

Lesson 3.3: Dreaming is Free! (¡Soñar No Cuesta Nada!)

Background (Read before you teach): In children and adults, sleep is important for memory and learning (Maski, 2015). Sleep is also important for safe driving, resisting illness, and better performance at work. Getting enough sleep is also associated with healthy weight in children (Ruan, Xun, Cai, He, & Tang, 2015). Youth who get more sleep consume less calories (possibly to fewer late night snacks) and gain weight more slowly (Chaput & Dutil, 2016).

People differ in the amount of sleep they need. Nonetheless, sleep experts are able to recommend a range of hours of sleep for different ages (Hirshkowitz et al., 2015). Children and adults whose sleep patterns usually fall well outside these ranges are more likely to develop health problems.

Table 1: National Sleep Foundation Recommendations on Sleep Duration by Age Group (Chaput & Dutil, 2016).

Age Group	Recommended hours of sleep ¹
Newborns (0-3 months)	14-17
Infants (4-11 months)	12-15
Toddlers (1-2 years)	11-14
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	10-13
School-age (6-13 years)	9-11
Teenagers (14-17 years)	8-10
Young adults (18-25 years)	7-9
Adults	7-9

Several parenting practices are key to helping children get the recommended amounts of sleep (Allen, Howlett, Coulombe, & OrCorkum, 2015). Those practices, backed up by the best research studies, include:

- Setting consistent bedtimes and wake-up times to meet sleep recommendations;
- Establishing routines around bedtime and throughout the day for other activities;

- Limiting access to television, computers, and other screen devices around bedtime. This may mean moving these devices away from the child's sleeping area; and
- Allowing children to settle down and fall asleep in their own beds, without the presence of parents.

Teaching Tips: The skit can be an entertaining way to show bedtime routines. You might use this opportunity also to reinforce other health messages or help confront some barriers that parents mention related to getting enough sleep. For instance, if the parent has to awake very early for work, bedtime clothing may be clean, comfortable items that can be worn to day care. The routine will also include having the child get the backpack ready to go.

Target Audience: Mexican-origin families with children 3 to 8 years.

Key Message: Set a routine that helps children get sufficient sleep for better health.

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify the importance of sleep for children's health;
- Identify how many hours of sleep their children need according to their age; and
- Establish a consistent bedtime routine that includes creating a relaxing environment; turning off TV/computers at least 60 minutes before bedtime; and avoiding late night snacking.

Materials: paper, pens, small sticky notes, poster board chart with age group and # hrs of sleep recommended; food and other supplies for food demonstration (suggested: Pumpkin *Atole* (grain beverage), 1-2 story books for the skit.

Handouts: recommended hours of sleep for each age group, recipes

Set-up: Prepare poster chart with age group in columns along top row (Toddlers, 1-2 yrs; Preschoolers, 3-5 yrs; School-age, 6-13 yrs, and Teenagers, 14-17). Under each age-group, write the recommended hours of sleep (Table 1) but cover the number with a sticky note. Display poster and place sticky note pads with pens on tables. As participants arrive, ask them to write on the note the age of at least one of their children and the number of hours the child slept last night (recall bedtime last night and wake time this morning). Parents should not write names on the notes.

Opening (Anchor): (10 min) Welcome! Review what was covered last time and ask if participants have made changes, based on their goals. Congratulate and encourage them to keep on making changes.

Today, we will be talking about what parents can do to help their children get enough sleep to do well in school and be healthy.

To begin the class, choose one of the following:

- **Ask:** How many hours of sleep do you usually get? How does your day go when you get less sleep than you need?
- **Ask:** Who can share a memory of a parent, older sibling, or grandparent who told stories or sang a song to help you sleep when you were a child? Please share what that was like for you.

(As this discussion is underway, have assistant or a participant help collect the notes and post them under the correct age category on the chart)

Lesson (Add): (10 min) Discuss the following points:

- **Ask:** Why is getting enough sleep important to children's health and development?

Getting enough sleep is important for a child's ability to do well at mental tasks in school. Sleep actually helps the brain store information in a way that makes learning easier.

There is also an association between getting enough sleep and healthy body weight.

Not getting enough sleep may increase risk of being overweight in 3 ways:

- 1) Sleepy children may be too tired to play actively at school (less physical activity);
- 2) Children and teens may eat more snack foods when they stay up late; and
- 3) Lack of sleep may also affect appetite during the day, making kids hungrier (by changing the body's hormones)

Daytime napping does not appear to make up for lack of nighttime sleep in preventing overweight or for promoting a child's mental development

- **Say:** Everyone may be different in their need for sleep. However, experts can identify the amount of sleep needed for better health. Let's see what these recommendations are. (At this point, remove sticky notes on the chart and reveal the recommended hours):

Toddlers should get at least **11-14 hours**

Preschoolers should get at least **10-13 hours**

School-aged children should get at least **9-11 hours**

Teenagers should get at least **8-10 hours**

- **Ask:** How are children in this community doing in meeting this recommendation? Re-visit the chart to see how many children fall below recommendations.

- **Ask:** What makes it difficult for children and teens to get to bed on time and/or get enough sleep? (Make a note of the barriers and use this information in the “Personalize a bedtime routine” activity)

Activity (Apply): (30 min) While the assistant starts the food demonstration, the educator leads the activity.

- **Say:** One way that parents can help children calm down at night is to read, tell stories, or sing to them before bed. Did you know that children who have this type of routine do better on verbal tests in school? It doesn’t matter whether the parent reads, sings, or tells stories in English or Spanish.

(Skit or Role-Play): Invite 2 parents to role play an interaction between a child and a parent during a bedtime routine. Explain that they can offer a few choices, like “which of these books shall we read?” or “what would like to have for breakfast tomorrow morning—cereal, banana, and milk or a banana smoothie (*licuado*)? They can read the story and/or ask the child to talk about the pictures and what is happening in the book.

(Personalize a Bedtime Routine): Hand out paper and pens. In pairs, ask parents to write down the steps or parts of an evening routine for one of their children. Prompt them to think about the barriers mentioned earlier and come up with a solution. (Note: remind families to include turning off TV and screen devices and avoid large meals near bedtime—small snack like a glass of milk and banana okay).

- Food demonstration, tasting and sharing. Pass around the containers, showing the participants any foods that might be new or unfamiliar (for example, low-fat products, whole grain alternatives). Explain step-by-step how the food is prepared. Serve samples for tasting. **Ask:** What are some ways that your children can help prepare this recipe? How can you use it at home? What do you like about the recipe? What would you change?

Closing (Away): (10 min) Pair-up and set specific goals.

What did you learn? Why is this information important to you? Looking at your personal bedtime routine, what is one thing you can do right away. Choose a goal to work on this month (week). Try to choose a simple goal that is doable within a week. For example, “ I will set a time for my child to turn off all screen devices every evening” or “I will do a relaxing activity, like reading or playing soft music, as part of my child’s bedtime routine”.

Write your goal on the recipe handout. Ask a friend or family member to help support you in reaching your goal. Invite families to share their goals.

References and Resources:

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