

Tired all the time?
This month's challenge
may be the wake-up call
your family needs.



CHALLENGE #4

YOU SNOOZE, YOU WIN

YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD ABOUT ALL THE STUDIES SAYING SLEEP HELPS YOU LOSE WEIGHT, GIVES YOU MORE ENERGY AND EVEN DECREASES YOUR RISK OF HEART DISEASE. BUT HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO SEE THE CHANGE? HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED WHEN OUR FAMILIES SPENT A MONTH GETTING SMART ABOUT GOING TO BED.

BY MICHELE BENDER

In an attempt to do more laundry or squeeze in another episode of *The Good Wife*, almost all of us skimp on sleep. And that includes our Healthy Challenge families. So we used data from their Fitbit Ultra activity and sleep trackers as well as their interviews with Robert Oexman, D.C., director of the Sleep to Live Institute in Joplin, Missouri, to create personalized goals that would get them the rest they need. "Just like going to work and the gym, you have to make a commitment to quality rest," says Dr. Oexman. "Once you stop cheating the clock, you'll look, feel and function better." Here's how our families put zzz's at the top of their list—and how you can snooze better too.

Photos: (Lehmans) Karla Conrad; hair and makeup: Mary Kate Gales; (Avaglianos) Jared Castaldi; hair and makeup: Lisa Bell.



★★ CHALLENGE #4 WINNERS! ★★

» THE LEHMANS

THE PARENTS

TIFFANY, 39, mortgage underwriter

ANDY, 45, building engineer

THE KIDS

ANNA, 10
JACK, 6

HOME

Des Moines, Iowa

CURRENT STATS

Tiffany, 237 lbs and 5'3"
Andy, 242 lbs and 6'2"

GOAL FOR ANNA

Stop looking to food as comfort and reward

GOAL FOR JACK

Eat more veggies and less fast food

AFTER A NEIGHBOR'S HOME WAS BROKEN INTO ALMOST A YEAR AGO, 10-YEAR-OLD ANNA STARTED COMING INTO HER PARENTS' ROOM IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND SLEEPING ON THE FLOOR. "She was scared that the same thing was going to happen to us and the person would take not just our things but her too," says Tiffany. "She would almost cry because she didn't want to stay in her room." And although Anna didn't wake her parents, kids don't rest well on the floor, says Dr. Oexman.

Tiffany also had an issue to tackle for this challenge: A self-described night owl, she didn't turn in until 11 p.m. or later. As a result, she was not getting enough shut-eye and was skimping on time with Andy, who often hit the hay by 9:30 p.m. "Sleep wasn't something that I really invested much in before," says Tiffany. "But I realize now that it's a vital part of weight loss and overall health." The result of their new and improved bedtime habits? Andy has more energy and is down 2 pounds. Tiffany dropped 2 pounds as well.

★ **Go to bed together.** Instead of spending mindless hours online or watching TV, Tiffany curbed her night owl tendencies and turned in when Andy did. "I really enjoyed that time we had together at the end of the day," says Tiffany. "We talked, got to snuggle and had more intimacy." All this made Tiffany realize that getting the right amount of sleep is "totally worth it!"

★ **Keep the kids out.** After just two nights of following Dr. Oexman's method (see "Reclaiming Your Bed" on page 137), Anna was snoozing in her own

SNORE NO MORE!

ELIMINATE THE NIGHTTIME NOISE WITH DR. OEXMAN'S TIPS.

- » **Sideline yourself.** Snoring can come to a halt if you sleep on your side as opposed to your back. Sew a tennis ball into the back of a T-shirt or search for "no snore shirts" online. "This way when you roll onto your back it's uncomfortable and you automatically roll to your side," explains Dr. Oexman. After two weeks, you probably won't need the shirt.
- » **Try nasal strips.** "These work well if you have nasal congestion or a deviated septum," says Dr. Oexman. Look for Breathe Right Nasal Strips (cvs.com, \$6).
- » **Consider a jaw supporter.** They look like mouth guards but help position your jaw in a way that opens your airways. Check out Ripsnore (ripsnore.com, \$67 for two).

room the entire night. One important thing: Dr. Oexman assured Anna that her fears were normal for a kid her age. "This way she didn't feel odd about doing this on a nightly basis," says Tiffany. "Now she's sleeping great and wakes up in a much better mood!"

