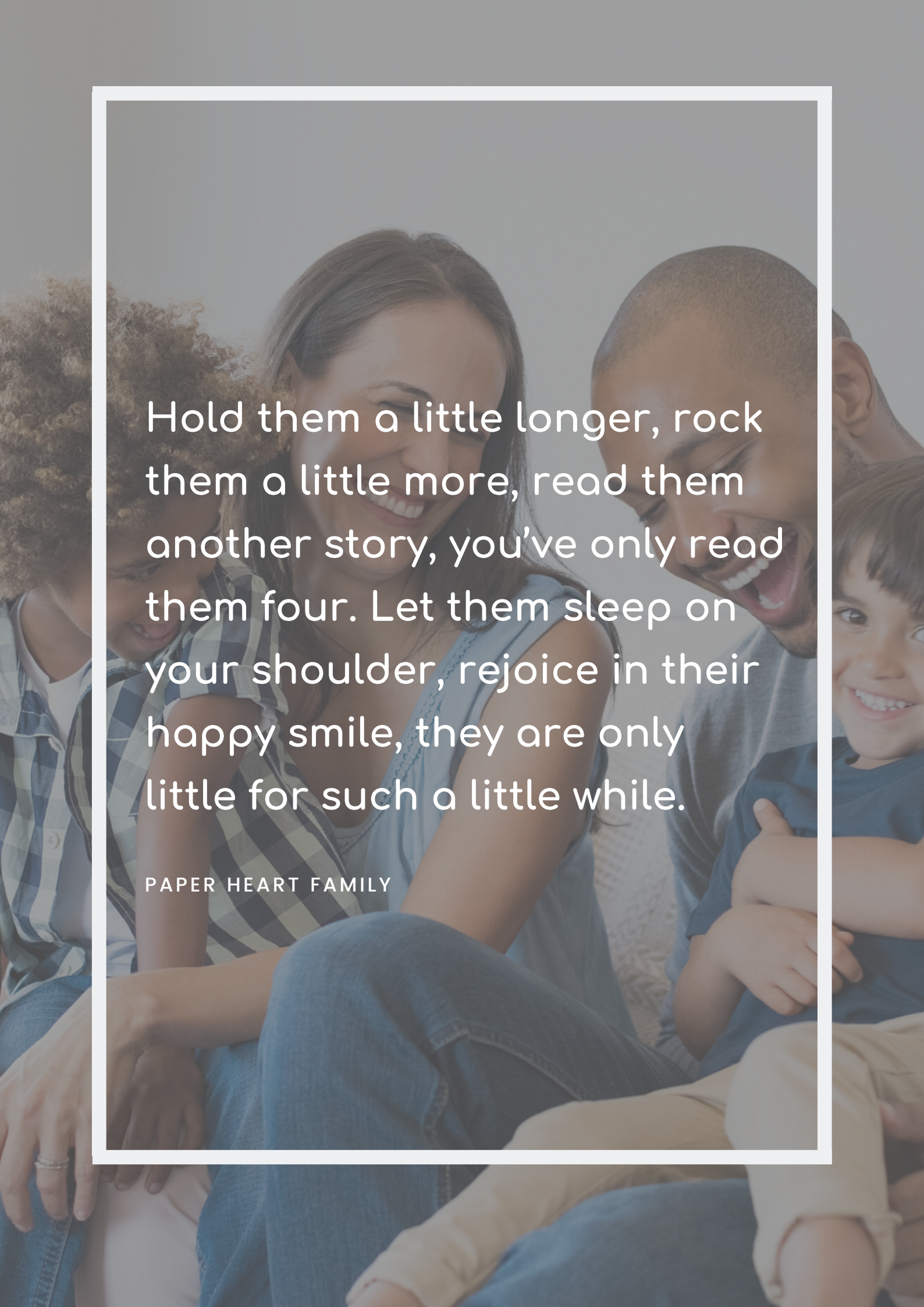
YOUR GUIDE TO ALL THINGS SLEEP

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Blissed Out Babies

Baby Massage and Sleep Coaching

A photograph of a family of four—a mother, a father, and two young children—huddled together in a warm embrace. The mother, with long brown hair, is smiling broadly. The father, with a shaved head, is also smiling and looking down at the children. The children, a girl with curly hair and a boy with dark hair, are both smiling. They are all wearing casual clothing. The image has a soft, slightly desaturated aesthetic with a white border.

