



Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child: A Step-By-Step Program for a Good Night's Sleep

Marc Weissbluth

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The perennial favorite for parents who want to get their kids to sleep with ease--now in a completely revised and expanded fourth edition!

In this fully updated fourth edition, Dr. Marc Weissbluth, one of the country's leading pediatricians, overhauls his groundbreaking approach to solving and preventing your children's sleep problems, from infancy through adolescence. In *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child*, he explains with authority and reassurance his step-by-step regime for instituting beneficial habits within the framework of your child's natural sleep cycles. Rewritten and reorganized to deliver information even more efficiently, this valuable sourcebook contains the latest research on

- the best course of action for sleep problems: prevention and treatment
- common mistakes parents make trying to get their children to sleep
- different sleep needs for different temperaments
- stopping the crybaby syndrome, nightmares, bedwetting, and more
- ways to get your baby to fall asleep according to her internal clock--*naturally*
- handling nap-resistant kids and when to start sleep-training
- why both night sleep and day sleep are important
- obstacles for working moms and children with sleep issues
- the father's role in comforting children
- how early sleep troubles can lead to later problems
- the benefits and drawbacks of allowing kids to sleep in the family bed

Rest is vital to your child's health, growth, and development. *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child* outlines proven strategies that ensure good, healthy sleep for every age.

Praise for *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child*

"I put these principles into practice--with instant results. Dr. Weissbluth is a trusted resource and adviser."--
Cindy Crawford

Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child: A Step-By-Step Program for a Good Night's Sleep Details

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Pamela says

I really love this book – though I notice I almost always hear negative reviews and comments about him which is a huge shame. People think of him as having a "cry it out" stance and of being anti-"attachment parenting" but this couldn't be further from the truth. What is great is that he doesn't have one philosophy or think there is one method of doing things. He gives many different sleep strategies that include no crying, some crying, and "cry it out" and he tells you which strategy is likely to work for which type of kid. He also has no issue with co-sleeping – he thinks you have to find whatever sleeping situation works best for your family. The best part is he provides data and scientific evidence on sleeping so you really understand the process of how it works and why it's important and how much sleep your child needs. He's so open-minded and tries to provide information for so many different situations (like if a parent has many support resources, or very few) because he recognizes that each family and child are different – but this is exactly why he is so misunderstood and why the book is so hard to read! Because he presents you with so many possible scenarios. But believe me it's well worth it. We ended up doing a mixture of things he suggested until we found what worked. Some of the things he said we ignored but some we really took to heart. In the end what comes through to me about this doctor is that he deeply cares about mothers (and their babies) and recognizes the many challenges that face them. But instead of trying to gloss over those challenges (or act like they wouldn't be there if only you had the RIGHT parenting philosophy) he paints a realistic picture of them (he acknowledges that some husbands aren't supportive or that some parents don't have outside family to rely on) and he gives advice on what to do in light of those situations (not how to fix the impossible).

Kelly says

First off, let me say that I didn't actually "read" this book cover to cover. I skimmed it. A LOT of people recommend this book, and I can see why. But it bugs me. In my opinion, the author has a "do or die" approach, like if you don't help your child sleep better NOW and in his (the author's) way, he/she is going to suffer for it for the rest of their lives. It made me feel guilty as a parent for not doing everything he says, like I'm harming my child, which I know I'm not. Also, it's almost like he thinks his way is the ONLY way. There are lots of books and ideas out there for sleep issues: there is no right or wrong way to help your child sleep. There is no "one-size fits all" approach to parenting - if babies were supposed to have an instruction book, they would have come with one at birth. I think this book helps a lot of people, and that's great, but it's not the end-all, be-all of sleep solutions. Oh, and you have to wade through a lot of scientific research mumbo jumbo to get to the real point of his book. It could have been written in a much more accessible manner.

Sarah says

The sleep bible! I swear this is the book that saved my life and now has me pregnant for the third time. Sleeping babies are the best babies ever, and this book teaches parents how to make sure their kids get all the sleep they need, how to get them to sleep, details on how much, napping, falling asleep in cars, etc - I still read it for my 3 year old and review it for my 1yr old...plus it has tips all the way to the teen years. I have not met anyone yet who has religiously followed it say it doesn't work! The author was my nephew's

pediatrician, and his mom gave me the book as a baby present, best gift ever!