★ **Unplug for 30 minutes.** "Bright lights from devices like computers, TVs and cell phones decrease the body's production of melatonin, a hormone responsible for making us feel tired and fall asleep," says Dr. Oexman, who told both families to turn off all technology at least 30 minutes before bedtime. "This tip really helped because it forced me to unwind in other ways—like talking to Andy, reading and praying—and to not be overstimulated with images," says Tiffany.



WHAT THEY WON! The Lehmans racked up the most points this month for following good sleep habits. So Kingsdown decided to help them get an even better night's rest by giving the entire family new mattresses. After answering questions about their sleep patterns, Kingsdown found the best bed for each of them. To locate a retailer where you can take the quiz, go to bedmatch.com.

Photo: (Lehmans) Kathryn Gamble Lozier.



» THE AVAGLIANOS

BEFORE THE CHALLENGE, LIGHTS OUT AT THE AVAGLIANO HOUSEHOLD WAS AROUND 11 P.M. AND ALARM CLOCKS WENT OFF AT 5:30 A.M.

The teens weren't getting the recommended 8.5 to 9.5 hours, and the parents were missing the 7- to 9-hour mark. Another issue: Peggy and Peter's tendency to doze off on the couch while watching TV. Because they've already slept some, this makes it harder to drift off to dreamland later. Though many of us watch TV before hitting the sack, doing so is a no-no, as is anything technology related such as checking email or playing video games. Lastly, Peter's snoring was a potential problem because snoring can cause disrupted sleep. Peter benefitted the most from Dr. Oexman's array of tips. "After about a week, I felt more rested and energetic, and it was easier to get out of bed in the morning," he says. Here's what helped them.

★ **Making an announcement.** Dr. Oexman suggested that the Avaglianos hit the hay at 10–10:30 p.m. "We made a conscious effort to turn in earlier during the challenge, but between work, kids, the gym, cooking and living, sleep is not the highest priority," says Peggy. Adds Peter: "Still, just being conscious of the hour and saying, 'It's time for bed,' which I haven't said to my kids in years, definitely helped."

★ **Starting a "no couch sleeping" policy.** To stay alert, Dr. Oexman suggested the Avaglianos play a game or take a walk before hitting the sack. "And when you're falling asleep on the couch, why not go to bed?" If one of them did nod off while sitting up, the Avaglianos took Dr. Oexman's advice and woke the dozer. "We got an hour more sleep that way," says Peter.

★ **Eliminating snoring.** "Loud snoring can stir the person doing it and his or her partner even if they don't remember in the morning," explains Dr. Oexman. He suggested Breathe Right nasal strips, which Peter tried. "I noticed that I didn't toss or turn as much," he says.

THE PARENTS

PEGGY, 46, radiologist
PETER, 45, set designer

THE KIDS

MICHAEL, 17
AMANDA, 15
CHRISTINA, 20, and
KATIE, 19, aren't participating because they're away at college.)

THE PETS

Nicki (a Siberian husky), Krammer (a golden retriever training to be a seeing-eye dog), Minnie (a cat) and an unnamed goldfish

HOME

Egg Harbor City, New Jersey

CURRENT STATS

Peggy, 181 lbs and 5'4"
Peter, 278 lbs and 6'

GOAL FOR MICHAEL

Lose the weight he's gained since quitting football due to an injury

GOAL FOR AMANDA

Drop those extra pounds and increase her flexibility

6 SLEEP HABITS EVERY FAMILY SHOULD FOLLOW

1 Prep for bed. Nightly routines aren't just for infants. They're essential for all ages. "Start a ritual about 20 to 30 minutes before bedtime to prepare the body for sleep," says Dr. Oexman. It could include a hot bath (which decreases your core body temperature) or a cup of herbal tea.

2 Get your own top sheets and blankets. "Using separate ones can make up for different temperature needs you and your partner may have," says Dr. Oexman. Added bonus: You won't wake up when he steals the blanket.

3 Stay in the dark. If you wake up in the middle of the night, don't check your email or text messages—no matter how tempting. When your kids must have a night-light, use a low blue one. "These eliminate the blue wavelength of light that negatively impacts melatonin production," says Dr. Oexman. Try the 120-volt Candelabra Screw Base Amber 6-LED Night Light Bulb (lowbluelights.com, \$10).

4 Lower the thermostat. About 68 degrees is ideal for catching 40 winks because it causes a decrease in your core body temp. If you get cold, covering up is okay. "It's exposing your head to cold air that naturally decreases your core body temperature," says Dr. Oexman.