Hold them a little longer, rock
them a little more, read them
another story, you've only read
them four. Let them sleep on
your shoulder, rejoice in their
happy smile, they are only
little for such a little while.

PAPER HEART FAMILY



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Welcome

Hi!

I'm Jemma and I am a sleep GEEK! I'm a Mother of 2 who is obsessed by all things sleep.



Thank you for choosing me to help you with your sleep challenges. I am excited and privileged to be working with you to help you change your family's lives for the better.

This handbook is designed to work alongside your personalised sleep plan. It is packed full of information about how sleep works and also with top tips to help you get the most from your sleep package.

If you understand the science of sleep you will have a brilliant basis to be able to understand why things happen and what you can do to help.

Good luck xx



Why do we need sleep?

First things first, we all know how we feel when we don't get enough sleep. But what is the real reason why we need sleep and what are the short and long term effects of not having enough? Here are some sleep facts.



Growth

Sleep contributes to growth, as the growth hormone is mainly released at night



Brain

Cell growth, and more brain connections occur at night



Learning

Deep sleep helps consolidate new experiences with existing memory



Physical Health

A long term lack of sleep is linked to obesity



Mental Health

Sleep problems can affect parental mental health



Relationships

Infant sleep problems can impact parental relationships



What is 'normal'

It is important to understand what 'normal' sleep habits in children are. It is a fact of life that babies and young children's sleep patterns will almost certainly not match those of us parents. This can be extremely frustrating and of course tiring to the point of exhaustion but we must understand what may just be 'normal' and adjust our expectations accordingly.

Is your baby good?

Commonly, one of the first questions asked of new parents is 'Is he/she good?' What this often really means is 'Do they sleep?' or even 'Are they quiet and not needy of your attention?' The reality is that babies are not programmed to sleep for long periods and in fact 6-12 month old babies wake on average 1-3 times per night with just under 20% of 6 month old babies sleeping through the night. They are also vulnerable infants who need our attention!

That's not to say that all hope is lost, if your baby is waking numerous times per night, taking short naps in the day or not napping well at all, with some gentle behaviour modification and support, things can often be improved.

How much should my baby sleep?

The table opposite shows 'average' sleep needs by age. If your little one is struggling to make it to bedtime, or you're having bedtime battles, early wakes or a disturbed early evening, it is worth reviewing how much sleep he or she is getting. Tweak naps accordingly but please note your little one may need more or less sleep than shown.



	Up to 6 Months	6 - 18 Months	18 - 30 Months	2.5 - 4 Years	4 Years +
Sleep Needs	12 - 18 hours per day	12 - 15 hours per day	12 - 15 hours per day	11 - 13 hours per day	10 - 12 hours per day
Naps	Usually 3	1 - 3	1 - 2	Usually none	None
Continence	In nappies	In nappies	In nappies	Usually dry (May wet the bed)	Usually dry (May wet the bed)
Mobility / Activity	May roll / sit	Sit, crawl, cruise, walk	Walk, run, jump – lots of energy	Walk, jump, climb, ride a scooter, dance	Walk, jump, climb, scooter, bike, ballet/dance, sports
Food	Should only need breast milk or formula	Introduction to solids with varying degrees of success/ acceptance	May be a fussy eater	May be a fussy eater	Usually diet has improved
Night Feeding	Yes	Probably	Possibly	Probably Not	No
Health	Immature immune system, teething	Frequent coughs / colds, teething	Iron deficiency, toddler diarrhoea	Frequent coughs, colds	Less frequent illness

Note that all babies are different and whilst most 3 year olds won't need a daily nap, some still will. See what works for your child.

