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Helping Children Sleep

(Ideas for sharing and discussion only)

Create a bedtime routine that has components that are done the same way every night. Some components of the routine might be having a snack (not sugar or chocolate), being read a story, washing up or taking a bath (dry the child slowly with deep pressure strokes), kissing each family member goodnight, selecting a soft toy with which to sleep, etc.

Discuss components of the next day with the child, calmly focusing on liked activities and people that will be part of the next day. Use the child's calendar or visual schedule. Address any anxiety the child may have.

Incorporate quiet, beautiful music into the routine if it has a calming effect on the child and others

Make a video, with another child as the "star" showing that child doing each step of the routine, ending with the child in bed with the lights out. Use the same music in the video that you will use in the daily routine. Show the steps of the routine with very little talking in the video. In the end, run the video for at least several minutes while the child is in bed quietly and the room is darkened. Watch the video every day with the child.

Create a routine that all adults will follow for when the child gets up at night. Make the routine absolutely predictable and as BORING as you can. Do not create fun and amusing experiences when he is up in the middle of the night. The "up in the middle of the night" routine ends with the child doing the last two or three steps of his bedtime routine (as created above).

Consider taking turns being responsible for the child's supervision and sleeping program at night. In this way, each adult knows that s/he will get a good night's sleep at a minimum of every other night and that both adults will not be up every night.

Experiment with various colored lights being used as a nightlight. Some families report that a small, green light seemed to induce sleep for their child. Others had more success with a red or blue light. Sometimes a white nightlight can have an alerting effect.

A book that might be helpful is called, [Sleep Better! A Guide to Improving Sleep for Children with Special Needs](#), by V. Mark Durand, Ph.D., Paul H. Brooks Publishing Company, ISBN # 1-55766-315-7, 1997.