

The power of naps

..... by Melissa Scholes Young



I believe in the power of a good nap. Daily naps should be legislated. We might even consider it a patriotic duty for the betterment of all. Think about how much less violent our society would become if we all just took a little nap every afternoon. Grumpiness would wane. Stress would melt away. Health would improve. Congress could even sanction an hour of naptime every day like daylight saving time. It would be a penalty-free hour of stolen moments. We might even be more productive when we return to our hectic pace.

When I watch my toddler wake from her afternoon siesta, I see the power of the nap. I hear her tiny feet padding down the hall toward me. She overtakes my lap with a drool-stained blanket, curls up her legs, and lets out an

unadulterated yawn. Her whole body sinks into mine, and for that moment nothing else gets done. We have just this tiny moment of peace and cuddling in the final precious moments of her nap.

Since her birth three years ago, I have succumbed to the supremacy of napping, too. My husband and I discovered our newborn would fall asleep only when curled tightly against our chests. Of course we read all the parenting books that warned us about the certain demise of our sanity if we indulged the demands of a two week old. We both agreed not to let her nap on our chests. And we both did it anyway. It wasn't just that we were weak to her coos and baby smells. We both loved the delicious, quiet moments when we fell asleep, too. Our breaths

synchronized. Our hearts pounded together. We were a little napping family.

I believe there is a delightful moment of absolute clarity when waking naturally from an afternoon nap. Sunlight filters through the closed drapes, and you snuggle down into the blankets for a few more seconds of denial. Everything seems possible in that quiet moment. The world has softer edges through the haze of grogginess. Difficult things can be processed. Forgiveness can be granted. A good nap puts everything in perspective.

If I ask the high school students I teach what they most want, the answer is usually sleep. Adolescents today have schedules that would impress even the most multitasked CEO. My students elect to take college-level course offerings at 7:30 a.m. just so they can pack in an extra credit to boost their GPAs. They rush from school to sports to meetings to homework. They often burst through the classroom door as the tardy bell chimes, double latté in hand, boasting of their four hours of shuteye. Give an exam in a high school classroom and watch what the students do when they finish. They don't turn to their neighbors to chat. One by one my students put their heads down on their cold desks and doze.

I believe our overworked nation is accomplishing little of real value with such sleep deprivation. We need naps, and we need them now. It's hard to believe, but the world will keep spinning if we check out for a while. Our world may even spin a bit slower if we just give in to a good rest. I believe in the power of a nap, and I think I'll go curl up right now. ☺

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