Optimising naps

Optimising naps during the daytime can be one of the best tools that you can use to get the best chance of an easier bedtime and longer stretches of sleep overnight.

Try to observe your baby, watch for an emergence of their natural rhythms, and see if you can identify your baby's unique signs of tiredness.

In identifying your baby's own way of telling you they're tired you will be able to avoid missing the window.



Some babies only show one or two early signs of tiredness before becoming quickly overtired. Other babies have a fairly high tolerance, and can cope with more awake time. Still, other babies seem to show no early signs at all, and seem to go from zero to sixty in a matter of seconds.

Over tiredness can present in the strangest way – hyperactivity! WHY?!

What happens here is the body realises that it hasn't had enough rest and produces cortisol to keep going. If your toddler is having a crazy half hour before bedtime and you find it hard to settle them, they're likely to be over tired and you may need to review their nap or daytime schedule.

We will discuss cortisol further in the next section.


Early signs to look for

Yawning / fussing / losing interest in toys or people / turning face away / glazed expression / waving arms and legs / looking pale / going quiet

Late signs to look for

Grimacing / back arching / asking for comfort through feeding / not wanting to be put down / rubbing eyes / pulling up knees / vigorous wriggling / crying or being inconsolable / pulling ears / rubbing face on parents chest or shoulder



A photograph of a family of four (mother, father, and two children) laughing and playing on a bed. The mother is on the left, the father is in the center, and two children are in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white box containing text.

The very fact you worry about
being a good parent
means that

you already are one

JODI PICOULT

The Science of Sleep

Whilst ultimately sleep is a homeostatic process - i.e. a self regulating internal process, there is a lot going on to help to make our bodies nod off.

Knowing a little about how it works can help you to make decisions on how to be responsive to your child's sleep needs day and night.

Cool Cortisol

Cortisol is often referred to as the stress hormone, and quite wrongly has a bit of a bad reputation. Cortisol can be thought of as our body's own version of caffeine so whilst it does the brilliant job of keeping us going when our bodies are tired (amongst lots of other brilliant things) we don't want cortisol levels to be high when it comes to bedtime.

It is produced while we are awake and the levels are highest in the morning and fall over the course of the day.

Cortisol can be produced physiologically e.g. hunger or psychologically e.g. through stress. It is what gives children that 'second wind' when they are tired. It is important for babies and children to have good naps as this will reduce the amount of cortisol in their bodies by bedtime. I always recommend reviewing day sleep and optimising the naps length and times as the first step to manage cortisol levels ready for the evening.



Magic Melatonin

Our bodies need to produce the hormone Melatonin to be able to go to and stay asleep at night. This hormone is naturally low when we are exposed to light and rises in the dark, which is why in Summer it is often harder for babies and children to go to sleep in the evening.

Babies start to produce their own melatonin between 0 and 6 months, mostly around 3 or 4 months, which is why we sometimes see a 'regression' in their sleep habits around this time.

Melatonin rises from falling asleep until around midnight which is why this is often the most settled sleep of the night. There's a well-known phrase – "every hour spent asleep before midnight is worth two hours spent asleep after midnight" this is exactly why! After midnight, melatonin levels begin to reduce until at around 5am when it is gone, if something disturbs the baby then they will find it extremely hard to go back to sleep at this point.



Circadian Rhythm

A circadian rhythm is a natural, internal process that regulates the sleep-wake cycle and repeats roughly every 24 hours. It controls body temperature (low in the morning and high in the evening), hormone release (melatonin produced in the dark), urine production (low at night) and blood pressure changes and is affected by light, noise, food and travel.

