



Developing a Helpful Bedtime Routine to Promote Restful Sleep

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Are your children getting enough sleep? According to the [Sleep Foundation](#), the average 3-5 year old needs 10 to 13 hours of sleep, 6-13 year olds need 9 to 11 hours, and teens in high school need a minimum of 8 to 10 hours per night. Busy family lives and the presence and use of electronic devices can cut into those precious sleep-time hours. Children who do not get adequate sleep often have trouble managing their emotions and behavior. This can lead to challenges at home and at school.

A major cause of childhood (and adult) sleep problems involves participation in an overabundance of stimulating activities at or just before bedtime. It is best to have **no computers, no video games, no music, and no TV, for a minimum of an hour prior to bed, ideally two hours.**

The good news is that there are simple ways to promote a restful bedtime, including the use of yoga and meditation before bed. Sally Delisle of ChildLight Yoga, recommends the following tips to promote a healthy bedtime routine:

1) Create a calm environment.

Dim the lights and keep the space free of light-up and noisy toys. You may wish to use a mini spritzer bottle containing a few drops of relaxing lavender essential oil mixed with water. Let your child mist the room with the relaxing scent.

2) Use props.

Using blankets provides weight and pressure which is grounding for anyone. Bolsters and battery or LED candles can also be included in your child's bedtime wind down routine. Ask your child what helps her to relax. Maybe she'd like her furry stuffie, or a picture of her favorite place within view of the yoga space.

3) Read a special book together.

Reading a book together can help you and your child relax and bond while also promoting literacy. You can add gentle movement by following along with a bedtime-themed children's yoga book like [Yawning Yoga](#), by Laurie Jordan, or [Good Night Yoga](#), by Miriam Gates.

4) Practice bedtime yoga poses and/or gentle breathing such as balloon breathing, peace breath, or “Count Down to Calm”.

Begin with the *Child's Pose*, then perhaps a few slow rounds of *Cat and Cow*, then back to *Child's Pose*. Continue with “*Sitting Ragdoll*” or “*Rock the Baby*.” Ask your child about these poses, most of which are practiced in classroom counseling lessons at school. End with *Balloon Breath*.

5) Include relaxation.

Use a soft calm voice while you practice the activities together and allow for silence while you rest together at the end of your yoga sequence. Make relaxation enjoyable and engaging. If you know your child enjoys having his back or feet massaged, do that. Let him choose the music. Try Back-to-Back Breathing or Back Writing as a peaceful, bonding activity with your child.

Having a bedtime yoga routine will not only make for a more restful night's sleep, but will go a long way toward helping your child have a more peaceful, productive day at school and home.

Sweet dreams!

Note: Activities, songs and materials can be found scripted and illustrated in [Yoga for Children: 200+ Yoga Poses, Breathing Exercises and Meditations for Healthier, Happier, More Resilient Children](#), by [Lisa Flynn](#).