

Dr. Saundra

Sarah: [00:00:00] Welcome to the Peaceful Parenting Podcast. I'm your host, Sarah Rosensweet, mom of three young people, Peaceful Parenting Coach, and your cheerleader and guide on all things parenting. Each week, we'll cover the tools, strategies, and support you need to end the yelling and power struggles, and encourage your kids to listen and cooperate so that you can enjoy your family time.

I'm happy to say we have a great relationship with our three kids. The teen years have been easy and joyful. Not because we're special unicorns, but because my kids were raised with peaceful parenting. I've also helped so many parents, just like you, stop struggling and enjoy their kids again. I'm excited to be here with you today and bring you the insight and information you need to make your parenting journey a little more peaceful.

Let's dive into this week's conversation.

Hey, y'all welcome back to another episode of the peaceful parenting podcast. Today, we are talking to Dr. Saundra Dalton Smith. She is an internal medicine doctor and she wrote a book about rest is called sacred [00:01:00] rest.

In it, she talks about the difference between sleep and rest, which is something that I never really thought too much about before. And I thought that you all would really benefit from learning about the seven different kinds of rests. There are seven that she's identified in her research.

And how to figure out how to meet that need that you have for whatever kind of rest that you are deficit.

And even if you're a parent with a busy life and lots of demands on your time and energy, Dr. Saundra had some great ideas for us as parents and how we could fill up those rest buckets. So have a listen. And be sure to share this episode with a friend who is exhausted, as I know most of you parents are.

I know as I was when I was a younger parent and I really hope that this is helpful for you. And that you find in it some rest.

Let's meet Dr. Sandra.

Sarah: Hi Dr. Sandra, welcome to the podcast. Thanks so much for having me. I saw you or heard you on another podcast talking about rest and I thought this is a [00:02:00] perfect thing that we need for all of our exhausted parents out there to hear more about the different kinds of rest that you've identified and how we can be better rested.

But before we jump into that great content, could you just tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do and how you came to study rest?

Dr. Saundra: Yes, I'm an internal medicine physician, but in clinical practice for about 20 years, I, well, burned out basically when I had my toddler. So my sons both came kind of back to back.

They were 21 months apart. And after my second son was born, I, But I found myself in a place of just pure exhaustion. Love the work that I do, but I just did not have the energy to do it and didn't want to continue like that. Continue in a place where I always brought the end of myself home to my family.

I wanted to actually come home at the end of work and have some energy to play with my toddlers. And so that's where the journey began for me.

Sarah: Maybe you could talk a little bit about the difference between sleep and rest before we get into the different types of rest, because I think most people, [00:03:00] when they talk about being well rested, they always think about, did you get enough sleep?

So what's the difference between sleep and rest?

Dr. Saundra: Yeah, sleep is a type of rest, but sleep and rest are not the same thing. And I think that's part of the first differentiation that has to happen is that when we talk about sleep, we're basically focusing on the passive form of sleep. physical rest. And as you mentioned, my research, basically we talk about there being seven different types of rest, including physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, social, sensory, and creative.

So if all of your attention is simply on getting more sleep, what happens if the type of rest deficit you have is actually an emotional rest deficit. You can't sleep your way into emotional wellbeing and emotional restoration. And so that is where we find is the problem. A lot of people say I'm resting.

And really what they're meaning is I'm doing some type of cessation activity, whether it's sleeping or laying around watching TV or, you know, whatever it is

that they do when they stop, but they actually have an associated rest with restoration with the [00:04:00] actual pouring back into the place. And that's really at the core of what rest is.

Sarah: What I find is a lot of myself included, and this is something I've worked on a lot, is that idea that you have to do something to deserve rest. I think it stems from our capitalist culture, right? That you have to earn your rest and that you can't rest until you've, you know, gotten everything done off of your to do list.

How do you help people when they have that mindset, you know, that they need to do, that there's all these things they need to do before they can rest.

Dr. Saundra: Yeah, I think that's definitely a challenge for a lot of people. But when we, you know, think about the logic of that is the work ever done, there's always something to do.

