

OCTOBER 2011 • Free

What Every Parent's Talking About

# parentingOC

**HALLOWEEN  
HAUNTS OF  
THE OC**

**Family Friendly  
Workplaces**

**THE REAL HOUSEWIFE  
OF ORANGE COUNTY**

**Peggy Tanous**

**On Parenting, Post-Partum  
& Living in the Spotlight**

**Special Sections: Party Guide, Preschool Guide, After School Activities Guide**

# ask the experts

Our Experts on Bullying, Napping, and Reacting to Your Child's Behavior

**Q: My 6 month old resists or refuses to nap. She sleeps great at night, but naps are a complete nightmare. It feels as if trying to get her to nap has taken over my life. What can I do to help the situation?**

A: I know from personal experience how incredibly frustrating it is to have a baby who doesn't nap during the day – both of my children took catnaps until they were approximately 6 months old. You are lucky she sleeps through the night as most children who take short or skipped naps usually have nightwakings. I know it isn't logical - but sleep, begets sleep!

For babies who aren't sleeping through the night, I would recommend you solve bedtime and nighttime issues first. It is critical that your child is able to fall asleep on her own at bedtime.

If you put your child down already asleep, she misses the opportunity to learn the skill of putting herself to sleep. Bedtime is the easiest time to learn this skill. If you rock your child to sleep at bedtime (or use any sleep crutch) and she sleeps through the night but doesn't nap well during the day, you first need to make changes at bedtime. "What happens regarding sleep at night will definitely affect sleep at other times." says Jodi A. Mindell, Ph.D. author of *How Infants, Toddlers, and Their Parents Can Get a Good Night's Sleep*.

## Scheduling and Sleep Windows

The first step is to look at your nap schedule. 6 month old babies need 3 ½ hours of day time sleep spread over two to three naps, says Dr. Ferber and author of *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems*.

The first two naps should be approximately 1½-2 hours each. The third catnap is optional if she sleeps well during the day, but it is a must if the earlier naps are less than 1 hour each and/or the sleep window is longer than 3 hours from the last nap until bedtime.

Ensure you are watching her sleepy cues and don't miss her sleep window. If you wait too long, she will get her second wind and will be overtired - making it more difficult for her to fall asleep.

For a 6 month old (sleeping 11 hours at night), her sleep window is 1½-2 hours for morning nap and no more than 3 hours for afternoon nap(s). For younger babies, the sleep window is no more than 2 hours and no more than 1½ hours for newborns. Once she is about 9 to 12 months, she should nap around the same time every day to help set her internal clock. It is important that the sleep windows are from the end of one sleep to the start of another asleep, so leave plenty of time for a short naptime routine.



Keith O'Neill, of Newport Beach, writes and speaks on the subject of self-esteem. He is the author of *Raising an S-Team Kid - The Manual That Didn't Come With Your Child*.  
[www.s-teamkids.com](http://www.s-teamkids.com)



Michelle Donaghy is a Certified Gentle Sleep Coach™ based in Orange County who has been helping sleepless families get a full night's sleep since 2005.  
[www.makingsweetdreams.com](http://www.makingsweetdreams.com)



Dr. Sam Alibrando is a psychologist specializing in couples, families and parenting. He is the author of *Follow the Yellow Brick Road: How to Change for the Better When Life Gives You Its Worst*.  
[www.apc3.com](http://www.apc3.com)

## Wind-down Time

Establish a good naptime routine to help her transition from playtime to sleep time. It can be a shortened version of her bedtime routine, without the bath or pajamas of course. You can read a book, sing a song, and snuggle. Babies need a dark and quiet sleep environment. Therefore, I recommend to all my clients that they install room darkening shades and use a white noise machine for all sleep. Your child should be awake when you put her down, just like at bedtime.

## Drowsy but Awake

After your baby's naptime routine, put her into her crib 'drowsy but awake' so she can learn to do that last part of falling asleep on her own. "Imagine a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being wide awake and 10 being a deep sleep," says Kim West, LSCW-C and author of *The Sleep Lady's, Good Night Sleep Tight*. You want to put her down for all sleep about 7 or 8, says West. You can stay nearby the crib and use soothing techniques such as your physical presence, your voice and your touch to encourage her to fall asleep. For some babies; anyone staying in the room gets them more upset - you may want to use timed checks or soothe from outside the door. The timing of the checks depends on your child's temperament and your tolerance level for tears.

*MSD Baby Sleep Coach is dedicated to helping families with young children learn independent sleeping skills through education, encouragement and support. Every family and child has a unique situation and there is no one size fits all. We take great care in customizing your sleep plan and offer extensive support until your desired goals are reached.*

*At MSD Baby Sleep Coach we are trained and very experienced in all sleep coaching approaches, not just one. Our specialty is in the gentle sleep coaching methods. We discuss with you, the parent, your options and help you determine the method that best fits your parenting philosophy and your child's temperament. We discuss the pros and cons of each method and customize a sleep plan so the method is one you feel confident in to ensure success.*

At this age, try for 1 hour to get her to take a nap. For a younger baby, try for 30 minutes. If she doesn't sleep, watch her sleep cues as she will be ready much earlier than her usual naptime.

## Catnaps

Sometimes your baby may take a 30-45 minute nap. Don't rush to take her out of her crib. Instead, go to her and try to soothe her back to sleep. If she goes back to sleep (even for just 20 minutes), wonderful, she did it! If she doesn't go back to sleep, even after trying for 30-60 minutes (depending on her age), you will need to adjust her schedule and shorten the awake windows until she learns to sleep longer. The skill of falling asleep independently will likely help her to start to take longer naps on her own.

Nap training is time-consuming, usually involves tears and is hard on everyone, but once it falls into place both baby and Mommy will enjoy a much needed rest during the day!

*By: Michelle Donaghy, founder of MSD Baby Sleep Coach*