Amanda says

This book is really flawed, I can't get away from that. If you're looking for a book of hints on getting your child to sleep, this isn't it - the title is misleading. Weissbluth is over-the-top about insisting kids get enough quality sleep (although that's arguably valuable in our overscheduled lives) and there are dire warnings for kids who don't. Sometimes the book is contradictory and it is poorly organized.

So why my rare 5 star rating? It is just full of good information about sleep development. My fourth baby is an infant, and remembering that now is when she will start staying up really late at night but at 6 weeks will be ready for an earlier bedtime is sanity saving. Having an idea of when naps consolidate, what's a reasonable bedtime, and how to work through common challenges make my life easier. If you're totally on board with Babywise or Dr Sears, you will probably not love Weissbluth's advice, but if you're more middle-of-the road (like me) this has a ton of good information that is adaptable for different families without insisting on a moral path. He is accepting of cry it out, but if that's not your path then there is advice for the family bed. What he is most insistent on is that children - and their parents - get the sleep they need. If your method is not getting you baby good sleep, he's pushing you to change it.

I would recommend parents not choose a day when they are desperate for sleep changes to read this. (Chapters have an "action plan" section, but I find them confusing.) Read it to get a sense of how much and when your child needs sleep and be watching for those windows of change.

Jennifer says

I read this book on the recommendation of several people and many mommies swear by it. For me this book can be explained in a nutshell that doesn't need 400 pages: babies need lots and lots of sleep, yours probably isn't getting enough, let your baby cry it out for up to 45 minutes at naptime, unlimited crying at night time. Why I really gave it only two stars is because the author makes annoying and unsubstantiated claims that are not easy to swallow. For example, if your baby gets too little sleep then he/she could develop ADD later on. Bullshit, buddy.

Laura says

I'm really struggling to read this book -- the poor organization, the condescending tone, the wordiness. So I think if I can review it as I go with all my snarky thoughts I will enjoy the process more and possibly make it through. Because this has been recommended to me so much (and because I got a free copy) I am trying to be humble enough to finish it. I skimmed through this for both of my previous babies, but I'm now trying to read it thoroughly in preparation for my third.

So far:

I need to respond to one particular satisfied patient whose letter is included in the book because I pretty much hate her. She writes, "I am aware that the practice of toting your baby along with you on every occasion is the new social thing. No doubt it stems from the 'me' generation's philosophy that a baby should not be

allowed to interfere with your lifestyle. So parents everywhere are seen with their infants: in grocery stores, restaurants, the homes of friends....The pressure is on to be a 'nouvelle' mom." The nerve of some parents to leave the house when we should be sitting at home with the shades drawn as if having a baby was a nuclear holocaust! If there is social pressure to bring your baby to the grocery store, it comes from CPS frowning on leaving your child alone, not hipster moms. And no, I don't think I should let a baby interfere with my selfish "lifestyle" of eating food. How does it help my baby if I starve to death? She calls it the "port-a-kid trend," as if I were visiting to the store just to be seen with my chevron car-seat cover and baby named JaeyDynn and not because this was my only chance in days to restock our empty fridge.

That rant is done. On to others:

The good doctor actually says: "Sleep and wake states are different but not opposite." I don't think he realizes what "opposite" means. (Inigo Montoya would have something to say about that.) His argument is that it's a different process to fall asleep versus wake up. It's also a different process to jump vs. fall, but up and down are still opposites. I was trying to explain his logic to my 9YO. "He must be drunk," my 9YO concluded. "Actually, he's a doctor," I said. "Then he must be a drunk doctor," he countered. I concur.

Those are really insignificant criticisms, but it felt good to get them out. My only substantial criticism so far is that this whole putting-to-bed-early thing just doesn't work like the testimonials say. When my brother and sister-in-law were coming to visit for a couple days, I implemented this advice on my then-2YO to ensure I impressed our guests with his well-rested behavior. Contrary to the doctor's assurances, putting him to bed earlier did not make him sleep longer. Instead, as most might have predicted, he woke up (and with him everyone else) early. I had so much faith in the words of this book at the time that it really baffled me why he was up so uncharacteristically early.

