



## **SLEEP AND PARENT WELLBEING**

### **Understanding Sleep: A Quick Recap**

Sleep supports a child's mood, learning, memory and their ability to cope with the world around them. When sleep is disrupted, it can lead to increased emotional responses, heightened sensory sensitivity and overall overwhelm.

The aim is not for perfect sleep. It is about small steps that help the body and brain feel calm and ready for rest.

### **Sleep Pressure and the Body Clock**

Sleep pressure builds throughout the day. The longer we are awake, the stronger the drive for sleep becomes. It helps if the day is filled with the right kind of activities. Being active, getting outside and avoiding overstimulation all help build this pressure in a healthy way.

The body clock (also known as the circadian rhythm) likes regular patterns. Things like waking up around the same time each morning, seeing natural light early in the day and having a familiar bedtime routine all help set the body clock.

### **What to do when sleep is still a struggle**

Sometimes, even after working hard on routines, things still feel difficult. This is where we bring back the detective mindset. Go back to the beginning and reassess. Something small may have shifted without your realising.

Use these prompts to check in:

- Has the bedroom environment changes? Thing light, noise, temperature or comfort
- Is the wind-down routine still the same? Are there any new habits creeping in?
- Have there been changes in your child's emotions or daily experiences?
- Is there enough movement and outdoor time during the day?

Ask yourself:

- What has been working well?
- What seems to be causing tension?
- What feels differently lately?
- What do I already know about what helps my child to sleep?
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### **Looking after your own Sleep and Wellbeing**

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Supporting a child with ongoing sleep struggles is exhausting. The broken nights, early wakeups and constant thinking about what to try next can take a real toll. It is hard to stay calm, think clearly or feel like yourself when you are running on empty.

This section is not about fixing your sleep- it is about finding ways to protect your own energy, even in a tough season.

- **Create a stronger link between your bed and sleep**

Try not to spend long periods lying in bed awake. If you are lying there for more than twenty to thirty minutes and sleep still isn't coming, get up and go to another space for a little while—keep lights low and do something calming like reading or folding washing. When you feel sleepy again, return to bed. This helps your brain re-learn that your bed is a place for sleep, not for overthinking or lying awake.

- **Keep your wind-down simple and repeatable**

You don't need an elaborate routine. Just a few small, repeatable steps before bed—like putting your phone in a drawer, making a herbal tea, and brushing your teeth—can be enough to cue your brain that it is time to rest. Even if your nights are broken, keeping a short wind-down pattern helps build that sense of predictability.

- **Drop your expectations when sleep has been broken**

If you are up multiple times a night with your child, start thinking in terms of rest rather than full sleep. Resting your body, keeping light low, and avoiding stimulation all help your nervous system recover, even if you are not asleep the whole time.

- **Give your brain an 'off-switch' moment**

Try using a notebook by the bed to write out anything running through your mind. This can include to-do lists, worries, or even just a sentence like "I've done what I can for today." It helps give your brain permission to let go a little.

- **Protect one pocket of recovery time each week**

This might be asking for a lie-in one morning. It might be someone taking over the bedtime routine once a week. It might be twenty minutes alone in the car with a coffee and silence. One small moment of reset can help you get through the rest.