



SOULA
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6 Steps to Better Sleep

1

SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

How you think about sleep matters a lot. **Perception is reality.**

Strange but true—if you don't expect babies to sleep through the night, you won't be as affected when they don't, unless it's truly out-of-the-ordinary stuff (sickness, too many overly-interrupted nights in a row, etc.).

The parents who cope the best are the ones that expect and plan not to sleep as much when they have young kids, and modify their lives to accommodate that (i.e. become expert nappers, don't try to do all the things, etc.).

Our culture has weird ideas about sleep as a precious commodity due to our insane cultural idea of 'normal' pace and productivity. Our culture doesn't teach us that babies and young children have different sleep needs and patterns from adults, or how to change our lives to accommodate these patterns as newly minted parents.

2

KNOW BABIES DON'T SLEEP THROUGH THE NIGHT... & THAT'S OK.

As a culture we seem to be in a hurry to turn our children into mini adults. It is way more convenient as a parent when your baby sleeps through the night but it is not how babies (or young children) are made.

Born without the circadian rhythm that governs our instinct to sleep at night and be awake during the day, your baby learns this slowly over the first several months of life. They are also made to be attached to you and to feed every few hours—that is, they are biologically wired to ensure their own survival through constant physical attachment to their caregivers.

We live in modern times but our babies still run Stone Age software. They don't know you are in the next room keeping them safe from sabre tooth tigers...they need to be with you to know you are there. And while you're there they need to eat again, because their tummies are tiny.

Babies sleep a lot, but not for long at a time. We focus on how much they don't sleep (at night) but forget all the time they do during the day!

In the first month your baby will sleep about 2–4 hours at a time, typically, and sometimes once a day they may sleep about 5 hours. They are typically awake for 1–1.5 hours in between each sleep, which for the first month will be spent mostly feeding (8-12 feeds per day). The average is about 16 hours sleeping and 8 hours awake each day, but all babies are different and your baby's sleep pattern will be unique (and changeable).



It's good to know that many babies have a single good sleep about day two after birth. This lovely long sleep (for a newborn) usually happens just one time about the end of day two. Even though you will still be coasting the hormonal high of birth and may not feel you necessarily need it yet...get yourself to bed and sleep. It might be the last long stretch you get for a little while.

3

"SLEEP WHEN THE BABY SLEEPS." SERIOUSLY.

This is unfortunately the most annoying advice ever. When your baby sleeps you will want to do all the things you feel like you can't do while your baby is awake...which includes *everything on earth* except feeding, changing, rocking and staring at their sweet face. Every time your baby sleeps you will want to fit in a shower, bathroom break, exercise routine, and six chores. Or just scroll your phone to feel somewhat like the rest of the world still exists!

Instead, prioritise rest. Rest is the most important thing you can do for your own wellbeing and sanity, and, while it feels like rest is in competition with everything else that needs doing, it will actually make everything else easier and less stressful. A well-rested person can also better prioritise what really needs their attention, and what can wait, or be delegated.

After birth, every time the baby sleeps, take a rest until you are healed and mentally sturdy again. Don't miss this opportunity. Babies breastfeed easiest when fed on baby's cues; sleeping on their schedule will make you much happier to feed on their schedule too.

4

REMEMBER YOU WERE MADE FOR THIS.

Your body, brain, energy and priorities are different after birth than before. Research shows us that a postpartum brain is significantly physically and chemically altered with greater grey matter and increased plasticity. That's right—mother's brains literally get bigger after birth to service the rapid learning curve, intense intimacy and constant responsiveness of new and early motherhood. Nature is neat ❤️

You are a new version of yourself and won't have the same natural pace, motivations and needs as you did before your baby. This can feel like losing yourself and be a bit scary, but is also an exciting opportunity to discover and nurture 'mother you' if you have the space and support you need to do so.

How much sleep does 'mother you' actually need? How much rest? What is the best pace for your days? What really needs to get done, and what doesn't matter right now?

You may find that you can survive on less sleep, or lower quality sleep, than before, particularly if you follow your other intuitive cues about managing your energy during early parenthood.

CO-SLEEPING IS THE SECRET SAUCE.

Co-sleepers *sleep!* Before you have a baby this can sound counter-intuitive—it's difficult to imagine how to bed-share with a baby without being on high alert, the opposite of a restful night!

