



## The Benefits of Napping

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The Germans call it a “Nickerchen”, the Italians a “pisolino,” in Britain the slang word for it is a “kip” and my Dad refers to it as a visit to the “horizontal brain gym.” What are we talking about here? Why, a nap of course!

Far from being the lazy persons way to kill time, napping can be a helpful and powerful component to the day. In fact, the benefits of napping are both huge and surprising. Taking a nap sharpens alertness, prevents burn out, heightens sensory perception, and increases productivity. It also helps the brain retain information. Which is to say, a (good) nap is the opposite of what many people think. It is not a lazy withdrawal from daily life, but a productive pause that serves to brighten the hours that follow it. The National Sleep Foundation reports that while napping cannot make up for “inadequate or poor quality nighttime sleep, a short nap can help improve mood, concentration and performance.”

Napping is a beloved pastime in many cultures where the heat of the day precludes doing anything active for a few hours. In fact, the midday “siesta” is considered one of the most famous aspects of Spanish life and is an important and beloved aspect of many Latin cultures the world over. The ancient Romans also had regular siestas, considering them to be a physical necessity rather than a luxury. In China and Taiwan, most schools now have a half hour right after lunch where the lights are out, and it is considered a nap period. Some Japanese offices even have special napping rooms where their workers nap after lunch and during long periods of overtime work.

Powerhouse Martha Stewart avails herself of frequent naps and says, “I think while I nap, so it’s not a waste of time.” Napoleon apparently napped while sitting on his horse and Albert

Einstein would nap in his chair, holding a pencil and let himself sleep until the pencil dropped. Winston Churchill considered naps to be essential to his ability to navigate his responsibilities. According to the Churchill Museum in London, he is quoted as saying: “You must sleep some time between lunch and dinner, and no half way measures. That is what I always do. Don’t think you will be doing less work because you sleep during the day. You will be able to accomplish more. When you take a midday nap, you get two days in one.”

Napping still often gets a bad rap here in the United States where constant work is mistaken for true productivity. In fact, we are a nation of sleep deprived people. The National Commission on Sleep Disorders estimating that 60 million Americans are sleep deprived and the dangers of sleep deprivation are far greater than simple grogginess. Not getting enough sleep has been linked to many health problems including obesity, heart disease and depression. Many people are surprised to learn that it turns out sleep is as important to overall health as it diet and exercise. British researchers even discovered that knowing a nap was coming lowered a person’s blood pressure. ***The MIIA May self directed activity, Sleep Well, invites you to learn about your current sleep patterns and practice strategies for improved sleep. We hope you participate in this great program!***

We need to shift our thinking about napping and consider the many pluses of a midday break. Remember, sleep is not the opposite of productivity but a crucial component to staying productive. Super successful author Michael Hyatt, himself a dedicated napper, makes these suggestions if you are considering creating a habit of napping in your work day.

- Be consistent. Try to nap at the same time each day.
- Keep it short. No more than 20 or 30 minutes is needed to reap the benefits of a nap
- Turn off the lights. Lights act as a cue for our bodies – turning them off lets us know that is is time for rest.
- Use a blanket. Our bodies cool down while being still, so while not essential, it is helpful to have a blanket for complete comfort.
- Be discreet. Choose a private place, like your car, to take your midday pause. If you have an hour long lunch, take half of it to nap.



As Hyatt states “People who nap are not lazy. They might be the smartest, most productive people you know.” So, consider joining the ranks of these amazing folks – find a quiet spot today and have a rest!