

Employers wake up to the power of a staff nap

1 Warmer

a. Give and compare your opinions about the statements below.

	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
I like to take naps.			
Taking naps is good for your health.			
Companies should let employees nap at work.			
Employees who nap more are more productive.			

2 Key words

a. Read the definitions and find key words in the article that match them. The paragraph numbers are given in brackets to help you. Check your answers and your understanding of the words by using them to complete the example sentences.

1. when two or more numbers relate to each other _____ (paragraph 1)

Science shows that university test results _____ with sleep quality.

2. the fact of something or someone not succeeding _____ (paragraph 2)

The latest ad campaign was a _____; only 2% of viewers clicked on the link.

3. a short sleep (usually not in your bed) _____ (paragraph 3)

Sometimes I try to read on the train, but most days I have a _____.

4. not wanting to accept changes or new ideas _____ (paragraph 3)

Her manager suggested that she apply for the customer service position, but she was _____ at first. She wasn't used to working with people.

5. the rate at which a person gets valuable work done _____ (paragraph 5)

Being at the office for longer hours does not necessarily mean more _____.

6. provide more proof or support for an idea or opinion _____ (paragraph 6)

In the meeting, the consultant _____ the same points that employees have raised for ages.

7. reduce or be reduced in importance or size _____ (paragraph 8)
*Studies show that having less control over their work _____
employee satisfaction.*
8. take something necessary or pleasant away from someone _____
(paragraph 9)
*It is illegal to _____ someone of a job opportunity because they are pregnant
or plan to become pregnant.*
9. the state of feeling healthy and happy _____ (paragraph 9)
*Some companies offer game rooms, meditation or yoga sessions, and free massages to
support employee _____.*
10. produce or achieve something that you promised to do _____ (paragraph 12)
We need to _____ the new contract tomorrow.
11. someone who frequently has trouble sleeping _____ (paragraph 17)
I often receive emails from my boss at 3 a.m. He must be an _____
12. a strong desire to achieve something, usually success, power, or wealth

(paragraph 18)
His main _____ is to complete an MBA programme.

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GROUPS FROM LAW FIRMS TO THE NHS ARE SEEKING HELP FOR THE OVERWORKED

EMMA JACOBS

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- 1 A friend once mused that the number of babies you have directly correlates with your ability to nap. I had one.
- 2 During maternity leave more than a decade ago, I became demented by my failure to sleep when the baby slept. I tried everything. I changed into my pyjamas mid-morning, Winston Churchill style. I put on eye masks, made the room pitch black, walked in the fresh air, sprayed lavender cologne on my pillow and ate turkey slices. Nothing worked.
- 3 I am not anti-nap. I don't see a short snooze as a sign of idleness or moral decay – if anything, framing it as fecklessness makes it more appealing. I am just nap resistant; it's part of my make-up. Or so I believed.
- 4 Cara Moore, an executive coach and founder of ProNappers, a business consultancy, thought differently. An evangelist for the power of the nap, she has become so good at it she can fall asleep sitting in a co-working space with earbuds and an eye mask.
- 5 It increases productivity, she says. "If you go for a nap with an unsolved problem – an email you haven't been able to phrase quite right or a conversation that's weighing on your mind, you often wake up [and] know what to do or say."
- 6 The benefits were reinforced by research in the journal *Sleep Health* last month. It found regular napping slowed the pace the brain shrinks as we age, lowering the risk of dementia and other diseases.
- 7 Naps fall into three categories. The refresher: a post-lunch rest to revive energy; a recovery nap to remedy broken sleep, perhaps mid-morning; and the preparatory nap to ready for a night shift or evening of socialising.
- 8 Employers are waking up to the advantages. Dr Guy Meadows, clinical director at The Sleep School, which runs programmes for businesses and individuals, detects a shift in attitudes. He says some employers in law, consulting, banking and the NHS are asking for help for staff working long or antisocial hours, as they are worried about diminished concentration and increased risk-taking.
- 9 With organisations that require employees to work late on a deal, for example, Meadows might suggest "a strategic nap". "In the past [employers] were coy, they didn't want to be talking about sleep-depriving their employees. [Today] they're more open about wellbeing."
- 10 How to nap is one of the most common questions in his sleep sessions for companies. Employees typically don't nap, he says, because they don't know what to do and they can't fall asleep.
- 11 Of course, scornful managers or a lack of facilities (nap pods or quiet rooms) at the office are also big obstacles.
- 12 How many organisations have a napping culture, with managers truly enlightened about snoozing on the job? My editor is flexible but I can't imagine promising to deliver an article just as soon as my nap is over.
- 13 Working from home may have eased the way for some white-collar professionals. Research by LifeSearch, the life insurance provider, found one in six admitted to a nap during work time.
- 14 In overcoming nap resistance, Moore asks me to examine thoughts holding me back. A common one, she says, is pride in being busy. I'm past the stage of hustle-humblebragging — but am guilty of believing that if I press on, I'll grind through the work quicker. This desire to crack on, says Moore, and "tick a few more things off their list" is fool's logic.

