

February Text Study:

- ***Sleepless in American: Practical Strategies to Help your Family Get the Sleep it Deserves; Mary Sheedy Kurchinka(2006)***

Over the past couple of weeks a number of us have either expressed how tired we feel or how tired someone we know is. *Sleepless in America* seemed like a perfect text study for February to give each of us a chance to consider how is our sleepiness impacting us or our children. As always, the office has a copy of this book, however this book is filled with so many amazing tools to see how sleeplessness is impacting your family and strategies for improvement I would highly recommend purchasing a copy of this great read!!!

In Mary Sheedy Kurchinka's book, *Sleepless in America*, she poses the critical question; is your child misbehaving... or missing sleep? Kurchinka believes that if a child is misbehaving, it is very likely that he is she is in fact crying for sleep. Sleep-deprived children can include babies who are sleeping less than 14-16 hours in a 24 hour period; toddlers sleeping less than 13 hours, and preschoolers less than 12 hours. What makes this whole situation so difficult is children rarely tell us they are tired; rather they get wired which often times escalates into a frenzy of energy and outbursts.

Kurchinka describes new research describing the role adequate sleep plays in the ability for people to control their emotions, behavior, and attention span. Without sufficient sleep, a child's performance, mood, focus, and ability to work with others deteriorates rapidly. This is when power struggles begin and even the most easy-going child begins to lose it over the littlest of things. The impact sleep deprivation has extensive. Children have a difficult time managing their emotions and all of a sudden everything is a battle. Children may also become overly whiny, clingy, or anxious and just don't have the skills to communicate they are tired. Being tired also leads to difficulty controlling one's body. You may see a child hitting or throwing more aggressively than on a typical day.

Kurchinka also describes various signs of sleep deprivation. She acknowledges that identifying this can be very confusing. She says, "it's baffling when you are out with friends, and your child, who has missed her nap, seems unfazed. Thriving on the excitement and interaction, she's crazy with energy – until you arrive home and she falls apart. That's because the quest to stay alert is so strong for children that instead of getting drowsy, many get weird. Their behavior appears wild rather than tired as long as stimulation levels are high enough to keep them awake. But at home, when stimulation levels drop, they torment siblings, argue with you, chase pets, all in a mad drive to create enough commotion to stay awake."

Throughout the book Kurchinka gives practical tools to evaluate if your child is misbehaving or miss sleeping. She provides insight on looking at your own sleep patterns and how that may be impacting your child's actions. She provides a new spin on how we get children to sleep and validates the frustrating parents experience through these trying situations. She addresses why children may not be sleeping; specifically looking at the impact tension, the bodies time clock, and temperament have on sleep. Within each chapter she provides checklists for you to complete to see the uniqueness of your families situations and tailors suggestions to your specific needs!

Finally Kurchinka ends with strategies to end the bedtime battles, which will hopefully fix the miss sleeping that maybe occurring in your house. She describes creating an effective bedtime plan and naptime routines that are extremely extensive. It is realistic in helping you identify potential trouble spots and have a plan in place before these occur. She focuses on creating a realistic and predictable routine to ensure there is success for everyone. She models the language to use with young children through this process. The best is all the strategies are described in a way to adapt them to the uniqueness of your child; recognizing what may work for one child is not necessarily going to work for another.

Happy Sleeping!