Discover Gentle Sleep Training For Happy Family Transcript

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Introduction to Kim West and Sleep Lady

Back to the super fertility summit. I have such a wonderful session for you right now with Kim West. Also known as the Sleep Lady. Kim, you founded the brand The Sleep Lady to focus on gentle sleep and parenting solutions.

And for over 25 years, you've helped hundreds of thousands of families get the rest that they need. Even just saying that makes me feel like exhaling.

That's so refreshing. And to get the rest they need without leaving their child alone to cry it out. And while you focus on sleep training, you also provide resources and tips for parents to help schedule their child's day, their feedings, and more.

And you have recently released a book on sleep for twins. You also have a book for sleep on with singletons and at different stages. So your first book was Slightly Older Children and your latest book is zero to is it 0 to 1 the first year of life?

Yeah, my first book is six months to six years, and these two newborn books, the one for singletons and twins, are 0 to 5 months. O 0 to 5 months. Sorry I had that wrong. Okay, thank you so much.

And I'm really excited for this conversation because one of the things that you and I discuss often, Kim, is that people have a lot of fears and anxiety about fertility, about pregnancy, about parenting, about becoming a mom, becoming a dad, and becoming a parent.

And one of the biggest fears that people have is about sleep and about the loss of sleep and sleep deprivation and all of that many ways that impacts life.

It impacts mood, it impacts weight, it impacts focus and motivation, and therefore professional achievement. It impacts intimacy and which also impacts how you're connecting with your partner during the day.

And so many, so many other areas of life. So first, I want to welcome you, and I want to thank you for coming to have this bold, brave conversation that isn't had anywhere else.

Thank you for having me. I love talking about sleep. So I know you do for days. Yes. And I do think that, you know honestly like sleep is everything when you get.

Really.

Why Sleep Matters for Fertility and Family Health

Deep I feel like the whole world seems brighter and there's more possibilities, you know and it does affect everything that, that you mentioned. And I think you know, really until just about ten years ago, it was sort of pushed to the side.

Now I'm so grateful that there's more talk about, you know, exercise, nutrition and sleep and how it affects mental health and our physical health and of course, our children's ability to, you know, have a strong immune system and to grow and learn at the incredible rate that they do.

That's exactly right. So, Kim, in thinking about the end of today's conversation, what do you want to make sure that the people listening to our voices right now take away with them from this conversation?

That I support you in making sleep a priority. for yourself and in your family and that it's worse doing a little

research and reading and feel and knowing that you have resources available to you so that you can one have realistic expectations and to support and create a healthy sleep foundation for your super baby.

and even before that, for taking care of yourself because we know or you have taught me to, that when we take care of ourselves, it's makes the possibility of becoming pregnant, better and higher and no, I think that's important to know.

And that, you know, when you have your super baby or even if you already have a super baby and you're wanting to have another one and you're struggling with sleep, that there's help out there, that doesn't involve leaving your baby to cry it out.

I feel like a lot of parents are are scared that that's the only option. And so it's either suffer or let our, our baby cry it out. and also feeling like it's not something you'll have control over.

I mean yes of course the first few months are a lot of disrupted sleep. but there's really a lot of things we can do as parents to kind of lay, great foundation to make it a smoother transition to, you know, longer sleep, you know, as soon as possible.

And there's a lot of things we can do while pregnant to help us with that, too. Yes. And we're going to talk about those. So I love this. What you said.

I support you in making sleep a priority for yourself and for your family. And I think that's really a breath of fresh air, because I think many people will be surprised to even hear you imply that it's possible to make sleep a priority when you have a newborn or you have a young child.

So thank you so much for starting us off in that way. And as you just said, we can start preparing during pregnancy so that we're we are ready to go when our super babies arrive.

Preparing Sleep Habits Before Pregnancy

And that makes it a lot easier, because one thing I know is that it's not impossible to learn new things when you have a newborn, but it's harder to learn new things when you have a newborn, because your brain is not the same and you're and you don't have a lot of windows of time and so if we can learn about this information during pregnancy or in the semester before we're even pregnant and start laying that foundation, then we're then we're more prepared for when that time comes.

So let's start us off by talking about, in your book, 0 to 5 months. I'm sorry I got that wrong because I actually I have your book, so I should have had that. Correct.

But in that book you have, you have a section for sleep during the last trimester of pregnancy. So talk to us about what your recommendations are and how you would like to see people starting to prepare for prioritizing their own sleep in this book.

They're super babies while they're still pregnant, while their prime mastering before their super babies have arrived in their arms. Yeah, and I'm gonna.

If it's okay with you, just take even a step backward in time to some things that you could do even before you get pregnant. Please. In the prime master.

