

## FAMILY WELLNESS

# The Benefits of 'Duvet Days' for children.

- What is a "Duvet Day"?
- Tips for offering them
- Resources to learn more



## Ever feel like you need a break from your regular day-to-day? Children can feel that way, too.

In the late 1990s, one UK company began offering 'Duvet Days' to their employees--separate from sick days and PTO days, a 'Duvet Day' was for the days where, for no particular reason, you don't feel like getting out of bed. A day to rest and recharge, a "mental health day." Since then, 'Duvet Days' have been increasing in popularity in the UK, and even some US companies offer the benefit. Others may allow employees to use PTO for mental health days. But what about when our children are looking for a break?

While schools push for excellent attendance, even offering incentives for students who never miss a day, parents can likely relate to a child's feelings of needing a breather. Helping your child balance their responsibilities and schedule with their need to listen to their bodies and rest is a life-long skill that we can help children learn and practice.

By allowing 'Duvet Days,' we help children understand that their mental health is just as important as physical health.

# Tips for offering a 'Duvet Day'

How to help your child manage their break

## Consider what's possible for your family.

Adult work schedules don't always accommodate a day home, and that's okay. If you cannot be home with your child for a day off, consider if they might be able to go to a family member's or neighbor's home for the workday. Some adults may be able to work remotely for a day while home with a child taking a day off. You can also offer a 'Duvet Day,' but tell your child that they need to wait until it's not a work day--like over a weekend.

## Place boundaries around when 'Duvet Days' can happen.

Decide with your child how often this will be an option for them--for example, one day a semester or one day each school year. Place parameters around when they can ask for one--is it okay for them to miss a test for a Duvet Day, or do they need to choose a day when they won't miss certain school obligations?

## Place boundaries around what they can do on a 'Duvet Day.'

Talk with your child about what a 'Duvet Day' should look like and what they might choose to do during their day of rest. Activities like reading, watching movies, relaxing art activities, etc., are good options. Consider your child's personality and needs--some children may find going for a run an excellent choice for their mental health, even though it isn't "restful." Also, discuss the activities that aren't available to them during their day off--for example, scrolling social media. Can they do after-school activities, like sports?

## Be ready to listen, but avoid pressure.

Sometimes children may avoid school for a particular reason--a peer they aren't getting along with or an assignment causing stress. Ask your child if they want to share why they want a day off, but try not to pressure them to share if they aren't ready to. Also, be aware that sometimes, there is no reason, and we all have days when we need a break.

**"Why are children only allowed time off school if they're really sick?...Surely their mental health is just as important."**

– SARAH OCKWELL SMITH

# Resources

For continued support

- Read an article from the Washington Post about the growing trend of [schools offering Mental Health Days](#).
- Learn about [when Mental Health Days can be helpful for children](#) and when they shouldn't be offered.
- Get some tips from the National Association for Mental Health on how to [talk to your child's school about implementing a Mental Health Day policy](#).
- Read some suggestions of [things to do if you take a Mental Health Day with your child](#).

