INTRODUCTION

I help parents recognise and fix kids' sleep problems. As a mum, I know there's nothing like lack of sleep or interrupted sleep to bring out the worst in kids (and their parents). On the flip side, when good sleep is the norm, kids can grow and thrive.

I've been working for 37 years as a Speech Pathologist, & conducted over 39,000 clinical consultations. I've seen first-hand how sleep problems interfere with kids' health and growth, and family happiness. Why write "SLEEP WRECKED KIDS"? I was inspired by the global call from Sleep Specialists, who want parents to have a better understanding of the consequences of poor sleep. As research in sleep medicine proliferates, so does our understanding of poor sleep and it's many consequences. It's way more than just feeling foggy the next day. As a Speech Pathologist once I realized how sleep impacts communication learning focus and behavior, I wondered how any therapy, any learning could be effective, unless kids are properly rested. I was also inspired that, for sleep breathing disorders we have a key skills and a key role to play, in helping kids improve their airway so they can breathe and sleep better.

When it comes to sleep, parents have major challenges, because more than 1 million Aussie kids under 6 are sleep deprived, many are oxygen deprived and its connected to the way they breathe. Most of them are misdiagnosed or the problem is MISSED altogether.

((((delete form here?1. First problem is that some parents notice symptoms, but might think that snoring, noisy breathing, and night-waking are normal, because no one told them it's not.

2. Parents may recognise a problem, but they're busy tired & looking for the quick fix, like a pillow under the head or musical beds in the middle of the night. Unfortunately, they don't work.

3. Parents looking for expert help, have trouble, because it's such a specialised area of medicine and many doctors don't know how to fix it.))))))

The worst things is when kids don't sleep they are poorly behaved, unhappy & not alert. They can be mis-diagnosed with ADHD and kids with serious disorder sleep apnoea can be missed completely. There's clear science to show that poor sleep and lack of oxygen to the brain can lead to stunted growth, poor brain function and immunity. Just what parents don't want. These kids start school behind their peers and it's really hard for them to catch up. Research proves that the ripple effects can last a life-time.

We need solutions early, the earlier the better before kids start school, to avoid unnecessary health & learning disasters.

To spread the word amongst parents. My mission is to spread the word, so that every parent has this health topic on their radar, and every kid have the best chance of getting a good night's sleep every night. By doing this, perhaps our collective efforts can raise global IQ, happiness and health.

I believe that parents deserve to have the latest knowledge at their fingertips, for treatable health issues. Kids deserve to grow well, be happy & reach their full potential. Everyone deserves a good night's sleep. In the vein of Adam Mansbach, "…no you're not thirsty, you don't need one more drink, your bed is waiting, now get the * to sleep" No. 1 NY best sellers list, now sold x million copies, and there's a good reason for that. Adam's best seller speaks to WHAT the problem is. Sleep Wrecked Kids is here to tell you WHY and HOW to solve the problems.

Here is the first step: "Sleep Wrecked Kids (and Parents)".

CHAPTER 1

Parents As Lifeguards

Chapter Introduction

When Adam Mansbach wrote a book that hit the NY Times best seller list it surprised everyone. "Get the F… To Sleep" and has now sold over 1 million copies. No one expected it's popularity, yet in hindsight why was it such a surprise? It speaks to the common concern of parents whose children won't go to bed, won't or can't go to sleep, can't wind down enough to go to sleep and the shenanigans that go with it. It names the problem, and it speaks to parents' pain points when kids don't sleep. Now parents need to understand why and how to solve sleep issues, how parents can be lifeguards for their kids and why parents need their sleep too. Sleep problems are common, the consequences reach way beyond the frustration it causes for the family. When bed time shenanigans settle into a firm habit, night after night with no apparent solution, kids don't get enough sleep, or don't get the right quality sleep it affects every aspect of their function: health growth mood IQ development…..kids can simply never be at their best and neither can their parents.

What I notice day after day in my clinic, is that many parents understand that sleep is important, but they seem unaware of the key signs that show that their kids are not getting the right sleep formula. What's more, they believe their kids are getting good quality sleep, even when the symptoms of poor sleep quality are in their face.