Okay, cool. Yeah. Let's do that. So, so, so many. I mean, we live in a fast world, right? It's really easy to. I get this. I, by the way, have done this myself.

stay up super late, steal from our sleep tank. and be like, will be fine. We'll have another cup of coffee. We'll just have to keep going. I'll change in X, you know, number of weeks, months, years, you know.

So I if you could you know, if you know, like this is something I really want, I'm really focusing on, on my health and kind of preparing my life for a super baby.

Then I would suggest that you start with regulating your wake up time in the morning and your bedtime. and you know, if you can only vary it by an hour.

I know this is really hard to do on the weekends. but try at least if you can't do it on the weekends, try, you know, that Sunday through Thursday, right there you go to bed around the same time and, you know, usually, by the way, most of us adults and I know this is hard in European countries where we, you know, you tend to like to go out to dinner later and, you know, everything's a little bit later.

But our circadian rhythm, our internal clock actually is set for us to usually go to sleep around in between 10 and 11 p.m., which I know is, you know, can be can be hard for some of us if we have like a week become a night owl or we are so doing that and doing exercises before that that help to slow the brain down, you know, dimming the lights.

Sometimes people like to use, light blocking glasses. And particularly if you have a history of insomnia, and do what I would, I think is a fun idea, exercises where you are pedaling around, meaning it's not taking up a lot of, bandwidth.

It's not something intense. You ideally are not shutting off your computer and going straight upstairs to bed. By the way, sometimes I do that too. So I get it.

but you give yourself at least an hour and pedaling could be, you know, I took a warm bath, and then I'm, like, putting away laundry or, you know, I don't know, something simple that doesn't require a lot of thinking about anything.

this kind of help slow the brain down. And of course, if you like doing things like, you know, meditate or any, you know, simple stretches, things like that, just starting those patterns now and the same for the morning.

If you have already had a history of insomnia, I would go get some help for that. And that doesn't mean, by the way, a sleeping pill, the number one, you know, treatment for primary insomnia is CBT, cognitive behavioral therapy.

And the AI is for insomnia. There's lots of great apps that help that can help you with it too. If you you can also find a therapist who's trained in that, and so don't feel like you have to depend on, on a medication.

Of course, if you have other issues going on, restless leg syndrome, sleep apnea, you want to address those things, now because, you know, it will be harder to address, later.

So I think that's super important.

Last Trimester Sleep Strategies and Baby Rhythm

and there's lots of things you can do nutritionally and exercise wise that helps set you up for healthier sleep. But even if you just start with that small, kind of doable exercise, that will really help.

So now. So now we'll get into the the last trimester of the pregnancy. Okay. So just like I said about the consistent bedtime that you were going to do before, it's even more important now because your this will regulate your baby's sleep in utero.

So which is super cool right. So you go to bed between 10 and 11, you're slowing down your movement. Right? And they're not getting that kind of nice vibrational in your voice and the sound of you walking and moving.

Now they're getting that like, oh, it's quiet now. and so that's another reason, right? If it wasn't just for you, it's now,

for your baby. The other thing to to just have realistic expectations about is that when we're pregnant, we have, elevated I believe it's progesterone, which makes us feel sleepier. Right.

So which is why you hear a lot of people say, well, I feel really tired. Built the first trimester in the last trimester, especially, but our sleep changes, too.

So we have more REM sleep, which is the light active sleep and less deep sleep. Okay, so I think this is helpful to understand why we feel so tired too, and why the sleep doesn't feel the same.

We also have our baby pressing on our bladder make and you know, it's more uncomfortable physically. you can't you can't sleep on your back and you're getting up to go pee.

And so these are all factors that another reason to take special care of yourself. and try to go to that a little, bit earlier. the other thing is I think, is why this is important research that they say that, that what's important to know about sleep deprivation is that it's about how well you tolerate sleep deprivation, and some people tolerate it better than others.

So I'm an example of someone who does not tolerate sleep deprivation as well. I used to think, oh, I wish I had become a pediatrician. I would have loved that.

But I don't actually know if I could have survived residency. I just don't function well. Sleep deprived is probably why I became the sleep lady. I was like, what do you mean?

Babies don't sleep? Well, we gotta find someone. You know, nobody tells you that, you know, now we hear a little bit more about it than than we did 30 years ago.

but that's important to know. So. So that means that if you know that you are someone who doesn't tolerate, sleep very sleep deprivation very well, then it's important for you to figure out what's the support I'm going to need.

from the very beginning. And if you have a partner who's, let's say more of a night owl or tolerates sleep deprivation better than you, maybe you can have plans for that, right?

