



# Tips for Tots



## Strategies

### Tip #6: Supportive Naptime

Did you know?

#### Infant/Toddler:

Naptime may cause increased anxiety. Caregivers may notice that a child is often distressed and that routine strategies are ineffective. Infants and toddlers may not soothe easily, may cry uncontrollably or have an otherwise strong reaction (i.e. body shaking or sobbing without sound). Caregivers may be unaware of what a child may be reacting to. Certain aspects of naptime: dimming the lights, losing sight of a caregiver, other children crying, or being away from family, may cause a child to feel unsafe. Caregivers may need to make adjustments to the environment to assist the child in feeling secure.

#### Preschool:

Naptime can sometimes feel threatening to a preschool age child. It may be connected to a frightening event, including the separation from the caregiver who represents security to the child. The child who has been affected by frightening or adverse events may perceive the same situation differently from other preschoolers. If a preschooler often cries or becomes clingy, runs around when the lights are dimmed or when asked to sit on their cot, may require other strategies be implemented. Each child needs to feel safe and secure in their environment.

#### Infant/Toddler:

- For the infant that has difficulty settling for nap, communicate with the parent/guardian about what helps at home.
- At naptime keep the infant or toddler near the caregiver to allow for gentle pats, reassurance and use of a soothing tone. Rock and cuddle the child if possible before nap.
- Maintain consistent caregivers to help the child build secure relationships within the program.
- Learn the child's rhythms and routines and match this to the child in developing a naptime plan.
- Coordinate breathing- caregiver and child. Rock, sing or talk in a soothing tone.
- Play the same soothing music daily as repetition may be helpful.

#### Preschool:

- Follow a predictable naptime routine. A social story can be written about the naptime routine.
- Allow comfort items from home: a special toy, stuffed animal, pictures from home or provide a soft toy from the classroom.
- At naptime the caregiver may need to be near the child or only within eyesight. The child may ask for a back rub, hand held and others may decline physical contact.
- Keep music and talking soft and low as there may be more of a startle response during naptime.
- Provide some light as a child may need to look around to be reassured of their location and safety.
- Provide a quiet activity for those who do not sleep.
- Communicate any naptime concerns with the family and together develop a plan that addresses the unique needs of the child.

#### Resources:

[Traumatic Experience and the Brain](http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/early-childhood-trauma) by Dave Ziegler PH.D. 2011  
<http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/early-childhood-trauma>  
<http://www.nctsn.org/resources>

Contact your area ECCP Consultant for **free** Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation services.

To learn of the consultant in your area visit [www.eccpct.com](http://www.eccpct.com) or call ECCP at (860) 704-6378

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