However, before birth you shared your body with your baby 24/7, and afterwards is really no different as you gradually separate into two individual beings over a year or more. Co-sleeping is what nature intended for newborns and if you choose to do it, you have built-in instincts to make it work safely. Babies are wired to be skin-to-skin and will often sleep better with you than without—and you will usually sleep better being connected to them too.

Co-sleeping works because you can feed through the night with minimal disruptions...no getting up, no bright lights, and the ability—once you're used to it—to attend to baby's slightest murmur without having to properly wake up.

Many also swear by "dream feeding"—using baby's instinctual latch to feed them while they sleep through so there's no waking up hungry at all, just maximum peace and rest for all.



6

GET HELP.

Society is no longer set up to support mothers. The shock of adjusting to infant sleep patterns is made much, much easier with a community and/or extended family around to make meals, help with older kids, keep on top of the washing, and care for you as you get used to the constant feeding, sleeping and waking cycles of your baby.

It's not just newborn sleep patterns that fatigue us, it's the expectation that we will manage it—along with everything else we are usually responsible for—solely on our own as a nuclear family.

These days, to benefit from a village we first have to build one. If you are lucky enough to have one before you give birth, put them to work! If not, give yourself permission to ask for help, often, and persevere if the first person you ask or thing you ask for doesn't work out. You were never meant to do this alone and there are no brownie points for doing so—only soul-deep fatigue.

There are people in your life who want to help but don't know with what or how. Ask for what you need to be able to get more rest, give reminders, and receive with pleasure—no guilt allowed.



Wise words...

I have 3 kids close together and I sleep like 10 hours a day.

My tips are **bed sharing/co sleeping/sleep nursing** (when baby starts moving, nursing as she lies down and NOT wait till they wake up and cry. When I nurse her as she starts moving... she falls back asleep and so do I!)

I get all the babies in bed at about 7pm and we are usually all asleep at 8ish and we wake up at about 7am. Nighttime is a big blur... Baby sleeps between my arm and knees with my boob around her face.. She feeds whenever shes hungry ... sorta smells for it and latches... sometimes she can't find it so I sorta shuffle a little and help her latch and we both go back to sleep. **I don't get up. I don't burp... don't change her diaper...** so I know I wake up at night when baby latches or is trying to latch but it's honestly a big blur as I don't even open my eyes and neither does baby.

It takes time to get there ... obviously newborns are harder to latch ... my baby is 5 weeks and already pretty good at sniffing and at least attempting to latch by herself while I sleep... I think another 2 weeks and I won't even have to move... at some point you are sleeping and you just sorta wake up to feel baby suddenly nursing on you. Pretty cool.

NATI
Mama

If you haven't had a baby before you may first need to get some **realistic expectations**. I find that people even well educated are surprised about how wacky sleep is, how much a newborn will sleep during the day and how much and often they nurse!! Our mainstream culture has a weird fascination with sleeping through the night when for attached babies it's just not realistic or even desirable.

MARYN
Midwife & Mama



Bedsharing or cosleeping can help a lot with sleep.

Also, my body got used to no sleep. It took a bit and it was exhausting for a few weeks, but then my body adjusted and an hour in a row felt like 8. Once my kids started STTN* (my youngest was 5 so I went like 12 years with broken sleep), sleeping all night made me feel like I was dying. It took longer to adjust to that than the no sleeping for me.

Making sure I had help, that I didn't have to do anything else but feed the baby after a night of broken sleep, that helped a lot.

My babies never slept longer than an hour in a row. For years. My youngest hated sleeping longer than 45 minute stretches. If my boob wasn't in his mouth he refused to sleep.

A lot of people couldn't handle it, but I like to think **we get the babies that won't break us**. I'm good not sleeping. My best friend needed sleep, and her babies slept from young ages. Sometimes that isn't real but I like to imagine it is. Mostly so I stayed sane.

KAYCE
Midwife & Mama

*STTN = *Sleeping Through The Night*



May we all embrace the physiological and spiritual changes going from maiden to mother. **We won't necessarily need to meet the demands that we did before.** Not to say we won't be utterly exhausted sometimes, but we will get by with fewer hours of sleep.