Particularly if you have a certain type of personality, which is the personality I have, I can find work. I don't have a problem with keeping things to do. There's always something to be done. So if we have this mentality that we're going to work, We're going to rest when the work is done. You basically have said, I'm never going to rest.

And if we just [00:05:00] think about the logic of that, just comparing it, even to like our cell phones, you know, our cell phone, if we start seeing the little battery life go down into the yellow or the red zone, we respect that. enough to say, I got to do something or it's just gonna get to the end of itself. We don't do that with our own cells.

Even when we can tell we're in the yellow and the red zones, we act as if we are exempt to rest and every, everything that uses energy. Has to have time to be restored. And so just the logistics of that doesn't make logical sense. We're actually, we treat ourselves as if we are kind of robotic, but robots need rest, which is restoration and recharging.

And so I think for a lot of people, it's really understanding that we can, Work from our place of exhaustion, which oftentimes produces work that's of lesser quality, lesser satisfaction, lesser joy, or we can actually work from a place of being well rested, where the work then comes from [00:06:00] a place of you being energized, passionate and full of excitement about the work that you're doing.

So I often ask people, which one do you? Would you prefer to keep grinding it out and being unhappy? Or do you actually want to have the energy to do the work that you want to do? Whatever that may be, whether it's a job you're passionate about or job you just do for money, but what about if you're able to do it?

And when you leave, you have the energy to enjoy the rest of your life.

Sarah: That makes so much sense. And you're almost saying that you know, you can work better when you're rested rather than the other way, rather than trying to work so that you can rest.

Dr. Saundra: Absolutely. Yeah. Working from a place of rest is going to produce a life that actually feels successful.

Yeah. Or a lot of us are working from a place of exhaustion, and even if we have so called success as far as finances and these other things, it doesn't feel successful.

Sarah: Right. That makes so much sense. What kind, so you mentioned briefly the seven types of rest. Maybe just go over those again, go over those [00:07:00] again, and maybe afterwards you could highlight if you think that parents are more susceptible to being less rested in some of those areas.

Some of them jumped out to me. I can share that with you after if you want. Yeah. So, the seven areas

Dr. Saundra: include physical, mental, spiritual, so, emotional, social, sensory, and creative. As far as, you know, it really depends on the parent and what their lifestyle is and what kind of. type of work that they do.

Each of the seven types of rest, there are things that can predispose you to having greater deficit in certain areas. Let's say if a parent is neurodivergent, well, some kid toys will drive you batty if that's the case because they make lots of noise. And then we have parents who maybe their job requires a lot of emotional or social energy.

Maybe they're Counselors or teachers or therapists where they're dealing with a lot of people's emotions. Well, that person is going to be more prone to emotional rest deficits, and they might not have the ability, their compassion may be exhausted by the [00:08:00] time they get, you know, they get home with their family.

And so they're not so nice once they get home with their family, but they're great people. with everybody else. So, you know, you have to kind of really take into account, where is energy being expended with each parent? Because even in the same household, mom can be having a rest deficit in one area and dad have a completely different rest deficit.

So, you know, the weekends, One person might get their rest deficit area restored where the other person still is in a rest deficit when they go back to work.

Sarah: You just mentioned, and I think this is key, you just mentioned energy expended. And maybe could you talk a little bit more about that? Because I think as a parent, like I immediately jumped to for when my kids Are around your kids ages so older now, but when they were little, I could say that the emotional, I had that emotional rest deficit and a sensory rest deficit just from little ones who wanted to talk to me all day and be with me all day.

And, you know, had the emotional the emotional needs of small children. Talk up a little bit about the energy [00:09:00] expansion and how that. Energy, is that the right word? Expending energy and how that affects the rest deficit.

Dr. Saundra: Yeah. So the rest deficit is really, if we kind of look at our at those seven different areas as, I mean, probably a simple way is looking at it as a bucket, so to speak.

And as you are going throughout your day, you're using energy from that bucket. It's being drained out and whatever activities that you're doing, unless you have some system in place for pouring back into that, Bucket. It doesn't just auto generate energy by itself. It has to be refilled. And so when we look at any of these areas, like for example, passive passive physical rest sleep, a big part of that is the physical body needs time for it to the muscles to heal the body to regenerate cells.

