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TOM TOM ENGLISH



Tired, depressed and working too hard

VOCABULARY

Feeling Beat up =

to feel tired, exhausted, battered. (literally to feel that you have been punched or kicked many times)

Sought =

Past tense of "seek"

Doze, dozing =

To have a light sleep - similar to "nap"

Unwind =

To relax and to lose tension

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think people in the 20-39 year old age group are more and more unhappy?
2. Are you in this age group? If so, do you think this survey is correct? Do your friends feel the same?
3. If you are not in this age group, how did you feel when you were 20-39?
4. Thinking back in your (adult) life, what age was the happiest for you? Why?
5. The survey said that the happiest group is the over-65s. Do you agree with this? Think about your own experience or people you know.
6. What do you do at the weekend? Does it help you to relax and recover?
7. Do you agree that the government/companies should try to fix this problem? What should they do?

VOCABULARY

Sleep-in=

To sleep later than usual

Restorative =

Having the ability to recover health, energy or strength

Isolation =

A state of being separate from other people, being alone

Progressive =

Forward thinking, modern, willing to change other people, being alone

Feeling beat-up before it's time

A new survey by Japan's health ministry has found that Japanese young people in the 20-to-39 age group are more overworked and unhappy than ever. Unsurprisingly, the main reason for unhappiness was work stress. The only good news in the survey was that happiness levels rose through life, becoming highest for those aged over 65.

The survey also sought to find what young people do after their stressed-out workweek. Apparently most young people spend their weekends doing nothing much at all. More than 30% said they spent days off "doing nothing or dozing." Older age groups were more active, with only 25 percent reporting doing nothing.

If younger workers feel they can only unwind through inactivity, they are wrong. A good sleep-in or afternoon nap on the tatami can be very restorative, but the human mind and body needs soothing, engaging activity to fully recover from stress.

Unfortunately the most common weekend activity was surfing the Internet. More than 40% of all age groups do this. The Internet is very diverse and the survey did not ask what sites people went to, so it is difficult to make a judgment about this activity. However, surfing the net is a solitary activity with little face-to-face interaction and even less physical movement.

Only 10 percent of those aged between 20 and 39 reported doing any exercise, sports or even walking. This compared to over 30 percent of those over 65.

The picture of the typical Japanese weekend that emerges from this survey is one of isolation and inactivity. The most common thing people did when they were anxious or worried was to relax and sleep. For young people, even eating came in ahead of hobbies or sports.

Companies can help reverse this trend for staff, who are their most important asset. Recently some progressive companies buy membership in health clubs, and gyms for their staff. The ministry of health also needs to make sure that companies continue to reduce overtime work. When working hours continue until late at night, most employees will not do exercise or other activities. The current vicious cycle of overwork followed by inactivity needs to be changed.

Companies and the government should understand that a humane and efficient workplace is one where employees are not stressed out. They should maintain high energy. What employees do in their off time is their choice. But they need to understand that their free time activities greatly affect their working ability and their general level of mental and physical health.