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## “Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep”

### Introduction

Within minutes of waking in the morning, I can tell if my husband has gotten enough sleep the night before. Smiles and lighthearted jokes don't come as quickly, and his usual peppy step is missing. His patience for my chatter or requests for help are not as easy to come by. And that's just after having one bad night of sleep!

I remember when we had our first newborn in the house and my husband was so kind to wake with me every three hours to help with feeding, burping, and diaper changes. One night I decided to let him sleep the whole night through and take care of the nighttime routine myself. I thought perhaps even though he was not fully awakened, he would still notice the two times that I had fed, burped, and changed our daughter, but in the morning he exclaimed, to my amusement, “Wow, she slept through the night, huh?”

We all need sleep. We need deep, uninterrupted hours of sleep at night and sufficient rest during the day in order to function

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at our best. In order to focus on our work, manage our households, and spend quality time with friends and family, we need to start the day with a rested and refreshed body, mind, and soul.

Chances are if your child is not sleeping tight throughout the night on his own then neither are you. Both of you are in dire need of rest. You are not functioning at optimal levels during the day, and you need this book as much as your child does. If you are not able to leave your child for the night with a kiss and gentle whispering of, "Sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite," then you need the hope provided here on the following pages. Read on.

### WELCOME!

Perhaps you come to this book as a new parent who is afraid to make any mistakes and wants to get it right from the start. You've come to the right place. Or it could be that you are a parent of a ten-month-old who hasn't learned the art of sleeping. Right place again. Or, you might be a seasoned parent of multiple children and you have not had a good night's sleep in years. Perhaps you have a friend or a daughter who desperately needs to hear a voice of reason in this emotional roller coaster of teaching your children the art of sleep. Welcome all.

We all know that sleep deprivation can affect one's disposition. But parents are often surprised to find that once their child is getting the rest she needs, she is no longer as grumpy or disagreeable as before. **What was once considered a 'personality trait' is discovered to be no more than a side effect of sleep deprivation.**

Consider this story involving a Colorado mom with whom I was consulting. During our initial interview the mom was telling me that her five-month-old daughter would get very irritated and impatient with the simplest of activities. Even pulling a shirt over

her head while trying to dress her would sometimes send her into frantic tears. Immediately after her daughter began getting sufficient rest during naps and at nighttime, this happy mom reported to me that her daughter no longer fussed over this simple task of dressing. In fact, the mom began to be able to predict her daughter's reaction based on the amount of sleep she got that day. She used to think her daughter was just fussy about dressing, but she realized that it was just her sleep-deprived state that brought tears easily and made it hard to be cooperative with even the simplest of tasks.

### A Sleep Crisis

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but you need to know that we 21<sup>st</sup> Century Americans are in the midst of a sleep crisis. It doesn't make the news as often as our national struggle with obesity, but it's just as real and just as serious. It's a crisis that is easy to overlook, because it's so widespread. What's normal is not what's best. One survey found that children of all age groups are on average being shortchanged an hour of sleep or more every night.<sup>1</sup> It's an epidemic that is impacting infants, school-age kids, teens, and adults. We're a nation of zombie insomniacs, and it's time for us to wake up and smell the highly caffeinated beverage of our choice!

Sleep deprivation affects a child's disposition by making him irritable, impatient, fussy, overly sensitive, and tearful. But if this were just about cranky kids and groggy parents, it wouldn't be such a big issue. The fact is that lack of sleep has been linked to a vast array of physical and psychological troubles. Here's a partial list:<sup>2</sup>

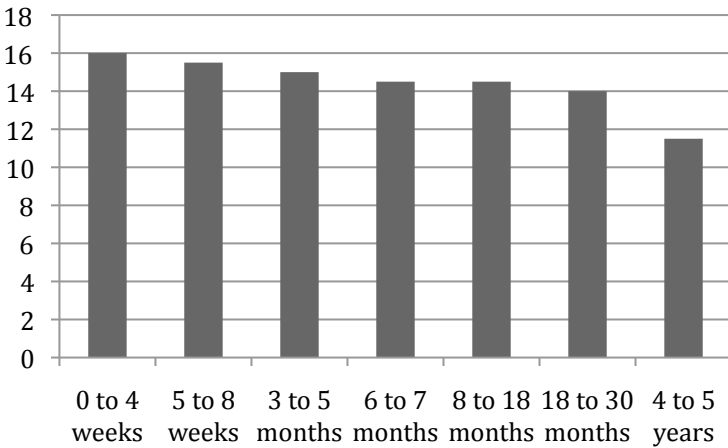
- ☾ Obesity
- ☾ Hindered physical development
- ☾ Lowered physical immunities
- ☾ Learning disabilities
- ☾ Negative self-image

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- ☾ Depression
- ☾ Behavioral problems
- ☾ Stress on the family

If you have a child now, take a look at the chart below and see if he or she is close to the recommended amount of sleep.<sup>3</sup> You

### Optimal Amount of Sleep in a 24-hour Period



will notice that the hours needed goes down very gradually. These are averages, so your child could need up to an hour more or less than what is listed. However, if you have, for instance, a seven-month-old who is only sleeping a total of 8 hours a day, chances are you will notice that he seems easily agitated and generally disagreeable most of the day. Consider that this is a result of sleep deprivation rather than a personality trait.

It is part of our job as parents to ensure that our child gets enough rest. **In conjunction with healthy activity, cognitive stimulation, proper nutrition, loving touch and words, vision and**

**direction for their lives, teaching our child the art of sleep is an essential piece of the puzzle in this journey of parenting.**

Has your child been labeled as a “poor sleeper?” Have you been told that she just might only need 7 hours of sleep at night? Are you convinced that she is beyond help? Is it hard to imagine things being any different?

Once a child is getting the regular rest he needs, parents will see change on many levels; a child who is happier, more contented, and overall more agreeable. He will be more focused, attentive, and function at higher levels physically, mentally, and emotionally. What’s more, parents will be better rested and happier, too! They will be enjoying quiet evenings with loved ones, reading luxurious novels during naptime, finding sanity and extra time to perhaps even dust off photo albums. You will be enjoying life more as it was intended.

That’s the good news: regardless of your circumstances, and no matter what others may have told you, it is not too late. The approach introduced in this book can help produce results. Of course, everyone’s circumstance is different. You may find that you can tackle this problem overnight. Or you may encounter a few wrinkles that require some perseverance and resolve. Either way, as long as you’re committed to making a change, you can be confident that the end result will be a healthier and happier family.

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### Sleep-Deprived Child:

- ☹ Easily irritated
- ☹ Unpredictable crying outbursts
- ☹ Distractible
- ☹ Clumsy
- ☹ Has trouble focusing on a task
- ☹ Clingy
- ☹ Wants to be held all day.
- ☹ Whiny
- ☹ Close-minded
- ☹ Generally disagreeable.
- ☹ Falls asleep whenever in the car or stroller.

### Well-Rested Child:

- ☺ Playful and patient
- ☺ Able to focus for extended periods of time and complete puzzles and other tasks.
- ☺ Can play alone happily for lengthy periods of time.
- ☺ Open-minded
- ☺ Cooperative.
- ☺ Alert and awake on outings.

### Where did this “Sleep Solution” come from?

I have had the privilege of working on the issue of sleep with so many wonderful families over the course of my time as a parenting consultant. I’m always inspired by the way that the parents’ love for their child manifests itself in their determination to go the extra mile and give them the very best care that they can give.

This book contains much of the same advice and techniques that I use with those parents. It worked for them, and it will work for you. Here you will discover a fresh, clear, and easy-to-understand look at the topic of sleep. The methods presented are simply outlined for easy understanding. There are step-by-step instructions, practical examples, and additional assistance for special

circumstances based on the most frequently asked questions regarding sleep.

