

10 Tips to Help Children Get to Sleep During Hectic Holidays

from Author People Magazine Dubbed 'The Dream Maker'

Former Special Education Teacher Patti Teel Has Produced Popular Children's Sleep-Aid CDs, Penned 'The Floppy Sleep Game Book' for Penguin

SANTA BARBARA, Calif., Nov. 29, 2005 – 'Tis the season when many parents forget that cross-town shopping marathons and late-night parties make their children's precarious sleeping problems even worse.

"Parents can get a bit frantic during the holidays, and it really disrupts a child's ability to relax and get a good night's sleep," said Patti Teel, a children's advocate and stress-management consultant dubbed "The Sleep Lady" by The Wall Street Journal.

"Parents need to remember to take a moment to set up their child for a peaceful evening," Teel said. "If they don't, there won't be much holiday cheer in the house come morning."

Teel offers the following tips for parents to help their children relax and get to sleep during this busy time of year:

10 Tips to Help Young Children Get to Sleep During the Holidays

1. Don't Over Schedule -- Avoid overwhelming activities such as long trips to the mall. Short spurts of shopping will be more fun for everyone. Keep in mind that an activity that may not be overwhelming for one child may, in fact, be overwhelming for another child.
2. Teach Children Relaxation Skills -- Teach your children stretching techniques, deep breathing, and guided visualization. For instance, play a game of "Santa Says" whereby parents direct children to stretch and relax by curling up like a snowball, by moving their arms and legs slowly like a snow angel, or by opening their mouths widely to catch snowflakes.
3. Put Children's Worries to Bed -- Make a ceremony out of putting worries or fears away for the night. Have children draw (or pretend to draw) a picture of what's bothering them. Fold (or pretend to fold) the worry or fear repeatedly, making it smaller each time. Put the fear away in a box and lock it with a key.
4. Engage in Activity-Based Celebrations -- Throughout the holidays, engage children in simple holiday rituals such as making cards, decorations, cookies, or gifts. Consider letting each child select one activity for the whole family to do over the holidays.
5. Make Your Home a Sanctuary -- Make "quiet time" a part of your family's evening routine. Limit total screen time, including computer games, video games and TV. Tell or read inspiring holiday stories. Listen or sing to soothing holiday music.
6. Have Children Play Outdoors -- It can be hard as the days get shorter, but exposure to daytime sunlight helps children sleep better at night.
7. Keep Children Physically Active -- Physical activity is one of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce children's stress levels and ensure that they get a good night's sleep. Children should engage in at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity every day, but not within several hours of bedtime as it raises the metabolic rate.
8. Maintain the Bedtime Routine -- While routines are likely to be thrown off during the holidays, it's critical that parents leave plenty of time for a relaxed pre-bedtime routine and maintain a consistent bedtime.

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9. Teach Appreciation and Gratitude -- It's hard for children to be upset or worried when they stop to consider what they have. Tell your children about the good things that happened during your day and have them do the same. Help them to appreciate life's small graces such as a hug, the sound of the birds in the morning, or a beautiful snowfall.

10. Instill Compassion and Encourage Generosity -- Perform simple rituals that positively re-focus children's minds and energy on others such as lighting a candle for someone or saying a prayer for those in need. Have your children draw pictures for someone, help bake and deliver food, donate some of their clothes, toys or books, or visit an elderly person who needs companionship.

SOURCE: <http://www.pattiteel.com/>

Dubbed "The Dream Maker" by People magazine, Patti Teel is a former teacher and the creator of an award winning relaxation audio series for children. Her book, *The Floppy Sleep Game*, gives parents techniques to help their children relax, deal with stress and fall asleep. She is a popular speaker and presents innovative workshops for parents, children, and health professionals. Get R&R tips and sign up for her newsletter at www.pattiteel.com. You can listen to her online radio show at www.timeoutwithpattiteel.com.