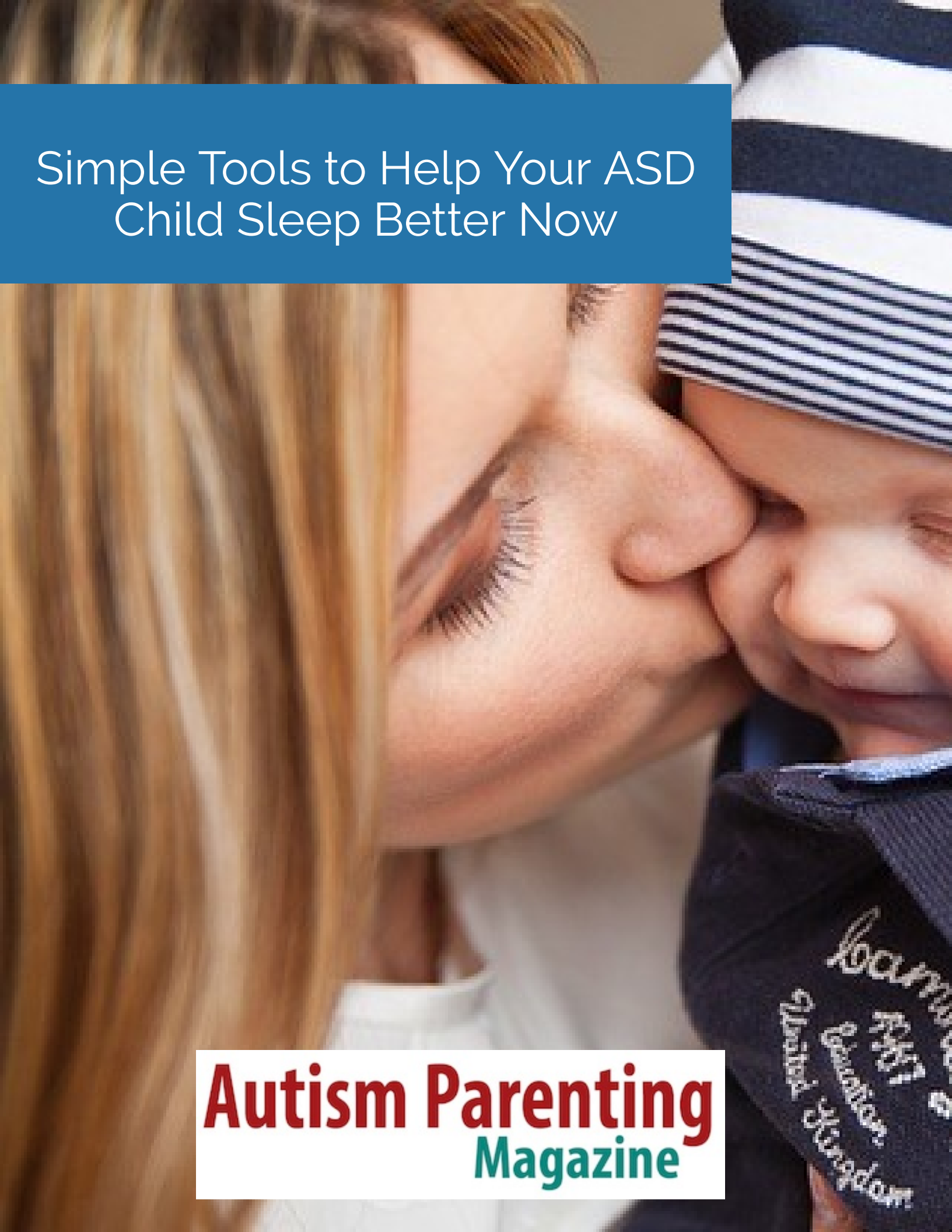




Simple Tools to Help Your ASD Child Sleep Better Now

Autism Parenting
Magazine

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Sleep problems are common in typically developing children, but can be particularly prevalent in children with Asperger's and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).



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These sleep problems often appear as difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking too early. Sleep is an essential element in emotional and physical health, and disruptions in sleep can negatively affect coping and focus.

In children with ASD, there is an estimated 73% rate of sleep challenges, many of which are associated with some of the common features of ASD. For instance, children with ASD tend to sleep less than the norms for their age, and expectations for sleep can create a lot of tension for parents and child. It can be difficult to determine how much sleep is needed for each individual, and we will discuss some of the ways that we can create a reliable estimate of sleep need.

Children with ASD tend to have sensitivity to stimuli, which can interfere with sleep onset at bedtime and after waking during the night. They tend to have a strong preference for routine and controlled conditions, and struggle with any changes in their preferred environment.

Children who have sensitive hearing may be more easily aroused by noises in the house, which can be a source of sleep disruption, or may be stirred to wake by even subtle noises in their sleep environment. Touch sensitivity can affect responses to bedding or sleep clothes, and they may become fixated by a sensation that is **distressing** or strongly attached to a **particular blanket** or stuffed animal. We will cover the many tips and techniques to creating a sleep environment that is conducive to sleep and will reassure heightened senses.

Problems with sleep tend to have two major components: problems with settling brain and body and problems with circadian rhythm. Much of settling brain and body is establishing the safe conditions for sleep and appropriate distraction techniques, but there are some more complex changes that can be necessary. Much of our circadian rhythm is established through light exposure, and children who struggle with being in the dark are more likely to experience challenges with sleep continuity.

Children with ASD can struggle with self-soothing and emotional regulation, which can be an essential element to bedtime routine. Additional sleep challenges in ASD can include co-sleeping, with more parents of children with Asperger's reporting co-sleeping occurring in reaction to challenges with settling to sleep. It is not uncommon for parents of children with ASD to find themselves sleeping regularly with their children simply as a survival strategy. Through this webinar presentation, we will de-mystify some of the challenges with sleep in ASD and share simple tools to allow for improved sleep for both child and family.

In this episode of Dr. G Aspie Show, host Dr. Frank Gaskill interviews Southeast Psych's Dr. Melissa Miller about why Aspies might be prone to sleep problems, as well as provides some tips that everyone could use to sleep better.

https://youtu.be/_AnfbME4aYM

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