Continued on next page

15 As with a good exercise regime, Meadows encourages scheduling naps in a diary, setting an alarm or asking someone else to hold you to account. Meadows suggests experimenting with the napping time, usually between 10 and 20 minutes.

16 The first day at home after lunch, I start with 10 minutes, setting the alarm in case I enter deep sleep. I lie in a hammock with a cushion over my eyes to reduce the light. Worrying that my neighbours will wonder why I've got a cushion on my eyes prevents me from sleeping. Moore suggests listening to something to slow my whirring internal thoughts. I try a guided meditation, interrupted by a request to fund their podcast. The next day, I listen to a boring book. It works for a bit and then my mind wanders: how did the narrator discover his knack for sending people to sleep? Does it interfere with his dating life? Better was Moore's ProNappers' meditation, which declares "napping is a great use of your time", accompanied by the sound of waves.

17 On the fourth day, I enter a kind of twilight consciousness. Success, according to Meadows, whose most important advice is, don't fixate on sleep. The ambition, he says, creates its own stress – evident among insomniacs.

18 Two weeks later, on a sporadic nap schedule, I find that rest has become its own reward. I'm going to persevere. A nap habit takes practice, after all – Moore suggests at least a month, and Meadows, three. No one can accuse me of lacking ambition.

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Emma Jacobs, 9 July, 2023

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3 Understanding the article

a. Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Fix any that are false.

1. The author has never been able to nap easily.
2. Cara Moore can easily fall asleep in the office.
3. Moore says that napping is great for problem-solving.
4. Sleeping too much can increase the risk of some diseases.
5. More employers are telling workers who have active social lives to take naps.
6. Dr Meadows recommends taking a preparatory nap if you finish work early.
7. Some people don't like the idea of napping because they want to keep busy.
8. Your naps should always be the same length.
9. The writer tried meditating and listening to audiobooks to fall asleep.
10. You shouldn't worry about sleeping; just try to relax.

4 Business language – collocations

a. Complete each sentence with the correct preposition(s).

1. When will companies wake _____ the benefits of office naps?
2. There was a shift _____ the team after the conference.
3. Do not let fear hold you _____ from new experiences.
4. Let's press _____ and get the job done.
5. If we each take a few pages, we can grind _____ them more quickly.
6. I love the feeling I get when I tick things _____ my list.
7. Telling others about your goals is a great way to hold yourself _____ account.
8. Let's not fixate _____ whose fault it is. Let's ask, how can we fix it?
9. Every winter, we are _____ a tight schedule to meet customer demand.

b. Now, write phrases from the previous activity to match each set of synonyms.

1. continue working _____
2. focus on, obsess over _____
3. discover, realise _____
4. finish, complete, achieve _____
5. a change in, a transformation in _____
6. be in a hurry, work against the clock, have a tight deadline _____
7. prevent from, hinder _____
8. be accountable, be answerable _____
9. work towards a goal despite difficulties or obstacles _____

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. Did anything in the article surprise you? What is it?
2. Have your ideas about napping changed? How?
3. Should all companies allow employees to nap?
4. What should a napping area look like?

6 Wider business theme – employee wellbeing

a. Read the employee complaints below. Which two issues are the most common in your work culture?

- Lack of recognition for employees
- Lack of emotional safety
- Always being overworked and tired
- Lack of career growth
- Boring or meaningless work
- Changing tasks constantly
- Not being able to make their own decisions about how they work
- Always being available and 'on'

- b. How can these two complaints be addressed? Work in pairs or small groups. Have a meeting to discuss and agree on the two complaints that should be addressed first. Brainstorm how to address them and share your ideas with the whole class.

Useful language

I think that we should prioritise ... because ...

While ... is important, ... is crucial.

Since employees must / need ..., ... should be our priority.

The impact of ... on employee wellbeing is undeniable.

Absolutely! / I can't agree more.

This may be true, but ... / That's a good point. However, ...