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The Nanny Toolbox

February Fun

Love is in the air, which means it's the perfect time for sweet treats and activities designed in the spirit of Valentine's Day. Here are a few ideas to get you started...

- **DIY Valentines:** Is anything sweeter than a child's hand-made valentine? We don't think so. Gather glitter, construction paper, and anything else than comes to mind and help your charges make Mom and Dad a hand-made gift that shows they care.
- **Gifts from the heart:** Want to celebrate Valentine's Day with the kids. Little gifts like hand-made notes allowing an extra hour of video games or a treat go a long way in bringing a smile...

Want more fun tips? Hop over to [Nanny Island](#), where the conversation's always going.

Letter from the Editor

It seems like the economy is top of mind for just about everyone in the nation, nannies included. And while pinching pennies is prudent, it's also important to know what you're worth. That's why we encourage you to participate in the International Nanny Association's annual salary survey, which compiles nationwide data to produce a snapshot of the industry. By working together, we can ensure that all nannies are fairly compensated...

On a related note, we recommend highly that you consider attending the INA national conference this year, which takes place in Dallas, TX and promises great workshops and networking, as always.

This month, we also spotlight some of our fellow nanny bloggers, including Kelli Geres, who recently guest-blogged a piece for [Morningside Nannies](#) on working with divorced parents. It's frank. It's honest. And it's definitely a must-read, with candid insight directed to nannies and parents alike!

Last but not least, Happy Valentine's Day – we'll see you next month!

INA Conference Registration is Open!

You can never get too much professional insight, and when it comes to the world of being a nanny, the INA is a major source of ongoing information and education. Serving up great networking, essential seminars, and plain old fun, this year's conference will take place in Dallas, TX from April 23-26.

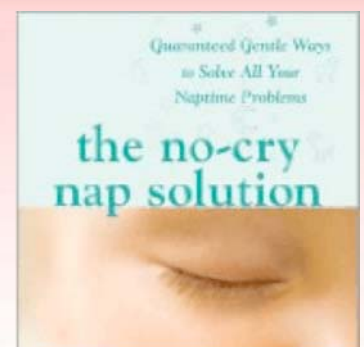
Connect with fellow nannies. Gain skills that will enhance your career. Meet other nannies from all over.

To register, visit <http://www.nanny.org/conference.php> -- hope to see you there!

Book Excerpt: The No-Cry Nap Solution

We've all faced the frustrations surrounded nap time, but lucky for us, Elizabeth Pantley recently faced the subject head on in her new book, The No-Cry Nap Solution. Read on for a brief excerpt from the chapter "The Nap-Resister: When Your Child Needs a Nap but Won't Take One," then visit <http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth> for more information.

Daytime naps might last just a few short hours, but they can affect all twenty-four hours of a child's day. Naps can improve a child's mood and reduce fussiness, crying, whining, and tantrums. Studies show that children who nap daily get sick less often, grow taller, and are less likely to be obese when they grow up. Naps enhance attention span and



brain development. Naps can also help make up for any shortage in nighttime sleep. Even a one hour shortage in overall sleep hours can have a negative effect on a child – compromising alertness and brain function, and increasing fussiness and fatigue.

There are many ideas for helping a child to take a nap, but the best idea in the world may not work for you if the solution doesn't address the reason that your child won't nap. There is not just one reason that babies and young children refuse to nap – there are hundreds of different reasons. Before you decide on a solution you need to understand your child's motivation. Once you figure out the cause of your child's "nappingness" you can put together a plan to overcome her resistance. Here are a few typical reasons kids won't nap – and suggestions to solve each problem:



Problem: Has outgrown the current nap schedule

Solutions: Think about any changes in your child's life, growth or development. Has he learned to crawl, begun to eat solid food or started daycare? Any change can also affect sleep patterns. Watch your child for signs of tiredness between naps and adjust your schedule to meet his new needs.

Problem: Nap schedule doesn't match your child's biological clock

Solutions: Naptime, bedtime, mealtime, exposure to light and darkness, and activity all can affect your child's biological clock. Look at your child's schedule to be sure these things occur at reasonable times every day. The improper order of things (such as active, brightly lit playtime just before bed) can affect your child's rhythm.

Problem: Nap schedule isn't consistent from day to day

Solutions: If on weekdays nap times, bedtime and wakeup time are specific, but on weekends they're hit and miss, then your child will be functioning with a constant bout of jetlag. Other inconsistencies can also affect this, such as when your child naps at a certain time at daycare, but a different time at home, or if he takes a nice long nap on days when you are at home but takes a short one in the car (or skips a nap entirely) when you are on the go. Set up a possible nap schedule for your child and do your best to stay within a half hour of the nap times that you have set up.

Tips for encouraging naptime

No matter why your child won't nap, there are a few specifics that can be helpful as you encourage any child to take regular naps. Keep these basic principles in mind:

- Maintain a consistent daily schedule that works with your child's natural body clock. Create a predictable pattern to the day – with meals and naptime happening at reliable times.
- Modify your schedule according to your child's sleepy signs. No matter what the clock says, it's nap time when your child becomes quieter, loses interest in toys or playtime, fusses, stares off into the distance, rubs his eyes or ears, and of course: if he begins to yawn.
- Have a relaxing pre-nap routine to cue your child that naptime is here and help him wind down and relax.
- Set up a sleeping place that is cozy and that sets the stage for sleep. Dress your child comfortably for sleep.
- Keep mornings bright and active, and the half hour before each nap session quiet, dimly lit, and calm.
- Keep in mind that you cannot force a child to sleep, but you can follow the basic rules of biology, gauge your child's sleepy signals, and create a setting that is inductive to sleep and relaxation.

