

An All-Nighter

There is no logical explanation for this, but about once or twice a month, along comes a night when no one in our house gets any sleep.

That is: zero sleep takes place.

In other words, we are *all* awake *all* night long.

No ZZZZZs.

Take this night, for instance.

8:30 *p.m.*: I stood up and declared, loud enough for everyone to hear: “Tonight I am going to get tons of sleep. I am so tired that I could fall asleep right this minute and not wake up until next week.

“Yes, sirree,” I went on. “*Sleep* is what is needed here. Good, healing, nourishing sleep.”

And off I went with 4-year-old Stephanie to give her a bath, brush her teeth, read her the required two stories, sing the required three songs, and then sit in the dark until a suitable interval passed and she agreed that I could leave the room.

And I actually did make it through the bath, the teeth-brushing, and the stories.

But once we turned out the light, I was a goner. No songs.

9:47 *p.m.*: I uncrooked my neck, straggled out of her room, took a bath myself, and went downstairs to tell the rest of the family again how wonderful sleep was.

The two older children, both of whom had a day off from school the next day, looked unimpressed. They are teen-agers, which is a time of life when you feel you’ve already wasted enough time on sleep—unless it’s morning.

Allie, who is 13, had a friend sleeping over, and they were still in the stages of mapping out the evening’s agenda.

“Go upstairs and go to bed,” I said.

11:05 *p.m.*: I crawled into bed and set the alarm for 7:00.

“A full eight hours,” I said to my husband. “Like normal people.”

11:25 *p.m.*: I went to find out why Allie and her friend were having drill team practice in the guest room upstairs. They insisted they had not been marching and didn’t have a drum.

“We were piling blankets on the bed so we could be warm up here,” Allie said.

“Why don’t you sleep in your own room, where it’s already warm?”

“It’s more fun up here.”

“Then use quieter blankets,” I said.

12:13 a.m.: My husband got up to investigate the beeping noise coming from 16-year-old Ben’s room. Naturally it was the computer modem.

Ben explained that the middle of the night is a great time to talk to people around the country via computer.

His operation was shut down.

1:30 a.m.: Stephanie (Native American name: Elbows So Sharp They Could Kill You) came thundering into our room and climbed into our bed. I grouchily made room for her and her equipment, which included a pumpkin, a teddy bear, and all the books from the Sesame Street Alphabet series.

1:38 a.m.: I suddenly realized that the whispered “I’m thirsty” every three seconds meant that I would have to go downstairs and get a drink of water for Stephanie.

1:45 a.m.: Stephanie remembered she was owed three songs. We argued about whether we could sing six the next night.

2:20 a.m.: The next door neighbor, whose wife had let that afternoon to have a baby, arrived home from the hospital. The children, none of whom had slept even one wink, all yelled from their beds that they wanted to go outside and ask him whether it was a boy or girl. I shouted, “No!”

3:40 a.m.: Stephanie whispered that she needed to go to the bathroom. I suggested that after that, she might find a suitable place to sleep in her own room. She cried. I said, “Never mind.”

4:15 a.m.: My brain finally processed the fact that I was sleeping cheek to cheek with a live, 2-pound pumpkin. I put it on the floor.

5:05 a.m.: Stephanie informed me that the bed was too hot. We rearranged all the covers. I said her room was very cool. She cried. I said, “Never mind.”

7:15 a.m.: Stephanie rolled over in her sleep and knocked me with her head, giving me a fat lip.

8:30 a.m.: Leaving all the children sleeping, I went outside and talked to the neighbor who was walking his dogs. He said his wife had had a baby boy.

“Guess we’ll be having some sleepless nights for a while,” he said.

I didn’t have the heart to tell him that long past the colic and the teething and the 2 a.m. feedings, he’ll still have random No Sleep Nights.

He wouldn’t believe it anyway.