Lastly, I LOled when I read his supposition that parents keep their kids up too late because they enjoy their company so much. I thought he mentioned having kids himself, so I don't know how he came up with that.

TTFN!

I've gotten a little farther. I'll start with something positive: Finding out that newborns should only be awake 1-2 hours (in my experience, it's the full 2) was a life-changing revelation. Learning the signs of tiredness was also critical to what was left of my sanity. I am kind of embarrassed that I had to read that in a book rather than figure it out through my supposed motherly instinct.

Back to whining. The doctor's solution for everything is more sleep -- putting to bed earlier at night, leaving baby in the crib longer in the morning, NEVER waking a sleeping baby -- except when you should. But in the extremely unfathomable event that the baby is actually getting enough sleep, you will know because "It is clear you have reached a too-early bedtime because your child no longer easily and promptly falls asleep." I thought that was the sign for a too-late bedtime? And at what point (after the first week) does a baby EVER "easily and promptly" fall asleep? He is talking about a species I know nothing about. From what I'm reading, there is one perfect amount of sleep and one perfect sleep schedule for each baby, and it's a moving target as they grow, and if you screw it up it's because you so carelessly didn't follow the detail buried on page X (which probably involved some incarnation of putting the baby to bed earlier).

Another observation: What was the point of including this cringe-worthy patient quote? -- "I must have Chinese breast milk; he gets hungry just one hour after nursing!" I assume the doctor thought this was funny, but I'm not even sure because WTF is Chinese breast milk? Do bodily excretions have nationalities? If so, I claim Belgian citizenship for my milk; that could be the secret ingredient in Godiva. Along similar lines, the book establishes the authoritative normal citing a study of what "white urban families" do. I'm just saying

this to show what a sophisticated white girl I am. Look at me pointing out racism!

Lastly, I'm having a hard time sorting out what advice is for what age range. I've been taking notes trying to keep it straight (because I sure don't want to have to read this book over each time the baby grows). I noticed when I added "12 to 21 months: transition to 1 or 2 naps," it was right below my bullet for "9 months: usually 1 or 2 naps." Either I misunderstood something or the doctor can't keep it all straight either. I noticed upcoming chapters are split up by age range. Hopefully that will help me sort it all out.

I'm still pushing through, hoping for more nuggets like the 1-2 hour wakefulness window. The more I read the more I'm convinced this guy really is an expert in putting people to sleep.

I am just too tired to finish reading this book, but here are my final angry thoughts thereon, with the caveat this is based on my mommy-brain memory of what I read, which may or may not be what I actually read:

What is so magic about a 6:00 bedtime? Apart from the impossibility of never going anywhere in the evening (how else will anyone who's anyone at Food4Less see his aqua and grey scandi-print PJs?), how is it possible that this is the ideal regardless of timezone or season? So, Arizona babies should go to bed an hour apart (don't ask me to figure out if I mean before or after) from Utah babies just north of them during Daylight Savings (which Arizona commendably abstains from)? Why struggle to get the baby to sleep at a time when it's usually sunny *just* to have him wake up in the dark? If it's just the 12-hour proximity to 6 a.m. that's sacred (O Holy 6:00 at Night), what if I don't want to get up that early? (That's not actually a "what if" so much as a "h*** no!") My older kids don't need to wake up until 8, and synchronizing their schedule with the baby's maximizes my sleep and sanity.

The doctor is so smug in his belief that cry it out will work...except when he briefly mentions the fine print, that if it doesn't you should try again when the baby is older. It's like an oily salesman trying to peddle a warranty after he went to great lengths assuring you that thing will never break down. Or like an investment banker who keeps losing your money until she finally gets it right and says, "See, I told you I'm good at this." I'm not anti-CIO; I've just learned it's not all it's trumped up to be. I was a golden convert to CIO when it worked wonderfully for my 10-month-old oldest. Then I fell into apostasy when it worked not at all for my second baby at various ages. For nights and hours on end, he would cry until the magic hour of 6 a.m. And, since you are instructed that picking him up will only reinforce his resilience in screaming his head off, you have to choose between reinforcing his willful rebellion and maintaining the Holy of Holies 6 a.m. wake-up.