All of those things happen during that non REM stage three and four sleep. Okay. And so the process of that is the restoration, the refilling up of those [00:10:00] parts of our bucket. Well, the same thing happens emotionally when you are sitting down with that client and you are expending emotional or social energy with your kids or whoever that you're doing work with, what pours back into that?

Because the majority of us, particularly as parents, a lot of our life is family work. If at work, everybody's needing you, has demands on your times, your

energy, your talents, that's pulling from your emotional and social energy. If you go home and it's the same thing, everybody's pulling on your time and your energy and your talents.

Where's the time that you actually can have your own emotional release where you can say how you're feeling and what's going on with you. Where's the time for you to have a social, Rest, restoration, where someone is actually saying something positive and life giving to you and you're not the one encouraging and doing all of those things and pouring out from that bucket.

So we have to make sure that our buckets don't get kind of one sided where we're [00:11:00] always pouring and we never actually have a pattern or system or some time where we allow ourselves to get it filled back up. You've

Sarah: been alluding to solutions, and I want to go there next, but how, if somebody came to you, if you had a patient come to you and say, let's just say a mom, because a lot of our audience is moms, and it was just like, I'm just exhausted, and you determine maybe it's not the sleep rest deficit.

How do you help them figure out what area of rest they're most lacking or where they need to focus?

Dr. Saundra: Yes. Well, you know, in my book, Sacred Rest, that's a big part. Part of the conversation, because before we even get into the seven types of rest, we start off by having people go to our free rest assessment at rest quiz dot com, which basically allows them to get a score in each of the seven areas.

And when they are able to kind of see. Okay, this is an area I need to pay attention to and focus on so that when you're, you know, when you're looking at something and there's seven of anything, it's like, wow, you know, I already have a lot [00:12:00] on my plate. Now I got seven things I got to figure out. But the reality is most of us are already naturally doing some things to restore ourselves.

Otherwise we wouldn't be functional. Usually there's one if they're still saying they're tired and there's obviously nothing medically wrong with them. You know, their thyroid hasn't. You know, had a problem or nothing medically that we can see wrong with them. Then when we start looking at these rest deficits, oftentimes it's one or maybe two that are the areas that are our greatest deficit.

And when we start pouring back into that area, when we start restoring that part of their, themselves, they start feeling better because you're going, pouring back in the place where they actually have the depletion.

Sarah: Yeah, I'm just looking at my rest scores. My rest quiz scores and we, again, we'll link to that in the show notes.

And the two that I had I got my two lowest scores were 22 in physical rest and 22 and emotional rest, obviously physical rest, that would be the sleeping. Right. I need to get more sleep. Well,

Dr. Saundra: that's passive is [00:13:00] sleeping in an act of physical rest include things like your muscles your joints, your bones, kind of what's hurting you.

Okay. So, you know, if you're pick, if I don't know what your work is, you know, specifically, but let's say if you're a parent and you're picking up a baby, 35 pound toddler over and over again, you may have some physical rest deficit because you're not stretching after that workout. You probably don't even consider it a workout.

Sarah: How do you know me so well that I'm not stretching? So, okay, so physical rest, sleeping and just physically resting your body, so I can work on that. What would you do, what would you tell me that I need to do more of to get more emotional rest?

Dr. Saundra: Emotional rest is, there's two components to that.

There's the kind of emotional rest as it relates to your personal life. And then there's the emotional rest that comes from a lot of people, I'll put it this way. A lot of people have what I call professional emotional rest deficits related to kind of this professional emotional labor that they carry specifically because they have to hide some of their emotions or Act in a way contrary to the [00:14:00] emotions they feel.

For example, if you're in customer service and people are mean or rude, usually you're still keeping a smile on your face, even though you don't feel like smiling, you're not happy in the moment. So you're actually using energy and suppressing your emotions to be able to stay at a level of professionalism.

That's a stressor. And so people do this in many different ways. That's one way, another way, because this is the area that I touched on. The biggest rest deficit

initially is as a physician, I work in, I'm an internal medicine physician. I work within the ER and ICU at times. And so in the small town I work in, when someone comes into the ICU, they're not a stranger to me.

