

I Really Should Get Some Sleep

by Liberty Bartlett

YB Feature

You look at the time. You should probably go to bed. As you lay down and close your eyes you feel a sudden urge to get up; maybe you could watch some TV or scroll on your phone. Maybe that will help. You try to fight that urge but the next thing you know, you're sitting up staring at your phone for another hour. When you finally put your head on the pillow, you try all over again in the hopes of getting rest, but it feels like an endless chore that will never end.

For many students, the loudest part of their day isn't the crowded hallways or the chatter of the lunch room, it's the silence of their own bedroom before they go to sleep.

The Sleep Foundation says that during puberty, teenagers' biological sleep clocks shift later, even though school still starts earlier.

Falling asleep wasn't as simple as just closing your eyes. For a lot of students, bedtime was when the stress from the day or random thoughts finally hit.

"I usually think about my day or what I'm going to do the next day," eighth grader Juliann Roan Eagle said. "I like to think about my plans for the next day so I'm prepared for whatever comes next."

The next day can creep into the night's ruminations.

"The last thing on my mind before I go to sleep is typically what I'm going to wear the next day," junior Mackenzie Yager said. "Then I just keep thinking about the next day of school and what I have to do."

Nighttime was when the brain would just not be quiet. Students would be lying there and suddenly think about stuff they forgot to do or about something awkward that happened earlier.

"I am usually thinking about embarrassing things I've done before," freshman Troy Dawes said. "I think through what I wished I had or hadn't said."

Not everyone knocked out right away so students looked for ways to bring on the zzzz's.

"When I can't fall asleep I usually play on my phone until I fall asleep," sophomore Ella Vyhnalek said. "It usually takes me about 5-10 minutes to doze off."

For others, it may have taken a little longer.

"I usually watch TV if I can't sleep," freshman Landon Shaw said. "It takes me about 15-30 minutes to fall asleep on a normal night."

For some, their phones were part of the problem. Even if students tried to put their phone down, they usually ended up picking it back up.

“For me to be able to fall asleep, I have to be on my phone so my eyes get tired,” freshman Erik Piaz Bautista said. “Otherwise, it just takes even longer to fall asleep.”

Weekends hit differently. A lot of students went to bed one or two hours later on Fridays and Saturdays which made Mondays feel worse.

“I usually go to bed at 11:30 on Sunday through Thursday and 12–1 a.m. on Friday and Saturday,” eighth grader Ingrid Gonzales said. “That change in schedule can make Mondays feel even more exhausting, and I struggle to get up when the alarm goes off.”

So were students actually well-rested? Students weren’t super tired, but they were not full of energy either.

“I don’t feel super exhausted when I wake up; I’m just a little drowsy,” seventh grader David Loarca said. “However, I know I could do a better job of getting more sleep.”

Between phones and school stress, it was sometimes hard to actually relax at night.

“The hardest part is when I’m too stressed about school to sleep; I turn on a video to forget about it, but then I stay up later and I’m tired the next day, which makes me stressed again,” seventh grader Dacoda Bartlett said.

Whether it was late night scrolling or a mental replay of the day’s most awkward moments, the struggle for students to fall asleep was a shared experience for many. From the blue light of phone screens to the weight of upcoming assignments, sleep remained a problem for students who were just trying to make it through the demands of the week.

“I just keep repeatedly opening and closing my eyes,” junior Benji Beckley said. “I really struggle to fall asleep because I have a million thoughts going continuously through my mind.”