



Parent-in-Training

You are not alone in this thing called "parenting"

WRITTEN BY Decca Knight

bella families

Sleep Conundrums

Time: 9:00 p.m. Friday Night

Place: Party with friends

Situation: My son is about to turn into a rotten pumpkin as he is WAY past his witching hour

As parents, we have all been in this situation. We know that we have our child out too late, and we can see the downward spiral of emotion beginning. With my son, it is like all of his "control systems" go haywire and a switch is thrown in his brain. I often feel like screaming to my husband, "Mayday, mayday, we have lost all control, abandon ship, abandon ship!" We try to avoid situations like this, and we rarely keep our child out after 8:00 p.m. In fact, his bedtime, at three years of age, is usually around 7-7:30 p.m.

Why do we put him to bed so early? Because he is an early riser and likes to get up around 7:00 a.m. At his age, he should be getting ten to twelve hours of sleep a day. On days when he does not get twelve hours, I can see a marked difference in his behavior.

However, his behavior is not what you would expect from an overly-tired preschooler. He actually seems to have more energy. This must be one of Murphy's most insensitive laws. As adults, we walk around like zombies when we don't get enough sleep. Kids, on the other hand, seem to gain more momentum the less sleep they have.

I have observed this sleep conundrum time and time again with my child, friend's children, and children with whom I work. Yet, many parents are unaware of how many hours of sleep children should have. The National Sleep Foundation recommends the following hours of sleep for different age groups:

- 1 - 3 years: 12 - 14 hours per day
- 3 - 5 years: 11 - 13 hours per day
- 5 - 12 years: 10 - 11 hours per day
- 12 - 18 years: 8 - 9 hours per day

In my observations, the age-group that is most often sleep-deprived is the 7-12 years group. When I have polled elementary-aged kids that I work with about how much they sleep, the majority say seven to eight hours a day. This is very worrisome to me, as children need adequate sleep for their brains to prosper and for emotional regulation, concentration, physical health, and more.

Many studies by the National Sleep Foundation have shown that children who do not get enough sleep experience a host of difficulties including decreased attention, hyperactivity, increased irritability, and lack of impulse control. Sometimes such symptoms are mislabeled as ADHD or ADD when they actually might be as a result of exhaustion. Additional studies have shown that sleep deprivation can lead to decreased cognitive ability, weight gain, depression, and anxiety.



So, how do we get our kids to sleep more? We should have, and enforce, consistent bed times, even on the weekends. Allowing children to stay up late every Friday and Saturday actually disrupts their circadian rhythms, thereby making sleep more difficult the following week. We should also take all electronic devices out of our children's bedrooms and we should not allow them to use TV to unwind at the end of the day. Listening to soothing music or reading a calming book is a better alternative. A child's room should also be conducive to sleep as it should be cool, dark, and quiet.

So, the next time that your little darling is fighting sleep, hold firm to your expectations and get them to bed at a reasonable hour. We certainly don't want to be sending overly-tired bundles of energy out into the world! If we continue to do so, we might all have to take sedatives!

Decca is a wife, mother, counselor, and parenting educator. In an effort to further help kids and parents, Decca began studying the Love and Logic Parenting® philosophy. She teaches classes to other "Parents-in-training" and runs Blue Ridge Parenting LLC (www.blueridgeparenting.com). You can also "like" Blue Ridge Parenting on FB for more parenting tips and advice.



The Changing Face of Insurance

WRITTEN BY Heather Woody

There's a new superhero in town. She's a multitasker, a mom, a leader, a businesswoman and a friend. Sound familiar? She's your local insurance agent. You might be surprised to hear that this predominantly male industry has a few new players of the fairer sex.

What's the reason behind this trend? "The perception of women is changing," asserts State Farm agency recruiter Melicca Dunn. "Women are suited to the insurance industry because women are natural caretakers."

Dunn has worked for State Farm for eight years and has spent the past six years as a recruiter. She is excited about the growing number of women diving fearlessly into previously male dominated industries. In Roanoke, there are five female agents, two of whom joined the State Farm team last year. These ambitious women already have experience in the working world and have learned to play to their nurturing label.

Females are perceived as gentle and delicate, but under that sugary exterior is a strong, savvy woman who is capable of being a mother and a boss. This duality favors female agents because it makes them accessible and relatable, which is important now that more women are making the financial decisions for their families. Women like to relate to each other and when a client sees that their agent is a wife and a mother too, there is an instant connection between them.

A woman's top priority is her family, so when an agent asks, "Where do you want your family to be?" the client relaxes because she has found someone who wants the best for her family, someone in whom she can confide. Female agents are breaking the stereotype of insurance agents. People think of a stuffy, white-haired man when they think 'insurance agent'. As a woman, you might not trust him as instantaneously, because he cannot be a wife or a mother. Besides, given the choice between confiding in a girlfriend or a father, most women would choose their gal pal time and time again.

Women make excellent salesmen in addition to being trustworthy confidants. For starters, they don't have that pushy stigma associated with male salesmen.

The agents wear different hats—caretaker, saleswoman—but did you know that each agent is an independent, small business owner? After navigating State Farm's approval process, which includes an assessment test, background checks and writing a business plan, candidates then look for an agency opportunity. Dunn explains that approximately 85 percent of agencies survive their first year, which is incredible in today's economy.

"Women in the past didn't want risks," remarks Dunn, "But today's women are more risk-tolerant and confident in their abilities."

Running a small business always included an element of risk, but women of the 21st century are built from bold bones and courageous craniums. To run a small company, these super women must wear the hat of boss, janitor, problem-solver and every job in between. They need to be results-oriented and have the ability to form relationships and earn trust, not to mention juggle their families and husbands.

Insurance agents may not wear capes, but move over Lois Lane, there is a new superwoman in town.

If you're interested in becoming an agent, please contact Melicca Dunn, Agency Recruiting, at 434-872-5423 or visit www.mdunn.sfagentcareers.com.