It's not, this was. I'm older, so this is 20 years ago. There were no hospitalists. Like you knew the patients. You went to church with them. You saw them in the grocery store. These were people you actually know. And so when they're at an end of life situation, I'm an empath. And so every bone in my body may want to burst out into tears, but you'd never see a [00:15:00] teardrop from my eye.

I've trained my emotions to be under control, to handle high stress situations. However, Just because I'm able to control the emotion doesn't mean the emotion doesn't want to have a place for release. Because otherwise, I'm just packing in that emotional backpack. Now parents do this quite a bit, especially if they have stress and strain, you know, marriage can be hard.

So if you're a couple and you are battling on the verge of trying to keep your marriage together And, you know, you're putting on a front for your kids because you're like, you don't want them to worry that something's going to happen. That's an extra level of stress. Where's the place you're going where you're actually able to release.

Your true emotions, whether that's a therapist or a counselor or a trusted friend, same difference. If you're someone who goes to work situation might be somewhat toxic. When you come home, you may say to yourself, well, I don't want to trauma dump. So I'm not going to talk about it with my spouse because I don't want to just, you know, trauma dump all that stuff on them.

But really emotional [00:16:00] rest is not trauma dumping. Trauma dumping would mean me coming home. and sharing all the details. I'm going to tell them the conversation and how that person looked when they talked to me and all this stuff as if I'm taking them into the conversation, like I'm painting the picture.

That is trauma dumping because you're basically trying to reenact the emotions with that person. Emotional arrest is very different. It would be something like, in my situation, instead of telling my husband what the ER scene looked like when the family came in after the car accident, painting the bad picture, The emotional rest part of that would be me saying I had nothing to offer that family spouse came in, you know, with nothing I could do medically.

I felt hopeless. I felt helpless. I felt like I didn't have what I need to support them. I'm basically saying something at a level of vulnerability that speaks a

level of truth that allows me to say what I really feel. feel. And most people don't do that. They don't feel safe with that. And [00:17:00] they may not have practiced that.

And so it's one of those things I always encourage parents to do. You know, one of the things that stands out of my mind, I speak to lots of groups, whether they be youth groups or youth camps and corporates and all sorts of areas. But one that particularly stand stands out was a youth group where a young woman after we were talking about the seven types of rest and we were going through how to apply it.

And I remember her saying when we got to a motel, She's like, I don't know how to do, how to have that kind of conversation. He's like, I don't know anybody who actually shares what they really feel. And I thought, Oh my goodness. How what a sad. Yeah. And here we have a 16 year old who's like, nobody shares what they really feel.

We all kind of keep it all bottled up. So how is that child ever supposed to get emotional rest if we don't have safe places to practice this at home? You know, and as a physician, if I'm at the bedside of a child who just tried to take their life, the number one thing I hear from [00:18:00] them is, I don't feel like I can talk about the real things that are bothering me with my family.

Sarah: Right.

Dr. Saundra: And that's a place where every parent can step in and really start kind of changing the conversation, not just around mental health, but around how children experience emotional rest.

Sarah: Yeah. That's really resonates. That's what we do a lot in peaceful parenting is welcoming emotions is one of our key things that we work on with parents is to how to welcome your child's emotions.

And it also struck me that you talked about the emotional backpack, which is something I talk about every day. That's one of our. Okay. sort of our key our key principles is that, you know, kids, when they can't process the feelings that they're experiencing, they, or adults, you know, anyone when they can't process, like you're talking about in the ER, you're not going to process the sadness that you're feeling in the moment.

So you'd stuff it away in your emotional backpack. So that's going to really resonate for a lot of our listeners because they hear me talking about that all the

time. So talking about your feelings. With someone who is a safe person and to be able to express that is there, are there any other ways that you [00:19:00] recommend for getting emotional rest or emotional backpack?

Dr. Saundra: Yeah, absolutely. Another way that a lot of people experience emotional rest, I'll give a couple one day journaling. Sometimes you don't. Sometimes there isn't a person, you know, we work with a lot of single people and sometimes they're like, I don't really have anybody. There's not a spouse that I come home to that I can have that conversation with.