A baby's circadian rhythm is linked to Mum's in the womb, so when they are born they need to develop their own, which takes time. This means they will have lots of reasonably short periods of sleep and often have periods of awake time in the middle of the night!

How can we help to establish the Circadian Rhythm?

Light

Exposure to daylight helps with the natural production of serotonin which makes the baby (and us!) feel more alert. Dimming lights in the evening and having a really dark sleeping space helps with the production of melatonin and can help them sleep for longer, especially in the Summer months. Blackout blinds and curtains are a real lifesaver!

Routine

Consistent timings for wake up and bed times as well as for naps and meals (after weaning to solids) will help little ones to understand the time of the day. No need to be completely rigid every day but consistency 80% of the time helps. Have a consistent daily bedtime routine of no more than 45 minutes.

Exercise and Stimulation

Encourage exercise and stimulation at appropriate times of the day. Children should get as much exercise in the day as possible. For babies this may be some tummy time, or playing with the baby gym etc. and for toddlers and older children, playing in the park, running, jumping playing physical games, dancing etc.

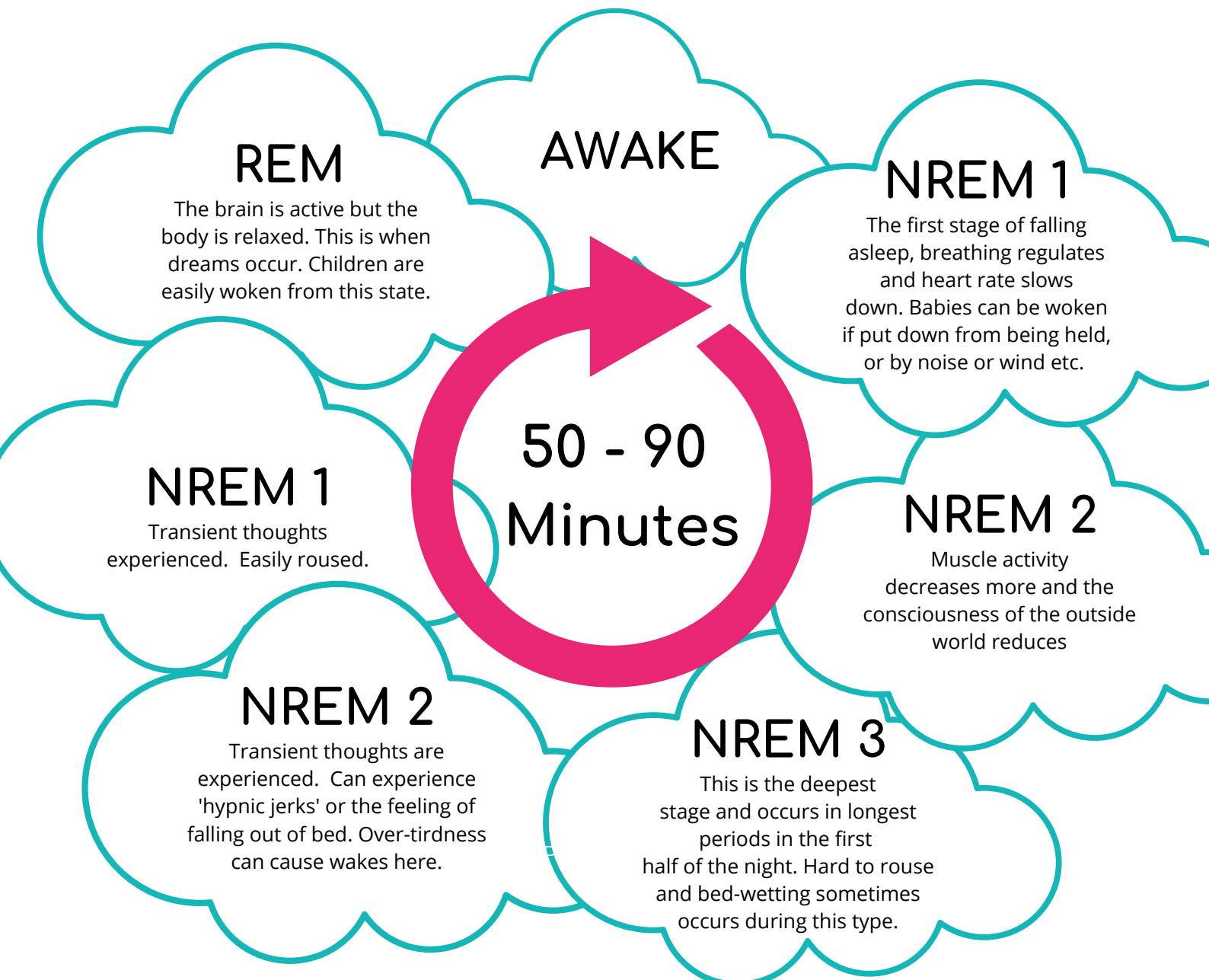
Keep any stimulation close to bedtime calm. TV emits blue light which has been proven to affect the onset of sleep so try to avoid too much in the evening. The advice is to turn screens off hours before bedtime.