Why is the correlation between day and night sleep quality always (as in, not just by Weissbluth) interpreted to mean that more day sleep causes more night sleep? Could it not possibly be that the same factors interfering with day sleep are still at play with night sleep? If there's a jackhammer going off 24/7 outside the nursery, you scream obscenities at the construction company and turn on white noise; you don't say, "Poor baby can't sleep because he took a nap at 9:15 instead of 9:00." The very, very best nights I've had are when we're overscheduled to the point that Baby doesn't get enough naps and is therefore more exhausted than hungry.

I'm sure this book has helped a lot of people, and even I got some good stuff out of it, but...yeah.

Hannah says

This book was recommended to me by a good friend who had literally poured over every book she could find on the topic of sleep. She sees it as the sleep bible.

Unfortunately, I had a hard time with the book for several reasons.

- 1) It's very dense with a small typeface - not easy to read when you're exhausted and looking for a solution.
- 2) It's totally unclear where in the book there's actual **practical** information on how to help your child sleep.
- 3) The author is strongly opinionated and has kind of a damning tone.

As a new parent, it's hard to filter out other people's judgemental attitudes, especially "experts," so I prefer information that's delivered in a softer tone. At one point, Weissbluth actually states something to the effect that children who get poor sleep are more likely to be bratty and those brats are more likely to become fat. I'm going to hunt down the actual quote, but that's the jist of it.

I get that he's emphatic and I agree that healthy sleep habits are incredibly important, but there's a difference between beating a drum and beating a person over the head with it.

All the same, the book is chock full of research and data that can help you develop a more informed approach toward your child's sleep, and Weissbluth does present some great concepts.

A friend of mine actually figured out what the "program" or "plan" was (she winnowed it out from the rest of the book somehow). She swears by it, which I probably would too had I been able to get that far! When I get the pared down version from her, I'll post the important page numbers here.

Breeana says

What a lifesaving book!

Like many first-time parents, I started off pretty darn ignorant. I did everything wrong regarding my firstborn's sleep habits for the first about 9 months. I became a miserable being surviving on almost no sleep and lots of frustration. My baby turned into a sullen little thing, too. I knew something had to be done when I realized he hardly smiled or giggled at all.

I researched different sleep-training books and liked the reviews from Amazon.com on this one, so I bought it.

I recommend you read it with a highlighter and mark everything you want to be able to easily find again. Weissbluth doesn't format his writing very well and he often repeats himself or gets off track. But the INFORMATION contained is empowering!

I applied the techniques and principles he teaches and WOW! It worked wonderfully. My marriage to my husband improved, I became a normal person again, and Brady became a sweet, happy baby again (instead of cranky from being sleep-deprived).

I suggest you don't "cheat" when teaching your baby how to sleep because - I'm here to tell you - you will pay later on, and it will be even HARDER to fix. I applied everything from the book except ONE thing: sleeping through the entire night without a bottle (or nursing). Brady got to a point where he was taking two

long naps a day and sleeping all night... except for one night nursing, which I couldn't give up. Then when I weaned him at 14 months, I gave him a bottle each night. WELL... it would've been easier overall if I had just weaned him from his night feeding at 9 months. My mind was telling me to, but my heart was saying the opposite. I thought it was fine until the repercussions started appearing. It's worth it to do it right (completely) the FIRST time, and not prolong even a small part of the problem.

Any new parents or moms, I highly recommend this book! It has worked wonders in our family. Our 18-month-old now ASKS for his nap when it's naptime. He does the same with bedtime as well! Life is wonderful. I'll apply this book from birth on with the rest of my children.

Syd Markle says

I give this one two stars not because the ideas were bad. The concepts are fairly sound and it is helping me get my 3 month on a napping schedule that will help him grow and be happy. I've already seen significant improvement in his mood.

I give it two stars because the book repeats itself over and over and over. It needs a good editorial scrub. It's as if someone felt it should be a certain number of pages, so they kept stretching the material. It's very redundant and honestly, could be boiled down to perhaps three chapters.