And so being able to journal it is, it's a process of getting it out of your mind kind of so that you can put it out there and realize that you have a chance to, you know, evaluate it, not necessarily try to process it, so to speak, but at least releasing it, let, letting it have voice. Another opportunity can be with any type of like creative expression.

A lot of people experience emotional rest when they allow themselves to be creative without the concern of what someone else thinks.

So

Dr. Saundra: you're sitting around your You're doodling. Some people doodle as a way of emotional rest. So you're able [00:20:00] to kind of put whatever on the, from pen to paper, whatever it is, or, you know, drawing it, or some people sing it.

My son likes to get emotional rest by playing his guitar and coming up with songs. As do most of the people who live in Nashville now. So it's a common, you know, art is a common way of getting emotional rest. But the difference is it's art produced at the benefit of you alone. You're not caring if anybody likes it.

You're basically trying to get the emotion out of you in a way that you can express it.

Sarah: Love that you are going into the creative creativity territory. Maybe we could talk about creativity, the creative rest deficit a little bit. What does that look like? And how how would you fill that rest deficit and how's it different from what you just talked about in terms of the creative expression as emotional rest?

Dr. Saundra: Yes, exactly. The, what I just described is not creative rest. It's emotional rest because creative rest doesn't require any demand upon your

creativity. And so. What I just described, [00:21:00] you're creating something. So that means you have a, you're using creative energy to express that. Creative rest is when you're appreciating what has already been created and allowing it to awaken and unlock and inspire creative ideas inside of you.

So you're not producing creatively. You're actually receiving the creative experience something else has produced. So whether that's, you know, nature where you're looking at the creative expression of the world and you're appreciating the ocean and the mountains and flowers and rainbows and sunsets and all of those kind of things.

Or if you are going to a museum or if you're listening to music on your phone, or if you are watching theater or watching someone do a dance recital, there's lots of different ways to experience a creative rest experience, but it just really boils down to you personally. What inspires you. Because what inspires me may not expire, inspire the next person.

And so getting really kind of [00:22:00] focused in on when I'm in certain settings or experiencing certain types of beauty or creativity that unlocks more creativity inside of

Sarah: you. I love that Other things that you think would be helpful for our parents to know about in terms of rest and rest deficit?

Dr. Saundra: Probably the only other one that comes to mind would be specifically mental rest deficits. I think we didn't discuss. No, that would be great to discuss. Simply because a lot, there's lots of decision fatigue that happens right now. And mental rest deficits have a tendency to add to that. So people tend to have trouble concentrating.

They forget, they're forgetful. You know, we hear things like mommy brain and all of these kinds of different terms that usually, Basically, you're describing forms of mental rest deficits, where basically you're just not able to clear out your thoughts enough to concentrate and focus. And so it's important to kind of determine what are the things that actually help you to have more mindfulness type [00:23:00] practices and to be able to clear your mind, kind of get rid of some of the extra.

mental clutter to be able to focus a little bit better. Multitasking worsens that. So usually if you're able to do any type of kind of concentrated work, time blocking, those kind of things so that your attention is focused in on something

specific. The other thing is that Rumination. Rumination has a tendency to keep a lot of people from getting into deeper levels of sleep.

And so if you find that you are a nighttime ruminator, in other words, you lay your head down and you're thinking all the thoughts. You're thinking about your to do list the next day and it's kind of just running on a spinning cycle in your brain. Having something like a notepad or just a post it note or something where you can jot down whatever your thoughts are, do a brain dump, sometimes really helpful because it gets the thought out of your mental space onto something concrete, and when it's written down on something concrete, it's like the brain understands that it's no longer responsible for [00:24:00] holding on that information.

Sarah: That's helpful. Yeah, I'm just trying to think if there's anything I anything else I should have asked you about parent specific rest. I encourage anyone to go out and take your quiz and to learn what areas that they could focus on. I think it took about it took me about five or seven minutes.

It's not a hugely lengthy thing, but it is thorough. And we will link to that in the show notes.

