mountain song community school

Sleep hygiene practices for children

❏ Stick to the same bedtime each night, even on weekends. Children tend to sleep better when they have consistent bedtime and wake-up times.

❏ Establish a bedtime routine. This is a predictable series of events that happen every night. A simple routine might include taking a bath, putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, and reading a bedtime story.

❏ Create a calm, cozy sleep environment. If possible, keep the room quiet, cool, and uncluttered.

❏ Implement a screen curfew. Screens emit a type of blue light that suppresses melatonin, the hormone that helps regulate sleep.

❏ Use beds primarily for sleeping. Watching TV or using a tablet or computer in bed can make it harder for your child's brain to associate the bed with rest.

❏ Alarm clocks can be useful, but consider facing them away from your child's sleeping area to minimize light and distraction.

❏ Consider a relaxing routine before bed that includes slow, deep breathing or a positive visualization of your child's favorite nature spot.

❏ Avoid caffeine (soda, chocolate, tea, or coffee) in the late afternoon and evening. Water or herbal tea can be good alternatives during these times.

❏ Encourage daily exercise. Physical activity helps people of all ages fall asleep more easily and stay asleep longer. About one hour of activity each day is a helpful guideline.

❏ Be mindful of scary or violent content. Some games, shows, and YouTube videos are marketed to children but may still be frightening. Poppy Playtime is one example that often comes up in conversations with students.

❏ Consider soothing, natural calming scents such as lavender in a diffuser.

❏ If your child is prone to bedtime worrying, a short mindful meditation before bed can help calm the nervous system. It can also be helpful to create a "worry time" earlier in the evening when your child can talk about concerns and think throughways to cope with them.

❏ Some children also find comfort in a security item such as a stuffed animal or soft blanket.

❏ It can also help to put children to bed when they are sleepy but still awake so they can practice settling themselves to sleep.

Kim Butler, Licensed School Counselor, LPC
Director of Mental Health Systems
kbutler@mountainsongschool.org