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## Power-Napping at the Gym?

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Our blogger tries out a sleeper of an exercise class

Perusing Equinox Fitness's Manhattan schedule ([www.equinoxfitness.com](http://www.equinoxfitness.com)) I notice a class at the branch at West 76<sup>th</sup> and Amsterdam called PowerNap. It's described as a "midday movement-enhanced snooze" with stretching. Since it offers two things a 40-year-old working mother needs- flexibility and sleep, I give it a try.

I walk into the dimly lit room with meditative music playing in the background and am amazed at all the stuff – blankets, mats, bands and yoga blocks- that the other students have around them. (Actually, I'm amazed that there *are* other students in such an odd class.) With the instructor's soothing voice guiding us, we begin doing gentle stretches either seated or lying down. Unlike in traditional yoga classes, we get into a pose and hold it for several minutes while we "rest." For some moves, we're instructed to make pillows out of our arms; for others, we're told to rest our heads on our blocks or blankets.

Though our eyes are supposed to be closed, I peek around and can't believe how relaxed some people seem resting their heads on the hard yoga blocks. Their faces are so content you'd think they were snuggled up to the softest, down pillows. At first all this "rest" seems strange, but each stretch feels

great and each “rest” feels even better. Still, the instructor’s regular use of sleep-related phrases like “nuzzle” and “cuddle” make me wonder if this “nap” aspect of the class is just a gimmick and this is really a regular stretch class with a little more resting.

I realize I’m wrong minutes later when we get into savasana (or corpse pose) where you lie on your back with your palms facing the ceiling, legs extended and eyes closed. Traditional yoga classes often end with this pose so I figure this is the “nap” part. That is until I feel someone putting a soft blanket over me. It’s the instructor and she doesn’t simply cover my body, but thoughtfully tucks me in, covering one hand with the blanket, and then walking *all* the way around my outstretched body to cover the other. She even pulls the blanket up over my chest! I peek to my left and see one woman, with a blanket wrapped snugly around her, get into a fetal position resting as if she were on her couch on a Sunday afternoon. Though I feel nice and cozy, I start to worry: How long will I have to lie here? Maybe my classmates are going to doze off, but I certainly can’t fall asleep at the gym! I’m too high-strung and have a mind that’s always racing.

Cut to twenty minutes later when I’m awoken by the soft sound of a gong. Drool trickles down one side of my mouth and I have that “where am I?” feeling you get when you fall asleep somewhere strange. I’m stunned that I drifted off to dreamland in the middle of the day on the gym floor! But I’m not the only one. Loud snoring comes from various parts of the room. The teacher hits the gong until people start moving beneath their blankets. We sit up for a few gentle stretches to transition from midday snooze to our regular lives.

When class is over, I can’t believe how good I feel. In fact, I feel terrific! I’m so calm that I forget to check my Blackberry for 20 minutes after leaving the gym (usually I check it the second I’m done.) I’m energized as if I’d just had a cup of coffee and refreshed as if I’d just woken from a good night’s sleep. I don’t hit the usual 4 PM energy slump that afternoon and – best of all- didn’t need my usual sugary afternoon pick me up! Though an hour of stretching and snoozing in the middle of the day seems indulgent, the benefits were worth it. I will go back. But next time I’ll bring a real pillow.

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