

RELAXATION AT BEDTIME

Feeling relaxed is important in the run up to bedtime for both parent and child. If your child is experiencing difficulties sleeping it can make you both feel anxious. Youngsters often pick up on stress levels around them so it is important to create a relaxing and calm environment as bedtime approaches.

Here is some advice that may help:

- Turn off all screens an hour before bedtime, this includes television, laptops, tablets and mobile phones. Screen activities can be mentally stimulating and may also inhibit the production of melatonin, the sleep hormone that helps us to feel drowsy.
- Set aside time earlier during the day to allow your child to share any worries with you. It can be helpful to share how their day has been and what is planned for the next day. Make sure to give them your full attention.
- Dim the lights in the hour before bed to create a relaxing environment and aid the production of melatonin.
- Fine motor skill activities such as craft activities, model making, jigsaws or colouring pictures can aid relaxation.
- Massage can help some children to unwind.
- Classical music can be very soothing and makes good relaxing music to play in the background during the bedtime routine.
- Mindfulness is being increasingly used and there is evidence to suggest that it can be helpful to promote relaxation and sleep. There are a number of apps and products on the market that may be useful.
- Encourage your child to concentrate on their breathing. Imagine breathing in a beautiful white light and blowing out any worries or troubles each time they exhale. Breathing exercises are also useful for parents to carry out and are a great exercise to enjoy together.
- Teach your child to progressively relax the muscles in their body. They can begin by tensing their feet to the count of 5 and then letting them relax. Next tense the calf muscles and relax, moving up to the thighs and so on until they have relaxed each part of their body. This is another good activity to try together.
- End the day on a positive note by sharing 5 great things that have happened during the day.

If you are concerned about your child's anxiety levels discuss with your GP or a healthcare professional, some children may require specialist support.

For more information, contact The Sleep Charity or your representative.

For more information and advice, visit The Sleep Charity at thesleepcharity.org.uk or contact us on info@thesleepcharity.org.uk