

# Guidance Guide

## Are You Sleeping?

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I know we all get it on a certain level. It's a basic human need. And it sounds so simple. Sleep. But, it's 2014 and we are in the age of being "super humans." Who needs sleep when we have Starbucks (the one on 8<sup>th</sup> and Pittsburgh is almost open)! Who has time for sleep when we are overwhelmed with work, family, activities, have to's, etc.?

Sleep has become a complicated issue and the consequences are becoming more problematic in our culture today. The reality is that sleep is essential. Research indicates that the quality of your sleep directly affects the quality of your waking life, including your mental sharpness, productivity, emotional balance, creativity, physical vitality and even your weight. As adults we are modeling our own sleep habits to our children and basic sleep hygiene is not being practiced in many households today.

As we transition from late summer nights to school, we may have put our healthy sleep habits on the back burner. If we do not carefully design a new sleep routine now, we may develop unhealthy habits that have the ability to negatively impact our children's overall academic success and well-being as well as our own. In fact, even minimal sleep loss takes a toll on your mood, energy and ability to handle stress. In a study of 74 six to twelve year olds, researchers found that the children generally had more trouble with their school work and more attention problems during the week when they stayed up late each night.

Sleep isn't exactly a time when your body and brain shut off. While you rest, your brain stays busy, overseeing a wide variety of biological maintenance that keeps your body running to top condition, preparing you for the day ahead. Without enough hours of restorative sleep, you won't be able to work, learn, create and communicate at a level even close to your true potential. Regularly skimp

on "service" and you're headed for a major mental and physical breakdown.

According to the National Institute of Health, the average adult sleeps less than seven hours per night. In today's fast paced society, six or seven hours of sleep may sound pretty good. In reality though, it's a recipe for chronic sleep deprivation. Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco discovered that some people have a gene that enables them to do well on six hours of sleep a night. This gene, however, is very rare, appearing in less than 3% of the population. For the other 97% of us, six hours doesn't come close to cutting it.

Many of us are walking around sleep deprived without even knowing it. If you need an alarm clock in order to wake up on time, rely on the snooze button, have a hard time getting out of bed in the morning, feel sluggish in the afternoon, get sleepy during meetings or class, get drowsy after heavy meals, need to nap to get through the day, fall asleep while watching tv or relaxing in the evening, feel the need to sleep in on weekends or fall asleep within five minutes before going to bed, you may be struggling with sleep deprivation.

*Continued on reverse*



So how much sleep do you really need?

Newborns to 2 months old	12-18 hours
3 months to 1 year old	14-15 hours
1 to 3 years old	12-14 hours
3 to 5 years old	11-13 hours
5 to 12 years old	10-11 hours
12 to 18 years old	8.5 to 10 hours
Adults (18+)	7.5 – 9 hours

So sleep is not so simple after all. But, obviously vital if we want to lead a healthy and productive lifestyle. As a psychotherapist, life coach and elementary school guidance counselor, I am so concerned about the high levels of anxiety, depression and obesity that are so pervasive in our culture today. I honestly believe that so many of these issues could be minimized by getting the right amount of sleep each night.

We are lucky to be in a school that is filled with incredibly bright and vivacious students who have full lives. We can further enrich them and our Erie Day School community if we help our children design healthy habits early on. After working as a college psychotherapist for ten years, it was heartbreaking to see academically gifted students failing out of school due their poor emotional well-being. And so I am asking all of you to consider going against this cultural norm of sleep deprivation and take a stand on getting enough sleep for both you and your children. As a result, we can create an opportunity for all of us to live our lives to their fullest potential.

## *Erie Day School Motto*

May I live each day being mindful of the goodness that surrounds me.

May I always stretch my mind and heart so that I live my life in wisdom and love.

May I be a loyal friend to others and willingly help those in need, and may I always honor and respect the earth of which I am a part.



# Erie Day School

*Learning today, leading tomorrow.*

Erie Day School  
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If you have any questions, comments or additions to the *Guidance Guide*, or know someone that should be included on the email distribution list, please contact Allison Parr-Plasha at 814-452-4273 or via email at [aplasha@eriedayschool.com](mailto:aplasha@eriedayschool.com)

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