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# Author's goal: Baby and parents sleep tonight

By ELAINE MARKOWITZ  
Jewish Press

Ever since she developed her method more than a decade ago, Shari Mezrah, Tampa sleep schedule specialist, has been speaking on the importance of a good night's sleep for infants, children and their often sleep-deprived parents.

As a nationally recognized expert on baby's sleep, Mezrah has appeared on the syndicated talk show *Daytime*, in addition to being featured on FOX, NBC and CBS news. Her practice, BabyTIME is located in Tampa and she consults with parents worldwide. Some of her clients are desperate parents referred by pediatricians

Many of her recommendations are detailed in her new book, a pocket-size guide, *The Baby Sleeps Tonight* (The Baby Sleeps Tonight: Your Infant Sleeping Through the Night by 9 Weeks (Yes, Really!)), that she wrote as a resource for new parents, one to help them survive those sometimes mind-boggling weeks that can come as you hold your first child, watch the hospital disappear in the rearview mirror, and think "What do I do now?"

According to Mezrah, a key factor is scheduling. She says there are three particular behaviors that can help parents get started in creating healthy sleep patterns in their offspring, namely making sure:

- babies on the bottle are full after eating,
- children on solid foods limit their sugar intake,
- children spend the night in their own rooms.

"A full tummy is a happy tummy" is a favorite saying of Mezrah.

"One of the key components is learning how to efficiently feed your infant," she says. "You have to make sure your baby is full after eating so he won't wake up hungry during the night."

She cautions parents against too much sugar for babies once they are on solid food: "You truly are what you eat. Sugar is often a big culprit in keeping children awake."

Chocolate milk, for example, may appear to be calming a young child before bedtime. Not so, said Mezrah. "Chocolate milk has sugar and caffeine (from the chocolate) which can disturb a child's sleep."

Mezrah has some words on family dynamics and effective sleep patterns as well.

"I am not an advocate of co-sleeping," she says. "It can lead to a power struggle between parent and child."

Mezrah says that if children wander into the parents' bedroom during the night, they should be walked back to their own bedroom.

"The child needs to feel comfortable in his or her own space," she says, and not get in the habit of intruding on parents' intimacy.

In her book Mezrah outlines an entire program, day by day, on getting babies to sleep. Some local residents have found relief for their own families by taking her advice. One of those is Jodi Jacolow of Tampa, the mother of

two toddlers, who told the *Jewish Press* that she and her husband, Steven, have worked together on incorporating Mezrah's suggestions into their lives.

"I started my two children on her plan, one at six weeks and one at birth," she said. "By 10 weeks they were both sleeping through the night." Jacolow said. Mezrah also helped the couple transition their 20-month old son from a crib into his new bed.

"She suggested having a celebration of the new bed with balloons and a cake and making

the transition into a party," Jacolow said. "It worked."

Leni Sack, director of the Tampa JCC pre-school program, witnessed another of Mezrah's tips, one that may sound bizarre to some. Sack said her 3-month-old granddaughter tended to scream in her car seat.

Sack's daughter Amy had tried to calm the infant with all kinds of music to no avail. In came Mezrah with the suggestion to try one other — rap music — and it did the trick.

"The strong rhythm of rap music helped settle the baby down," said Sack.

Mezrah said a happy family life, where no one is sleep-deprived, is possible for most.

"Just try to be one step ahead of your child's needs as well as your own," she says.



Shari Mezrah



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