

**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Beating the September Sleep-Deprived Blues*

“Without enough sleep, we all become tall two-year-olds.”  
— JoJo Jensen, *Dirt Farmer Wisdom*, 2002

**B**EGINNINGS OF THE SCHOOL YEAR often initiate the challenge of new sleep schedules. Waking to an alarm to get up earlier in September and struggling to leave the house to get to school on time can leave everyone feeling cranky. At end of the day, tired children often act out after trying to adapt to new classrooms. After work and commute, parents’ energies are waning, and on a bad day dealing with a whiny child can turn anyone into a “tall two-year-old.” Be reassured that you are not alone if you are experiencing the September sleep-deprived blues.

Taking stock of sleep is the best way to start off a new school year. There are ways to make adequate rest a priority and create routines that leave family members feeling secure and happy. Here are some tried-and-true suggestions:

**Prepare yourself for transitions.** Get up earlier than your children and do something restorative—stretching, drinking coffee, reading the paper. Later, commuting to school for pick-up, listen to beautiful music or an audio book so you create a space to leave work dilemmas behind. In the evening, create a calmer environment for everyone before launching into bedtime rituals.

**Turn routines into reunions.** Spend 10 minutes snuggling or talking with your child to wake him up rather than using an alarm. Before leaving home, play a five-minute game or run around outside. These mini-activities will positively program his whole day and yours. After picking your child up, create a short playtime in our Children’s Garden or schedule a daily talk time before you start homework or dinner. Consistently dedicating these times to loving time together makes children feel secure and receptive to your suggestions.

**Shut down technology.** Americans get 20 percent less sleep than they did 100 years ago. Studies show hours of sleep are lost to every type of technology. Experts advise turning off the TV, computer games, etc. an hour before bedtime to blanket our homes with calm. Children often feel like they are missing out on something when they hear the noises of TV while lying in bed. Dim the lights and send the message that everything is shutting down for a peaceful night.

**Make sleep a family value.** Sara Jessica Parker’s new movie, *I Don’t Know How She Does It*, illustrates the crazier aspects of living in a sleep-deprived, accomplishment-oriented culture. Talk about sleep being essential to feelings of well-being. If you fall asleep putting your child to bed, share how getting the extra rest helped you instead of lamenting what you didn’t get done. Show your children that you set a firm bedtime for them and for yourself and try to stick to it. Say, “I have to get sleep or I’ll be cranky.”

Let’s help our children to understand that getting enough sleep makes life happier.

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