Like, so, if, let's say you were to have a C-section, that your partner could be in charge of getting the baby, changing the diaper, bringing the baby to you to feed the baby, putting the baby back, putting the baby to sleep, all of those things.

Right. So that you can be healed. What we want to try to get to, and this can sometimes feel hard, is about five ideally six hours of consecutive sleep nights after our baby is born.

Okay, so this can be hard. because, you know, our babies wake frequently during the night, so lots of times we don't get that for probably six weeks. If, however, you are a mom who was at risk for Pmdd, postpartum mood, and anxiety disorder, although they are changing the name event, it seems like lately, guys are at risk before, meaning you had a history of, depression as an example or anxiety and or you had p mad before and your first with your first child, then you are a higher risk with it for the second part, but you don't have to have any history of mental health to experience, postpartum mood and anxiety.

So she's right. Super common. and it's nothing to be ashamed of. And absolutely, you should get support for it because you don't have to feel that way.

but if, let's say you feel like you are at risk of that or you even, you know, had insomnia, you know, prior to, to pregnancy, then it's even more important for you to make this the priority that that 5 to 6 hours, and, and, and that could be as an example, if you have decided to breastfeed your baby that you pump and express and you go put in some earplugs and go to bed, and then you get your partner to give that bottle, to the baby.

I mean, again, this is if you are at high risk, it's important. I mean, obviously you ideally want to do that once

breastfeeding is established. So that is that for, you know, 4 to 6 weeks you're not going to be able to but again, it depends on how, you know, at risk you are and how you're feeling.

Postpartum Sleep, Mental Health, and Feeding Support

Right? Because if you're not feeling well and you have gone beyond the baby blues, then this is when you make this the priority. Right? That's exactly right.

I I'm so glad you brought this up. I want to, so I just want to kind of unpack some of the nitty gritty. And I also want to talk about Pmdd. So, let me start with it.

So just for, for context, for anybody who's, who's having their first super baby or coming to have their first super baby, when you're establishing breastfeeding, you need to be utilizing the milk every 2 to 3 hours, especially if you have a lower supply or your supply tends to get lower easily.

Someone like me, I had so much milk I could nothing would shake that supply. I mean, I could feed like 1010 super babies at once and have enough milk.

Which sometimes can cause a challenge to. It. Oh, it has it has other challenges. Absolutely. But but so just so you know, if you if you have to be utilizing your milk supply every 2 to 3 hours in order to maintain it, then it might take a little bit longer to achieve this 5 to 6 hours of uninterrupted sleep.

Because even if you pump and you or your partner or somebody else can provide the bottle when your baby gets hungry in the next 2 to 3 hours, you still may need to express more milk at that time in order to maintain your milk supply.

So there there are definitely nuances here. However, what Kim has said that I really want to underscore is that if you are not well or you have a sense that you're high risk or you're on the verge of depression, anxiety, whatever it may be, and you have to make the decision to sleep 5 to 6 hours and skip a session of pumping or feeding, and you have milk that somebody else is feeding your baby when they're hungry.

Then you go ahead and prioritize that for yourself because it means. It means. Your mental health and your well-being have to have to be the priority.

And if you're not well, your milk supply may be affected anyway. And get not getting sleep is is going to be even harder for you when it comes to your mental health.

It's hard to not feel anxious when you're sleep deprived. It's hard. Hard to not feel a little bit low when you're sleep deprived. But if it looks like it's going over to the next level, that's something that we really need to be paying attention to.

So I just wanted to provide that that context and nuance and, and underscore some of what Kim was saying there. Now obviously there, you know, there are things that can happen.

you, you know, you need to take care of yourself. You need to take care of your breast. You need to take care of your milk supply. So there's a lot here, but you'll get into a flow and it will happen relatively naturally, but also get the support you need for lactation and for sleep.

Now, one thing that I want to talk about in terms of postpartum anxiety and depression or mood disorder or psychosis, is that one? first of all, these things are far more common than people realize.

And it's very interesting. So we we know that women who seek help from us to have their super baby, are have a higher rate of anxiety and depression than the general population, because we know that people who have had a history of anxiety, depression, other types of mood disorders and disturbances have a higher risk of fertility challenges, and vice versa.

Having fertility challenges increases the risk for those things. Now, what's interesting is that people are often very shocked by feeling low or feeling anxious after they have their super babies, because they they wanted their super baby so badly that they can't imagine that that could ever happen.

And so I think it it, it hits them even harder because they're like, how can this be happening? I have the thing that I've been wanting. And so to understand that, you know, there are there are hormonal changes involved.

