

# PARENT INSPIRATION

## Sleep to Succeed!

**W**e know sleep is important for healthy growth, for fighting disease and for improving our mood. But sleep is an often overlooked element of successful learning and development. This week we look at how much sleep kids need and how it contributes to success in school.

### HOW MUCH SLEEP DOES YOUR CHILD NEED?

Preschoolers (3-5) need 11-13 hours of sleep each night. School aged children (5-12) need 10-11 hours of sleep. Teens need 9+ hours of sleep and suffer most from lack of sleep which is especially dangerous if they are driving.<sup>1</sup> If a child has a burst of energy at night it means they really needed to be in bed earlier. Teens really do get tired later and do need to sleep longer in the morning. However, letting them sleep in weekends makes it worse, so they are best awakened by 10:00 a.m.<sup>2</sup>

### THE SLEEP-SCHOOL LINK

Mood swings, behavioral problems (like hyperactivity), and cognitive problems which affect students' ability to learn can all be caused by too little or poor quality sleep.<sup>3</sup> Adequate sleep is needed before and after learning a new task in order to help memory. Mood, motivation and judgment are all impacted by sleep.<sup>4</sup> Self-control, which we all use to focus on a task, pay attention, and control our behavior, is lessened when people of all ages don't get enough sleep. This is true even if one doesn't FEEL tired.<sup>5</sup>

Researchers have also found that children with sleeping difficulties scored higher (than other children) on all ADHD subscales, including hyperactivity/impulsivity and inattention.<sup>6</sup> In fact, losing less than one hour of nightly sleep for a week makes it harder for children

with ADHD to remain attentive.<sup>7</sup> While ADHD and ADD can have many variables, one study found that treating sleep problems alone was enough to eliminate attention and hyperactivity issues in some children.<sup>8</sup>

### GETTING CHILDREN TO SLEEP<sup>9</sup>

1. Teach school-aged children about healthy sleep habits.
2. Emphasize need for regular and consistent sleep schedule and bedtime routine.
3. Keep your child's room dark, cool and quiet.
4. Keep TV and computers out of the bedroom.
5. Avoid caffeine.

Bedtime routines work well when parents plan ahead. Establish clear family rules, consistently kept by all family members. Guard at least an hour before bedtime for unhurried time for quiet interaction with family members or alone in preparing for sleep. This is an ideal time for family worship, followed by individual devotional time reading, praying and/or listening to calming music.

Ellen White makes the connection between sleep and holistic health that facilitates academic success this way: "If the youth would form habits of regularity and order (in going to bed at an appropriate time and waking up at an appropriate time), they would improve in health, in spirits, in memory, and in disposition."<sup>10</sup>



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## IN THE BIBLE

The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. Then Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn’t even have time to eat. Mark 6:30-32 NLT



## IN NATURE

Sleep isn’t just something that people do. Other mammals, birds, and fish sleep too. As a family, find out about the animals in your area.

How long do they sleep? Do they sleep in the day or at night? Did you know that creatures like ducks, whales, and dolphins sleep with only half their brain at a time! Three-toed sloths in captivity sleep for 15-20 hours a day but in the wild they sleep only about 9.5 hours. Why do you think wild sloths sleep less? Go out in the evening and watch for nocturnal animals like bats or owls or evening insects like fireflies—but don’t stay up too late as you need your sleep too!

## LEARN MORE

- Read about animals and sleep:
  - ★ [www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=how-do-whales-and-dolphin](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=how-do-whales-and-dolphin)
  - ★ [sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080513191934.htm](http://sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080513191934.htm)
  - ★ [faculty.washington.edu/chudler/chasleep.html](http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/chasleep.html)
- *Sleepless in America: Is Your Child Misbehaving ... or Missing Sleep?* By Mary Kurcinka (2007). HarperCollins: New York. This book provides practical ideas with humorous, real life stories from parents with whom Mary worked.
- Learn more from the referenced articles and books:
  - 1,3,8,9. The National Sleep Foundation, [sleepfoundation.org](http://sleepfoundation.org)
  2. Time for Bed by Susan Murray, [www.lakeunionherald.org/103/7/42402.html](http://www.lakeunionherald.org/103/7/42402.html)
  - 3,4. Sleep, Learning, and Memory, [tinyurl.com/28flgdv](http://tinyurl.com/28flgdv)
  5. Sleep consistency and sufficiency: are both necessary for less psychological strain? by Barber, Munz, Bagsby, & Powell (2010). *Stress and Health*, vol 26, pp 186–193.
  6. [medscape.com/viewarticle/702000](http://medscape.com/viewarticle/702000)
  7. Moderate sleep loss impairs vigilance and sustained attention in children with ADHD, [tinyurl.com/6elgago](http://tinyurl.com/6elgago)
  10. Child Guidance by Ellen White, p 111
- Ellen White’s books are freely available online at [egw-writings.org](http://egw-writings.org) or for sale through [adventistbookcenter.com](http://adventistbookcenter.com)

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