

Sleep - A Guide for Parents/Carers



Supporting Children and Young People With Healthy Sleep

Sleep is one of the most powerful foundations for emotional wellbeing, learning and overall health. Yet for many families, good sleep can feel difficult to achieve, especially when life is busy or routines become disrupted.

This guide is designed to help parents and carers support children and young people to build healthy, positive sleep habits with reassurance, consistency and understanding.

Understanding Sleep in Children and Adults

Sleep is not just “rest”; it plays a key role in heart health, metabolism, emotional resilience, learning and memory. Research tells us that sleep impacts almost every part of our wellbeing.

Many UK adults and children are not getting enough sleep:

- 14% of UK adults average less than five hours a night
- 71% of adults don't reach the recommended 7-9 hours
- Over a third of primary-aged children fall short of their 9-11 hour recommendation
- Only 25% of teens get their recommended 8-10 hours
- Over 95% of teens say nighttime phone use disrupts their sleep

Sleep needs vary by age:

The recommended amount of sleep for an adult is 7-9 hours per night. For primary-aged children (ages 4-11), it is recommended that they have 9-11 hours of sleep per night. Secondary-aged children and teens (ages 11-18) are recommended to get 8-10 hours per night.

The Three Types of Sleep

The quantity of sleep matters, but **quality** matters just as much. Too much of one and not enough of another can leave us exhausted, even if the total hours look right. We cycle through three types of sleep, each with a different job:

- **Deep sleep** - physical recovery
- **REM sleep** - emotional processing and memory
- **Light sleep** - transitions between sleep stages and waking feeling refreshed

Immediate Actions

For Primary School Children

Many younger children struggle with consistent sleep. Lack of sleep can show up as:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Increased emotional outbursts
- Poor school attendance
- Trouble learning new information

What you can do:

- Create a consistent bedtime routine – think bath time, a story, or a calm activity
- Turn off screens at least an hour before bed
- Limit sugar and caffeine later in the day
- Keep bedtime predictable, even at weekends

For Teens

Teens face unique sleep challenges. Their body clock naturally shifts later, making mornings harder.

Many teens experience:

- Problems falling asleep
- Nighttime phone or device use
- Difficulty waking up
- Tiredness affecting mood and learning

What you can do:

- Support a wind-down routine 45 minutes before bed (reading, gentle stretches)
- Agree together on realistic bedtimes and digital curfews
- Where possible, help teens get enough sleep in the morning to match their natural body rhythm

Taking Action: Small Steps That Make a Big Difference

Around 70% of adults say they want better sleep, and small changes can make a huge impact. Follow our Sleep Checklist for support in your night time routine.

For yourself and your child, consider choosing just two or three strategies to try:

- Keep a consistent bedtime and wake-up time
- No screens one hour before bed (or longer for teens)
- Practise Happy Breathing before bed
- Create a calm bedroom environment - minimal clutter, cool temperature, comfy bedding
- Reduce stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine and alcohol (for adults) as they impact sleep quality
- Use the Sleep Loyalty Card each evening before bedtime on the Parent App. This can be found in myHappyMind Checklists.

Teaching children to sleep well is one of the most meaningful lessons we can give them.

Good sleep supports their health, learning, emotions and relationships.

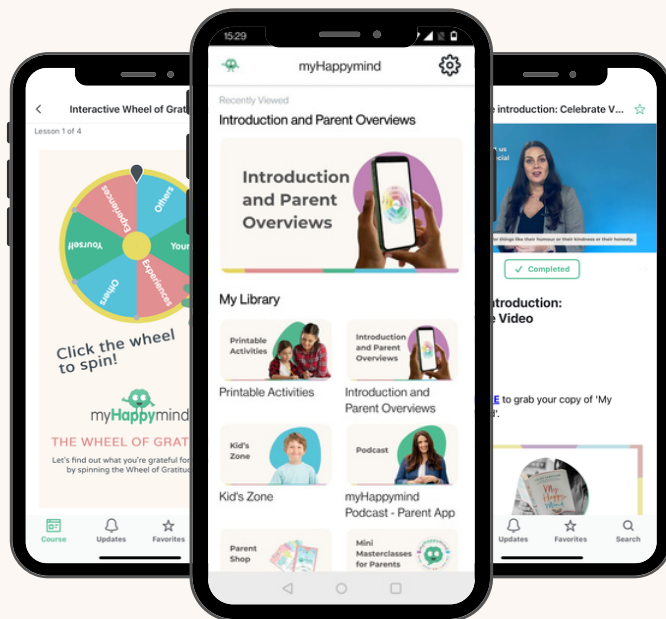


How myHappymind Can Support You and Your Child at Home

Through your child's school, you have free access to some fantastic myHappymind resources that can help you support your child's emotional wellbeing at home. These tools are designed to be simple, practical and helpful for all children, including those who are neurodiverse or going through a difficult time.

- **Happy Breathing:** These are short, guided breathing exercises that help children calm their bodies and minds. They're great for easing big emotions like anxiety, frustration or overwhelm and can be especially useful if your child is sensitive to busy or noisy environments. You can listen to the Happy Breathing audio clips together through the myHappymind Parent App.
- **myHappymind Places:** This tool encourages your child to "check in" with how they're feeling and talk about what might help. Regular check-ins build emotional awareness and make it easier for your child to share what's going on inside. This is particularly powerful for children who may struggle to express their emotions or need extra support with self-regulation.

These resources are there to help you feel confident in supporting your child's wellbeing and to give your child practical tools they can use anytime they need them.



If you haven't already, download the parent app to access the resources by scanning the QR code below...



YOU WILL NEED THIS AUTHENTICATION CODE TO SIGN UP



**If you have any questions, contact us at
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