

Fact Sheet

Sleep and Rest Time in Daycare

General Overview

Sleep and rest time in childcare may be difficult for children especially as they get older and into the pre-schooler age group. Some children are not good sleepers or may find it difficult remaining quiet and still for a long period of time.

If children refuse to remain on their beds may begin to engage in some problem behaviours that can disrupt the other children. Some children need to learn the rules of their room and although it is not essential for the child to actually fall asleep it is important that there a quiet rest period.

The following information including cues and strategies are just a guide to help parents and carers in successfully assisting the child in the sleep time routine. It needs to be remembered that each child is different and develops understanding instructions and skills at different rates. Sleep and rest time should not be an emotional time with both parties fighting.

There are no hard fixed rules for parents or carers to develop a sleep rest time routine that occurs without the trauma and fighting however there are a number of different school of thoughts in creating a positive outcome for both the child and the adult.

Suggested Strategies

- Some children do not normally sleep in the afternoon and may need time to get used to the idea that rest/sleep time occurs in the centre.
- Shorten the length of time the child is expected to remain on the bed acknowledging that the child has rested and has been thoughtful at not disturbing the other children.
- Do not force a child to sleep but ensure that the environment is conducive to a quiet time such as soft lights, quiet music and keeping distractions to a minimum.
- The child may need their bed screened off from the other children if they become disruptive with the aim of eventually removing the screen once the child has the idea of the routine.

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- Provide adult supervision to settle the child. The adult may pat the child gently only if they are lying down and constantly reposition the child to lie down. If the child does not like being patted sit close by thus making them aware of your presence.
- Provide no eye contact or attention verbally
- Offer the child a book when they are lying down. If child sits up remove the book, lie child down again and give the book back.
- Recycle books throughout the sleep/rest time. The aim is to provide a quiet rest period and the child may eventually fall asleep.
- Establish a pattern of pre-sleep/rest time behaviour i.e. offer a small drink, having a special cuddle toy/blanket
- Commence with short periods of time and acknowledge the child's attempts to remain quiet gradually increasing the length of time the child will remain on the bed.
- Provide quiet activities slightly away from the other sleeping children for those who do not sleep.

References

Dodd Susan (1998)
Sanders M (1992)

Managing Problem Behaviours, MacLennen & Petty
Every parent, A positive approach to children's Behaviour. Addison-Wesley

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