Sleep Cycles

Our brains move between different types of sleep in each sleep cycle. Each of the different types of sleep affect brain development.

It is very important for brain development and growth that babies go through all the types of sleep in the sleep cycles, using your personalised plan will help you to optimise your child's nap routine to help them to do so.

A newborn baby's sleep cycle is very simple - REM - NREM 3 - REM - NREM 3 until it matures into a more complex cycle around 4-6 months. This shift is commonly known as the 4 month sleep regression, a little misleading as actually it is a huge development rather than a backwards step!



Sleep Onset Latency

This is a really important one to understand and remember.

Sleep latency is the time it takes to fall asleep and the optimum time is 15-20 minutes. It's a popular misconception in parents that bedtime has gone well when the child falls asleep instantly. What this actually shows is that they were overtired. Noting how long your child takes to fall asleep gives a really good indication of their sleep pathology.

You can tell that they're not asleep yet if they still have erratic breathing, babies will still grip your finger and they may be tossing and turning still.

The impact of a short sleep onset latency is that the first part of the sleep cycle will be completely missed which can present in regular waking after bedtime until they 'catch up'.

What we will do as part of your personalised plan is to work on a daytime schedule that will ensue your child is good and ready for sleep and that they are happy to be by themselves in the sleep latency



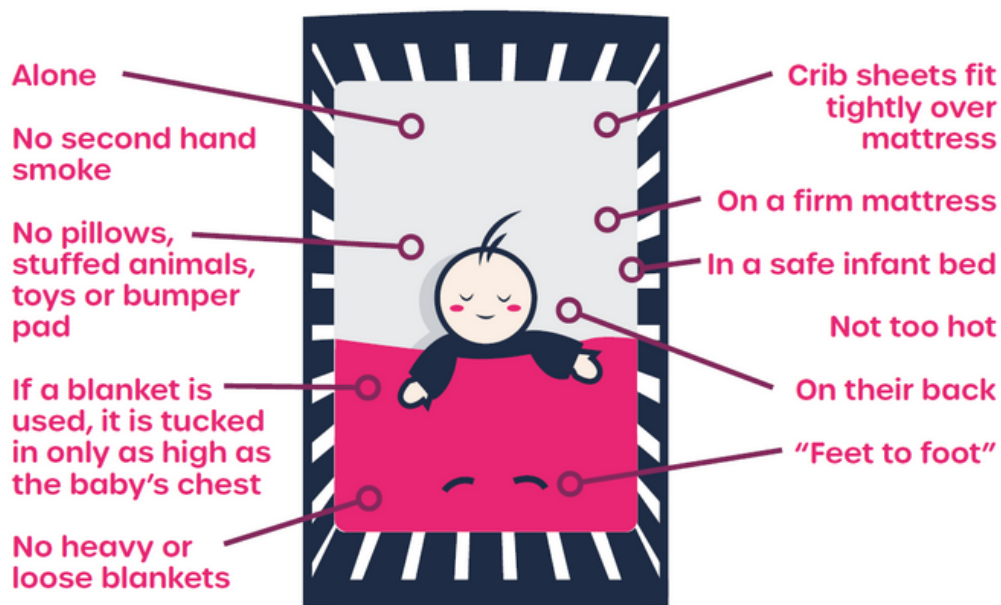
The Practicalities

Whatever sleep strategy you choose for your family, you must always observe safe sleep practices, further information can be found at The Lullaby Trust.

The 6 recommendations for safe sleep.

- 1 - Back to sleep: always put them down on their backs to sleep
- 2 - Feet to foot: always place the child's feet at the foot of the cot
- 3 - Not too hot
- 4 - No smoking
- 5 - Breastfeed if possible
- 6 - In the same room as parents for at least the first 6 months

The Sleep Environment



Optimising the Sleep Environment

Creating the optimum sleep environment for your little one will give you the best chance of seeing success from your efforts. These recommendations aren't compulsory but will definitely help.

Dark Room



Particularly when your child has established their own circadian rhythm at 3 or 4 months old, a dark room will be a game changer. Using blackout blinds and curtains is a great start but I also highly recommend a GroBlind which sticks to the window, they are perfect for eliminating almost all of that light that can still creep in around blinds and curtains and are portable so perfect for taking on holiday. Avoid using night lights, sometimes they can emit blue light even when they look red and can actually be stimulating rather than calming.