Maybe "mom brain" is actually a softening to help us compensate for the loss of slower brain waves we used to get by sleeping. **The more mama can lean into the changes rather than trying to live her former life — now with a baby — the more content she will be.**

People may try to tell mama that burping the baby is necessary after feeds but I've never found that necessary for nighttime feeds.

The partner may be well meaning and want to help with pumped milk feeds in the night so mama can sleep, but there's more likelihood that baby will fuss if aroused by being held and upright and taken possibly into a lighted room.

AMAYA
Doula & Mama

Co sleeping, nursing lying down, resting in general...and she needs to **embrace the change of the transformation**, let go of her old self, it's a joyful journey and can be challenging, it's part of the beauty. It's a productive work, you give energy, the reward is amazing, can't be described. . .

I will use an analogy that comes to my mind now...you hike, it needs effort, in the meantime you enjoy the beauty of the nature and you reach the top of the mountain, you feel amazing and breathtaking beauty fills you!!

Oh and also **the body prepares wisely for the less sleep state of baby year**...me for example before i needed a full 8 hour sleep to function and now with 6 I am fine. I try to rest and eat well too.

DOROTHEA
Mama

When I changed my expectations about nighttime parenting, my life changed.

I was someone who would say that I "didn't do well" with little amount of sleep or interrupted sleep. I was very stressed out by my interrupted sleep and it caused other issues as well, obviously. So when I embraced the idea that **OF COURSE parenting is an around the clock responsibility and honor**, it rocked my world. Kids don't stop needing us at night. Our bodies have been nighttime parenting for generations. **We are well adapted and totally capable of being able to endure and function on less sleep.**

I also had to change my schedule. When I have a newborn, it is not abnormal for me to go to bed at 8 or 8:30, with the baby, so that even though my sleep is interrupted I will still get plenty. My husband is also awesome at taking naps when our littles nap. I'm not great at that, but maybe other mothers would be.

BROOKE
Mama

I cosleep with a very dimmed light on (you can buy a dimmer to attach in between your light bulb and your light... thus turning any light into a dimmed light) for the first 6-9 months and yep, baby just nurses while we both sleep. It's delightful.

The first three weeks I do sleep with baby on my chest and I sit up slightly to nurse (so they don't get acid reflux) and then we go back to sleep again shortly after being done. Then in the 2nd or third week baby sleeps next to me and we dream nurse (it's lovely).

I do encapsulate my placenta and take some in case I am feeling on edge from not sleeping well. The only time that I really struggle with feeling tired is if baby is teething (about to break through). But other than that our kiddos are really peaceful at night. (And if littles are not sleeping well I chalk it up to parasites and we do a homeopathic parasite blend or I give them magnesium spray on their belly for better rest or some frankincense on their heads for bad dreams).

Side note... with our first baby, my hubby didn't want to bed share, but then he realized that either I would never sleep or we wouldn't be in the same bed if I didn't bedshare. And now we are on our 6th baby together. I just put a pillow in between him and me for the first month because he can be a really sound sleeper :-)

STARLA
Mama




QUIET TRUTHS OF INFANT SLEEP

BY TRACY GILLET

From 'Sleeping Through the Night, Self Soothing and 'Good' Babies: Why We Need to Stop Setting Mothers up to Fail' at [raisedgood.com](https://www.raisedgood.com).

- It is normal for babies to wake through the night, as often as every two hours for many, many months... and need their parents to help them fall back to sleep.
- It is normal for a child's sleep to take five steps forward and three steps back and one step sideways and then turn inside out...sleep progress is anything but linear.
- It is normal for babies and toddlers to breastfeed to sleep (and through the night).
- It is normal for a baby to crave constant contact, to nap on her mother and to cry when she leaves the room to bring her back into proximity. This is not a sign that she is "spoilt", this is a sign that she knows how to ensure her own survival.
- It is normal for toddlers to wake through the night and need mum or dad's reassurance...to make them feel safe enough to surrender to sleep again.
- It is normal for families to cosleep in the way they choose – bedsharing, room sharing, sidecar cot, musical beds – and it is normal for families to enjoy it...and not want to change a thing.
- It is normal for mothers to cry and to need help – that is NOT a sign she is failing or in need of a "solution".

It is normal for babies to sleep like babies, and not like adults.

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Lst's Connect!

Would you love more support for pregnancy, birth & postpartum?
Please reach out, I'd love to hear from you and be a resource for you.



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