



Mindful Moments Volume 5

Sleep and Coping with Anxiety

As adults, we often realize that feeling stressed or anxious can affect how well we sleep. This is no different for children. However, because of their age they may be unable to label or express these feelings. Very often, these feelings can present themselves as difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. If your child is struggling with sleep during this unsettling time, here are some helpful strategies to try with them.

1) **Create a structured bedtime routine**

A healthy bedtime routine allows your child's body and mind time to slow down before lights out. Take at least half an hour to play quiet music, give your child a bath, or just have some snuggle time. A time to just relax and share favorite stories about your little one.

2) **Read a Story**

Time flies when you're having fun! Reading can be a great distraction and can help take your child's mind off any worries they may be having before bedtime. Consider reading to them first and then, if they are able to, have them read to you.

3) **Exercise daily**

Make sure that your child is getting exercise every day. Maybe it's just a walk around the block or a game of tag in your backyard. Exercise has been shown to help with sleep, just not too close to bedtime!

4) **Limit screen time**

Phones, tablets, and TVs emit light that keeps your brain awake, so try to limit them an hour before bedtime. In fact, screen time can increase levels of anxiety in children, making it more difficult to fall asleep. Consider setting a cut off time for screens an hour or more before bedtime to help your child's brain settle down for the night. Instead, consider listening to music or reading a book to help quiet their mind.

5) **Breathe Deeply**

Try a deep breathing activity. For example: the 4-7-8 breathing exercise.

Step 1: Breathe in for 4 seconds

Step 2: Hold your breath for 7 seconds

Step 3: Breathe out for 8 seconds

6) Tense and Relax

Try this relaxation exercise in bed: Get your child to squeeze their toes for several seconds, and then relax them. Then do the same thing with their lower legs, and on up their body, including arms, hands, stomach and even facial muscles. Listening to some soothing music can help with this relaxation process..