

YOGA [®] MAGAZINE

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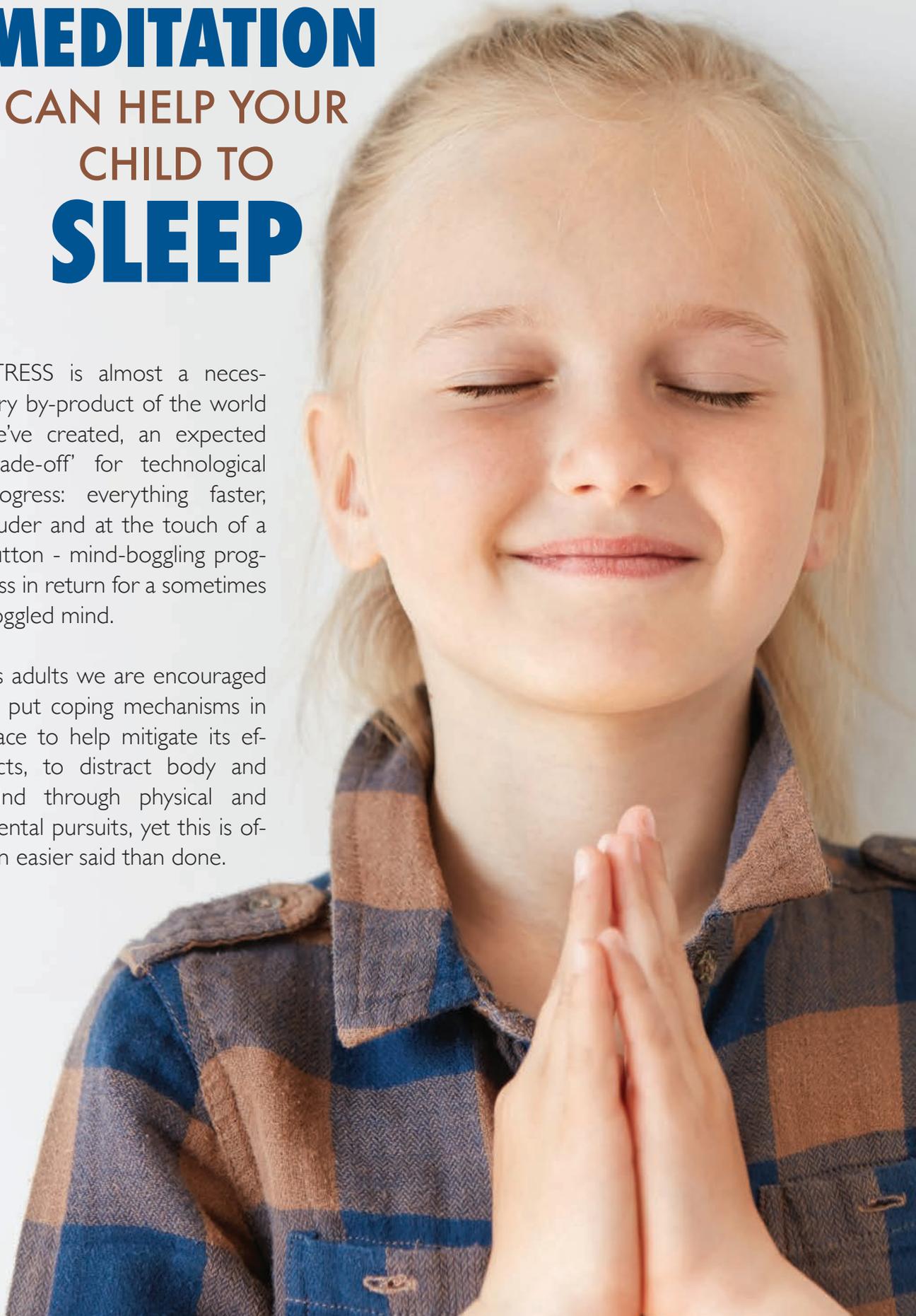
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HOW MEDITATION CAN HELP YOUR CHILD TO SLEEP

STRESS is almost a necessary by-product of the world we've created, an expected 'trade-off' for technological progress: everything faster, louder and at the touch of a button - mind-boggling progress in return for a sometimes boggled mind.

As adults we are encouraged to put coping mechanisms in place to help mitigate its effects, to distract body and mind through physical and mental pursuits, yet this is often easier said than done.



What hope then for our children? The world we show them is also faster, louder and more immediate. Information is all around them and it is said that a child today receives as much stimulus in one day, as their great grandparents did as children in an entire year. This constant sensory overload can impact greatly on their mental wellbeing causing stress, depression, anxiety and sadness.