Temperature



Get a room thermometer so you're able to check the room temperature. Too hot and this can stop children from falling asleep, too cold and they're likely to wake up. According to the Lullaby Trust, a room temperature of 16-20°C – with light bedding or a lightweight, well-fitting baby sleep bag is comfortable and safe for sleeping babies. Regular 3.30am wakes could be caused by being too cold. You can add socks to help with this or even better invest in a sleeping bag. Before the age of 3, not all children will be able to understand that they need to pull blankets or duvets back over themselves so it is a good idea to keep them in a sleeping bag for as long as possible. Sleeping bags are available in different togs or the different seasons and are ideal for keeping baby nice and warm all night.

White Noise



In the womb, our babies were exposed to constant noise from Mum's heartbeat to the whooshing and gurgling of blood flow and digestion. For them to then find themselves in absolute silence can be scary and distracting. Using white or pink noise can help to settle them and help them to stay asleep through sleep cycles. There are various apps and toys that can be used to provide white noise, choose one that doesn't end after a period of time. The white noise can help to distract from the normal sounds of the house and can even be used on holiday or on the move when needed.

Bedtime

Even as adults we have our sleep associations which help us get ourselves ready to sleep. We often have a set routine, go upstairs, brush teeth, wash face, get undressed and pull the covers over us, turn off the light. Despite us not always recognising it as such, these routines are important in getting our minds ready for the onset of sleep.

Children thrive on routine so having a calm, nurturing bedtime of no longer than 45 minutes can really help.



When deciding on what to do for your bedtime routine, you should plan a routine that you are to do exactly the same every night. Ask yourself while bath time might be relaxing for baby, is it something you will be able to include every night for a couple of years?

- The routine should be calm and relaxing, keep the lights low and keep sounds low and calm.
- Change the nappy as close to bedtime as possible and avoid TV in the routine as blue light can stimulate.
- I recommend that once you go up to the bedroom that is where you stay.
- If you're really consistent with the routine your baby will start to recognise the sleep cues and will naturally start to understand that sleep time is coming.
- Think about implementing a sleep phrase such as 'Night night, it's sleepy time now' that you will say this every time you put them to bed.
- For naps in the day, you can use a shortened version of the bedtime routine to help with consistency.



