

SLEEP SMARTER



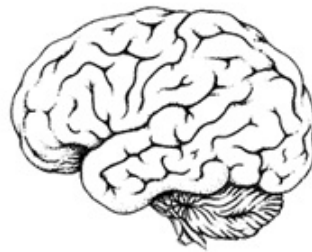
21 Proven Tips
To Sleep Your Way

— To —

- ✓ A Better Body
- ✓ Better Health
- ✓ Bigger Success

SHAWN STEVENSON

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I still remember the feeling when my grandmother put me to sleep at night. I felt happy, I felt loved, and I felt excited about what the next day would bring. This book is dedicated to her. I will never stop representing her and sharing all of the incredible gifts that she saw in me.

It's my sincerest wish that you not only get the best sleep possible, but that your life is happier, healthier, and full of success because of it.

S.S.

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— Introduction —

Sleep is the secret sauce.

There isn't one facet of your mental, emotional, or physical performance that's not affected by the quality of your sleep.

The big challenge is that in our fast-paced world today, millions of people are chronically sleep deprived and suffering the deleterious effects of getting low quality sleep.

The consequences of sleep deprivation aren't pretty either. Try immune system failure, diabetes, cancer, obesity, depression, and memory loss just to name a few.

Most people don't realize that their continuous sleep problems are also a catalyst for the diseases and appearance issues they're struggling with.

Studies have shown that just one night of sleep deprivation can make you as insulin resistant as a type-2 diabetic. This translates directly to aging faster, decreased libido, and storing more body fat than you want to (say it ain't so!).

Now stretch that out over weeks, months, even years, and you can start to see why lack of sleep can be such a huge problem.

A study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal showed that sleep deprivation is directly related to an inability to lose weight. Test subjects were put on the same exercise and diet program, but those who were in the sleep deprivation group (less than six hours per night) consistently lost less weight and body fat than the control group who slept for over 8 hours per night. Could high-quality sleep be the missing component to nutrition and smart exercise to help you shed fat for good?

In Chapters 11 and 13, we'll be exploring the sleep-body fat connection and specific strategies to help you get in the best shape of your life. Pour on that secret sauce please!

Other studies show sleep deprivation encouraging cancer, Alzheimer's, depression, and even heart disease. In a society that's overworked and under-rested, it's more important than ever to pay attention to issues associated with not getting the sleep that we require. Although we'll be covering the negative impact of sleep problems in this book, we're going to put our major focus on what you can do to improve your sleep starting tonight, and avoid these chronic issues in the first place.

What about performance in your work? And what about productivity and getting things done?

At first glance we might think that working more and skimping on the sleep will get us there faster. The research is in and it's 100 percent conclusive: when you don't sleep well, you get slower, less creative, more stressed, and underperform. Basically you're only utilizing a fraction of what you're capable of. We're going to talk about this more in Chapter 1, so sit tight and I'll give you the low down on what sleep (or lack there of) is doing to your brain.

There's an old Irish proverb that says, "A good laugh and a long sleep are the two best cures for anything." My promise to you is that this book will give you real, practical strategies to help you get the best sleep possible. You'll laugh, you'll think, you'll plan, you'll put things into action, and you'll see your life transformed as a result of it.

You deserve to be healthy, happy, and fulfilled in your life. Getting great sleep is a huge component of this, and this book is the key to helping you get there.

A pioneer, and leading authority on sleep research, Dr. William Dement said, "You're not healthy, unless your sleep is healthy."

Nothing could be more true, and these 21 tips are going to help you get great sleep for many years to come.

Chapter 1

KNOW THE VALUE OF SLEEP

The topic of this chapter is a little unusual, but it's probably the most important. Many people are negligent about getting enough sleep because they don't truly understand the benefits they're getting from it.

So what is sleep? And why is it important?

Well, defining sleep is a lot like trying to define life. No one completely understands it, and if you try to explain it you're more likely to sound like Forrest Gump than a world-renown scholar (Life is like a box of chocolates... sleep is like pretending to be dead).

Sleep is actually defined as a *natural periodic state of rest for the mind and body, in which the eyes usually close and consciousness is completely or partially lost, so that there is a decrease in bodily movement and responsiveness to external stimuli.*

That sounds a little weird, but the most important takeaway is that it's a *natural* periodic state of rest for the mind and body. If you're not doing it, then

you're being completely unnatural. And, nobody likes unnatural people.

What's more important is knowing the big prizes that sleep gives you. Generally, being awake is catabolic (breaks you down) and sleep is anabolic (builds you up). Sleep is known to be an elevated *anabolic state*, heightening the growth and rejuvenation of the immune, skeletal, and muscular systems. Basically, sleep rebuilds you and keeps you youthful.

High quality sleep fortifies your immune system, balances your hormones, boosts your metabolism, increases physical energy, and improves the function of your brain. Without all of the essential benefits that sleep is providing, you will never, I repeat *never*, have the body and life you want without giving your body the right amount of sleep.

In our culture, sleep is not respected very much at all. As a matter of fact, we are often programmed with the idea that to be successful we need to work harder, sleep less, and we can catch up on all the sleep we want when we're dead. To say sleep is not respected is really an understatement.

Working hard is unarguably a big part of being successful, but so is working smart. So many people in our world today go on plugging away with work, burning the candle at both ends, not realizing that the *quality* of work they're doing is being radically compromised. Research shows that after just 24 hours of sleep deprivation, there is an overall reduction of six percent in glucose reaching the brain. Simple translation: You get dumber.

This is also why you crave candy, chips, donuts, and other starchy, sugary things when you're sleep deprived. Your body is trying to compel you to get that glucose back to your brain as soon as possible. It's a built-in survival mechanism. This is inherent in our genes because, in our days as hunter-gatherers, that lack of brainpower could mean a swift death from a predator or a substantially reduced ability to hunt and procure your own food for survival. Today a simple trip to the refrigerator can bypass your body's cry for more sleep, but those stress mechanisms are still alive and well within your body right now.

