

# Sleep Issues: Guidelines for Parents



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# Sleep needs vary from person to person

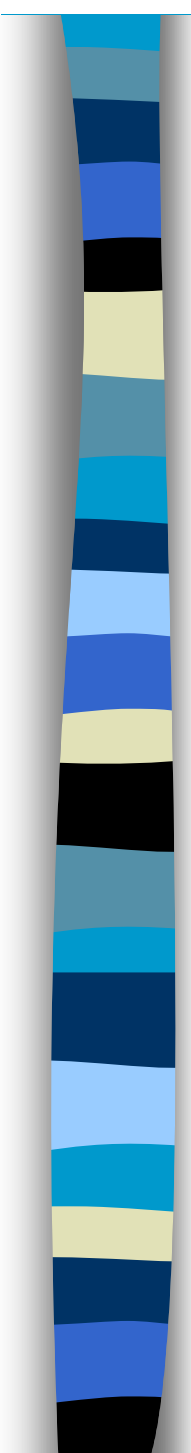
- Our total sleep needs decrease with age

<u>Age in Years</u>	<u>Hours of Sleep Needed</u>
• 2-3	12
• 3-5	11
• 5-9	10.5
• 10-14	10
• 14-18	8.5



# Not all individuals compress sleep into traditional sleep times

- “night owls”
- “morning larks”
  
- Night owls struggle to fit into typical family, work, school schedules



Sleep problems are not only difficult to endure for parents and family members, they can also substantially affect a child's readiness to learn

- Impairs performance on physical and mental tasks
- Suppresses motivation to work
- Increases irritability
- Increases feelings of depression



# What constitutes a sleep problem?

- Not getting enough sleep
- Difficulty initiating sleep
- Disrupted sleep pattern (nighttime waking)

# Not Getting Enough Sleep



- Earlier bed time

- Nap time



# Difficulty Initiating Sleep

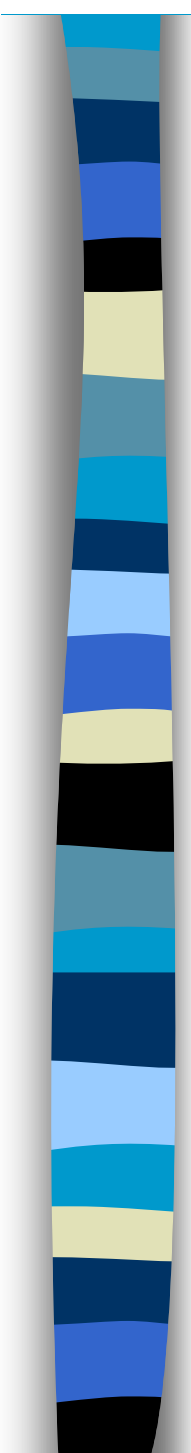
- Need to know why
  - Anxiety/fear
  - Energy level “night owl”
  - Attention seeking – less than optimal sleep habits developed



# Nighttime Waking

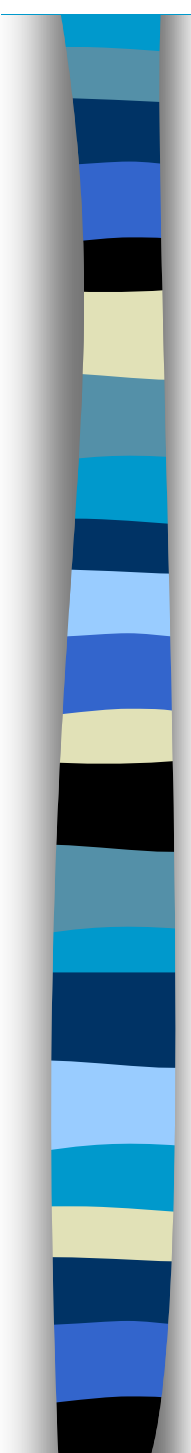
- All individuals go through varying degrees of sleep and wakefulness each night
- Nighttime waking can be shaped by parental response to waking





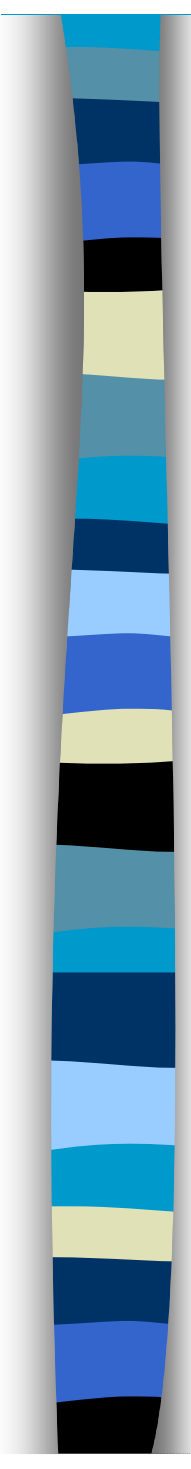
# If a parent always responds to partial waking/crying with attention

