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Of Inemuri, Siestas and 40 Winks

Lijee Philip

Inemuri is a word not often referred to in corporate parlance. The Japanese term refers to taking power naps at work, or “sleep while being present”.

Prathap Reddy, the 88-year-old founder of Apollo Hospitals, has however followed the Inemuri system by taking a power nap for the last 30 years. “It helps him work 16 hours a day, staying alert and fresh all the time,” says daughter Sangita Reddy.

Sangita, joint managing director of Apollo Hospitals, feels it is a good practice, but she personally has not just got into it.

Dozing off at work may still attract attention, often unwanted if you are not the top boss. But a short sleep does refresh the mind, and companies are increasingly realising the benefit and are allowing, some even encouraging, employees to take that nap break. Some like Google and AirBnB have sleeping pods at offices for employees to take rest, while smartphone company Oppo offers nap time at its Gurgaon office. Now, in the new normal of work from home, several companies ET spoke to said they were encouraging executives to take short breaks during the day to stretch, breathe and even take a nap if they are too tired.

The culture of an afternoon nap is not uncommon in other parts of the globe. It’s siesta in Spain and riposo in Italy, and in the US, where

the practice is more common among technology and software companies, it’s called Silicon Valley sleepers.

In India, it is not widely accepted yet, but many are moving in that direction.

Mahindra Finance managing director Ramesh Iyer takes a short break at least thrice a week post lunch, which he says reinvigorates him for the rest of the day.

“When one used to be physically present at our workplaces, one could take short coffee breaks. In back-to-back screen meetings from home, that’s not the case,” says Iyer. “Eyes tend to get very tired of overly concentrating. This little break, like of a power nap, restores energy levels.”

Maruti Suzuki chairman RC Bhargava takes an afternoon siesta unless there are meetings at that time.

Bhargava’s colleague, executive director Shashank Srivastava, believes in power naps. “Short naps are great

for reinvigoration, helping in regaining alertness that is so crucial in important office interactions,” he says.

For Raj Nayak, entertainment industry veteran and founder of Happyness.me, “there is nothing better than sleep”, but he says executives need to be disciplined about the nap time.

Lemon Tree Hotels chairman Patu Keswani has the habit of taking short naps of 3-5 minutes. “This system works for people who have lots on their mind,” he says. “This is nature’s way to shut off.”