ICAN'T BELIEVE I DID THAT LAST NIGHT

The most valuable takeaway from this sleep deprivation “brain drain” discovery is that the reduction in glucose isn’t shared equally. Your parietal lobe and the prefrontal cortex actually lose 12 to 14 percent of their glucose when you don’t sleep. These are the areas of the brain we most need for thinking, for distinguishing between ideas, for social control, and to be able to tell the difference between right and wrong. Have you ever made a poor decision when you were up late at night that you wouldn’t have made if your head was on right? Chances are you have.

It wasn’t entirely your fault. Your brain was hijacked by a dumber (and slightly less attractive) version of yourself.

Always remember the value of your sleep. You will perform better, make better decisions, and have a better body when you get the sleep you require. Sleep is not an obstacle we need to go around, it’s a natural state your body requires to boost your hormone function, heal your muscles, tissues and organs, and make your mind work at it’s optimal level. The shortcut to success is not made by bypassing dreamland. You will factually work better, be more efficient, and get more stuff done when you’re properly rested.

There’s a big difference between “working” and actually being effective. By sacrificing your sleep, you can definitely do more work, but the quality and effectiveness of your work will be sacrificed. A physician study published in *The Lancet* proved that sleep-deprived individuals took 14 percent longer to complete a task, and made 20 percent more errors than individuals who were well rested. Structure your time to get more sleep *first* and you’ll be able to get your work done faster and more effectively than if you zombie walked your way through it.



SLEEPPOWER TIP

When you know you've got a big task, project, or event coming up, pull out a calendar and plan ahead how you can get your ideal number of sleep hours in. Often times it's as simple as setting up a schedule. But, people overlook it because, well, it's just too easy.

If it's important to you, you'll schedule it. Stick to that schedule as well as you can, and know that you will get the work done better and faster if you're more rested. We usually sacrifice our sleep to cram in more work because we didn't plan efficiently. And as the wise Benjamin Franklin said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

———— Chapter 2 ————

GET MORE SUNLIGHT DURING THE DAY

It may sound counterintuitive that getting more sunlight during the day can help you sleep better at night, but science has proven that this is precisely the case.

Your body's sleep cycle, or "circadian timing system," is not just some airy-fairy thing. This is a real, built-in, 24-hour clock that's not that much different from the clock on your cell phone or wristwatch.

Your circadian timing system is regulated by the *suprachiasmatic nucleus*, a small group of nerve cells found in the hypothalamus in your brain. The hypothalamus is considered to be the master gland of your body's hormonal system. It controls your body's hunger, thirst, fatigue, body temperature, and sleep cycles by acting as a master clock. So, now you know, when it comes to sleep, you've got to literally have your head in the game.

Now, how does morning light improve sleep? Light actually signals your hypothalamus and all corresponding organs and glands to be alert and "wake

up.” That light exposure, specifically *sunlight* exposure, triggers your body to produce optimal levels of daytime hormones and regulates your biological clock. Too little light exposure during the day, and too much light exposure in the evening will negatively impact your ability to sleep well at night. One of the most vital hormones affected by light exposure is the powerful antioxidant hormone *melatonin*.

MELTOMELATONIN

Melatonin is produced by the pineal gland in your brain and it sends signals to create the best environment in your body for sleep. It's secreted naturally as it gets darker outside, but we can really screw it up if we don't get the right light exposure at the right time. Melatonin isn't the "sleep hormone," but it can definitely be considered the "get good sleep hormone."

Some researchers believe that melatonin is related to aging. For instance, young children have the highest levels of nighttime melatonin production, but it gradually declines as we age. Melatonin is associated with being young and vital, but it diminishes as the years pass by. Is this simply how it has to be, or is it something we cause by not honoring our sleep cycles?

Remember, the production and secretion of melatonin is heavily affected by light exposure. Sunlight provides the natural spectrum of light that we need to help coordinate the cycle of melatonin production. Simply put, when you get more sunlight exposure during the day, and less light exposure at night, you're on your way to a magic sleep formula that really works.

Now how do we apply this when millions of us are certified desk jockeys and cooped up in our offices all day long? And, how much does it matter anyway?

A recent study focused on sleep quality of day shift workers revealed some shocking results. When compared to office workers who have direct access to windows at work, those office workers who *didn't* have access to windows got 173 percent less exposure to natural white light and as a result slept an average of 46 minutes less each night. This sleep deficit resulted in more reported physical ailments, lower vitality, and poorer sleep quality.

The office workers with more light exposure tended to be more physically active, happier, and had an overall higher quality of life. With your new found understanding of sunlight's affect on sleep and hormone function, the data from these types of studies become obvious. So now let's dive into how to leverage this understanding to get the best results possible.



SUNLIGHT POWER TIP #1

When it comes to sleep benefits, all sunlight is not created equal. The body clock is most responsive to sunlight in the early morning, between 6 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Exposure to sunlight later does not provide the same benefit. Make it a habit to get some sun exposure in that primetime light period. Direct sunlight outdoors for at least one-half hour has been shown to produce the most benefit.



SUNLIGHT POWER TIP #2

If you are in cubical dungeon away from natural light at work, use your break time to strategically go and get some sun on your skin. Even on an overcast day, the sun's rays will make their way through and positively influence your hormone function. You can take your 10 or 15 minute breaks outdoors or near a window, or if you're really playing at a high level, you can make a habit of eating your lunch outside.



SUNLIGHT POWER TIP #3

In emergency situations, where you are chained like a prisoner in the cubical dungeon, there are specially designed light boxes and visors that simulate sunlight. These are often prescribed to treat seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a form of depression that tends to take place during the darker winter months. But, truly you are more powerful than you know to affect change in your life and get yourself the natural sunlight you require. This is only an option because I felt an obligation to tell you about it. Although this can be helpful, even the best light box won't give you as much phototherapy benefit as 30 minutes outside on even an overcast day.

———— Chapter 3 ————

AVOID THE SCREENS BEFORE BEDTIME

This is likely the number one thing you can do to improve your sleep *quality* immediately. The artificial blue light emitted by electronic screens triggers your body to produce more daytime hormones (like cortisol) and disorient your body's natural preparation for sleep.

Computers, iPads, televisions, smartphones, etc., are kicking out a sleep-sucking blue spectrum of light that can give you major sleep problems.

