

This straightforward workbook provides clear and targeted strategies to make bedtime easier. Sleep-deprived parents can flip to the relevant chapter and start making changes tonight!

–**KRISTEN KALYMON, PhD, BCBA-D**, CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST,
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR

Getting good sleep is so important for kids—it's the secret to doing well in school, making friends, and feeling great emotionally. But let's face it, it's not always easy to come by! With years of experience in childhood sleep, the authors have created a practical, parent-friendly guide to help you build healthy sleep habits for your child and set them up for a lifetime of well-being.

–**AIMEE KOTRBA, PhD**, COAUTHOR, *OVERCOMING SELECTIVE MUTISM:
THE PARENT'S FIELD GUIDE*

As a pediatrician and mom of two I could have used a book like this when my kids were little! Practical evidence-based advice with worksheets to help with implementation. It even has tips on how to deal with the other caregivers who are resistant to sleep training. I recommend this book 100%!

–**SARAH LUPU, MD, FAAP**, PEDIATRICIAN,
CHESTNUT RIDGE PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATES, MONTVALE, NJ

Sleep is essential for every child's well-being, but the path to restful nights isn't one-size-fits-all. This book equips parents and caregivers with evidence-based strategies tailored to every stage and understands a child's unique needs. It's a compassionate, practical guide for families seeking better sleep and stronger routines.

–**MONA AMIN, DO**, FOUNDER, PEDSDOCTALK

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome! We are so happy you are ready to tackle your child's sleep issues and that you are trusting us to help with your precious cargo during what we know can be a difficult time for all involved. Whether you are dealing with early wake-ups, stress-filled bedtimes, or middle-of-the-night difficulties, this workbook will help you feel confident and equipped to tackle these issues.

This book is meant for a variety of caregivers at different stages of childhood sleep. Whether you are the sleep-deprived parent of an infant, the caregiver of an 8-year-old who is experiencing serious sleep anxiety, or the grandparent of an exhausted teenager who is struggling to wake up for school each day, we are here for you.

In this book, we talk a lot about the importance of considering who your child is during the day as part of learning how to tackle their sleep issues. This understanding is particularly important for older children struggling with sleep because you will want to consider how their daytime anxiety or behavioral issues may be part of what you are seeing at bedtime. We also want to be clear from the start that we will not address every possible sleep issue or every possible solution: We focus on the problems we see most often in our clinical practices, and we provide approaches for you to consider when deciding how to respond to what is happening in your

home at the time. We take this approach not only because of our experience and training as psychologists, but also because we are always learning about and reviewing the research on sleep. In this book and in our clinical work, we rely heavily on evidence-based strategies (i.e., approaches supported by science and research). Most importantly, we hope that by picking up this book, you can focus less energy on the search for answers to sleep problems because we have done the leg work to provide you with up-to-date guidance. We have narrowed the focus and options to ensure that you don't feel overwhelmed by where to start.

ABOUT US

We, the authors of this book, are all doctoral-level clinicians who not only work with the pediatric population for sleep concerns, but we also specialize in mental health treatment. Our combined, unique qualifications include working with children with anxiety, depression, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), obsessive-compulsive disorder, and selective mutism. All recommendations and guidelines presented in this book are based in the same evidence-based practices that we use daily in our clinical work. These specialties make us uniquely qualified to speak on children's distinctive needs as they pertain to sleep.

We all came to this pediatric sleep space in different ways and found each other in equally unique circumstances. Andrea Roth, PsyD, would say that she came to this space by blood and that sleep is truly the "family business." She started by working in a sleep laboratory in Detroit, Michigan, with her father, Thomas Roth, PhD. After working in different positions in different laboratories, she combined this early appreciation for sleep with her passion for research-supported pediatric clinical care in graduate school, where she then met Allison Shale, PsyD. The two then worked together within their

clinical placement in Westchester, New York, treating youth with a variety of mental health diagnoses. Their careers evolved side by side, diverging in their clinical specialties, with Dr. Roth going the route of anxiety and depression and Dr. Shale going into behavioral defiance and noncompliance in children. Sleep always kept them together and continuing to collaborate, both in clinical practice and in late-night phone calls over the sleep struggles of their own children.

Shelby Harris, PsyD, was the missing piece of our sleep medicine puzzle. While Dr. Roth was participating in a pediatric sleep supervision group run by juggernauts in the field, Dr. Lisa Meltzer and Dr. Jodi Mindell, she made a passing remark about billing within private practice. An equally casual recommendation to connect with another private practice sleep clinician brought Dr. Roth and Dr. Harris together. Dr. Harris focused on adult sleep throughout her graduate studies; she obtained her board certification in behavioral sleep medicine, directed her own program at Montefiore Hospital, and then created her own thriving sleep practice. With this book, we hope to extend our combined years of knowledge and research-supported sleep interventions beyond our patients and friends, so more families can stop searching for answers and enjoy the benefits of a good night's sleep.

