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## Sleep is Your Superpower: Tips to Power up Your Child's Learning

*School Wellbeing Program Coordinator Gloria Blacka shares some helpful hints on good sleep hygiene.*

With all the change and added stress that we have been experiencing it's not unusual that children are out of routine. You may have noticed that your own routine and structure is disrupted. Routine and structure give us predictability and help keep us stay on track.

One of the most significant disruptions is sleep. Sleep is fundamental to our health and wellbeing. Primary school aged children need on average ten hours of sleep a night. Sleep and mental health are closely connected; interruptions to our sleep can have huge consequences. Good quality sleep directly effects our attention and behaviour.

This can translate to how well our children attend to school and their friendships. Kids running low on sleep are less able to concentrate, more easily distracted, and more hyperactive or impulsive.

A proactive way to ensure that we prioritise children getting enough sleep is developing healthy sleep hygiene. Some examples of sleep hygiene include:

**Establish regular sleep patterns:** Having a set night time routine for your little one is important. This may include dinner, shower, bedtime story at set times. Children crave predictability and thrive when healthy boundaries are in place. They help children feel secure and are essential to establishing safety. Regular sleep and wake up times are also very beneficial.

**Make sure bedroom is comfortable:** Children's bedrooms can become messy jungles which all parents cringe at from time to time. Having bedrooms free from clutter and distractions help in setting the mood for comfortable sleep.

**Exercise and time outside:** Plenty of physical activity not only is helpful in getting the kids off screens but it also helps children use nervous energy through play which we know is how children express themselves.

**Caffeine is a stimulant:** Whilst many parents know that sugary drinks aren't the healthiest options you may be surprised to learn that many of these drinks have hidden caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant which can make children restless making it difficult to settle and get to sleep.

**Screen free time:** Ensure that your child has at least half an hour screen free time before bed. The blue light that electronic devices emit are known to disrupt our ability to fall asleep and stay asleep.

**Consult with your GP:** If your child's sleep is not improving with the strategies put in place or you are concerned contact your GP for support. Additionally, if your child has other needs or is on regular medication consulting with your GP or Paediatrician will be necessary.

**Consistency is key:** Remember that not every strategy is going to work for your child. Establishing a routine to meet your child's needs is what is important. Whatever sleep hygiene routine that works for you is going to have the most benefit if it is consistently adhered to.

*Gloria Blacka is off to get a good night's sleep!*