Have you ever driven down your neighborhood street at night and seen that majestic blue light beaming out of people's windows? You're probably like a) I wonder what they're watching? or b) I wonder if they're getting abducted by aliens?

Mariana Figueiro, of the Lighting Research Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic, and her team showed that two hours of iPad use at maximum brightness was enough to suppress people's normal nighttime release of melatonin. When your

melatonin secretion is thrown off, it will intrinsically throw off your normal sleep cycle.

Figueiro also noted that if this nighttime device usage happened on a long-term basis, it could lead to a chronic disruption of circadian rhythms. As a result, the likelihood of serious health issues can skyrocket.

It's important to remember that our cultural use of these electronic devices has only been possible for the last few decades; first with the advent of television, and then really exploding with the advent of laptops, tablets, and smartphones in just the last 10 years. Millions of years of evolution versus 10 years of late-night meandering doesn't favor our ability to adapt to this anytime soon.

As human beings, we are literally not designed to stare into the type of light emanating from these devices. When it comes to nighttime usage, we want to be like the little girl in *Poltergeist* and "stay away from the light." Side note: that movie still creeps me out.

Of course, we've got work to do, and the technology we have available to us today is amazing. We just need to have more awareness and more respect for our body's natural processes.



SCREENPROTECTIONPOWER TIP #1

If you want to give your body the deep sleep it needs, make it a mandate to turn off all screens at least 90 minutes before bedtime. If you ignore this and continue to have problems sleeping, I promise you Jimmy Kimmel is not going to pay your hospital bills.



SCREENPROTECTIONPOWER TIP #2

Use an alternative medium for nighttime activity. Remember those papery things called books? You can actually open one of those ancient relics and enjoy consuming a great story, inspiration, or education that way. And, remember when people actually talked to each other face-to-face? You can talk to the people in your life, listen to how their day went, find out what they're excited about, and what they may be struggling with. They can obviously do the same for you too. In our world, where we're more connected than ever before in some ways, we are desperately lacking connection in others. Getting off our electronic devices, having a conversation, and showing affection is vital to our long-term health and well-being.



SCREENPROTECTIONPOWER TIP #3

Use a blue light blocker. Extenuating circumstances come up, and you may need to be on the computer later than you want. This is where cool advancements in technology can come in to help smooth things out. On my Mac, I have a free application called f.lux that automatically eliminates the problematic blue light from my computer screen at a certain time each day (you can get similar things for your smartphone and other devices too). But, again, the best solution is to shut down the technology at least 90 minutes before bed, if you're serious about getting great sleep. If that's not feasible, this is a tool you can use that can definitely help you along the way.

———— Chapter 4 ————

HAVE A CAFFEINE CURFEW

Caffeine is a powerful nervous system stimulant. If your nervous system is lit up like a Christmas tree, you can forget about getting high quality sleep.

The reality is, people like coffee. It is what it is. We just have to learn how to navigate our consumption of coffee and other caffeinated goodies to make sure that we're still getting the best sleep possible.

A study published in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine* shared some critical insights about the effect of caffeine on sleep that you need to know about. The lead author of the study, Christopher Drake, associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral neurosciences at Wayne State University says, "Drinking a big cup of coffee on the way home from work can lead to negative effects on sleep, just as if someone were to consume caffeine closer to bedtime."

What the study discovered was that participants given caffeine at different times (immediately before bed, three hours before bed, and six hours before bed) all

showed significant measurable disruptions in their sleep. What this means is that not only is it not a good idea to have caffeine right before bed time, but having a cup of coffee or caffeinated tea even as much as six hours before bed can cause sleep troubles.

What's fascinating about this study is that sleep disturbance was measured in two ways: objectively, by means of a sleep monitor used at home, and subjectively, from diaries kept by the participants. When the participants consumed caffeine six hours before bedtime, they had a measurable objective loss of one hour of sleep shown via sleep monitor. The crazy part is that the participants didn't note any subjective difference with their sleep in their sleep journal. Even though they physiologically lost sleep because of the caffeine, they didn't consciously know it at first!

This is how the viscous cycle of sleep deprivation gets started. Not getting enough deep sleep due to caffeine consumption inevitably makes us more tired. Being tired makes us want more caffeine. And, extra consumption of caffeine will, in-turn, make our sleep problems worse. We've got to have a strategy to break this viscous cycle to ensure that we're getting the sleep our bodies deserve.

LIVING THE HALF-LIFE

So here's the real deal about caffeine. First of all, the places that caffeine come from are typically delicious: coffee, chocolate, tea, *etc.* Not only are they tasty, but caffeine also has a natural affinity with the human body. It can really get our body and mind in a positive place. This is why caffeine can be so addictive.

Caffeine doesn't "give you energy" in the way that most people believe. All day everyday while you're awake, neurons in your brain are firing and producing a neurotransmitter byproduct known as *adenosine*. Please understand, adenosine is more than a simple waste product. Your nervous system is constantly monitoring for adenosine in your body, because once those levels raise to a certain point in your brain and spinal cord, your body starts to nudge you to go to sleep (or at least to relax).

Then, in comes the caffeine...

Caffeine has the unique ability to fit into receptor sites in your body for adenosine, because it's so structurally similar to the real thing. Normally, when your receptor sites are filled with real adenosine, your body shifts into rest mode. The issue with caffeine going into those receptors is that it simply sits there like a distant relative over-extending their stay on your couch. It doesn't actually turn on functions, like adenosine would, to make you tired. As a result, your brain and body are still trucking along and you don't realize that you're actually sleepy. Pretty cool in some ways, but hopefully you can see where this could become a big problem.

Your body is still producing more and more adenosine because of all the "awake" activities you're doing, but it never gets properly metabolized. Due to this, you're body literally has to change the way it normally functions, stress hormone levels increase in your system, and your brain and organs get overworked because they aren't getting the accurate cues to rest and recover.

Because of caffeine's long-term effects, it can take several days for its aftermath to wear off. Caffeine has a half-life of around five to eight hours (depending upon your unique biochemical makeup). Half-life essentially means that after a specific amount of time (say eight hours) half of the substance is still active in your system. So, using the eight hour half-life as an example, if you consumed 200mg of caffeine, after eight hours you'd have half of it in your system (or 100mg), after another eight hours you'd have 50mg, another eight hours it would be 25mg, and so on. This is why having caffeine even six hours out from bedtime still caused sleep disturbances in the study.

