Sleep Starts at Sunrise

A calm morning guide for tired families

From Catherine at
The Nurture Owl

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Welcome

Hello 🤍

Almost everything you'll read about sleep is about nighttime: bedtime routines, the wind-downs or 3am wake-ups.

But after 27 years of working with children and families, I can tell you this:

Sleep doesn't start at bedtime.
It starts the moment your child wakes up.

A calm morning sets the tone for the whole day and supports better sleep that night for you both.

Calm doesn't mean slow or perfect. Even a busy, working-parent morning can feel steadier with a few small changes.

This short guide is about the other half of the story. It's simple, it's kind and there is no pressure to do it all.

Here's to calmer mornings and easier nights.

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Why mornings shape bedtime

Your child has an inner body clock which works best when it gets clear, steady signals about when the day begins.

Just like at bedtime, a calm, predictable routine in the morning helps your child feel safe.

Light
Natural daylight early in the day helps set the body clock, which supports the body's natural melatonin rhythm in the evening.



Rhythm
A start to the day that feels similar from one day to the next

Safety
Feeling calm, connected and supported

Bring these three together each morning to start the day positively and nurture your child's emotional wellbeing from the outset.

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Start the day calm

Mornings look different in every home and they can often feel like a race. Just a few simple steps can help your child (and you!) start the day feeling calm and connected, rather than rushed and wound up.

🌿 Connect first. A cuddle, a quiet moment or just sitting together before the day starts.

🌿 Keep requests simple and prepare for transitions. One request at a time reduces demand, and letting your child know what's coming next makes each change easier.

🌿 Keep the sensory load low. Soft, gradual lighting, quiet voices and comfortable clothes make a gentler start.

🌿 Prepare the night before. Clothes out, bag by the door, breakfast planned. Fewer decisions means a softer start.

🌿 Allow a little extra time. Rushing is often what tips the morning over.

Try this tomorrow: choose just one idea from this page that you are not already doing and notice how the morning feels.

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Small signals that help the day begin

Light, food and movement are three key signals that tell your child's body the day has begun, and even a quick version of each counts.



Open the curtains to let daylight in. Being exposed to daylight early on helps your child's body clock know that the day has started.

Sitting down to eat breakfast gives their bodies another gentle cue that the day has begun. Keeping this calm and relaxing helps the day start positively.





If you can squeeze in some gentle movement in the morning, this helps their bodies wake up and feel ready for the day.

Little and often is enough.
These small signals kickstart your child's body clock into finding its rhythm, setting the path towards sleepiness at bedtime.

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Connection and a calm start to the day

Those first moments of the morning set the tone for the day ahead. Incorporating small moments of connection can really help your child feel safe and ready to go.

Connection

Before the day gets busy, making time for a cuddle, a chat or some quiet time together can make all the difference. Feeling connected helps their emotional wellbeing, so they feel secure from the start.

Predictability

Following a similar routine each morning, such as wake up, breakfast, get dressed, helps children know what is coming next. For many children, especially neurodivergent children, knowing what to expect can make mornings feel calmer. Visual aids can be beneficial here!



Flexibility

Some mornings will be rushed, and that's okay. Many neurodivergent children do best with a routine that flexes with their energy, sensory needs and mood. If a step feels like too much, simplify or skip it. Tomorrow is a fresh start.

How the day begins can shape how the day ends. Feeling safe and settled in the morning can help your child feel calmer by bedtime.

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A morning for you

You matter in this too. Mornings can feel like a race against the clock, but small moments of calm can help you start the day feeling more settled, and that feeling passes to your child.

Everything in this guide works together.
Daylight, breakfast and movement help your child's body clock find its rhythm. Connection helps them feel safe and secure. A routine that flexes with them helps the day feel manageable. Each one sets them up for the day and builds towards sleepiness and a calmer bedtime later on.

Bedtime doesn't start in the evening. It starts from the moment the day begins.

If sleep feels hard right now, you don't have to work it out alone. I offer a responsive and nurturing approach to sleep support, one that fits your child and your whole family.

Book a free discovery call and let's talk it through.

https://www.nurtureowlsleep.com

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