

## Sleep

We are going to set up a monthly column to support our work around promoting positive mental health in our school. This will contain links to helpful websites, articles or book recommendations to help with the sometimes chaotic world of parenting.

This month we thought that we would take a moment to look at sleep and its importance for all of us in supporting our mental and physical health and well-being. The NHS England website, recommends that for children age 5-7 10 – 11 hours is still needed and for children aged 10 – 11 around 10 hours 45 minutes is a healthy amount.

It is so hard for all of us to function fully on less than optimum sleep and there are some great sleep tips on the website: [www.nhs](http://www.nhs).

Having a regular bedtime routine, even for children approaching secondary school age, is really helpful. Being off screens for at least an hour pre bed is shown to help with bringing down stimulation. The blue light syndrome has been shown to inhibit our sleep. Playing relaxing music, or a mindful app that encourages an emptying of the mind of worries and the daytime stress can support our sleep patterns and encourage deeper restorative sleep.

Avoiding sugar too close to bedtime can stabilise our blood sugars and, if possible, a warm bath before bed can really begin to relax the mind and body.

It is really common when we stop at the end of the day, for worries to come flooding in and that is the thief of sleep. Sometimes it can be really helpful to have a notebook and pen by a child's bed so that they can jot or doodle any worries down so that they stop whirling around preventing the sleep fairy from visiting. Failing that, many Oxfam stores still sell worry dolls, which are such a comfort to children – the idea that they can externalise their worry and get it out of their heads and the worry doll can keep hold of it – so freeing them to sleep more soundly.

Night time is also a good time to introduce some talk time and find out more about our child's day. Lots of open-ended questions can be really useful and allow us to remain curious to their inner world. For those of us ever plagued by the night time wakes, we know that black and white thinking can be really prevalent in those sleep times and so a simple gratitude diary by the bed or reminding each other and ourselves of one or two good moments, however small, can remind us that the day is often neither all good or all bad, but somewhere in between, and in this realisation, can be great comfort.