The real trouble is, millions of people aren't just having one serving of caffeine, they're having many. We also don't realize when we pick up the habit that our bodies become jaded to the energizing benefits of caffeine. This can happen in as little as 12 days. So, what do we do when we don't notice a strong or consistent enough buzz? We drink more, of course!

The reality is, caffeine is a powerful stimulant, and it can be a wonderfully pleasant part of our life, if we respect it as such. We need to rewire our body to use it on a regular, yet cyclical basis so that we can really get the most bang-for-the-buck.

We know now how caffeine works, and the deleterious effects it can have on our sleep. Now here are some tips to help ensure that caffeine works for you and not against you.



SMART CAFFEINE POWER TIP #1

Set an unbreakable caffeine curfew to make sure your body has time to remove the majority of it from your system. For most people, it's generally going to be before 2 p.m. But, if you're really sensitive to caffeine, then you might want to make your curfew even earlier, or possibly avoid caffeine altogether.



SMART CAFFEINE POWER TIP #2

Caffeine can be used strategically to enhance fat loss, if used in the right way (you'll get more information on this coming up soon). That said, don't throw the baby out with the bath water and negate the potential benefits of caffeine. To maximize your body's use and benefit from caffeine, it has to be cycled. There are several ways of going about this. I'm just going to share with you three.

1. Go on two days and three days off - If a healthy, non-addicted person is using caffeine, it can be cleared from your system nicely after three days. When you have it again, you'll notice the same benefits as you did the initial days you used it.
2. Go two months on, one month off - This is reasonable if you're using a small to moderate amount of caffeine daily (less than 200mg a day) as in a cup or two of black coffee or tea, or a pre-workout supplement. Using more caffeine than this can lead to withdrawal symptoms for the first few days after discontinued use.
3. Go full on as needed - This is where the magical, "when we first met," experience can happen with coffee and caffeine. On most days, ignore it; live your life normally, without caffeine, but when you need it, go full on into your love affair. Now when I say you "need it," I'm talking about you have a performance, a big project, or something that is really important (but short in duration, so your indulgence won't be more than a couple of days). Use caffeine as a boost, not a crutch, and you'll be able to truly enjoy its benefits while still sleeping like a champion.



———— Chapter 5 ————

BE COOL

I remember during ridiculously hot summers, my parents wouldn't turn the air conditioner up so that they could "save" on the utility bill. Well, I can tell you that I sweated off a lot of pounds those summers, tossing and turning in my bed upstairs (oh, and heat rises by the way), trying to sleep through the heat. I didn't sleep well then because the temperature of our bodies have a very strong influence on our ability to sleep.

Something called *thermoregulation* heavily influences your body's sleep cycles. When it's time for your body to rest, there is an automatic drop in your core body temperature to help initiate sleep. If the temperature in your environment stays too high, then it can be a bit of a physiological challenge for your body to get into the ideal state for restful sleep. Studies have found that the ideal room temperature for sleep is really quite cool at around 60 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit. Anything too far above or below this range will likely cause some difficulty sleeping.

To take this discovery even further, studies have shown that insomniacs (individuals with chronic sleep issues) tend to have a significantly warmer core body temperature than normal right before bed. This will inherently lead to a heightened state of arousal and struggle to fall asleep while their body tries to reset its internal thermostat.

So where is this internal thermostat anyway? Can it be actually changed?

To find your body's internal thermostat, you have to go back to our understanding of the master gland, the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus actually integrates the function of your nervous system (what senses the internal and external temperature) and your endocrine system (what secretes specific hormones to either induce sleep or keep you awake). Your hypothalamus is like the coach of your cellular basketball team.

If the coach is treated well, given a nice salary of nutrition, and not over-stressed, chances are it can keep everyone in line, achieving the greatest results possible. Think the "Zen Master," Phil Jackson. He managed stress like a pro, and brought the best out of his "body" of players.

On the other hand, if the coach is under-paid, over-worked, lacks support, and miscommunicates the roles of the team, then the whole thing can fall apart fast. This is why the health and support of your hypothalamus is so important.

Your hypothalamus is part of a very significant system in your body known as the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis, or HPA-Axis for short. The HPA-axis is critical in normal hormone function, sexual function, managing body weight and more. The most important takeaway here is that the HPA-axis is your body's number one system for managing stress.

The previously mentioned study on insomniacs also found that the test subjects experienced greater levels of anticipatory anxiety than normal test subjects. The *worry* and *stress* over sleeping was higher, and likely contributing to the increase in core body temperature. It's not just the environment that needs to be cool, you need to be cool too (as in your mental and emotional state). Your HPA-axis is dealing with the overall stress load in your life. From work, to relationships, to nutrition, to your exercise, your HPA-axis is managing it all.

You absolutely must have a strategy to manage stress in our high-stressed world today, or you can sleep in an igloo and still not be cool enough. We'll talk about some life-changing stress-management tools coming up in Chapter 16. For now, let's get the environment around you optimized for the best sleep possible, so that you have a smart, well-rounded approach to the free-throw line. Swish!



KEEP IT COOL POWER TIP #1

Make sure that the temperature in your bedroom stays close to the recommended 68 degrees Fahrenheit at night. For some people, this is just right, but others may have images of Jack Frost and Frosty the Snowman. Trust me (and the science), you will sleep better if you're a little cooler, just don't over do it. You can still have your covers and PJ's, but don't over do that either (chances are your lover or would-be lover doesn't want to sleep next to a flannel-clad, multiple-layered lumberjack at night). Get a nice, cool environment in your room and snuggle up to sleep more soundly.



KEEP IT COOL POWER TIP #2

If you have trouble falling asleep, try taking a warm bath an hour and a half to two hours before hitting the sack. The increase in core temperature from the bath will fall accordingly and level out a little cooler right around the time you turn in for the night. Many parents know that this is the secret sauce for having young kids fall asleep and *stay* asleep at night.



