**Keeping Sleep Time Consistent During the Summer**

Summer time often brings less commitments and restrictions. However, when it comes to sleep, keeping a consistent bedtime is very important for you AND your child’s well-being.

Sleep used to be thought of as a period of inactivity where not much happened. Modern technology and advanced methods of studying the brain, heart and breath as one sleeps, it is now understood that sleep is in an extremely active time during which hormones are released, memories are consolidated and the body is repaired and rejuvenated. And, a consistent bedtime matters as much as the amount of sleep a child receives. The consistency helps keep the body’s natural rhythm of sleeping and waking cycle in check. It also provides structure and predictability for children which, despite their attempts at resisting it, are important for their sense of well-being.

Getting the necessary sleep and keeping the structure of a set bedtime in the summer can be difficult. Here are some tips for helping you and your child keep a regular bedtime that is similar to what they have during the school year. And, it helps transitioning back to the school year easier.

**Set a Bedtime within 30 minutes to an hour of your school year bedtime.**  By choosing a set time and pointing it out to the child on the clock, the clock becomes the bearer of the limit and you can reduce power struggles between you and your child. If you are consistent with the time, point it out to them on the clock, and then they will stop asking to stay up even if it is light outside.

**Utilize the same bedtime routine you had during the school year.** If you aren’t using a bedtime routine try one that includes activities such as a bath, story time, pointing out what your child did well that day and a moment you enjoyed being with them. You can also take this routine with you if you go somewhere else which will help make sleeping on a summer holiday easier.

**Decrease the light stimulation your child gets**. Get blackout drapes or put up a dark sheet or paper on the windows to cover the extra light. The increase in light at night and in the morning can prevent and disrupt sleep. You can take a dark sheet with you wherever you are going to ensure that room also stays dark. A dark room will help cue the brain that it is time to sleep. Also, turn off all electronics a half an hour to an hour before bedtime as the light from them can keep the brain and the hormones that regulate sleeping stimulated.

**Stay Cool**. Ideally, the room temperature for sleeping is 68-72 degrees. Cooling down is an important part of falling asleep. If you can’t control the air in your home, take a cooling bath before bedtime.

Child and Family Therapist

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