

香港資優教育學院
The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education

Factsheet

YOUNG GIFTED CHILDREN AND SLEEP

Sleep deprivation is difficult at the best of times for both children and adults but it can be heightened and more frustrating with high ability children. If deprived of sleep we become irritable, irrational, moody and unreasonable and these can be difficult to manage for the sleep deprived child and/or parent. If not dealt with properly, difficulties and patterns can emerge that produce repetitive poor sleep behaviours.

Gifted children and some young people find sleeping difficult for a number of reasons:

- Cannot switch off, too much on their mind
- Worries and anxieties
- Scared of the dark and monsters
- Just don't require much sleep
- Enjoying a book
- Insatiable appetite for learning

Every child is unique and every sleep problem has its own unique characteristics but there are common features. You may recognise some of the following:

- No bedtime routine
- Children cannot fall asleep in their own bed
- Children won't stay in their own bed
- Children wake in the night
- Children awake long after you have gone to bed

Poor sleep patterns will develop if your child has not learned to fall asleep alone, in their own beds and stay in their own beds all night. Some children may have health or neurological problems that affect their sleep patterns but this is rare; the brutal truth is that most children who have poor sleep patterns haven't been taught how to sleep well by their parents.

For young children bedtime routines need to start early in the evening and need to be consistent. The late afternoons and evenings should be relaxed and enjoyable beginning with

- Teatime
- Playtime/watching TV
- Bedtime – keep it calm but fun
- Into night clothes
- Final warm milky drink, preferably not juice - too sugary
- Clean teeth
- Story in bedroom with low lighting and calm atmosphere
- Give forewarning of when getting to end of story
- Close book and tell them it is night time
- Do not engage in conversation or arguments
- Give a kiss and hug, turn lights out and leave
- Bedroom should be in darkness or with a night light (the presence of light can upset the body clock)

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So whatever the reason that your child doesn't sleep a consistent routine is essential. Once your child is in their room and in bed, the story time is over and its time to rest, you must leave the room and they must stay in their room till the morning whether they are asleep or not. Those high ability children who cannot sleep can read, listen to music or story tapes but that is all. The expectation is that they stay in bed. As long as they are quiet and reading and little sleep does not affect them the following day then it is OK that they are awake longer than the average child. Some children, especially high ability children, often do not need as much sleep as the average.

Books

Dr Tanya Byron & Sacha Baveystock. *Little Angels* (see Chapter 5 – Sweet Dreams)
James Jobson. *The Sleep Book*

Websites

<http://www.relaxkids.co.uk/>



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