KEEP IT COOL POWER TIP #3

Rock socks. Even though the room temperature would ideally be cooler to induce great sleep, some people can trigger sleeplessness because their extremities are too cold. This is because blood flow is the primary method of distributing heat throughout the body. If your hands and feet are too cold, it could be a sign of poor circulation. The solution: wear a pair of warm socks to bed if you need to. Some people are naturally more warm-bodied and prefer to be barefoot, so test it out, and see what works best for you.

———— Chapter 6 ————

GET TO BED AT THE RIGHT TIME

You can literally get amplified benefits of sleep by sleeping at the right hours. Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary says, “Timing your sleep is like timing an investment in the stock market—it doesn’t matter how much you invest, it matters *when* you invest.”

It’s been shown that human beings get the most beneficial hormonal secretions and recovery by sleeping during the hours of 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. This is what I call “Money Time.”

You get the most rejuvenating effects during this period, and any sleep that you get in addition is a bonus. This is based on the seemingly lost realization that we humans are a part of nature, and when the lights go out on the planet, that’s a cue from the universe that it’s time for us to turn down too.

Today, however, we can trump nature and light up our house like a Las Vegas stripper sign. We can be up until 3 a.m. doing the laptop lap dance, and not even

think twice about it.

News Flash: That is abnormal.

We are literally designed to go to sleep when it gets dark, so if you've made a habit of ignoring this innate law, it's time to take action to readjust.

In our discussion on sunlight exposure in Chapter 2, we found that our body's natural production of hormones is critical to getting the best sleep possible. By lining your sleep up with your natural hormonal secretions, the benefits you get from sleep will be exponentially better.

For example, you may be sleeping from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. and getting eight hours of sleep, but you are missing on that "money time" when the beneficial hormonal secretions are at their highest. Melatonin, human growth hormone, and more are secreted in their strongest doses when your sleep is lined up properly. Want to stay young and vibrant longer? Then you need to know that you get the best dose of HGH, the "youth hormone," if you're sleeping during those prime time hours.

Some people get eight or more hours of sleep, but still don't feel well rested when they wake up. Dr. Chaudhary also states that, "If your body is chronically deprived of the regenerative sleep between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m., then you may still feel fatigued when you wake up in the morning." Again, this affirms the understanding that it's all about the hormone production, and missing out on that "money time" is not a very smart investment.

THE SECOND WIND

Around 10 p.m., your body goes through a transformation following the natural rise in melatonin. This transformation is to increase *internal* metabolic energy to repair, strengthen, and rejuvenate your body. Heightened production of antioxidant hormones happens at this time to help protect your DNA from damage, improve your brain function, and more. If you're asleep as normal during this phase, all is well. However, if you're up when 10 p.m. rolls around that increase in metabolic energy can be experienced as a "second wind."

Have you ever had this happen before? After work, around 6 or 7 p.m., you're tired. You can't wait to hit the sack and get a great night's sleep. Then 10 o'clock rolls around and you feel wide-awake and ready to do stuff! It's very likely that you have just experienced the energy "second wind." It's really not that much different from exercise. People who've done any type of endurance training know that if you keep at it for a certain amount of time even though you're tired, your body will kick into a second wind and you'll feel energized again and ready to keep going.

Instead of the increased energy being used for normal internal housekeeping, it was used for you to update your Facebook profile and watch three more episodes of your favorite show on Netflix.

It's important to understand that your body's ability to repair itself, remove free radicals, and maximize hormonal output, is greatly inhibited when you allow yourself to stay up and move into that second wind. People who stay up past 10 or 11 p.m. and dig into that second wind energy, often find that they have a harder time falling asleep when they want to. The result is that you're more fatigued and groggy when you wake up in the morning. So let's get into some specific tips to get that "money time" sleep your body really deserves.



MONEY TIME POWER TIP #1

The 10 p.m. recommended bed time isn't exact with all of the variation in time zones, day light savings time, how far you are from the equator, time of year, *etc.* If we get too neurotic about the exact time to go to sleep, it can get a little ridiculous. What you want to aim for to get the highest quality sleep possible is getting to bed within a few hours of it getting dark outside.

For most people, this is going to mean somewhere between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. most of the year. By doing this, you are giving yourself a huge hormonal advantage. During the winter season, humans would naturally be sleeping more and going to bed a bit earlier. Conversely, during the summer months when the days are longer, you have a bit of a permission slip to stay up later and enjoy the weather a little more. Nature is giving us direct cues on when to sleep, we just need to learn to pay attention to them.



MONEY TIME POWER TIP #2

To help reset your sleep cycle so that you're actually tired when the optimal bedtime rolls around, make a habit of getting some sunlight as soon as possible when you wake up. This is going to help boost natural cortisol levels and fully wake your system up. Your body knows what to do, and will find its natural sleep cycle with you practicing good sleep hygiene and following the tips in this book.