It's often helpful to hear about the struggles and successes of other parents. Unfortunately, we don't often get the chance to get together and share those stories with each other. So throughout the book, I've included a few **"Tales from the Trenches."** In those real-life stories, we will have the privilege of getting a peek into the lives of a few different families and their experience with teaching their child to fall asleep on his own. Although the plan and outcome was very similar for each family, everyone's actual experience was particular to their situation. Some found their babies quickly slipping right into the routine with ease, while others struggled through months before they saw complete success. In every case, however, the end result was a child who was on a predictable routine where he was falling asleep on his own and getting enough rest during the day and night to function happily and contentedly throughout the day.

(Note: The names in these case studies and circumstances not essential to outcome have been changed to protect the privacy of the families represented here.)

If at any point you feel that you need additional help and support, please head over to [www.mothersfriendsos.com](http://www.mothersfriendsos.com). There you'll find more sleep resources, an interactive blog, and, best of all, a direct line to the author! I would love to hear about your own situation and story, so feel free to send me an email anytime.

### **What's Your Angle?**

You've very possibly had the experience of standing in the parenting aisle of your local bookstore, bewildered by the plethora of options when it comes to sleep books. If you dig into a few of

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those books, you'll discover that there are many different and even contradictory approaches to the issue of sleeping babies. Each of those approaches has its merits and value. So what makes this book different, and what philosophical point of view are we coming from? Fair question. To start with, we hold these truths near and dear:

- ☾ Sleep is something of a lost art in our culture, and it deserves to be rediscovered.
- ☾ Sleep training isn't rocket science, but it does help to have some basic facts under your belt.
- ☾ Routine: babies thrive on it.
- ☾ Parenting is meant to be enjoyed.

Next, the values below have guided the way that the material in this book is presented:

- ☾ **Accessibility.** Busy parents need to get at the material quickly. So we've cut out the filler and given you lots of charts, tables and checklists.
- ☾ **Bias-free.** No hidden agendas here, just solid medical research, real-life experiences, and the desire to give our kids the healthy and happy start to life that they deserve.
- ☾ **Community.** It takes a village, and our web community and one-on-one consulting will keep you connected and supported.

Finally, one overarching goal: **This book is for parents who want to teach their child to sleep on his own and stay asleep in his own bed all night long, as well as take good, restorative naps during the day.** That's the simple bottom line by which we'll measure our success.

## Hang In There, Baby!

You've heard the saying "it's harder on the parent than the child." That is definitely true in the case of sleep training. I've come across many reluctant parents for whom this process has taken its toll. But while the parent winces and cringes, the baby (after drying a few tears, perhaps) comes out if it smiling and happier than ever. The end result makes the hard part so worthwhile.

In my work with families, I've managed to identify the one factor that will determine the outcome of this endeavor: it's the perseverance of the parents. It could very well require some resolve, will power, and faith to see this process through.

The church down the street posted this saying on its marquee last week: "Obstacles are the fearful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal." As cliché as that is, it certainly applies to this endeavor. My husband (the sometimes-cranky guy I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter) is currently training to run his first marathon. Running 26.2 miles is something he never before would have thought possible. But he has a training routine laid out by an experienced coach. Some days he feels as if he's flying a few inches off the ground, while more often he feels like bricks are tied to his feet. Either way, he gets out there and follows the program. A clear goal, a trustworthy coach, and the determination to keep going.

Take a moment and think about what you'd like to see change in your family's daily routine. Don't be afraid to be specific, and don't be afraid to be ambitious. In fact, go ahead and write down your goal (or goals) on a note page at the back of this book. Good. Now you're one step closer to sleeping tight!

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It may be difficult to imagine a different reality in your family. But you're surrounded by those who have travelled this road before, so be encouraged, have hope, and hang in there!

So let's get to work. In the next chapter we'll confront the three most common "sleep myths."

Here's to the beginning of the journey!