

An Allspace Therapy Educational Resource



Is It Just Behavior?



A Parent's Guide to Sleep & Airway Red Flags

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Is Sleep & Airway Affecting Your Child's Behavior, Learning, or Regulation?

Many childhood struggles are not simply behavioral.

They may be physiological.

This brief guide will help you recognize common red flags and understand how sleep and breathing shape development.





Why This Matters

Children do not experience sleep in isolation.

Sleep quality influences:

- Attention
- Emotional regulation
- Impulse control
- Learning readiness
- Growth and development
- Energy and resilience

When breathing is disrupted during sleep – even subtly – the body works harder to maintain oxygen flow.

This can activate the stress response, alter nervous system regulation, and affect daytime behavior.

Many children are labeled as:

- “Difficult”
- “Hyperactive”
- “Sensitive”
- “Unmotivated”

When the root issue may be disrupted sleep and airway function. Understanding this connection changes how we respond.



10 Common but Overlooked Signs

Not every child with sleep-disordered breathing snores loudly.

Look for patterns like:

- Mouth breathing during the day
- Snoring (even softly)
- Teeth grinding at night
- Restless sleep or frequent movement
- Night sweats
- Bedwetting beyond typical developmental age
- Difficulty waking in the morning
- Dark circles under the eyes
- Hyperactivity or impulsivity
- Chronic fatigue or frequent meltdowns

These signs are often dismissed individually. Together, they may tell a different story.



What These Signs Can Signal

When a child breathes through their mouth instead of their nose, the body compensates.

This may affect:

- Oxygen and carbon dioxide balance
- Tongue posture and craniofacial growth
- Nervous system regulation
- Sleep architecture
- Stress hormone levels

For example:

Teeth grinding can be the brain's attempt to stimulate breathing.

Bedwetting can reflect strain on the cardiovascular system.

Hyperactivity can be a stress response to fragmented sleep.
This is not about blame.

Disrupted breathing patterns can also influence oral development, speech clarity, chewing, and feeding patterns – as the muscles of the lips, tongue, and jaw are part of the same craniofacial-respiratory system.

It's about physiology.



What Parents Can Do

Start by observing without judgment.

Notice:

- How your child breathes during the day
- Whether their mouth is open at rest
- Sleep patterns
- Energy fluctuations

Ask:

Has sleep ever been evaluated from an airway perspective?

Consider seeking collaborative input from professionals trained in:

- Airway and sleep
- Airway-centered dentistry and orthodontics
- Orofacial myofunctional therapy
- Pediatric ENT
- Sleep-informed speech-language pathology

You deserve clarity.

Your child deserves restorative sleep.

If This Resonates

If some of these signs feel familiar but you're unsure how they connect, you don't have to piece it together alone. Structured, science-informed guidance can transform uncertainty into confident next steps.

I created the Please Secure the Airway (PSA) Parent Course to help families understand:

- How airway development affects sleep
- The connection between breathing and behavior
- What signs matter most
- When to seek evaluation
- How to advocate confidently

This course provides a cohesive framework — so you can move from wondering to informed action, calmly and confidently.

As part of the PSA experience, families also receive *How to Be a Sleep Detective: A Guide for Parents* — a structured framework and screening tool designed to help you organize observations before appointments and collaborative conversations.

You can learn more here:

<https://allspacetherapy.com/psa-trainings/>

When airway is supported, everything changes.

**The PSA is great! The Rosetta Stone of airway issues
in kids. Everyone should have this.
- B.D.**





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Nicole is an ASHA board certified speech-language pathologist with a unique blend of subspecialties. She is the Founder of Allspace Therapy in Calabasas, California and is the myofunctional therapy section leader for the American Academy of Physiological Medicine & Dentistry (AAPMD). She is a graduate of the Mind, Brain, Teaching graduate certificate program at Johns Hopkins University.

Nicole is a national and international speaker, as well as a published author on the topics of educational neuroscience, orofacial myofunctional therapy, airway function disorders and the autonomic nervous system, and sleep wellness in pediatrics. Her first article for The ASHA Leader (2015) on sleep-disordered breathing and tongue-ties garnered a Bronze Excel Award from Association Media & Publishing for Best Column.

Nicole is a passionate advocate for interdisciplinary collaboration and public health awareness on airway health and sleep. Alongside an interdisciplinary team of colleagues on the FAIREST: Functional AIRWay Evaluation Screening Tool (Pilot Study, Phase 1), she has contributed to research on nasal breathing and oral function.