Although our credentials give us a particularly well-educated and informed perspective, our life experiences also ground us in the reality of how difficult childhood sleep issues can be. We are all mothers, and we felt lucky to have each other during the various ups and downs of sleep that our children experienced. Short of getting every one of you into our practices or you having our phone numbers on speed dial, we wanted to provide a helpful resource that you can pick up and put down as needed. We like the workbook format for caregivers because with so little time, so many available resources, and so many challenges in determining reliable sources of information,

we know it can be hard to read a book from cover to cover. (If you have that time in the future, we love and recommend Dr. Craig Canapari's 2019 book, *It's Never Too Late to Sleep Train*.) Next, we describe what you can expect from this book.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

By now, you may have talked with friends, family, or even your pediatrician in the hope of finding something (anything!) to increase the amount of sleep your child is getting (which affects your sleep too). As parents and caregivers, we want to make sense of why our children are sleeping poorly or possibly not sleeping at all. Although the recent influx of online and professional advice is helpful at times, it provides a bevy of nonmedical and nonresearched concepts, terms, and approaches for handling disrupted sleep that can be difficult to wade through.

With so many books, podcasts, and websites available, it can be difficult enough to parse out reliable information—let alone try to determine what may be most beneficial for you and your family. Although these different sources of information can be helpful, they often offer a one-size-fits-all approach to sleep solutions. For example, a child who struggles to sleep alone because of anxiety and nighttime fears needs a different approach than a child with ADHD and behavioral defiance. Without a more complete understanding of why your child is not sleeping well and without a targeted plan derived from that understanding, you likely will not be as successful as you could be in addressing your child's needs.

Unlike many sleep blogs and books that make broad suggestions around changing sleep without considering individual differences, the chapters in this book are geared toward a specific age group from infancy through adolescence. Each chapter focuses on the sleep difficulties we have found to be most common at that point in

development; when you come to a sleep issue, you can start by reading the age-appropriate chapter. Each chapter includes strategies and brief vignettes that show the techniques in action while also considering possible hiccups and pitfalls. Once you have read about the skills, you can complete a brief worksheet to develop a plan (and backup plans) for self-identified possible problems. Additionally, this book emphasizes identifying your support system. We know that working on sleep challenges can be difficult; having a plan in place with identified people and resources to help you through will increase your chances of success. The worksheets are intentionally brief so you can complete them in a single sitting. This workbook is extremely user-friendly, and no formal knowledge of sleep or complicated medical terminology is required to understand and benefit from it.

It is important that we also mention a few things this book will not do. First, we will not make medical recommendations. This resource will be helpful for a lot of children, but there are some causes of sleep problems that this book cannot address. Some disorders and diagnoses, such as autism spectrum disorder and developmental delays, can complicate sleep issues. In these cases and others, you should consult with a pediatrician or clinical specialist as a first step in addressing and understanding your child's individual sleep needs.

We also encourage you to speak with your pediatrician or another trusted medical professional if your child is experiencing any of the following:

- If you notice that your child is snoring routinely, holding their breath, or gasping for air overnight, this may be a sign of sleep apnea. In this case, talk with your pediatrician about a referral to a pediatric sleep medicine physician or ear, nose, and throat specialist (ENT), because a sleep study might be indicated.
- Although children rarely use the word “restless” to describe their limbs at bedtime, they may say their limbs feel “itchy” or there are “creepy crawlies” on them. They may also say

they have trouble getting comfortable or toss and turn a lot at bedtime. These remarks may be an indication of restless leg syndrome (RLS). It is worth noting that children with ADHD have a higher incidence of RLS than other children (Migueis et al., 2023). To assess for RLS, your pediatrician can perform a simple blood test to measure your child's level of serum ferritin (a protein that stores iron).

- If your child has other medical conditions (e.g., eczema or reflux), we encourage you to get them under control so you can eliminate physical pain or discomfort as a cause of sleep issues.

As mentioned earlier, our approach highlights the importance of considering who your child is outside of their sleep difficulties. We will challenge you to really think about who your child is for the many other hours of the day, because this will help you determine how to best approach their difficulties at bedtime and through the night.

This book is meant to be easy to digest, and we hope you will return to it as needed over time. Rather than read it from start to finish (although you certainly can if you want to look ahead), we recommend starting with Chapter 1 for a review of general principles and guidelines related to sleep. Chapter 1 also highlights reasons to consider a referral for clinical and individualized support and to address medical conditions that can affect sleep, which should be treated first. In the remaining chapters, we discuss the importance of caregiver teamwork (Chapter 2), provide guidance for age groups from infancy through adolescence (Chapters 3–7), and offer trouble-shooting tips (Chapter 8).

Throughout this book, we will follow two children, Lena and Nik,¹ from their infant days through their toddler years and beyond.

¹Cases are composites of real clients. Details have been changed to ensure patient confidentiality.

Their stories, and those of their caregivers, demonstrate approaches to resolving sleep issues across various stages of child development and among caregivers with different comfort levels.

We hope that you reference this book throughout your child's sleep journey and that you pay it forward to your friends and family when they inevitably hit a rough patch, too. We think you will feel empowered knowing that you have our guidance in your back pocket whenever you need it.