Naps

When and how children nap will have a huge impact on their overnight sleep. I will always recommend that daytime naps are reviewed and tweaked as a starting point as if we can get your baby napping well in the day, night times almost always improve somewhat by themselves.

After 3 or 4 months, a baby's daytime sleep cycle will be around 45 - 60 minutes. This is why we will usually see much shorter daytime naps and more frequent wakes overnight.

A big part of feeling like you have had success in putting your child down for a nap or for their main sleep is that they don't fight it too much, my recommendations will give you the skills to work on a plan to best ensure they are not over or under tired, both of which can make bed and nap times a chore for everyone.

What we will work on is understanding your baby's capacity for awake time. By understanding this you will be able to more accurately predict when your baby will be ready for their nap or bedtime.

Over tired Signs

- May seem hyperactive
- Difficult to settle, squirming, arms flailing
- They might push away from your chest,
- Pulling glasses off you or pulling hair
- Only napping for 45 minutes
- Waking 45 minutes after going to bed
- Early wakes
- Waking lots overnight



I would recommend, where possible, that you put baby down to nap at home in their normal sleep environment. Of course it's not always practical to be at home all the time to facilitate this but I would highly recommend spending some time at home for a week or so to try and establish a good nap schedule. Once baby has their naps working it's much easier to do some on the go.

Try not to look at it as being stuck at home but more as having some predictable down time in the chaos of motherhood, it is important that you have time to yourself too!

Under tired Signs

- Difficult to settle
- Crying when trying to put down
- Short naps
- Waking in the night for a long period
- Early wakes



Foods to help sleep

Experiment with your child's food intake to find the right amount of food to have in the evening. It takes around an hour for the tryptophan in foods to reach the brain, so give a snack an hour or so before bedtime.

Tryptophan is an amino acid that our body uses to make serotonin; the neurotransmitter that slows down nerve traffic to help calm the brain. Serotonin is also the precursor to the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin. In fact several studies have shown that increasing tryptophan in your diet can improve your levels of melatonin leading to a positive impact on your sleep.

Many foods high in lean protein such as chicken and turkey, eggs, fish, peanut butter, nuts, seeds, and cottage cheese are high in tryptophan and are good “sleeper” foods.

Research also suggests that combining tryptophan rich foods with complex carbohydrates will help the body get the most benefits from tryptophan. It is best to combine your tryptophan foods with complex carbs such as brown rice, oat cakes, whole grain bread, quinoa, brown pasta, buckwheat or whole-wheat crackers.

Cherries are one of the few natural foods to contain melatonin. Just a handful of delicious cherries will help promote sleep. Research has shown nuts such as almonds, walnuts and pistachios are also a good source of melatonin, helping to increase our circulating melatonin.

Bananas can also help promote sleep as they contain the natural muscle-relaxants magnesium and potassium; also good for cardiovascular health and cognitive functioning.

Sweet potatoes are a sleeper's dream. Not only do they provide sleep-promoting complex carbohydrates, they also contain muscle-relaxant potassium. Other good sources of potassium include regular potatoes (baked and keep the skin on), lima beans, and papaya



Foods that inhibit sleep

It is good idea to avoid foods that stimulate neurochemicals that perk up the brain such as sugar.

Sugary snacks or drink at bedtime will not only give your child a boost of energy hindering them from falling asleep but research has also shown them to be a cause of nightmares.

Typical fizzy drinks contain citrus as well as sodium benzoate and other chemicals which can aggravate the gastrointestinal tract and promote acid reflux, not a recipe for a good night's sleep.

Caffeine has a half-life of 5-7 hours so aim to avoid any caffeinated drinks or food no later than midday. Tea, coffee, chocolate and coca cola can profoundly disrupt night time sleep and delay bedtime. Instead try having a calming herbal tea like Chamomile or Fennel tea.