Chapter Body

As a parent I know how distressing it is when children are out of sorts and you feel helpless to fix it. I surveyed parents about whether a book on kids sleep would be of interest to them it was a resounding 'Yes' except for Daniel's mum. More about Daniel later. (Include?Here is a copy of the survey ……..)

When it comes to kids' sleep the first problem I see is that some parents notice symptoms of sleep disorder, but might think that snoring, noisy breathing, and night-waking are normal, because no one told them it's not. They are common, not normal.

Secondly, parents may recognise a problem, but they're busy tired & looking for the quick fix e.g they might try to fix snoring with a pillow under the head or play musical beds in the middle of the night, to help settle a child. Unfortunately, these solutions do not fix the sleep problem

Thirdly, parents looking for expert help, have trouble, because it's such a specialised area of medicine and many doctors and health professionals don't know how to recognize and fix it. And for those who want information and guidance it's not easy to find. E.g. Daniel's mum visited 23 medical specialists here and the US, told me, "Most of what I learned was because of Daniel's sleep problems, but it was hard going finding the information. I knew none of this before he was born. It was ridiculously hard piecing the clues together". Many parents give up trying and thank fully, Daniel's mum did not give up. Parents can put 'sleep' into too hard basket. Some discover that they can't find a solution because parents are unable to agree on the way to handle it, and workable solutions are undermined. Or some settle into a kind of resigned complacency, we tried everything didn't work, I guess that's just the way it is.

When thinking about parent's role in their kids' sleep I can't help thinking about lifeguards. Let's take the example of health professionals, for a moment. Parents may be surprised to know that many/most health professionals are as unaware as parents about signs and symptoms of sleep disorders, and that experts in the specialized field of sleep medicine are in high demand. In presentations to health colleagues I have described health professionals' role as sentinels. They are in the prime seat, to recognize Signs and Symptoms of Sleep Disorders, be someone who watches out, gives warning, sets a plan of action in motion. Really, the very best people to help are parents, who are in the perfect position to be a lifeguard, the central figure of a child's life, who sees their children daily, who want the very best start in life for their kids, the best chance of reaching their full potential. No one has a child's future and best interests at heart, as much as a parent. For children in long day care, their carers may also have key insights….

The metaphor of Lifeguards is powerful because it is about saving lives, watching for danger, protecting, preventing drowning. Parents are lifeguards in many areas of a child's life and there is no reason sleep to be any different.

Let's talk about Jillian, whose mum said to me the other day "Our normal wasn't normal. We just did not know any different". It was an emotional moment and a realization that could only happen once she observed her child behaving differently. They thought her wriggle squirm and energy was 'just the way she was', the nature of the beast if you like. We were discussing how Jillian sat still in our session for the first time ever, and that literally and only in the previous week, they successfully set a new boundary around sleep behavior. For the first time in 8 years, J slept through the night for 3 nights in a row, and she was like a new child. In fact she'd never done that even once before, in 8 years.

Why is it important for parents to be lifeguards? Isn't that the teacher's job? The child care professional? The health professional? The doctor?

Well yes, the responsibility belongs to all of us, but parents are in the prime seat. They are there when kids are born, for first cry, first smile, when they wake and go to bed, get sick, have a meltdown, first step,s first words first solid foods, when they have the tantrum in the supermarket, crawl into your bed, at some ungodly hour of the night. Parents are in the perfect position to see the Signs and Symptoms of Sleep Disorders, be the lifeguards of sleep, but time and time again, even for the most well-meaning parents, I see they miss the signs and symptoms.

I asked a Sleep Specialist how I could start exploring this in my clinic with patients. He suggested a simple probe called the SSSDistrubedRest, which I modified, with his permission, specifically for use with parents. This questionnaire is now used with every single child who comes to the clinic. The first thing I discovered using the SSSDR questionnaire was that many parents do not observe their children's sleep and if they do, they don't know what signs to look for. However, they were easily coached on what to look for when their children were sleeping. I also noticed that even though they started seeing key red flags of poor quality sleep they still felt their child was getting good quality sleep simply because they were in bed sleeping for the recommended number of hours.

What's more, when I started talking to parents about sleep, I heard all sorts of myths and wives tales around sleep, that were interfering with their understanding of the critical role of sleep, in early brain development executive thinking skills , IQ, behavior, mood, growth, immunity and much more. And when we kept talking they said, "I wish I knew that before". "I tried methods of solving sleep, and they never worked". They had resigned themselves to sleeplessness or thought the stage of poor sleep would pass.

