



Parents of Young Children: Quicktips Just for You

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Your mother was right. Everything really does look a little brighter after a good night's sleep. (*Or as much as you can get!*) When habitually sleep-deprived, the system is literally "stressed" beyond efficiency. Overtaxed and depleted, we become more vulnerable to illness, depression, forgetfulness, irritability and headaches. Food choices, self-esteem, pain tolerance and a positive outlook may be compromised. We need to release busy days and prepare for deep, restful sleep and find ways to compensate for the sleep deprivation that is so common in parents of young children.

Sleep Tips Parents of Young Children

- Power Naps: While a babysitter or neighbor takes the kids outdoors, pause your day and sneak off for a 20-minute meditation or nap. Set a timer so you can relax without worrying. Busy people often find that taking twenty minutes to a half-hour rest during a busy day will provide them with 3-4 more productive, focused hours to achieve their goals and objectives. You'll be amazed!
- Plan a "Snooze-Fest Weekend." Send the kids to Grandma's, curl up and watch old movies. Then sleep as late as you want to and feel really truly refreshed.
- Prepare for a good night's sleep: Spend that last half-hour before bed doing something relaxing, non-work-related, and not on the computer. (*At night, the bright monitor screen can stimulate wakeful brain activity and disturb circadian rhythm in the pineal gland.*) Try a warm bath, meditation, journaling, a brain candy novel, a foot-rub, or gentle time talking with someone you love.
- When you climb into bed, longing only for the respite of a good night's sleep, does the movie in your head begin? Do a quick internal scan. What worked well today? What would you like to try a little differently next time? Is there someone to whom you owe an apology? Make it. A clear conscience is worth its weight in -- well, now it doesn't weigh a thing, does it?

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More Tips for Parents of Young Children

If Necessity is the mother of Invention, then I think that Stress is the midwife, and Humor is the doctor-on-call! Find ways to laugh out loud every single day. When it comes to stress, Laughter truly is the best medicine. It helps us release tension, ease depression, boost endorphins and experience joy.

- ❖ When things get tense, ask yourself, "If I were an outside observer watching this chaotic moment in a sitcom, is there anything funny about what's happening in this episode? What would be the moral of the story?"
- ❖ Sometimes children catch us off-guard with serious inquiries about current events, cancer, drugs, death, etc. Many feel a good rule of thumb is to answer the question asked truthfully but at its simplest level. Then ask, "Did that answer your question?" "Do you have another?" (They'll let you know!) Too much information can be as unsettling as too little.
- ❖ Gather the family, put on lively music you love and ... Everybody Dance-Dance Dance! This is fun, easy exercise and is also likely to lead to laughter - the best stress-buster of all!

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