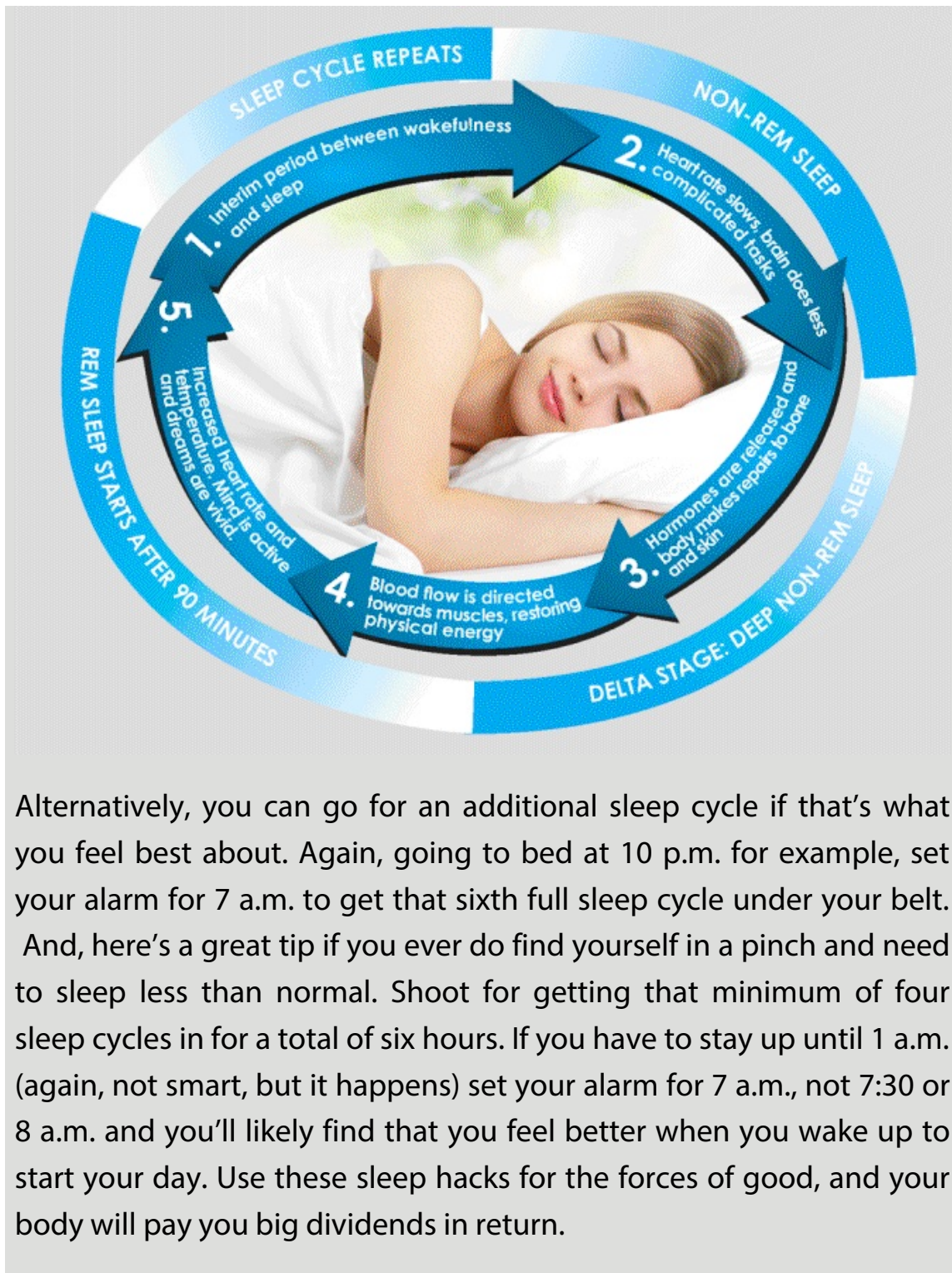


MONEY TIME POWER TIP #3

During normal sleep at night, your body follows a predictable pattern, moving back and forth between deep, restorative sleep (deep sleep) and more alert stages (non-REM) and dreaming (REM sleep). These stages of REM and non-REM sleep come together to form a complete *sleep cycle*.

Sleep cycles typically last for 90 minutes each and repeat four to six times at night. So, six normal 90-minute sleep cycles would equal nine total hours of sleep.

Even if you get a full night's sleep, you can still wake up feeling groggy if your alarm goes off during the middle of one of your sleep cycles. To make your mornings better and more energetic, start setting your alarm so that it goes off in accordance with these sleep cycles instead of the standard "eight hours of sleep." For example, if you go to sleep at 10 p.m. set your alarm for 5:30 a.m. (for a total of seven and a half hours of sleep) and you'll likely find that you feel more refreshed when you wake up than if you set the alarm for 6 a.m. and interrupted another sleep cycle.



———— Chapter 7 ————

RUB THE "ANTI-STRESS" MINERAL INTO YOUR SKIN EACH DAY

Magnesium is a bonafide anti-stress mineral. It helps to balance blood sugar, optimize circulation and blood pressure, relax tense muscles, reduce pain, and calm the nervous system. Yet, because it has so many functions, it tends to get depleted from our bodies rather fast.

Magnesium deficiency is likely the number one mineral deficiency in our world today. Estimates show that upwards of 80 percent of the population in the United States is deficient in magnesium. And, some experts say that these numbers are actually conservative. Chances are, you're not getting enough magnesium into your system, and getting your magnesium levels up can almost instantly reduce your body's stress load and improve the quality of your sleep.

Not only is magnesium important for optimizing your sleep, it's critical to your health and longevity overall. A study published in *The Journal of Intensive Care Medicine* showed that people deficient in magnesium were twice as likely to die

prematurely. I don't know about you, but I don't want to clock out before my time. Optimizing your magnesium levels can be key to living a long, healthy life.

When discussing magnesium, Dr. Mark Hyman states that, "This critical mineral is actually responsible for over 300 enzyme reactions and is found in all of your tissues—but mainly in your bones, muscles, and brain. You must have it for your cells to make energy, for many different chemical pumps to work, to stabilize membranes, and to help muscles relax."

Magnesium levels can be a serious problem or a serious benefit depending where you are in the spectrum. This is definitely not something to take lightly.

In addition to the proven impact magnesium has on your body, research shows that one of the central symptoms of magnesium deficiency is chronic insomnia. This is valuable information to know because simply getting your magnesium levels up can have a huge impact on your sleep quality very quickly.

GET IT UP THE SMART WAY

Supplementation may not be the best method to get your magnesium levels up. Research has shown that a large percentage of magnesium is lost in the digestive process. So, what do we typically do to compensate? Take more, of course!

The problem is that taking too much of a low-budget internal magnesium supplement can have you sprinting to the bathroom faster than Usain Bolt. Magnesium actually pulls more water to your bowels, which can lead to one or many unexpected bathroom breaks.

Quality is everything when it comes to your magnesium sources. High quality supplementation can be helpful in small amounts, as well as a diet high in magnesium-rich foods. But, the most effective method of safely and effectively boosting your magnesium levels is through topical application onto your skin.

The understanding that your body can absorb magnesium transdermally (through the skin) has been known for hundreds of years. Have you ever heard that taking a bath in epsom salts was great for eliminating pain, reducing stress, and helpful for a good night's sleep? Epsom salt is actually a form of magnesium called *magnesium sulfate*.

