

"I'm not sleepy"...

Making the Transition from Naps to No Naps

I could hear my daughter-in-law's steps as she came up over my basement stairs. "I won't be long and she's only slept twenty minutes all day". My high energy grand-daughter ran to meet me. She's fifteen months and naps are not one of her strong points.

And then there's the child, like my second oldest, who asked to have a nap even after he started kindergarten. However short or long, or whatever the age, there will come a time when your child will no longer need a daily nap. One thing for sure, parenting is about flexibility as our children move from one stage to the next.

Children between two and three years old need a total of 11-15.5 hours of sleep, with a possible 1-3 hours of this acquired during nap time. Four and five year olds need 10-13 hours, with a nap time that may vary between 0-2.5 hours.

As much as we love them, it is perfectly normal to look forward to that time of day when they close their eyes in sleep. Oh how much one can accomplish in 60 minutes! Or maybe it's just the quietness ...a time to gather thoughts or play catch up with our own rest.



As parents, we sometimes work diligently at establishing and keeping a daily nap routine. Whatever the reason, this short oasis of time can become very precious and letting go of the daily nap can be a "painful" transition for some parents and children.

What can help this transition?

#1- Don't feel guilty for feeling disappointed or frustrated with the change in routine. Just remember, initially, it is normal to feel that way but it will be okay. 😊 You will move past these feelings. You and your child will establish new routines and you will still get things done.

#2- Allow an adjustment period. There may be days you'll find your child may sleep for two hours and other days not at all. Just as they fall many times before they walk, there will usually be a progression of fewer naps until their bodies adjust to the change.

#3- Schedule some down time. Even though a child may no longer need a nap, they may need a "quiet time". Activities that require sitting are great for quiet time; reading or looking at books, putting together a puzzle, making things with play dough or blocks or maybe watching their favourite video. With an established quiet time, they are less likely to fall asleep too early or have a meltdown while you're trying to prepare supper. Children like routines and even an hour of quiet time can help with the extra tiredness they may feel as they adjust.

#4- Establish an earlier bedtime routine if necessary. As children leave their naps behind it may mean a little earlier bedtime. You know your child. If you see they are overly tired and stressed as evening approaches you may need to adjust their bed time.

#5- Keep the positives in mind. As your child grows to no longer need a nap there will be things you can do together that you couldn't before; a play date, a trip to the mall, or a picnic in the park. Make life an adventure! You are now free to schedule activities where before, things would have to be planned around nap time.

Raising a child is all about embracing change ... letting go of the old and looking forward to the new. As a parent, keep your long term goals in mind. You are raising an independent, caring and responsible person and at every stage in their growth there will be new challenges and new joys. So go ahead and look forward to this new step toward independence! ☺

By Myrna Moss

Parent Program Coordinator
The Tree House FRC
Deer Lake, NL

