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TORONTO SUN

Mon, July 28/08

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Sleeping on the job

Taking a siesta can help boost stamina, energy and alertness

By **JOANNE RICHARD**

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Getting employees to sleep together is good for company profits.

Dr. Sara Mednick highly recommends corporations create relaxation rooms for workers to catch some shuteye because napping on the job makes workers smarter, healthier and more productive.



Just 20 minutes will boost creative problem solving, reveals Mednick's latest research. If boardroom meetings are bogged down by the same old problem, then sleep on it for a new solution and fresh ideas -- plus added energy, alertness and stamina, says Mednick, a Harvard-trained research scientist at Salk Institute in California, who has been leading napping research for the past 10 years.

A midday snooze is a quick fix that offers long-term benefits: "Napping can be lifesaving," says Mednick, adding that napping three times a week or more can reduce coronary heart disease by 37%. Add exercise to the equation and "it's a super perfect combination; you'll live forever."

She also recently released scientific data comparing napping to caffeine in terms of improving performance.

Sadly, few heed the wakeup call. Napping is generally viewed as a sign of laziness in our society, says Mednick, author of *Take a Nap! Change Your Life* (Workman Publishing). It leads to a healthy, productive waking life, especially in the face of an epidemic of sleep deprivation.

"We're generally sleep-deprived, getting only 6 1/2 hours of sleep when we should be getting eight," so by making up for it with a nap -- ideally, 20 to 90 minutes before 4 p.m. -- protects against fatigue, says Mednick, who naps between 10 to 45 minutes daily.

Mednick recommends companies being open to shut-eye as an employee perk. She suggests using a lunch break, since you're likely to eat less in order to fit in the nap. So snooze

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