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# Author to QU students: Take a nap!

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It's no surprise that college students are one of the most sleep deprived groups of people. Late-night study sessions and 8 a.m. classes strain students to stay energized through a whole day.

On Friday night, the Residential Hall Committee and SPB held a special seminar with Sara Mednick, Ph. D, and author of "Take a Nap! Change Your Life."

"Why might you need a book about napping?" Mednick asked the audience. Napping seems like such a simple concept, sleep when you're tired. But as she explained, there is a way to get the most out of naps.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, 40 percent of Americans of all ages are getting less than seven hours of sleep a night.

"This occurs all throughout the life span and it turns out all the way through, we're depriving ourselves of sleep" Mednick said.

The risks of sleep deprivation are serious. Health problems include heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes, weigh gain, and depression.

"The Department of Labor found that we walk into work and are already 4 percent less efficient due to sleep deprivation... and of course, if you're sleeping through your classes than you're not learning what you need to learn" Mednick said.

While many, like doctors and soldiers, believe they can manage sleep deprivation, Mednick showed proof that sleep is more important to the working week than previously thought.

Mednick not only studied sleep deprivation, but she first-hand experienced it as a graduate student at Harvard. Never one to nap, Mednick attended a lecture about sleep studies. This sparked her interest in finding out why short daytime naps refresh people.

"While working in the office," Mednick said "I snuck into my friend's office, with a couch, and I locked the door, completely exhausted I took a nap and woke up and felt awesome, totally renewed. And I thought wow, this research I've been doing was right!"

Her research included extensive sleep studies involving memory and performance on tests. Some subjects took naps early in the day; some took naps in the late afternoon. Others were sleeping their normal hours, and some were completely sleep deprived.

According to her research, those who slept for long amounts of time, either six to seven hours a night plus a long nap, or eight hours and night plus a short nap, score highest on tests, had the best memory retention and continued to succeed.

The most important things to know about how we sleep are sleep patterns. There are 5 different stages to sleep: awake (asleep with high brain function), stage1 stage2, slow wave sleep, and REM (rapid eye movement). To feel the most refreshed, you should wake up in the SWS (slow wave sleep) cycle or REM cycle.

"As the night goes on, you move to the slow wave sleep & REM stages quicker. These sleep cycles continue throughout the day, so when you nap in the morning, your naps have more REM sleep" Mednick said.

According to her book, the best time to nap is based off of when wake up. Included with the book is a helpful "Nap Wheel" which can tell you exactly how to plan your naps. If you are looking to improve your alertness and motor skills, try taking a quick "power nap" during stage 2, no longer than 30 minutes. If you're looking for a refreshing and restorative nap, 7 p.m. is the highest point for SWS sleep. A nap can help with memory and problem solving.

Finally, if you're in a creative slump, try napping during the REM cycle. This is based on how late you stay up, because the best time for REM sleep is early in the morning. Dreaming occurs in this stage, which can often bring inspiration.

If napping had such good benefits, then why don't more people nap? Mednick explains that most of Americans are reliant on "coping mechanisms" like caffeine, stimulants and high fat and sugar food for quick energy.

"Caffeine is used by nearly 90 percent of Americans daily" Mednick said. Tests show that people using caffeine instead of naps severely impact the verbal and retentive memory. In the end, that Starbucks latte will not give you the same pick-me-up as a good nap.

After all the sleep studies and writing her book, Mednick is now implementing naps in the workplace, as part of the "Corporate Nap Initiative".

Mednick, who is still an avid napper gives these tips about napping:

"Know your napping schedule, find a quiet place, turn all the lights off, and make sure to have an alarm, so you don't sleep through anything important," she said.

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