This is there might be thyroid changes involved, any number of things and that this can happen to you even when you deeply have wanted your super baby.

And if you know that you're susceptible to anxiety and depression, having a plan in place for reducing your risk and getting more sleep is even more important.

I couldn't agree with you more. Yeah, I mean, yes to everything that that you just said. and I can also, provide to listeners some really great resources.

That would be wonderful. About Mad and creating a wellness plan, for yourself and, and I, you know, I'm just a really big supporter. it has to be family well-being.

It that and and maybe even the lactation consultants may, you know, not like what I'm about to say, but if I have to choose between a mother and and father.

Because fathers also experience p mad. Yes, they do. It, particularly if the mother is experiencing it or yes or same sex couples, same thing, right? Caregivers.

It's not just the person who's had the baby. It can even happen when you've adopted or you've had a surrogacy baby. I mean, it it still happens because of the the shifts that happen within us.

One when we are given a baby, that that I will go with their mental health well-being at before I will go with you must breastfeed. You know, I agree.

Because if, if, if the if the parents aren't. Well, it's hard for things to go well for everybody. Exactly. But a lot of pressure on moms. and to breastfeed.

Yeah. Yeah, there's a ton of pressure. And also there's a, there's a way to like to do both if you need to. Right. breastfeed and if you have to supplement because you're going to need to get that sleep then, then you know, that's what your baby needs, right?

Baby. Into you fully present and engage to create that secure attachment which will be the emotional foundation of their life. So I'm asked to be provider a big believer in that.

Yeah, I. I completely, completely agree with you.

Hope, Priorities, and What Super Fertility Means

we would love to have your resources in the Parenting Life Cycle Club for our prime ministering families. We'd love to share them here. I there are so many more things I would love to talk about with you, but I think in closing, I'd like to ask you two questions.

And I just want to say quickly that having trouble having another baby after having had a baby or children is even more common than having trouble having a first baby.

And there I always talk about this, that there are a lot of features of parenting that can contribute to that increased risk of having fertility challenges with subsequent children, and sleep deprivation is one of them.

That's something that I'd love to dive into you, into with you at another time. Kim. So to be continued, and we've talked about this elsewhere, but let's let's have another conversation in the near future and invite the, the people listening to come to that one as well, in closing time.

To maybe just say to them, by the way, there is hope and it's never too late. So please. Oh, abs. Absolutely, absolutely. And all the things that you're learning here are in service of that.

So thank you for saying that. I thought I think I took that for granted as a given. So that's thank you so much for that. Parents feel a little oh yeah.

Oh no that's that's that's very true. Thank you so much for saying that. So I think I think we know what your answer will be. But if you if you could only do one thing to take care of your fertility and your future super babies, what would that one thing be in your book?

well, I guess it will have to be. My first point. Is to sleep a priority. Yes. Okay. Make sleep a priority. Yeah. And everything falls into place from there. Oh, really?

That I really making sleep a priority for yourself and for your family? God, how I would love to have a whole other conversation with you on that. As you see, our super babies are growing and having big lives and schedules of their own because that's a place where I personally have felt, you know, how can I teach them the value of sleep and to value sleep when we often have to go to sleep later because we're we're doing other things, right.

So and we live in a world that tells us to take from our sleep. From. Our sleep. Babies. Yes. Yeah. When I don't want you. But the reality is, by the time they get home from football training and eat another dinner and get cleaned up and get to bed and then ready to get up for school, their sleep has become constrict, right?

So that's for again for part two. Of our. To be continued. So last question is what does super fertility mean to you, Kim? What does it feel like? What does it look like?

I well, first of all, I love that you call them super babies. so for me, the, the miracle, of it all, you know, and I think that, what year the work that you do reminds us that, that we have to really take care of our, our entire whole self and our whole family, which is so in alignment to, to my belief.

And so, so it's almost like a super couple, super family creates the super baby. that almost made me cry. I don't know why, but it's so true, right? I remember when I got married to my magical hubby, as I call him, and we started to having our super babies and I saw how they were being received in the world and how they were.

Being in the world. So at home. And what I realized was, I didn't fully understand how our love would create something so important in the world, because these humans would go out and be these bright lights and such a beautiful force in the world.

And now I see that every day. And I realize just how important it is not for our for our own little super family, but for for the planet that we all, we all step into this identity of being the super parents and having our super baby.

So thank you for that reflection that it's so, so beautiful. Thank you. Kim thank you for the work that you do. Thank you and thank you for yours. And thank you for sharing it with us.

Thank you for being here today. Thank you for joining us for this session. I hope that you've loved it as much as I have, and I will see you on the next session.

Thank you so much.