Chapter 1: Why children need sleep and the data that backs it up.

Chapter 2: Suggested sleep schedules by age.

Chapter 3: How to deal with difficult babies, and other sleep issues.

I will say however, I do not follow the cry it out advice. If he cries I respond. That's just my style of parenting.

Instead we focus on:

1. Not letting him get overtired (Babies can only handle about 1.5 to 2 hours before they get tired).
2. Encouraging longer naps during the day (This was a revelation that goes against common sense, and has really helped him sleep better overall.)
3. Getting him to bed at a regular time.

I feel like the book helped me understand the importance of structure. The concepts are helping us develop good habits for the future. It may not be for every parent, but it's working for us so far. Even if the organization of the book is horrible.

Marita says

I feel like all the books say the same thing in different ways and then sell it as the ONLY thing that works. The funniest thing is that they also seem to say that if you pay attention to your child you will notice patterns and respond according to your best instincts. DUH!! Pay attention to what your child needs. I never thought of that! I feel like most of these books are written to make mothers/parents feel bad, especially if you are breastfeeding. God forbid you don't like to hear your baby cry! What do you do if your child is totally motor oriented and therefore a restless sleeper as she has learned to crawl and pull her self up and creep along all

before 7 months! I have gone in circles and back only to resort to trusting myself and loving my sweet daughter. I will admit that it has helped to have my husband help some at night so that she is learning to feed a bit less. We'll see. As everyone says the only thing you can count on is that things change. Lily hasn't even gotten her first teeth. It is a process that all parents must go through and there is certainly nothing wrong with our children if they don't sleep "through the night"--whatever that means!! Okay off the soap box!

polly says

Decent.

This book is really not great for babies under 4 months of age, although it did introduce me to an important concept (don't keep a very young baby awake for more than 2 hours!). It is geared more to babies 5+ months and toddlers, preschoolers, children. For the first four months, definitely go to Dr. Harvey Karp's "The Happiest Baby on the Block," which is astoundingly good--and I recommend the DVD more than the book.

Dr. W is extremely knowledgeable about sleep patterns and methods. This book is full of information, but it is very poorly organized. I like that he is not judgmental about where baby sleeps (crib, co-sleeping, whatever) and although he does lean to a cry-it-out (CIO) method, that is NOT the only approach mentioned in this book. that method works for some babies; doesn't work for others. he notes that parents who don't want to CIO will not see fast results like CIO parents will, but that it can certainly work. Each parent has to decide for him/herself what is best, and I've had friends who have been totally fine with CIO and it works for them, although it won't work well for my intense little fellow....not at this point anyhow.

This is a good book because it really emphasizes how important healthy sleep is. however, for a wee little baby--go w/ Dr. Karp and read this book after a few months! However--I will say that I do think it's good after a couple of months to start implementing bedtime routines, etc. just for the sake of starting to establish predictability, so that is good.

Wendy says

I have mixed feeling about this book, but overall it is fabulous and I'm very glad that I read it.

The Good: I understand why this book has been referred to as the "sleep bible." After finishing this book, I feel like I no longer have any questions about what normal sleep should look like for my child and how to best go about teaching her to sleep. This book contains information on a large span of ages and phases from the first days as a newborn all the way through adolescence. There are also chapters dedicated to extremely fussy/colicky babies, common sleep problems, less common and more serious sleep problems, and special events or concerns (moving, vacation, new siblings) regarding sleep. Perhaps one of my favorite things about the book has nothing at all to do with the topic it so thoroughly discusses. I absolutely love the way Marc Weissbluth speaks to his readers. He does not have a "my way or the highway" attitude and seems to understand that different approaches may work for different families depending upon parental attitudes, parenting styles, and the child's temperament. It was comforting that Weissbluth offered "let cry," "maybe cry," and "no cry" solutions to sleep problems, reminding us that each approach will eventually yield the same result as long as it is used consistently. I feel that I learned so much from this book that I will probably

end up checking it out at the library again or buying a copy of my own to use as a reference as my child grows and her needs change.