Today, radically better forms of topical magnesium have been developed. Things like magnesium bath flakes and standard magnesium oils are usually 20 percent absorbable at best. The topical magnesium that I use and that I recommend for my clients is 100 percent bioavailable, is 100 percent pure, and the stuff just flat-out works. A night hardly ever goes by that I don't rub this magnesium into my skin, because I've consistently found that my sleep quality is even better when I use it.

Again, because a large percentage of magnesium is lost in the digestive process, the ideal form of magnesium is transdermal from supercritical extracts. You can find more information on this topical magnesium at www.TheShawnStevensonModel.com/magnesium.



ANTI-STRESS MINERAL POWER TIP #1

Keep the Magnesium Infusion right by your bedside and apply it right before you hop into the covers. The best places to apply it are:

- Anywhere that you are sore (hopefully you're following my exercise advice, covered in Chapter 11!).
- In the center of your chest (a major "chakra" position aligned with your heart - one of the most magnesium dependent organs in your body).
- Around your neck and shoulders (where many people carry a lot of their stress).
- Spray it on liberally and massage it in. Four to six sprays per area is a great baseline to go with.



ANTI-STRESS MINERAL POWER TIP #2

Incorporate magnesium-rich foods in your diet too. A study done by James Penland at the *Human Nutrition Research Center* in North Dakota found that a diet high in magnesium and low in aluminum was associated with deeper, uninterrupted sleep. Green leafy veggies, seeds like pumpkin and sesame, and superfoods like spirulina and Brazil nuts can provide very concentrated sources of magnesium for you.

———— Chapter 8 ————

CREATE A SLEEP SANCTUARY

If getting rejuvenating sleep is a high priority for you, then you need to take some essential actions to treat it as such. The bedroom should be for two things primarily... 1) sleep and 2) we'll get to in just a moment ;)

Stop making your bedroom the entertainment hub of your house. And, *never* bring work to bed with you.

Humans are creatures of habit *and* habitat. My two-year-old son knows that when we go into his bedroom at night, good sleep is about to go down. He actually gets upset if he can't get into his bed to go to sleep right away. Crazy, right?

If you create an environment where miscellaneous activities can take place in your sleep area, then you are not creating a neuro-association that it's time to sleep when you go in there. You may think that you are a big “grown-up” adult, but we are all just super-sized babies with the same basic programming.

Bringing your office work into bed with you is one of the most offensive sleep crimes you can commit. Not only is it creating a negative association with sleep, but it can also spell serious trouble for your love life if you're not careful. Cut the cord and don't allow work to enter your sacred relaxation space.

Now, when you picture a sanctuary, what do you think of? Fresh air, flowing water, beautiful plants, and a serene environment may come to mind. The good news is that these are all things that you can recreate in your own private sleep sanctuary.

Fresh air is very important. Did you know that the ions in the air you breathe can become "stale" and less energizing? The air you breathe carries more than just oxygen into your cells, it also carries other ionic elements that are vital for your health and well-being. As the air inside your home becomes stagnant, the ions in the air start to lose their (negative) charge. To fix this, you simply need to get the air moving again. Something as simple as opening a window or turning on a fan can re-energize the air in your bedroom.

UPGRADE YOUR BREATHING SPACE

If you are in a crazy situation where you don't have a window, or it's 20 below zero outside, you can use a high quality air ionizer to revitalize the air in your home. Negative ions are present in abundance near waterfalls, ocean surf, rivers, and mountains. Many of us have experienced breathing the "fresh air" in those environments and experientially know the healing benefits. You can actually simulate some of those positive effects by utilizing the right air ionizer.

Negative ions impact our health in three significant ways:

1. They make the air more energizing by providing free electrons.
2. They oxidize odors, fungi, mold, parasites, and toxic chemical gases.
3. They bind to dust, pollen, cigarette smoke, and pet dander to form larger particles (which make them much easier to remove from your home).

Air ionizers are not just good for your sleeping space, they are good for your home in general. There are several air ionizers out there on the market, so do a bit of homework to make sure that the one you choose is the right fit for you.

At minimum, if you're in a situation where fresh air can't flow through your room via a window or fan during the winter months, try using a basic humidifier. Not only can this improve the air quality and help you sleep, but it can also help prevent your mucous membranes from drying out and making you more susceptible to an infection.

Humidifiers bring a bit of moisture back to the air, providing that water element we'd find in a sanctuary environment. In addition, some people find that tabletop fountains or "mini-waterfalls" are great for relaxing and sleeping better at night. Studies show that both your heartbeat and breathing slow down after listening to running water. Obviously, I'm not talking about the drip from a leaky faucet, but the sound of running water can have an impressive effect on people who have a history of sleep problems.

GARDEN OF EDEN

One of the things synonymous with paradise is plant life. There are so many great benefits that you can get from having plants in your home that it's just too much to ignore. Now, you don't have to have plants dominating your crib like *Little Shop of Horrors*, but having an intelligently chosen houseplant or two can really do wonders.

Take the English Ivy for example. NASA listed it as the number one air-filtering houseplant. It has an unmatched ability to absorb formaldehyde (a known neurotoxin), which most of us are exposed to in our highly industrialized world today. It's incredibly easy to grow and it's adaptable. You can have it as a hanging or a floor plant, and it requires moderate temperatures and medium sunlight.

Another great plant for your sleep sanctuary is the perennial Snake Plant. It doesn't require much light or water to thrive. What's most impressive about it is that it absorbs carbon dioxide and releases oxygen during the night (while most plants do this during the day), so it's the perfect plant to keep in your bedroom for an air quality boost.

Not to be negated, the sight and *smell* of certain plants also having calming effects on the human body. Take the viney plant, Jasmine, for example. According to a study by the Wheeling Jesuit University, Jasmine has a positive effect on the quality of sleep one gets, decreasing anxiety and improving the attitude one has after waking up. The smell of Jasmine wasn't found to make people sleep more, but instead, improve the *quality* of sleep by reducing interruptions in normal sleep patterns. Though Jasmine hasn't been a traditional houseplant, it's now starting to grow in popularity. Additionally, the essential oils of Jasmine and other plants have been shown to have many of the same positive effects; just something to consider.

Whether it's plants, the soothing sound of water, or improving the air quality, do whatever it takes for *you* to feel relaxed and comfortable in your sleep sanctuary. Make your bedroom a sacred place where peace, calm, and relaxation are overflowing. When you walk into a sleep sanctuary, it'll be easy to peacefully drift off to your dreams.



