



CARE & NATURAL LEARNING REST & ALONE TIME

5

A [4-minute talk](#): regulation & story-telling soothing black rub game

OUTGROWING NAPS: Although everyone knows how helpful a schedule is in early childhood, the irony is that change is constant when children are growing. Children between the ages of 0-5 experience big growth spurts every 6 months or so which naturally disrupts routines. Just when you think you've got your schedule pinned down - things shift again. Babies usually settle into a morning and afternoon nap, but as they become toddlers they transition to just one nap a day. Between the age of 3-5 preschoolers give up their daily nap and consolidate their night time sleep. Some children will keep napping through age 5, while others will stop napping earlier. Parents often report that the transition to no nap is stressful because children become cranky at dinner time and this makes bath and bed routines even harder when kids are over-tired. Other parents report that giving up a nap makes the afternoon and bedtime much easier because the child goes to bed earlier and sleeps more deeply without the day time nap. Just taking the time to acknowledge that growth brings both joys and challenges in family life can be helpful in becoming self-aware as adults, setting appropriate expectations, and remembering as leaders of young children we are seeking balance – not too rigid or too loose.

VALUE QUIET TIME & ALONE TIME: When children are in the midst of growth and shifting patterns, it is helpful to maintain a schedule within a flexible framework. One way to do this is to continue to schedule quiet & alone time without expecting children to fall asleep. At nursery school we tell kids that it is okay not to sleep – but everyone needs to rest and have some alone time every day. We believe the value on solitude and quiet is a rare commodity in our busy world, and an important value for children. Quiet and solitude promotes daydreaming, creative thinking, self-regulation, independence and peace. Here are some ideas for helping children settle into alone time:

PLACE: Explain that everyone needs some quiet alone time during the day and decide where your child's alone time will be – in his bedroom? On the couch? In a fort under the kitchen table? Be consistent once you pick a spot that works and use this “alone spot” every afternoon at a somewhat consistent time of day. It is important to define the space. Explain to children that alone time needs to be restful for their whole body– they need to stay on their bed or blanket.

PREPARATION: Remind the child to go to the bathroom and wash hands before alone time. It's just helpful to take care of this as a routine because “I need to go pee” is a common reason to get out of alone time!

MATERIALS: Gather items that the child will need for alone time. Choose these in advance and put them in a basket or box – a favorite stuffy, a cozy blanket, a couple of good books, a notebook and a pencil, a water bottle and a box of tissue. Let your child know that all the other toys are closed during alone time.

SOUND: Plan for music or quiet. For some children soft lullabies or classical music played regularly and only at rest time is a helpful cue which creates a consistent peaceful ambiance. Other children prefer complete silence. At nursery school this year children seem to like our native American flute music played very low. Other early childhood people have advised that environmental sounds like gentle rain or rushing rivers.

SIGHTS & SMELLS: Dim the lights and pull the shades closed. Having an extra thick blanket ready to hang over a bright window might be helpful too. Think of what you can do to slightly alter the sensory environment. One of our nursery school teachers like to spray a small spritz of lavender essential oil at rest time to give the room a calming smell.

TRANSITION: Offer transitional support to help the child go from active to quiet. Agree upon one shared story, a short back rub, or a song and then distance yourself and go to your own alone time spot. Here's a favorite poem I learned from a Waldorf teacher which is said while tracing the shape of a moon on the child's back: *“The moon is round, the moon is round, it has two eyes and one nose but no sound.”*

[A relaxation Story for preschoolers: A boy and a Bear](#)