Generally high fat and heavily processed foods will be difficult to digest so they can disrupt sleep cycles, best to avoid close to bedtime!



Sleep Associations



From being very young, babies are used to falling asleep easily until their own circadian rhythm kicks in (3-4 months old), after then they will find it much harder to go to sleep without some help from parents. This help may come from feeding or rocking to sleep for example. These are known as sleep associations and the child will need you to do them every time they need to go for a nap, go to bed and wake in the night. This can become difficult to maintain and exhausting!

What I would like say is that none of these sleep associations are 'bad', none of them will do your baby any harm whatsoever. The only reason to stop them, or to try to change them is when it becomes unmanageable for you to continue. By all means if you are happy to feed to sleep every wake then absolutely carry on doing so and don't feel bad about it. If you find it too tiring and want to stop, your personalised plan suggests gentle ways to help.

The techniques I recommend for changing sleep associations are known as gentle behaviour modification always and do not involve cry it out or controlled crying methods.

Prolonged periods of crying raise levels of cortisol which in the very long term can not only impact on brain development but is also detrimental to the immediate sleep cycle so whilst it can appear to be a quick fix it is often likely to cause issues further down the line.

It is natural that these gentle methods can sometimes take a bit longer to implement but for me it's worth it to avoid prolonged crying which can be extremely distressing for everyone.

It is all about consistency, responsiveness and LOVE.

Regressions

There are so many changes in our children in the first few years of life, their brains are growing and they are constantly learning new skills. This can often have an impact on their sleep and these periods are known as sleep 'regressions'. Its so unfair to call them a regression as actually it shows the huge changes your little one is experiencing, its a great sign that they are growing and developing as they should!

Some babies might sail through these huge developments without any problems whilst others will really be affected.

3-6 months

Anywhere around 3-4 months, your baby's natural circadian rhythm will kick in, this is most commonly known as the '4 month sleep regression'.

This presents as them being far less sleepy and needing some help to go to sleep, but also waking between sleep cycles and so having much shorter naps and waking more overnight. It is after this regression that you will need to help your little one to learn how to fall asleep gently. My recommendations will give you personalised techniques to help.



6-18 months

There are also regressions at other stages, around 6 months, 8 months and 18 months. They may not be at exactly these ages but will fall in line with them learning new skills such as rolling, crawling, pulling themselves up to standing, or at times where they are getting used to dropping a nap. If your child already sleeping and settling well, then you should be consistent with your routines and it will pass usually in a couple of weeks.

2 years +

At roughly 2 years toddlers become more aware of themselves and the world around them and will try any tactic to delay going to bed as they don't want to miss out on any fun!

This is a normal developmental stage and despite them resisting bedtime is not a sign to drop the nap just yet, they will still need a nap until closer to 2.5 – 3 years old, sometimes even older.

Quick Wins Checklist

THINGS TO TRY WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

OPTIMISE THE SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

- ☐ Check for daylight / blue light
- ☐ Temp not too hot/too cold
- ☐ Too noisy? Try pink/white noise

OPTIMISE SLEEP HYGIENE

- ☐ Watch those tired cues
- ☐ No screens 2 hours before bed
- ☐ Review day sleep needs
- ☐ Tweak nap times/lengths

BEDTIME ROUTINE

- ☐ Around 45 minutes
- ☐ Calm and nurturing
- ☐ Dimmed lights
- ☐ Consistent

TIMINGS

- ☐ Wake at same time each day
- ☐ Main meals at regular times
- ☐ Bedtime the same each day

FOOD

- ☐ Are meal times regular?
- ☐ Offer a bedtime snack at start of bedtime routine
- ☐ At least 2 hours between last meal and bedtime

SELF CARE

- ☐ Ask for help from friends / relatives
- ☐ Take time for yourself, exercise, reading, yoga etc.
- ☐ Give yourself a break, you're doing an amazing job