Happy New Year! Around the holidays and school breaks it is almost impossible to keep a consistent schedule. This disruption can often lead to sleep difficulties for children. Here are some suggestions for getting your child’s sleep back on track after a hectic holiday season.

1. **Develop a regular sleep schedule.** Your child should go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.

2. **Maintain a consistent bedtime routine.** Children benefit from a bedtime routine that is the same every night and includes calm and enjoyable activities. Including one-on-one time with a parent is helpful in maintaining communication with your child and having a clear connection every day.

3. **Set up a soothing sleep environment.** Make sure your child’s bedroom is comfortable, dark, cool, and quiet. A nightlight is fine, a TV is not.

4. **Set limits.** If your child stalls at bedtime, be sure to set clear limits, such as what time lights must be turned off and how many bedtime stories you will read.

5. **Turn off TVs, computers, and radios.** Watching TV, playing computer games, surfing the internet, and other stimulating activities at bedtime will cause sleep problems.

6. **Avoid caffeine.** Caffeine can be found in sodas, coffee-based products, iced tea, and many other substances.

7. **For older children, avoid oversleeping on weekends.** Although catching up on some sleep during the weekends can be helpful, sleeping until noon on Sunday will make it hard for your teenager to get back on a school schedule that night.

8. **Contact your child’s doctor.** Speak to your child’s physician if your child has difficulties falling asleep or staying asleep, snores, experiences unusual awakenings, or has sleep problems that are causing disruption during the daytime.

SPOTLIGHT ON:
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Michelle is a second year graduate student in the clinical psychology doctoral program. Michelle graduated with honors with a B.S. in psychology from the University of Maryland in 2010. Before moving to Houston, she worked at the National Institute of Mental Health studying child anxiety disorders. At SACK, Michelle is the project coordinator for a treatment study examining Targeted Behavioral Therapy and she aims to further her research career in the field of child interventions. In her spare time, Michelle enjoys running and she completed her first half-marathon this fall.