To support parents being lifeguards of their kids' sleep, parents need good information and support from the time their babies are born. We can even make a strong argument to provide this information pre-conception, because the mothers' health, including the way she breathes, can have a massive impact on the way a baby develops and neural maturity at birth, readiness and ability to feed and breathe well.

Parents as lifeguards need to develop Sleep Literacy. Yes, understand what is good sleep, what is bad sleep, and the ultimate consequences of bad sleep. This means that sleep myths need to dispelled. Dr Judith Owens, Harvard Sleep Specialist (check title and reference it) says, "It's a myth that some children don't need much sleep. It's true that most children can't tell you when they are tired and even if they knew they were tired, unlikely to own up. But ALL children need sleep, and the right amount. They don't adapt or adjust or develop resilience to poor sleep or sleep deprivation, they simply don't thrive, don't grow and don't learn as well."

Parenting is without a doubt one of the most challenging roles in your life. Most parents I meet will do anything to give their kids the best start in life, and don't want to get down the track, saying " I wish I'd done this, or if only I'd known that". On the days when everything is chugging along nicely, and your children are their perfect selves, parenting remains challenging. Life is busy. Even when children are 'perfect' they have good and bad days, just like parents do, and here I am asking you to do one more thing, be A LIFEGUARD OF your kids' sleep. To be a lifeguard, you need your sleep too.*Did you know,* adults that get less than 5 hours sleep perform as if legally drunk. So how are you going to care for your kids, or be the lifeguard, if you are 'sleep drunk?'

Here's my proposal for lifeguard parents

For parents seeing symptoms but not recognising them, we will talk about how to recognize if your kids are sleep wrecked.
For parents who recognize there are problems, rather than the quick fix, there are guides on how to know what to do yourself, and when to ask for help and how to solve sleep issues effectively. (Jillian…….)
For parents needing expert medical solutions, you need to know who to see and where to go

Let's talk more about Daniel. I met 4 yo Daniel who had turned into a monster because of poor sleep. After 2 years of Daniel's irrational meltdowns, not just the terrible 2s, his poor parents were at breaking point, (and so was the marriage). He refused to go to bed at night, woke his parents frequently and only had 7 hours sleep. His mum said, "I can't be the nice mummy I want to be or the one he deserves, I'm too tired". She saw more than 23 medical specialists here and US, and it wasn't until a dentist recognised an airway/breathing issue, that they got progress. When I saw Daniel he had the hallmarks of sleep breathing disorder: problems with his breathing muscles, underdeveloped jaws, big dark circles under his eyes, he was a mouth breather and a snorer, one tired little puppy. *Fast forward* 6 months of treatments, Daniel was like a brand new kid: breathing & eating well, no longer snoring, no more tantrums, and he had a big growth spurt.
There are many Daniels. Parents have some challenges, because right now nearly 1 million Aussie kids under 6 and conservatively, 20% (x million world-wide), who are sleep deprived and for many its connected to the way they breathe.

For those parents seeing symptoms and not understanding what they mean, it's difficult because no one told them what the symptoms mean. Even told, they may not believe, opting a little laid back approach, a "he'll grow out of it" attitude, or even, "it's just the way she is" stance. They may even be operating under false assumptions based on myths and wives' tales. Not wanting to make a fuss, some parents assume "She'll be right mate" or "haha he's just like his father, wakes all the time" or "My grandma snores and she's just fine". None of these beliefs are based in fact. Myths can be so ingrained from child hood and here-say, they remain unchallenged. Here are some I hear regularly.
"oh he snores all the time, but just snores quietly"
"Ha ha she snores just like her dad"
"How cute, he sleeps in snail position"
"He wakes up with his head at the wrong end of the bed, haha"
"Oh yes I can hear him breathe, at least I know he's alive"
"At least if he's snoring loudly I know he's in a deep sleep"
"Most kids wet the bed, he just took a long time to grow out of it"
"He sounds like a freight train when he grinds his teeth, lucky he's at the other end of the house"

Some parents may recognise a problem, but they're busy tired & looking for the quick fix. For snoring they may try a pillow under the head or every night, there may be a round or 2 of musical beds in the middle of the night. Unfortunately, they don't work either. Because of acceptance co-sleeping attitudes frequently hear, about the 'musical beds' syndrome from parents. Whilst co-sleeping per se may not be a key problem, night waking or sleep disturbances for either the parent or the child IS.