- it increases the child's need to be in the presence of a parent to fall back asleep
- A child needs to learn to fall back asleep alone



If night time waking is attended to with parental attention several nights followed by a withdraw of attention on a subsequent night the child is likely to substantially intensify his or her plea for attention

- Which often weakens a parent's resolve to withdraw inappropriate attention out of fear of traumatizing the child

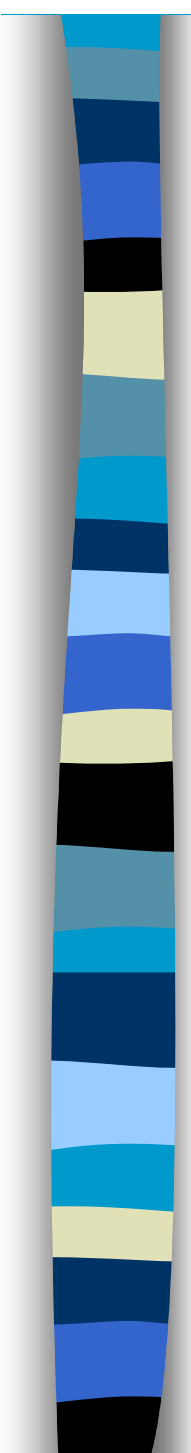


Need to understand the  
nature of the sleep  
problem in order to  
successfully intervene



# To get such an understanding

- Keep a ***Sleep Diary*** for one week to document the child's
  - duration of sleep,
  - pattern of sleep,
  - and what happens at problem times.
- Here we learn about the child's idiosyncratic sleep/wake cycle.

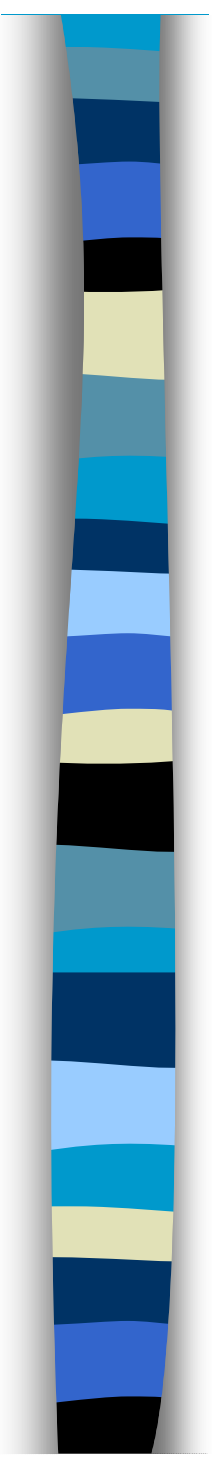


If nighttime waking is also a problem, keep a *Behavior Log* in order to develop an understanding of the function of the sleep disturbance



# Good Sleep Habits Checklist

- Establish a set bedtime routine
  - Use advanced warnings
- Develop a regular bedtime and a regular time to awaken
- Eliminate, 6 hours before bedtime, all foods and drinks that contain caffeine
- Try drinking milk before bedtime
- Eat a balanced diet (low in fat)
- Do not exercise (rough house) in the hours immediately preceding bedtime
- Do include a period of rigorous activity during the day
- Restrict activities in the child's bed to those that help induce sleep
- Reduce noise & light in the bedroom – create a soothing – low stimulation environment
- Try rocking/cuddling/singing/rubbing/massage/deep pressure/brushing
- Play soft music
- Read stories/tell stories/discuss the day's highlights
- Use a comfort toy
- Avoid extreme temperatures and temperature changes in the bedroom



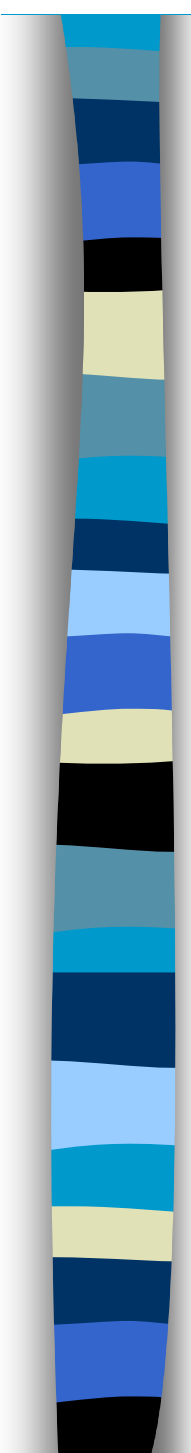
*Scrap the nap* if your  
child is not sleeping  
through the night



# Do's and Don'ts

- Make the last 30 minutes before bedtime a regular routine
- Include activities such as dressing for sleep, washing, and reading
- Include soothing, relaxing, and quieting activities (things enjoyed by both the parent and child)
- Keep the order and timing of the activities about the same each night (throughout the week and weekend)
- Avoid activities that tend to cause conflict
- Avoid TV in this 30 minute period immediately preceding sleep
- Avoid extending bedtime (“Just one more story Pleeeeeeease!”)
- Don't rush the routine





Remember that **the parent should direct the bedtime routine.** The child can and should have some input into the routine; however, if the routine becomes longer and more elaborate the parent must regroup and take control.



