



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

MOVING LIVES FORWARD

BEDTIME ROUTINES

Bedtime routines do way more for you child then just helping them sleep through the night! Research shows time and time again that a standard bedtime routine builds on the loving relationship a parent shares with their child, and sets a foundation for the structure of the world around them. So what are the most important parts of a bedtime routine? See the list and tips below to find a routine that works best for your family:

1. **START WITH BATHTIME.** If bath time is a rowdy time in your household, that's okay—use it as the last fun activity of the day. This is a great first step in the bed time routine as children will look forward to it, but also know quiet time is around the corner.

2. **PAJAMAS.** Early on, children form associations or bonds with blankets, sleep suits, and objects they start to connect to bed time. These associations change as children age but they are a healthy substitute for a parents touch and can become incorporated during the routine to help the child form the bond.

3. **BRUSHING TEETH.** This step is critical to form healthy life habits your child will carry on with them into adulthood and your dentist will surely give you a gold star for making this part of your nightly ritual.

4. **WATER NOT MILK.** Sending your child to bed with milk can hurt their dental health, and it can also become a negative association to bedtime. If your little one is used to getting a cup of milk at bedtime, start substituting it with water, and then slowly give your child less and less until they no longer need a cup with them at night.

5. **STORY TIME.** This step is where the relational building and loving relationship can really begin to form. Reading books help your child build language skills and overall brain smarts. But as they get older this is also a great time to recap how both your and your child's day went. They will appreciate the undivided attention and get a daily dose of snuggles.

6. **SETTING THE STAGE FOR A FULL NIGHT'S REST** Keeping the room quiet and slightly dimmer is also a critical step of a bedtime routine we sometimes forget about. This helps children really quiet down their minds and allows them to fall asleep faster. Every family is different, and the above order may look different in your home when bed time comes around. No matter what your routine is, just make sure it is a ROUTINE and children can expect a very similar fashion of events every evening! Enjoy the precious story time, and sudsy memories while they last

For more information on this article visit:

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2015/09/helping-preschoolers-cope-separation-anxiety/>

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