Some parents on the other hand are very well informed and pro-active, via a plethora of information blogs articles etc Parents may be looking for expert help, because they realize they need it. They may tried many tactics or strategies to correct sleep behaviours or may recognize the more serious signs of sleep disorders. However, they have trouble, because it's such a specialised area of medicine and many doctors don't know how to fix it. Here is an example, a parent, Jo, told me they took their child frequently to the doctor reporting their child was always tired, but the doctor said "get more exercise or try to relax more". The sleep was never addressed as an issue at all. They did blood tests and tried nutritional supplements and still no change, so then they did nothing at all. Lucky the parents kept looking and finally found a specialist who was able to help them, with their child's allergy that interfered with correct breathing patterns. They were great lifeguards.
Even 'experts' may offer different advice and approach so parents may be conflicted as to 'who is right?' and what should they actually do?.
There are no experts at every corner shop …..so it is not easy for parents to find the right help. Most basic medical training has a 2-hour lecture in a 6 year degree to address sleep disorders. It's just not on the GPs' radar. I hope this is changing.

When parents start learning, magic happens. Not long ago I was helping a little person (age 4) to stop thumb sucking. During our intake process, mum was alerted to the possibility that a younger sibling had obstructive sleep apnoea. After our sessions, mum sent the email (below).

On 12 Feb 2016, at 5:19 pm,

sleepdeprivedmum@bigpond.com.au

Dear NAME,

Nice to meet you. We have an appointment with ENT referral letter below but not until May. As discussed Sleepy Sausage breaths through her mouth constantly. She tosses and turns all night long and frequently wakes and needs us. She seems to have a kind of sleep apnea where she stops breathing and then snorts herself awake. I know this from sleeping next to her.

She is such a restless sleeper that when I work late in my office which shares a wall with her room I hear her bang into the wall around 3 times an hour as she tosses and turns so much. Although she sleeps in her own bed she does appear to wake fearful so one of us will sleep in her bed with her. We take this in turn because she rolls, snores, kicks so much that we hardly get any sleep when lying next to her.

Additionally she is a twin and we have successfully night time toilet trained her sister but every second night or more will wet her bed but won't wake for hours after the wetting. She is so sad when this happens that we have reverted to night time nappies but this also causes her distress despite our reassurances that she is loved and still our big girl.

She speaks so nasally that most people cannot understand what she says. She was slow to speak compared to her twin who still does a lot of the talking for her.

She is a loving and beautiful kid who just wants to please everyone. This sleep/breathing problem also seems to affect her ability to concentrate. Maybe she is just constantly tired?

We have tried nasal cleaning and nasal sprays to no avail. There is constant drool on her pillow case which we change a couple of times a week.

An earlier appointment with the ENT Dr would be greatly appreciated. We need our sleep! And Sleepy Sausage needs to be understood and able to rest.

Regards
Sleep deprived mum looking for help

We were able to fast track the ENT intervention, due to severity of symptoms. This mum was being the perfect lifeguard.

Ideas/exercises actionable steps

Start thinking about sleep as a priority
Observe your child sleeping, cruise past briefly each night or morning while they are asleep, watch and listen.
Think about whether your child is getting enough sleep and the right kind of sleep
Start the conversation with other parents, what are their thoughts about sleep?
Ask carers and others who know your child well, get feedback from trusted others, about your child's sleep

Conclusion

Parents can be lifeguards of kids' sleep
Be lifeguards for your kids, because they can't do it themselves
Remember you need your sleep too.
Kids can't 'get used' to having less sleep
Sleep 'debt' cannot be recovered
Keep sleep on your radar
If you are not already, start checking your children's sleep
If you are looking for expert help and you don't find the right person, keep looking
Do a sleep health check at least once a week, even for kids who are 'getting it right'
If your kids aren't getting the right sleep formula, you need to get onto it asap to avoid habits developing
Sleep Disorders are treatable and preventable
To be lifeguards parents need their sleep too