# What To Do If Your Child's Sleep Schedule is Problematic

- Check Good Sleep Habits Checklist and adjust as needed
- Develop a sleep routine consistent with the Do's & Don'ts
- Keep a ***Sleep Diary*** for at least 1 week
- Keep a ***Behavior Log***
- Consult:  
Teacher, Behavior Specialist



# Intervention Ideas

- The specific intervention will depend on the nature of the sleep problem and the child's specific needs.



## If waking early or if experiencing nighttime waking

- Eliminate reinforcement/attention
- Adjust sleep schedule to compress sleep period



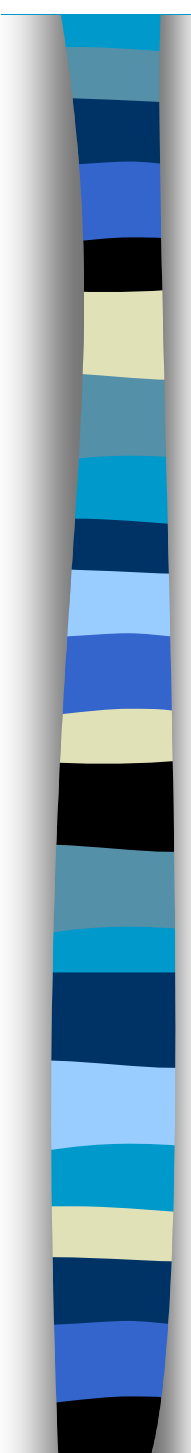
If waking is reinforced by:

- parental attention

- sleeping with the parent

- engaging in a desired activity

You must eliminate the positively reinforcing consequence



## Establish a new routine with set rules and gather sufficient resources to facilitate consistency

- Acquire the resolve to stick to the plan
- Understand that it may get worse before it gets better
- Do it during a week or two off from work
- Develop a turn taking plan – rotate “enforcer” roles
- Have sibling(s) stay with relatives or a friend



# Nighttime waking plan might include:

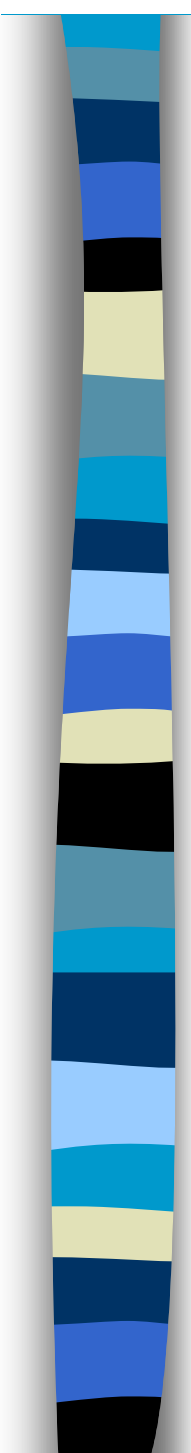
- If your child wakes and demands attention during the night - ignore the demands
- If a long established pattern exists
  - Parent checks and soothes the child for 5 minutes only
  - No TV/no sleeping with parent
- Leave after 5 minutes – do not reenter – do not allow the child to leave his/her room.
- Remove the opportunity for harm and protracted play from the room



# Early Waking or Nighttime Waking Plan

- Collect *Sleep Diary* data – determine the total number of hours the child typically sleeps each day/night
- This number may be quite different from the hours in bed – this discrepancy may be the reason for the sleep problem
- If napping - ***Scrap the nap***





# Arrange bedtime/wake time to accommodate the number of hours of sleep needed

- To do so
  - Calculate 90% of average daily sleep time
  - Set bed time & wake time so the child is in bed for this length of time
  - The child will go to bed exhausted



# Example:

- Desire bedtime 8:30/wake time 7:00  
(total sleep hours desired 12.5)
- Reality bedtime 8:30/wake time 4:30  
(average sleep needs - 8 hours)
  - Adjustment bedtime 11:45/wake time 7:00  
(hours of sleep 7.2)
- Establish routine
  - Slowly move bedtime up in 15 minute increments, a week at a time, to reach an 8 hour sleep schedule



# Resources

- Durand, V. Mark, (1998). *Sleep Better! A Guide to Improving Sleep for Children with Special needs*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, Baltimore, MD.
- Lansky, Vicki, (1991). *Getting Your Child to Sleep ...And Back to Sleep*. Publishers Group West, Deephaven, MN.