

**Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.**

## Top tips: Self-soothing nap times

**When it comes to nap time at nursery, sometimes it may seem that you spend forever rubbing children's backs to help them to fall asleep.**

By using self-soothing techniques, you will find that young children are more likely to fall to sleep quicker and, should they wake, they are able to get themselves back to sleep.

Self-soothing is based on the development of emotional self-regulation and most babies are capable of this around the age of six months. Self-soothing does not leave distressed children crying, but reduces the amount of support they need to fall to sleep.



1. As a setting, find out more about self-soothing and check that this is a technique which you think would work for your staff, children and parents. Once you have decided to go ahead, share the techniques with parents so that they are aware of how you are supporting self-soothing techniques at nap time
2. Establish sleep routines – this does not mean that all the children need to nap at the same time. It means that when you notice a child is getting drowsy, you follow the same routine each time. Consistency and repetition are key and even young babies will learn to recognise the cues for sleep time
3. For example, make sure the baby or young child has a clean nappy, collects their comforter, such as a blanket or soft toy (if needed), while the adult talks them calmly through the routine, talking about what they are doing and where they are going. You may have a lullaby style song to gently sing each time e.g. "It's time to go to bed, it's time to go to bed, goodnight, goodnight, goodnight"
4. Make sure sleep areas are comfortable, familiar, cool, dark and quiet
5. Where possible, try to put children down to sleep while they are drowsy, rather than asleep. This means they will fall asleep in the same surroundings as they wake up, leading to less anxiety on waking

**Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.**

6. Be close by, if they need you, but try not to engage with them directly as they fall to sleep. This helps them to know that they can fall to sleep without relying on an adult. On occasions, they may grizzle a little when first going to sleep, or on waking during their nap. If they show signs of remaining awake, try to use just your voice to sing and calm them back to sleep
7. Sometimes, pause before going to physically soothe a child. They may be able to resettle by themselves if you remain calm and quiet
8. Obviously, no two children are the same and so you may need to slightly alter techniques for different children, and it may take longer for some children to be comfortable with self-soothing. Keep listening to the child to find out what works for them. Equally, be prepared to change what you usually do for a child if they are feeling poorly or have had a disrupted day
9. If several staff are responsible for sleep times, make sure there are regular opportunities to share techniques which work well for your different children, to establish consistency between you.

### NDNA products to support you with these tips

- [Publication – Children's well-being](#)
- [Live Virtual Classroom training – Brilliant Babies](#)

And more resources at [www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna](http://www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna)