
Book Review

Raising Sound Sleepers

by Adam Blanning (Floris, 2023)

Reviewed by Heather Church

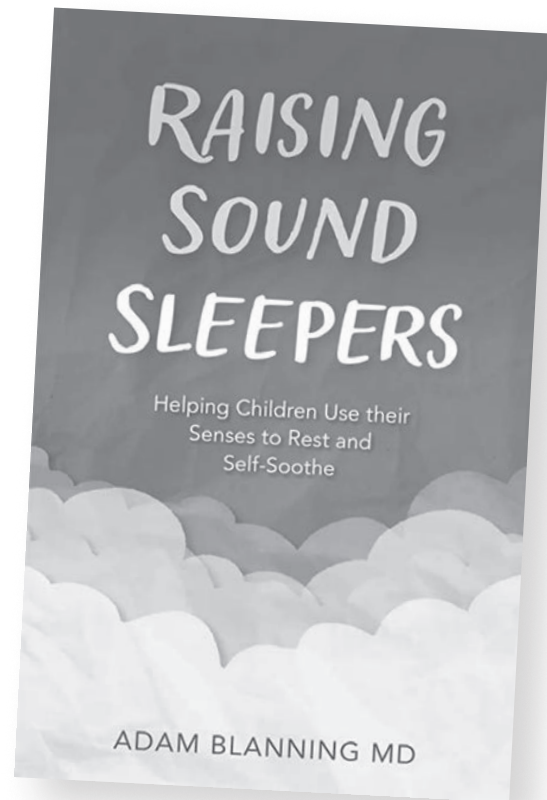
I love this book; I wish I had discovered it before becoming a parent. It is thoughtfully written and presented in a way that is highly accessible to parents, caregivers, therapists, and educators. This is a book that deserves a spot on your nightstand!

I vividly recall the challenges my partner and I faced regarding our children's sleep. We navigated the Parental Bedtime Despair (PBD) waves, experiencing both successes and failures. No other resources or books resonated with us regarding sleep the way Dr. Blanning's so eloquently does. This book remains relevant to me as an adult with adult children; although I am no longer a growing child, sleep occasionally evades me. Understanding the journey of the inner sensory pathway serves as a valuable reminder to pay attention to disruptions in my sense of well-being.

The book delves into a series of developmental milestones crucial for achieving rest. These milestones establish a foundation for resilience in the face of external stressors. Strengthening the steps along the inner pathway of self-soothing and regulation occurs through healthy sensory experiences and comprehension of key developmental transitions during childhood. "By actively assisting children in learning the subsequent stages of self-soothing and inward sensing, we can not only break free from persistent sleep patterns but also impart a greater sense of security to a child's daytime social interactions."

At the book's outset, Dr. Blanning presents the Sensory Pathway in humans step by step, including an explanation of the twelve senses. After giving the overview of the twelve senses, the book focuses on the six inwardly directed senses: taste, smell, touch, balance, movement, and well-being. He reminds us that it takes years for a child to acclimate to the world.

The subsequent chapters explore self-soothing patterns, starting with infants and progressing



through various ages and stages of child development. Following each chapter, Dr. Blanning provides highlights and "Questions to Consider," offering concrete guidance and prompts for reflection on daily interactions with children. These chapters systematically traverse natural developmental phases, offering practical support to meet children where they are with empathy and insight.

The depiction is grounded in observation and reality, acknowledging that guiding a child toward independence is challenging, often marked by frustration. Dr. Blanning dubs this Parental Bedtime Despair (PBD), capturing parents' sentiment when confronted with shifting circumstances. Chapter 3 provides examples of several manifestations of PBD and strategies for addressing them.

We learn that rhythm and routine cultivate inner balance in children, while predictability aids them in anticipating what comes next, contributing to successful outcomes. Independence, rhythm, and boundaries provide support when bedtime challenges arise and throughout the day. Dr. Blanning not only equips us with techniques to navigate these testing moments but also unveils the underlying dynamics between parents and children during different developmental phases. Nurturing well-being across all ages and challenges is central; it “not only enhances rest and self-soothing but also bolsters resilience.”

The book’s final chapters concentrate on rebuilding when disruptions occur in earlier life stages. Therapeutic approaches are offered for addressing transitions that hinder a child’s connection to their senses, especially the sense of well-being. Presenting the progression of self-soothing furnishes a roadmap for helping children to take the next step while also outlining activities for engaging in subsequent sensory development.

Chapter 10 presents the numerous developmental milestones and transitions children experience, along with the accompanying anxiety. These stages signify natural progressions of independent growth and cognitive development. This chapter is designed to assist you in navigating these inherent cycles and rhythms of sensory development in your children, developing an understanding that a child evolves in time and over time.

This book extends an invitation and opportunity to recognize how learning about inner sensory pathways empowers growing children to self-soothe, rest, and connect with their sense of well-being, fostering greater resilience in life.

“See the goodness and potential in your child.

Have faith in the unfolding journey.

Embrace love as you navigate the uncertain steps.”

—Adam Blanning, MD

Note: in the spring Dr. Blanning offered WECAN a Parent Evening called “Helping Children Settle into Deeper Sleep.” This year WECAN Parent Evenings will continue (see the events page on waldorfearlychildhood.org). Dr. Blanning will offer two talks this year:

- October 25th “What Nourishes the Development of a Child’s Sensing Capacity for the World, and What Disrupts It?”
- January 17th “Parenting in an Anxious World” together with Nancy Blanning