Dr. Saundra: I will say this. I don't think I think we mentioned or maybe touched on sensory rest, but I I hear from a lot of parents that this is an area that they tend to struggle with and their children sometimes struggle with as well, especially if their children have been diagnosed with ADD, ADHD, neurodivergence of any order.

form is that with sensory rest, we see it a lot in toddlers and we understand it in toddlers, but we don't recognize it as quickly in ourselves. So, you know, you take a toddler to a birthday party, they're fine about an hour in, they're screaming their head off, they're having a full tantrum and you're like, what just happened?

You know, nobody touched the [00:25:00] child is like, why are they so upset? Most of the time it's sensory rest. the sensory overload. So it's a sign of a sensory rest deficit. The same thing happens with adults. We just don't throw a temper tantrum. We just get irritable.

And so

Dr. Saundra: when someone becomes sensory overwhelmed, the normal psychological response to that is irritation.

agitation, rage, or anger. And so if you're a parent and you're noticing, it's like, I don't know, somewhere around two o'clock, I get kind of irritable. Well, it's the same reason we put kids to sleep for a nap around two o'clock or 11 o'clock or one o'clock, whatever time they got to go down. Because the napping actually is a moment of sensory reprieve.

Sleep is a bit of a sensory reprieve, but unfortunately, some of us need more of a sensory reprieve than just going to bed at nighttime. So one thing for parents to kind of keep in mind, think about the number of notifications on your devices, because if you're getting your phone, which a lot of people do, it's going off every [00:26:00] couple of minutes because you got a notification on Facebook and now Instagram and now whatever, everything's kind of sending you a notification.

Keep all the apps. I don't have a problem with phones and apps, but turn the notifications off. Right. You then get to choose when you engage with the app and you're not basically giving it permission to push you little stress bombs throughout the day.

Same

Dr. Saundra: with your kids. If you're noticing that you're home with your top maybe you're a parent who stays at home and you're, and you take care of your kids all day.

Kids are loud, and they don't have an issue with being loud, and it doesn't bother them. However, when you're a parent, it tends to bother us. We're not used to having noise 24 7. Still be able to see your kids, but if you're homeschooling and the kids are busy in an activity, And like they're good for like 20 minutes, but noise cancellation earphones on you're watching them.

You can see them. They're not gonna, you know, get in harm's way, but you don't have to hear that. [00:27:00] And so just having a moment of sensory reprieve is often enough to help reset. the kind of agitation that comes when our sensory overwhelm kicks in and can help to keep you a little bit more calm.

Sarah: That is such a good, that's such a good tip for parents because I think that, you know, that's what I was talking about when my kids were little is just like the constant, you know, noise and who needs me and all of that.

It does take a toll on a person. So so much. This has been really helpful for our exhausted parents and hopefully they've come away with a few tips of how to

get more rest in, in the different areas. I have a question that I ask all my podcast guests, which is if you could go back in time to your younger parent self, what advice would you give yourself?

And it can be about your area or any area.

Dr. Saundra: I would probably say that the advice I would give myself as a younger parent was simply be to just enjoy every stage of the journey.

Sarah: Yes. Yeah, it's so hard to remember when you're [00:28:00] exhausted and it's so true. I would, I often say I'd love to be able to go back and have one day with each of my children when they were little, you know, knowing what I know now it would be really nice.

Thank you so much Dr. Sandra for joining us. Where's the best place for people to go and find out more about you and what you do.

Dr. Saundra: Yeah. So as we mentioned, the free rest assessments available at [rest quiz. com](http://restquiz.com). All of this information is in the book, sacred rest, recover your life, renew your energy, restore your sanity.

And our main website is at [drdaltonsmith. com](http://drdaltonsmith.com).

Sarah: Awesome. We'll link to all of those all those in the show notes. Thanks so much for joining us.

Dr. Saundra: It's been my pleasure. Thank you.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode. I hope you found this conversation insightful and exactly what you needed in this moment. Be sure to subscribe to the show on your favorite podcast platform and leave us a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. Remember that I'm rooting for you. I see you out there showing up for your kids and doing the best you can.

Sending hugs over the airwaves today. Hang in there. You've got [00:29:00] this.