Night Birds, Watch Out!

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When was the last time you looked for monsters under the bed of your scared child while wishing them goodnight? Perhaps for those, whose children have grown up now to be teens, checking for monsters under the bed has become a redundant ritual. Nowadays, many children have largely become fond of staying up late at nights and turning into night birds. They spend time doing things, which, according to them can't be held to be done the next day. Late nights and extended bedtimes, however, can blunt young children's minds, stunting their ability to learn according to research.

A UK study shows that lack of sleep may disrupt natural body rhythms and impairs how well the brain learns new information (BBC online). Cognitive performances of children are largely affected by their sleeping habits and in the study, children who never had regular bedtimes tended to fare worse than their peers in terms of test scores for math, reading and spatial awareness. Family backgrounds and chaotic family settings also bring about disruption in the sleeping pattern of the children, which gradually becomes erratic and turns into a bad habit. (Journal of Epidemiological and Community Health).

Fatema Akhter teaches O and A level Biology, and is a mother of three children. She says, "It is a normal scene to see sleepy pupils in a class. When a young, exhausted and sleepy mind, leaves home to come to school in the morning, the brain refuses to receive any information. Many children are misjudged by teachers in the classroom because when drowsy, the child tends to get bitter and fails to bring about proper interaction. The body has a biological clock, and it is necessary for a child to maintain bedtime between 9 o'clock to 12'o clock. If the body is forcefully kept awake after these hours, extra adrenaline is secreted. On the other hand during the day, when the body is deprived of enough sleep for school hours, more adrenaline is secreted. This is a cause of blood pressure rising and increased cholesterol level." She also says that some kids can just sleep with their eyes wide open because their mind is shut, learning abilities therefore are hampered. Visual memory also tends to degrade as the brain becomes slow in learning.

Children who sleep late don't get proper sleep when they have to be awakened for school early in the morning. When they experience sudden jerks, like being pulled off the bed, or suddenly being put under the shower needing to get up abruptly, the body tends to be in shock. Therefore, tending to wake up on your own, giving your body some time to wake up fully is a healthy habit, which requires an early bedtime routine. In urban areas, the busy lifestyle creates a habit of staying up late, because many teenagers claim that the only time they can find some peace and silence is at night. On the other hand, school hours at 6am in the morning for young learners, for instance children aged three to five, highly disrupts their sleeping cycles. Since these children need at least ten to twelve hours of sleep, going to bed at 6pm does not look like a feasible option. Many teens suffer from treatable sleep disorders, such as narcolepsy, insomnia, restless legs syndrome or sleep apnea. Their quality of sleep worsens as some teens typically stay up late during workdays and sleep late on weekends.

Parveen Huque, Associate Professor in the Psychology Department of Dhaka University, says that waking up late in the morning can never compensate for the sleep that is lost when someone stays up late. She also says a mind, devoid of enough sleep is unable to focus and analyse complex situations. Staying up late also causes acidity in the stomach, and hunger pangs at night leading to unhealthy eating, which will contribute to weight gain.

Rafid Ahmed has recently sat for his A level exams and according to his doctor, he is an insom-