

On the MOVE

Sleep habit tips for teens

Get into more regular hours of retiring and arising, even on weekends. Teens who sleep long stretches on weekends aren't getting enough sleep during the week.

Exercise regularly, but not right before bed. Exercise increases your capacity to fall into a deep sleep and maintain this level of sleep.

Coffee, tea, cocoa or chocolate, which contain stimulants and are common in the diet of many teens, should be eliminated if they're causing sleeping trouble.

SOURCE: *Sleep - Everything You Need to Know*, 1997, J. Paul Caldwell, M.D.

Worth losing sleep over?

Matt Massa

Getting a mid-afternoon snooze is so vital for Matt Massa that he'll go anywhere possible to rest his head. Even an empty classroom, if necessary.

"I need my nap," said Matt, 16, a parishioner at St. Leo's Church in Hilton. "I usually go to the chorus room and lie down right on the floor. For the most part, I am so tired I just collapse on the floor."

Matt said he's been discovered by his Hilton High School teachers every now and then — but after their initial surprise, their only concern is if he's missing class.

Pat Moore said that he craves his afternoon nap as well.

"It helps me think more later at night," explained Pat, 18, from St. Louis Church in Pittsford.

Matt, also, said that his nap provides a crucial boost for evening study.

Without it, he remarked, "I'm exhausted. By 8, I'm toast."

Even though Matt and Pat like their naps, one expert claims that naps can

work against good sleep patterns because they might make it harder to fall asleep at night.

J. Paul Caldwell, M.D., also said that teens' sleep habits are among the most deficient of any age group.

"With the onset of puberty, most young people go from being excellent sleepers to having a chronic sleep debt," Caldwell stated in his 1997 book, *Sleep - Everything You Need to Know*.

In the book, Caldwell said that most teens need eight to nine hours of sleep per night, but "many don't make it." Among the distractions cited were television; school events; sleep-overs and all-night parties; and the social pressures of school and friendships.

Oh, did we mention the telephone yet? On a recent school night, Angelynn Agnello said, she stayed up until 4 a.m. talking on the phone — and got right up for school two hours later.

Angelynn said she managed to feel

wide-awake throughout the ensuing day because "I'm so full of energy." But the lack of sleep did catch up with her: She said that a couple of days later, she slept for 13 hours.

Interestingly, these two extremes left Angelynn right at her normal sleeping average.

"I usually need around seven or eight hours," said Angelynn, 13, from St. James Church in Irondequoit.

Phone calls tend to cut into Pat's sleep schedule as well. He said that many weeknights, when his studying is done, he's up past midnight on the phone.

Pat said he knows of a friend who manages to be in bed — asleep — by 9 each night. However, he said, such a healthy routine is not the reality for him or most of his peers.

"Different strokes for different folks," he remarked. "I don't think I could do that. I wouldn't be able to go to sleep."

A more apt example of his sleep habits, Pat said, would be the weekend of March 19-21. He staffed a diocesan retreat, getting fewer than five hours of sleep for two straight nights. When he returned from the retreat that Sunday afternoon, though he felt like going right to bed, he instead went out for a quick cup of coffee so he could catch up on his homework that night.

Meanwhile, Matt said that he's pulled an occasional "all-nighter" to get his homework done, leaving him with a "pretty sluggish" feeling the next day. Asked how easy it was to maintain his concentration, Matt replied, "With or without caffeine, that is the question."

When regular sleep patterns get thrown off, it's not surprising that teens get tired during the day and sometimes lose their fight to stay awake. Pat, for example, once nodded off while he and his family were viewing some exhibits at a museum.

"They took pictures of it. It looked pretty funny," Pat said.

Quiet, serene atmospheres make it hard to keep one's eyes open, Pat explained. Case in point: his meditation class at McQuaid Jesuit High School.

"You get so relaxed. Almost every other day, somebody falls asleep in that class," Pat reported.

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