

The Nap Conspiracy

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Across the country, there is a secret group of conspirators, a group that bands together to brainwash small children and bribe parenting experts. We teach our children that they truly need naps and we beg parenting experts to recommend naps. I am part of the conspiracy. I am the work-at-home mum of a Year Two girl and a 20-month-old boy and I have pledged myself to The Nap.

My daughter never slept well. She had trouble going to sleep at night as a baby and toddler. By the time she was one, there were no naps, except in the car. To this day she will not nap, even if she is ill. At night, she reads for an hour before sleeping.

When our son was born we swore that we would teach him to sleep. He still takes an hour-and-a-half to two-hour nap every afternoon. This is only because I am a nap

conspirator. Having raised one child who was awake all day from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., I will do anything to get my son to nap - and let me be clear that I do mean anything.

We do not sleep in at our house, for extra sleeping in the morning takes away from nap time. We do not leave the house between the hours of twelve and three and loud noises are prohibited then, including the lawnmower, blender, dishwasher and vacuum. We go into total lockdown status. The ringer is turned off on the phone and the answering machine turned down. If a television is on, it must be barely audible. No-one can walk past my son's door. The dogs are not allowed to bark during this time. I have been known to throw myself on top of a dog which is about to bark during nap time. I creep about and glare at any family members who are at home and

making any sound whatsoever during nap time. They simply don't understand how crucial The Nap is.

I am part of the ranks of nap conspirators because I believe in naps, not because they are good for my child (although they probably are), but because I need them. During nap time I type furiously on the computer, writing books, articles, stories and other fun and financially-rewarding projects. Nap time is the only time in the day when I have a chance to hear only my own thoughts in complete, sequential order. Nap time is also when I relax a little - it is my secret golden hour. I don't have to worry whether my son is plugging the dog's tail into the power point in the other room or flushing his training cup down the toilet. I get to drink or eat whatever I want without sharing. This brief hour or two is when I remember what it is like to be an adult and be sane simultaneously. Unfortunately, I'm often too tired to truly enjoy it. During The Nap, I pray frequently to the Nap god, "Please, please let him sleep" or "Please don't let him wake up yet".

The Nap is not just one event in a busy day, it is a way of life. My day is created around The Nap. I only go out on errands in the morning. On the way home from them, I often have to joust with evil incarnate - The Car Nap. The Car Nap is a villain which sucks precious moments away from The Nap, and can even eliminate it entirely. All the way home from wherever we have been, I must work, work, work to hold The Car Nap at bay. I point to every large truck, animal, bird, child, aeroplane and bus we pass with unheard-of excitement. I even,

and I admit this reluctantly, point to things that aren't there, just to get my son to turn his head and stay awake a little longer. I have a pad of paper on the seat next to me that I use when all else fails. I reach behind me and tap his legs and feet with it when his head starts to sag. I whistle, I sing, I make loud noises and generally behave like a lunatic. By the time I get home from errands, my voice is hoarse and my neck is stiff from looking back to see if my son is still awake. But it is worth it.

The nap conspiracy is continued by parents such as myself who make their children believe that they cannot function without a nap. In fact, it is the parents who can't function without a nap. If my son misses his nap, he is crankier than usual, but well able to complete all his necessary tasks for the day - throwing his dinner, rolling on top of the dog, pulling his sister's hair, emptying out my desk drawers, pounding on the windows and spreading his toys all over the house, particularly in the most trafficked areas. Without The Nap though, I lose my golden hour, forget how to think complete thoughts, fail to complete my work and feel my sanity slipping away. I go into withdrawal and fully expect to develop tremors and sweat profusely.

And so the nap conspiracy goes on and where it ends I know not. Since recent research has shown employees are more productive if they take naps, perhaps my son's employer will thank me when he naps at work; or perhaps he'll be tiptoeing through the corridors, unplugging telephones, and catapulting himself on top of loud employees so my baby can sleep on and on. 