From *The No-Cry Nap Solution: Guaranteed Gentle Ways to Solve All Your Naptime Problems* by Elizabeth Pantley (McGraw-Hill, January 2009). For information and more excerpts: <http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth/>

Do you earn enough? Take INA's Nanny Salary Survey...

Wondering how your compensation stacks up to other nannies? We may just have an answer for you.

The International Nanny Association (INA) conducts an annual salary that compares the wages of full-, temporary, and part-time nannies across the U.S. Capturing information on both live-in and live-out nannies in a range of categories, the survey creates a benchmark by which to determine where you stand. Of course, the best way to ensure that the information is complete is to participate!



Visit the INA website -- <http://www.nanny.org> -- and take the survey now. It only takes a minute or two, but the results can help all of us ensure that we're valued for the essential work we do.

Working with Divorced Parents: A Nanny's Perspective

Kellie Geres, is a veteran nanny with 20 years experience, and lives in the Washington, DC area. Our thanks to [Morningside Nannies](#) for allowing us to reproduce this article!

For the past ten years I have worked for three sets of divorced parents and as the child care provider in these situations it is my job to make the situation as stress free as possible for the child/children and assure them that they can count on me to be there for them. It is also my job to communicate to the parents the issues I see the children having that are due to the changed family dynamic. These may be emotional, behavioral, social or developmental.



I also wear the hat of household manager, overseeing the day-to-day running of two busy households. If the parents and the nanny all work together on setting up communication and action plans the situation can become a win-win for all, despite the trauma of divorce.

A MESSAGE TO PARENTS

Communicate daily. In my current position we rely primarily on email communication throughout the day, but I speak with at least one parent personally each day.

- Email allows me to communicate with both parents simultaneously so they both know what is going on: schedule reminders, concerns, school updates, doctor/dentist appointment reminders, etc.
- A household log works well and can be as simple as a spiral bound notebook left on the kitchen counter in each home for the nanny to write about the children's day and observations.
- Weekly updates on Friday on how the week went, reminders for the upcoming week, things I want the parents to pay attention to over the weekend, needs of each household, etc.

One of the best tools for a nanny is a BlackBerry. It helps nanny and parent to be in quick communication with one another. For example:

- I can email the parents to let them know that when I picked up the kids I learned that they have a project due or a test the next day.
- Dad may be in a meeting and Mom may be traveling when I receive a call from the school that one of the children is sick and needs to come home. I can email the parents to let them know what's going on.
- I've even emailed "call me immediately" when necessary and get a faster response than had I called and left a voice mail.

Parents, check your attitude at the door.

- Children pick up changes in mood, stress levels, and attitudes of the adults in their life.
- Don't demean, call names, or belittle your ex in the presence of the children, and advise friends and family to follow this rule as well.
- Put your egos aside and communicate directly with your ex-partner regarding the needs of the children and the households.
- Don't ask your nanny to tell your ex that you can't take the kids on your scheduled weekend. You need to discuss situations like this directly.
- You may enjoy a close relationship with your nanny, but be careful not to cross the line between friend/confidant and employer. The nanny is there in the best interest of the child/children.
- Please don't divulge personal information about your ex to your children or nanny in hopes of winning their love or making them choose sides – that's like asking which parent they love more.

Parents, clearly define your work agreement with your nanny. In the case of working for divorced parents this is even more important, since the nanny has two employers. Make sure that all parties are clear on the terms of the contract. For example, if the children are away with one parent on vacation, does that mean the nanny has paid vacation time? If one parent comes home later than the other parent, does the nanny get paid a higher salary for the time that she works for that parent? How will daily expenses be handled?

To read the rest of this article – including Geres' message to nannies – visit the [Morningside Nannies](http://morningsidenannies.wordpress.com/2008/12/) blog at <http://morningsidenannies.wordpress.com/2008/12/>

Nanny Bloggers Find Their Voice

There are getting to be quite a few nanny bloggers out there, and it's a great way for those of us who work in a field that requires us to go solo to



connect. One of our favorite blogs – [All Things Nanny](#) – includes a number of guest bloggers who make their voices heard. Looking for a good read? We highly recommend it!



Welcome to Our Newest Agency Advertisers

- [Nanny Care and More](#), Woodcliff Lake New Jersey
- [East Coast Northeast Domestics](#), Ridgefield Connecticut
- [New York Nanny Center](#), New York, NY
- [First Steps Agency, Inc.](#), Harrison, New York

The Nanny Agency Locator at www.4EverythingNanny.com puts your agency right where more than 8,000 families a week look for their next nanny – not to mention qualified nannies from all over. Visit online to learn more about all of the great benefits of signing up.

- A direct e-mail link and link to your website
- Important information about your agency including fees, policies, etc.
- A results-driven way to attract nannies and families alike
- Nannies and families are online searching. The Nanny Agency Locator sends them to you.