

# *About Sleeping*



This presentation will discuss some of the sleeping problems children with autism usually experience and offer strategies to help your child sleep better.

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*Presented by Jing Zhou, M.S., BCBA  
www.interventionsunlimited.com*

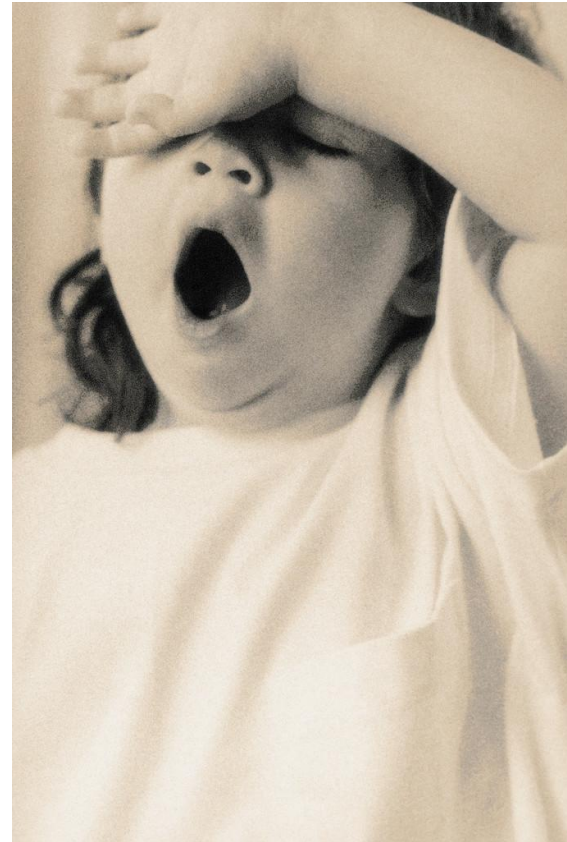
# Good Sleep is Essential

- Optimal sleep is essential for normal growth and development, emotional health, and immune function.
- Poor sleep affects daytime mood, behavior, and learning.
- Poor sleep can have a negative impact on the families.



# Prevalence of Sleeping Problems in the Autism World

- Researchers estimate that between 40% - 80% of children with autism have difficulty sleeping.



# Common Sleep Problems in Children with Autism

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Difficulty staying asleep
- Disrupted sleep-wake pattern
- Prolonged awakenings, waking up early or frequently



# Possible Causes for Sleep Problems in Children with Autism

- Lack of understanding of social cues related to sleep routine (poor sleep association)
- Release melatonin at the wrong time.
- Increased sensitivity to outside stimuli.
- Anxiety
- Possible medical conditions such as epilepsy
- Medication

# How much sleep do they need?

What is the right amount of sleep for my child?

- Preschool children (11-13 hrs)
- School age children (10 -11 hrs)
- Adolescents (9 ¼ hrs).

([sleepfoundation.org](http://sleepfoundation.org))



# Identify the Problem

## Keeping a Sleep Journal

### Questions to answer:

- Does the child have a regular bedtime and wake time?
- Does the child have a bedtime routine that is the same every day?
- How does the child fall asleep?
- Does the child play in bed?
- How long does it take for the child to fall asleep?
- Does the child wake up in the middle of the night and become disruptive?
- How are the behaviors handled?



# Sleep Journal

Day	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Time awoke							
Time in bed							
Time fell asleep							
Activities before bed time							
Behavior at bedtime							
What did you do to handle the problem							
Night time waking time/how long							
Describe night time waking							
Behaviors during awakening							
What did you do to handle the problem during awakening							



# Where to begin...

## Start with good sleep habits

- ***Routine, Routine, Routine.....***
- Establish a set bed time routine, such as a bath, story or books, and kiss good night.
- Engage in calming activities before bed time
- Establish a regular bedtime and regular time to wake up in the morning
- Avoid electronics such as watching TV, playing on the iPad, or other games prior to bed time.
- Restrict activities in bed to those that are associated with sleeping
- Reduce light and noise in the bedroom
- Keep the room comfortable and cool
- Do not give drinks with caffeine 6 hours before bed.
- Exercise more during the day.
- Like other behavior strategies, prevention may be the best medicine.



# Helping your Child to Follow a Routine

- Keep the bedtime routine positive
- Reinforce your child for cooperation
- Consistency is the key



## Establish a Good Sleep-wake Schedule

- Use your sleep journal to determine the amount of time your child needs for a restful sleep
- Decide on the time your child needs to wake up in the morning
- Work backward to find the desired bedtime
- Try to stay with the same sleep-wake schedule every day



# Exercise

- Exercise too close to bedtime may make it difficult for your child to fall asleep, as it raises the body temperature.
- Discourage vigorous activities right before bed.
- Regular exercise 4-6 hours prior to bedtime can help your child sleep better.
- Consult with a doctor before starting any new exercise program if your child has any medical condition.



# Sleep Environment

- Bed and bedroom should only be associated with sleeping.
- Avoid playing in bed, such as wrestling, or pillow fighting.
- Avoid placing toys in the bedroom or in the child's bed.
- Do not put a TV in your child's room.



# Difficulty Falling Asleep

- Establish new sleep association
- Progressive-waiting
- Bedtime fading



## Night Time Waking

- During sleep, we cycle between “active” sleep (REM) and “deep” sleep (NREM).
- It is normal for children to experience brief partial waking during the transition to “deep” sleep after our periods of dreaming.



# Suggestions for Night Time Waking

- Sleep Restriction
  - Find out how much time your child actually sleeps
  - Start with 90% of the actual sleep time
  - Wake up your child early.
  - If your child sleeps without waking, gradually add a few minutes at a time.
- Scheduled awakening: It involves waking up your child before he/she usually wakes up at night. You gently touch or shake your child to the point that he seems to awaken, then let your child fall back asleep.





# References

- Durand, V. M. (1998). *Sleep better: a guide to improving sleep for children with special needs*. Maryland, Baltimore: Paul H. Books Publishing Co.
- Ferber, R. (2006). *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems: new, revised and expanded edition*. New York, NY: Fireside