

## Cari's Professional Book Club Notes

Book Title: Sleep-Wrecked Kids

Author: Sharon Moore



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Week 5: February 9, 2020

Chapter 4: What Can I Do?

### Important Take-Aways:

1. Once parents understand what good sleep looks like, the negative consequences of bad sleep, and potential red flags to look for, they can start focusing on helping their child establish healthy sleep patterns.
2. The author discusses four avenues that are within the parent's control: the physical environment, the emotional environment, bedtime routine, and seeking third party help.
  - a. **The Physical Environment:** There are many things to consider when creating a good sleep environment including:
    - **Light:** Too much light, or blue light emitted from electronic devices can prevent the release of the hormone melatonin in the brain. Darkness signals the release of this sleep-promoting hormone. Dimming the lights in the evening, having a no screen time 2 hours before bed policy, and using room-darkening curtains are possible solutions to consider. If the child insists on a light in the room at bedtime, try using a soft lamp with a low wattage bulb and a timer or a nightlight (maybe one with the child's favorite cartoon character on it).
    - **Noise:** Too much of a ruckus can keep children from falling asleep. Think about household sounds such as TV, smartphones, adults talking/fighting, washing dishes, music and environmental sounds such as loud neighbors, barking dogs, and noisy traffic. Possible solutions include using a white noise machine, a fan, or playing soft classical music at bedtime. Training everyone in the family to use quiet voices and no clanging around in the kitchen at bedtime will help as well.
    - **Temperature:** According to the author, the ideal temperature for sleep is about 65 degrees. It can be difficult to find the right balance of pajamas and bedding to keep the child warm enough, but not too warm. But this is a good place to start when identifying possible solutions.
    - **Safety:** For children who have nightmares or are afraid of monsters, do a safety check every night before bed. Keep a Star Wars light sabre

handy to ward off unwanted bedtime guests. Open closets and look under the bed to scare off the nighttime monsters as part of your bedtime routine. Also, avoid watching the news, as it can be alarming and scary for young children.

- **Smells:** Pairing bedtime with a specific scent can help develop an association between smell and sleep. Rubbing lavender scented lotion on your child or using a lavender scented essential oil at bedtime may be worth a shot. The key is to use it consistently so the association can be made.
- **Clutter:** Bedrooms should be a place for sleep, so if there are too many toys or other distracting items (likes a TV or iPad), sleep will not be the main thing associated with this room. Clear out the clutter (at least temporarily while you are focusing on establishing healthy sleep patterns) and make this room a calming oasis where sleep happens.
- **Comfort:** Be aware of the fabrics that bother your child when selecting pajamas and bedding. Scratchy or rough material may bother your child. Look for pajamas that are tag-free. Choose a comfortable pillow and select bedding that have fun characters on them. Let your child hep pick out his or her favorite sheets and comforter.

b. **The Emotional Environment:** A calm environment promotes sleep, whereas an emotionally charged environment makes it hard for children to relax enough to fall asleep. Strategies to help with insomnia or anxiety related to sleep are provided:

- Offer a security blanket or stuffed animal as a transitional object. Consider purchasing your child a special bedtime stuffed animal (maybe go to Build-A-Bear and let your child make a special bedtime friend).
- Relax with a bedtime story and rhythmical rocking.
- Practice relaxation techniques with your child before bed. The author recommends a story book called *Sleepy Little Yoga* by Martina Selway.
- Do meditation together and practice a calming breathing technique.
- Provide reassurance that your child is safe. Talk about the scary bedtime thing during the day and then throw the scary thing out before bed. This can help the child feel more in control.
- Try offering a heavy quilt. Deep pressure can be calming to the nervous system (that's Cari's recommendation, not the author's).
- Analyze the cause of the anxiety and address it directly. Is the child overscheduled? Overstimulated? Worried about a new upcoming activity like starting a new school or getting a new teacher? Teach coping skills and talk about the issues.
- See a psychologist or other qualified health professional if more help is needed with anxiety management.

c. **The Bedtime Routine:** Everything you do during the day and leading up to bedtime can affect the development of healthy sleep patterns. Consistent, healthy routines are very comforting to children (and to adults too!).

- Don't try to change everything at once, as this can cause even more stress. Make gradual changes in sleep routines.

- As a parent, discussions about bedtime should be non-negotiable. And all caregivers who assist with bedtime need to be on board with this. Sunday through Thursday may have one set of “rules” and Friday and Saturday may have another set.
- Choose a good time in your schedule to start adjusting the bedtime routine when there are no other major life events happening. Don’t start messing with bedtime routines during the holidays or right before grandma and grandpa come for a visit.
- The author says to expect a solid 2 weeks to establish a new bedtime routine. Stick to the routine. If after 2 weeks of consistent attempts without any success, then it may be time to seek out extra help.
- Bedtime routine tips:
  1. Figure out what time your child should go to bed based on how many hours of sleep is required. If your child is 4 years old and needs 11 hours of sleep, and you have to wake her up at 6:30 a.m., then she needs to start the bedtime routine by 7:00 p.m. so she can be asleep by 7:30 p.m.
  2. Establish a bedtime routine that may include any of the following: bath, snack (not sugar or caffeine), story time, wind-down activities such as stretching or yoga, making a list for the next day, rocking, cuddling, music, banishing the monsters, tucking child into bed, turning on the nightlight, and saying goodnight.
  3. Night-waking problems are commonly caused by problems with the routine, the environment, bad habits/behaviors, nightmares, not feeling well, or sleep disorders. Figuring out WHY the child is waking up in the middle of the night is important.
  4. Co-sleeping is a topic that is addressed in this chapter. In a nutshell, the author says that if co-sleeping is part of your family’s philosophy and everyone is getting the sleep they need, then so be it. If not, then changes may need to be made to the routine.
- Morning routine tips:
  1. Place a digital clock next to the child’s bed and provide a wake-up curfew for kids who wake up too early.
  2. Wake kids up yourself with a backrub and soothing voice rather than with a harsh alarm clock.
  3. Reward and praise good sleep
  4. Provide slippers and a robe if it is cold in the morning.
  5. Provide a nutritious breakfast. Try providing breakfast in bed occasionally too!
  6. Natural sunlight will help wake up your child, so open the blinds and curtains.
  7. Prepare for the day by reviewing the schedule so your child knows what to expect.
- Daytime routine tips
  1. Carefully schedule and adhere to daytime naps.
  2. Limit screen time. No screen time 1-2 hours before bed...ever.
  3. Make sure your child gets plenty of play-based movement.
  4. Offer healthy regular meals and snacks.

5. Engage your child's mind during the day with cognitive tasks like puzzles, books, and activities that encourage active participation, rather than passive activities like watching TV and playing video games.
- d. **Seek Third Party Help:** If you have attempted all the above consistently for two weeks, and have found no success, then it may be time to seek out additional help from a sleep expert. Talk to your pediatrician about all the things you have tried and ask for a referral. Advocate and don't take "it's just a phase" for an answer. Use the checklists from Chapter 3 to help you advocate for your child.