Sleep, or rather the lack of it, is one of the first indications for parents that something might be off kilter. Children too are susceptible to the pitfalls of a stressful day and more and more lie awake at night, unable to 'switch off', their thoughts racing. Worry is often an overriding factor and many have a hard time letting go.

In general children today sleep one hour less than we did 25 years ago, and according to BBC Panorama, NHS data shows that hospital attendances in England for children under 14 with sleep disorders have tripled in the last 10 years.

Turn on their inner dishwasher

Children need their sleep for many reasons. Mentally sleep works like an inner dishwasher and cleans out the great many processes in the brain used to process the information they are exposed to on a daily basis. The brain is actually busier at night 'mopping up' than it is during the day. Physically, children need their sleep to grow and regain their strength and resilience. Studies show there is a link between obesity in children and lack of

sleep. We also know that children who, over time, sleep too little can show symptoms we relate to children with ADHD, who by the way also often benefit from more sleep. Of course, we cannot stop moving forward. What we can do however is teach our children how to 'let go' and meditation can help them to do this.

Help your child to dreamland with meditation

Child meditation can both prevent stress in children and help heal children who are already dealing with stress.

When I started sharing beautiful heart meditations with my daughters, I was surprised to see how much they loved the interaction and how quickly they would fall asleep. As different as children are, almost every child delights in hearing about how much a parent or caregiver loves and treasures them.

Turn up the love

Self-esteem and self-love are invaluable life resources. We need to equip our children with these resources to enable them to navigate their way through life, to process the constant influx of information and to help them to recharge. By building strong self-esteem, by reminding children they are loved and by teaching them to turn up the love they have for themselves, we enable them to let go of their troubles before they fall asleep, their hearts full of love. What nicer way to end one day before beginning the next?



“Your energy, mood and way of communicating with your child highly affect how quickly he or she calms down.”

Change your routine with ‘Hygge’

It’s all about the simple pleasures! When you start a new bedtime routine there is a good chance both you and your child will think it feels very early in the evening. Don’t think of pre-bedtime prep as cutting your day short, make the last hour before bedtime your special ‘hygge time’ – make it the best time of the day!

Once you’ve determined how many hours sleep your child needs, make sure you yourself feel good and have energy to help your child deal with a new method of falling asleep. Stay calm and loving in your energy even if your child has difficulties with the new method. Your energy, mood and way of communicating with your child highly affects how quickly he or she calms down.

Turn off all screens an hour before bedtime. Lie down next to your child and show him or her you have time to read in a calm and cosy way. Snuggle up and if you fall asleep yourself, that might be just what you need!

Talk to your child about their experience with meditation; ask how it makes them feel. Listen to your child – there is a lot to learn. Encourage your child to draw the images or feelings he or she sees or experiences during meditation.

Enjoy the ride to heartland

Above all, enjoy the ride to heartland with your child. Learning meditation from a young age is a life-long gift. My experience is that many children have a much easier time meditating than adults. And in many ways children can help their parents turn up the love for themselves as well. I always encourage parents to pay attention to their child in meditation and learn from them.

The human race is not meant for running without rest. We are meant to use energy and then rest to refuel; the resting part however is often overlooked. Get regular rest, be present and loving at bedtime, bring out the best in yourself, and through inner peace, love and self-love, you will encourage your child to do the same.

Three simple steps to changing your child’s bedtime routine:

1. Understand, acknowledge and accept how much sleep your child needs according to their age. Adjust your child’s bedtime to when he or she needs to wake up.
2. Begin preparing for bedtime an hour before by slowing down, turning off all screens, taking a warm bath and playing gentle games.
3. Be aware of your own energy and mood. Your calmness is key to calming your child down.



THE CHILDREN'S MEDITATIONS IN MY HEART, A COLLECTION OF BEDTIME MEDITATIONS FOR CHILDREN, WAS AN IMMEDIATE HIT IN DENMARK. IT HAS SINCE BEEN TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH AND IS NOW AVAILABLE IN THE UK FROM [AMAZON.CO.UK](http://amazon.co.uk), PRICED £14.95.

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GITTE, AUTHOR OF THE CHILDREN'S MEDITATIONS IN MY HEART, IS A DANISH WRITER, LIFE COACH, ENERGY MENTOR, MINDFULNESS INSTRUCTOR AND LIGHT WORKER. SHE HELPS PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILDREN THROUGH CHILD MEDITATION AND TEACHES THEM TO ALWAYS PARENT THEMSELVES FIRST BEFORE THEY PARENT THEIR CHILD. GITTE IS ALSO THE FOUNDER OF MOMO ACADEMY, WHICH HELPS DANISH SCHOOLS OFFER MINDFULNESS TO PUPILS AS PART OF THEIR EDUCATION. FOR INFORMATION ABOUT HER COACHING WORK AND WORKSHOPS VISIT [ROOMFORREFLECTION.COM](http://roomforreflection.com)