

## **BOOK Review by Amy Bonsiero**

### Healthy Sleep Habits, Healthy Child

By: Mark Weissbluth, M.D.

Publishing: The Random House Publishing Group – Ballantine Books, New York

This book was first published in 1987. It is been revised several times – last revision in 2003.

This book discusses many different aspects of sleep and how they relate to infant development. Specifically, it discusses how infants go through different behavioral states, and how important it is to identify when your child is displaying sleepy cues and then putting them to bed or down for a nap while they are in that transitional period, BEFORE they are overtired. The book also discusses how important the quality of sleep is that your child gets and how poor-quality sleep and/or interrupted sleep can lead to fatigue which can cause irritability, poor concentration, and decreased time in the quiet alert behavioral state.

The book is broken up into three parts. The first part discusses “How Children Sleep”. There is information about why sleep is so important, strategies for helping your infant achieve healthy sleep, and discussions about sleep problems and solutions including extreme fussiness and colic. The second section of the book discusses “How Parents Can Help Their Children Establish Healthy Sleep Habits”. This section is broken down into age groups (ex: 1-4 months, 5-12 months, 13-36 months, etc.). The third section of the book is dedicated to “Other Sleep Disturbances and Concerns” and includes areas such as special occasions and sleep problems.

I find it particularly interesting that this book discusses the same behavioral states that we learned about in CEIM training. The actual names for the states are slightly different, however the descriptions are identical. The segment of Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child presented below describes the two sleep states, the drowsy state, and also the varying awake or alert states:

*In sleep, the levels vary from deep sleep to partial arousals; in wakefulness, the levels vary from bring wide awake to being groggy. The importance of optimal wakefulness cannot be overemphasized. If your child does not get all the sleep he needs, he may seem either drowsy or hyperalert. If either state lasts for a long time, the results are the same: a child with a difficult mood and hard-to-control behavior, certainly not one who is ready and able to enjoy himself or get the most out of the myriad of learning experiences placed before him. (M. Weissbluth, 2003).*

The research presented in [Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child](#) supports the concept that infants/children need proper sleep and that by not teaching your child healthy sleep habits, the natural transition of the child's brain between the various behavioral states does not take place effectively or efficiently.

I feel that this book supports the IAIM curriculum tremendously for many reasons. A big part of the IAIM curriculum is dedicated to helping parents be able to understand and identify the different behavioral states of their child. Ultimately, it is important for the parents to be able to identify the *quiet alert state*, as this is the state when the baby is most receptive to massage. [Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Baby](#) also stresses the importance of understanding and identifying these different behavioral states. The IAIM curriculum also teaches the value in the quiet alert state and how this is the state when the baby's brain is most effectively able to learn, and therefore this state is extremely important in the developmental process of the infant. [Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Baby](#) also discusses the importance of this quiet alert state and how the lack of quality sleep can lead to decreased time in the quiet alert state, and therefore lead to difficulties in learning and/or developmental milestones.

I feel that this book will support my work as an Infant Massage Educator due to the fact that the research presented support the curriculum that I teach. Not only could I use the book as a resource for further discussion about the behavioral states, but I could also use it to point out how important it is for parents to be able to observe, listen, and learn what their infants are telling them.

There is a section in [Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Baby](#) which is dedicated to soothing techniques. Massage is mentioned in this section. Below are some highlights from the Massage portion of the book:

*Massaging babies has been observed in many different cultures and has a long history. It is not just a new fad. One particular benefit from massaging your newborn is that the mother or father directly benefits from this activity. While lovingly stroking your baby, you smile at your baby, talk softly, or you might sing or hum. These efforts, while focused on your baby, also relax you! Since fathers cannot breast-feed their babies, I encourage them to develop an intimate bond with their newborn by practicing baby massage right away – even before any fussiness begins. Using a natural cold-pressed fruit or vegetable oil, gently stroke the skin and gently knead you baby's muscles. (M. Weissbluth, 2003).*