5 Curb the caffeine. Whether it comes from tea, soda, coffee or hot chocolate, this stimulant can keep you up at night. This means you're tired the next day, so you reach for caffeine to perk you up, and the cycle continues.

6 Don't allow cell phones in the bedroom... even if your kids say they use their phones as alarm clocks. That's because every time you get a text or email, you wake up. "It causes fragmented, lower quality sleep," says Dr. Oexman.

CHALLENGE #5 Game On! Each family member received personalized goals from their trainers for cardio, strength and weight loss. See who hit their fitness target.





WIN IT!
Want to try out the Fitbit Ultra yourself? We're giving away four to one lucky family. Go to familycircle.com/fitbit for official rules and to enter. See page 182 for details.



2013 HEALTHY FAMILY CHALLENGE

Ready to put your crew to the test? *Family Circle* is looking for participants for next year's challenge. Go to familycircle.com/hfc2013 to download an application. Your family could end up fitter, healthier and in the pages of our magazine!

RECLAIMING YOUR BED

It's not only toddlers sneaking into their parents' room in the middle of the night—school-age kids are doing it too. But Dr. Oexman can get your children snoozing in their rooms just like he did for the Lehman family. "Your kids actually want to sleep on their own," he explains. Follow his how-to's and sleep solo again!

» **Skip the word "scared."** Instead explain to your child that it's okay if he "gets nervous" or "has concerns at night." And never say, "You're too old to be sleeping with us." It just makes him feel bad.

» **Start with 15 minutes.** Tuck your child into bed in a dimly lit room and sit with her for 15 minutes, just like when she was little. "You can converse quietly as long as you don't fall asleep," says Dr. Oexman. Then say, "I need to step out for just a few minutes. I'll be right back. If you have any concerns, yell for me." Why it works: "There's safety in knowing that if they have a problem they can just call out," says Dr. Oexman. Then leave the room and return in exactly 5 minutes.

» **Follow up with 10 minutes.** If your child is not asleep when you return, sit there for 10 minutes. If

she is still awake, say, "I need to go do something for a couple of minutes. Yell if you need me." Leave the room for 5 minutes.

» **Stay for 5 minutes.** If she's still awake when you return, sit in the room for 5 more minutes and excuse yourself again. "Typically, at this point, the child will fall asleep," says Dr. Oexman. If not, repeat this step.

» **Address the middle of the night.** Tell your child, "If you wake up, it's perfectly okay to come into our bedroom and tell us if you feel the need." This makes him feel safe, according to Dr. Oexman.

» **Walk your child back to bed.** If your kid wakes you in the middle of the night say, "Thank you for waking us up. Now let's go to your room." Take your child back and start the process over from the beginning.



65%
OF DADS GOT 7 HOURS OR MORE OF SLEEP LAST NIGHT VS. 54% OF MOMS.

46%
OF MOMS SAY THEY GOT 6 HOURS OR LESS OF SLEEP LAST NIGHT VS. 35% OF DADS.

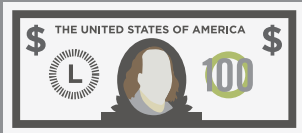
THE FACTS OF SLEEP

After surveying moms of tweens and teens nationwide, we uncovered some surprising details about families' bedtime habits. See how your crew compares when it comes to lights out, morning wake-up calls and what's really keeping mom awake at night.



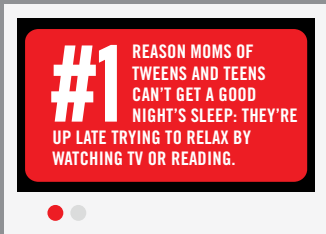
Whether you're sleep deprived or not, moms are still getting less rest than dads.

HOW MUCH WOULD MOM PAY FOR A PERFECT NIGHT'S SLEEP?



1 IN 5 ▶ \$100

\$1,000 ◀ **1 IN 8**



LATE-NIGHT LOOK: WHAT MOMS FOUND THEIR KIDS DOING WHEN THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ASLEEP




GAMING
64%




TEXTING
55%



SNACKING
36%


49%
of moms spend up to an hour luring their kids out of bed in the morning.


58%
of moms say it takes up to an hour to get their kids to turn in at night.

81%

OF MOMS ADMIT THAT OTHER THAN THEIR OWN BED, THEY FALL ASLEEP ON THE COUCH.

