

Helping a Sleepy Child Learn

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Do you get calls from the teacher that “Billy fell asleep in class again” or a sleepy child at your clinic door with a clinic pass saying “SLEEPING IN CLASS”? I get these calls and see these children in my clinic. So when I saw the subject “Helping the Sleepy Child Learn”, I thought “there is some information I need”.

The seminar presented information on Narcolepsy and other sleep disorders. The presenters were passionate about educating school nurses about narcolepsy. One of the presenters had narcolepsy but it was not diagnosed until she was 27 years old. She spoke about her struggles to stay awake in school. She shared the embarrassment she felt when she fell asleep and was caught by the teacher or when a cataleptic attack would occur as she was walking down the school hallways. She also spoke about a helpful high school teacher who taught the class a breathing technique to help all of them stay awake. She had us try the technique. It was as follows: Rub your hands together until they get warm. Place one hand lightly over each eye then use your fingers and thumbs to lightly massage down your face. Do slow deep breathing as you do this exercise. It is refreshing.

We also had the opportunity to answer a questionnaire to measure our general level of sleepiness in certain situations (Epworth Sleepiness Scale). There were 8 situations presented and you would circle your chance of dozing, 0 – would never doze to 3 – high chance of dozing. Some of the situations included while sitting and reading, while watching TV, in a car, while stopped for a few minutes in traffic and while sitting or talking to someone. If you scored a 10 or higher it was recommended that you discuss this with your doctor.

If you have chronically sleepy children in your school and what time they go to bed at night does not answer the question, contact the Narcolepsy Network at www.narcolepsynetwork.org or the National Sleep Foundation at www.sleepfoundation.org for information on Narcolepsy and other sleep disorders.