

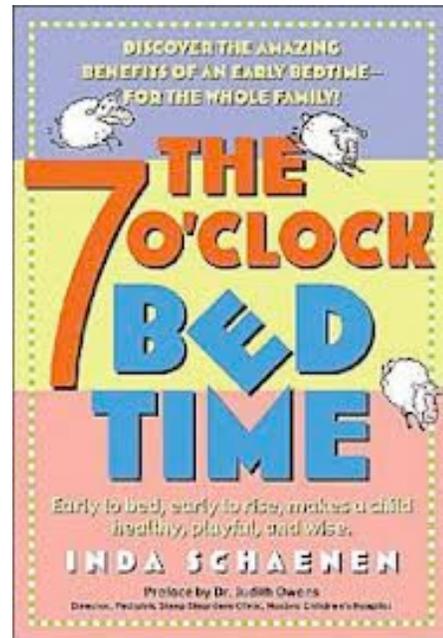
THE 7 O'CLOCK BEDTIME

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In her book *The 7 O'Clock Bedtime: Early to Bed, Early to Rise, Makes a Child Healthy, Playful, and Wise* (HarperCollins), Inda Schaenen offers one solution to the problem of kids being chronically overscheduled, over-excited through the evening, resistant to bedtime, and exhausted and grumpy every morning. She proposes that families restructure their lifestyle from top to bottom, with the general aim of improving kids' sleep (and therefore and increasing family harmony overall. As the title of the book suggests, Schaenen argues for a 7 o'clock bedtime and tells readers how to make it happen, by giving a detailed timetable, advice for dealing with vacations and illnesses, and simplifying family life. She recommends setting out the after-school snack as close to 3:30 as possible, allowing play until 4:30, having dinner on the table at 5:00, filling the bathtub at 6:00, beginning story time at 6:15, and giving the last kiss good night at 7:00.

Of course, for many families, the 7 o'clock routine won't fly. Work schedules may not allow for a 5:00 dinner and many families don't have to get out the door this early in the morning. But maybe the whole routine could be shifted an hour later for an 8 o'clock bedtime. Or we might accept Schaenen's counsel that we be mindful about our kids' sleep and think about how to help children to get the sleep they need in a busy world. If it's hard work to wake your child every school day, maybe he isn't getting enough sleep: maybe it makes sense to think hard about exactly how family routines can be restructured for more health and happiness. □



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