The Bad: I read this book cover to cover and perhaps I shouldn't have. The author even recommends reading this book more as a reference - only reading the parts you need at that particular time. This book was a challenge for me to read cover to cover for a few reasons. The first four chapters were very dry for me. They contained a lot of common sense and information included in seemingly every single parenting book. Chapter four in particular, titled "Sleep Extreme Fussiness/Colic, and Temperament," really got on my nerves. I might just be bitter because as I read it made me realize that maybe my little girl really did/does have colic! Either way, she is not an easy baby and although it was comforting to know that I'm not alone in my struggles, I hate being reminded of all the extra work I have to go through to comfort my extra fussy baby. Another reason to hate Chapter four is that it is extremely scientific. Now, I like knowing that the advice I'm being given is founded in actual studies and has proven results, but I'm reading the book to learn how to give my child good sleep habits. If I had wanted to know every single detail from each sleep study ever done on children, I would have picked up a medical journal, not this book. My final, albeit minor, complaint is that I had a difficult time finishing this book. My daughter is three months old and it was hard for me to want to read about what I should be doing once she's in preschool or older to encourage healthy sleep habits. Call me ignorant if you must, but I'm much more focused on the now to project that far into the future.

Our Experiences: I have just finished the book, but already have applied some of what I learned to our family life. This book confirmed that my baby really needs more sleep than I initially thought. I have tried harder to make sure she is awake for no longer than two hours at a time during the day, per Dr. Weissbluth's recommendation. I have moved my daughter's bedtime to an earlier hour and have noticed good results. We used to begin her bedtime routine, which I highly recommend all parents establish, at eight o'clock with her being asleep by 8:45. Now, I begin her bedtime routine whenever she begins to get fussy in the evening, sometimes as early as 5:30 but never later than 7:00, and have found her to be asleep within a half hour of beginning our routine. I have also found that sleep truly begets sleep, even if it doesn't seem logical - it works!

Rachel says

This book makes me feel like a failure as a parent when my child has sleep issues. I hate his preachy tone and militant approach. I have literally thrown it across the room in frustration. Several times when we have encountered a new sleep issue with Nora, I go back to this book, hoping that he'll have some good advice. We are currently trying his "sleep rules" approach to deal with her getting out of bed a thousand times a night, with some success, but I think it has more to do with the holidays winding down and getting used to the baby than it does with the "sleep rules." I just picked up The No-Cry Sleep Solution from the library and I like it a lot better already. Mostly because the author admits that there are different approaches that can work depending on your child and your parenting style.

Marisa says

This is the most amazing sleep book ever written. I read it with my first and it is a miracle! It totally teaches you how to train your kids to sleep. I refreshed my memory and re-read parts of it with our second and it still

worked wonders. Every parent of a newborn should read this. You'll never regret that you did!

Michelle says

Let's start with the positive. His notion that children calm down and sleep better and generally behave better after 6 weeks was spot on with my two children.

His ideas about not allowing infants longer than 2 hours of wakefulness has also worked well. He also talks about watching for signs of sleepiness, which I have found to be astute, although difficult to be watching my baby carefully for signs of sleepiness in the midst of everything else that goes on.

The idea that children don't sleep as well when they're overtired has been a guiding principle for us, and has served us well. Our children are excellent sleepers. From this and many other things he wrote about, I would consider Dr. Weisbluth to be very knowledgeable about baby sleep. Perhaps one of the experts in the field.

But the way he expresses himself almost drives me crazy! He has an argumentative tone and often accuses his readers of being too selfish to do what is best for their children!

He makes blanket statements such as "NEVER wake a sleeping baby," or "Put babies to bed NO LATER than 6:30pm." repeats them often, with capital letters and then later in the book makes suggestions that contradict his first statements.

He wanders from topic to topic in such a way that I wonder if he had an editor.

He spends pages ranting about selfish parenting. (You can skip those pages, there was nothing of value in there.)

I have struggled to stifle my anger at his approach to me—the reader he assumes is selfish and unreasonable, although he's never met me--so that I can glean from him whatever he has that will work for my child.

Let's face it, no two children respond exactly the same way, and so any book about raising children should offer suggestions and teach principles, realizing this won't work every time.

Basically, if you can get past the presentation, the principles in the book are sound, and have been very beneficial for us. I wish you the best of luck.