SLEEP SANCTUARY POWER TIP #1

Get at least one houseplant to improve the air quality in your home and go from there. If you don't have a green thumb and can barely take care of your own personal grooming (let alone a plant), then get a really low-maintenance plant, please. The pros of having a houseplant are simply too good to pass up; just make sure that it's something that suits you and not an additional stressor. If you don't have a good resource for houseplants, simply check out Amazon.com for many of the most popular varieties.



SLEEP SANCTUARY POWER TIP #2

If you share a sleeping space with someone else, make an agreement with them to keep office work out of the bedroom. This is a sacred space for the both of you, and usually it just takes a heart-to-heart conversation to make sure that everyone is on the same page. The biggest person to hold to the agreement is yourself, so have the discipline to keep your bed reserved for sleep and what's coming up in Chapter 9.

———— Chapter 9 ————

HAVE A BIG "O"

This is the other primary thing that the bedroom should be used for (as if you didn't know). Having an orgasm can be like a full-on sedative for most people. Research shows that during orgasm, both women and men release a cocktail of chemicals, including norepinephrine, serotonin, oxytocin, vasopressin, and the pituitary hormone prolactin.

Oxytocin, for example, triggers a cascade of bodily events including the release of other feel-good hormones called endorphins. This rush of endorphins and relaxing hormones when you release can be just the thing to set you up for a great night's sleep.

But, the proof is in the pudding, right? Even though most of us know that orgasm can induce sleep, are people actually using this to their advantage?

First off all, keep in mind that you don't need anyone else to do this (so single people, don't be worried.) But, if you do have a lover in your life, then don't hold

back because the effects can really benefit the both of you.

It's well established that a big component of insomnia is stress. If you're really stressed out, it can make it more difficult to fall asleep. Well, in the year 2000, a study was conducted with 2,632 women and found that 39 percent of those who masturbate reported that they do it in order to relax. Serotonin and oxytocin released during orgasm are two built-in, natural stress reducers.

With a sexual partner, it was found that men produced four times more prolactin when having an orgasm through intercourse when compared to masturbation. Prolactin is a hormone that's linked to sexual satisfaction, and it's also heavily related to sleep. Studies show that prolactin levels are naturally higher during sleep, and animals injected with the chemical become tired immediately.

Studies clearly demonstrate that plasma prolactin concentrations are substantially increased for over an hour following orgasm for both men and women. With that said, we can finally understand why sex is sometimes referred to as "sleeping" with someone.

Sex and orgasm have many benefits that go far beyond the realm of sleep. From boosting the immune system, to fighting depression, to actually helping you to live a longer life. Our ability to have and give orgasms is tightly linked to our health and well-being.

And just to be clear again on why this is so effective, the brain is actually the largest sex organ because of the vital role it plays in sexual arousal (whoever said size doesn't matter?). Cultivating your brain-body connection is critical to a fulfilling sex life *and* getting the best sleep ever.

Be responsible, have fun, and enjoy the benefits that the big "O" can have in your life.



THE BIG “O” POWER TIP #1

In all honesty, communication is key in this area. Everyone is different, and what satisfies one person might not do a thing for another. Find out what your lover likes and find out what *you* like. Share this info with them because being a clairvoyant is not on most of our résumés.

Share with your partner what turns you on, and what takes you over the top. I promise you that this data will be valuable to you both.



THE BIG “O” POWER TIP #2

Get physical. An obvious aspect of sex's impact on sleep is the physical exertion involved. When you put in some work bumpin' and grindin', you'll naturally feel more fatigued after the session is over. You don't have to just lay there most of the time all vanilla-ice-cream style. Move around, get involved, and put your back into it. Lying back and receiving is super fine as well, but if you want to earn your sleep black belt then you've got to put some work in too.

———— Chapter 10 ————

GET IT BLACKED OUT

It's a well-established fact that we sleep better in a dark environment; yet, so many people aren't taking full advantage of this.

Having light sources of any type in your bedroom can disrupt your sleep patterns. And, even using an eye mask is not going to be 100 percent effective for most people.

Did you know that your skin actually has receptors that can pick up light? These photoreceptors are similar to those found in your retina, so your skin can *literally* see. Researchers at Brown University discovered that skin cells also make *rhodopsin*, a light-sensitive chemical found in the retina. If there's light in your bedroom, your body is picking it up and sending messages to your brain and organs that can interfere with your sleep.

Sleeping in total darkness is so significant that nighttime light has been dubbed "light pollution." Light pollution refers to any adverse effects from artificial light.

Humans (and most other organisms for that matter) evolved to adjust to predictable light and dark phases to set their circadian clocks. Once artificial light became the societal norm, it effectively changed the length of our days. Today, the average person's sleep has decreased from around nine hours to about seven, and it hasn't been a pretty transition either.

One of the most devastating impacts of this light pollution is the confirmed effect on melatonin production. Studies show that exposure to room light during usual hours of sleep suppresses melatonin levels by more than 50 percent. That's not good!

Melatonin has been proven to:

- Improve immune system function
- Normalize blood pressure
- Reduce the proliferation of cancer cells and tumor growth (including leukemia)
- Enhance DNA protection and free radical scavenging
- Decrease risk of osteoporosis
- Decrease risk of plaques in the brain (like those seen with Alzheimer's disease)
- Alleviate migraines and other pain
- Improve thyroid function
- Improve insulin sensitivity and weight reduction

Melatonin is like the Bo Jackson of hormones. If it has something to do with health, melatonin 'knows' how to help.

Not getting enough sleep, and not sleeping in darkness, will age you faster and suck away your vitality. So, with all the new-found data to back it up, the best solution for improving your sleep is to get your room blacked out.

NIGHT LIGHT FIGHT

Purchase some of the now popular “blackout” curtains that are available from most retailers. And, get any other sources of non-stop light out of your room too. Do these two things tonight, and I promise you that you’ll thank me for it tomorrow. Sleep experts suggest that your room be so dark that you can’t see your hand in front of your face. I grew up with nightlights, so this was a really big step for me as well.

Speaking of nightlights, researchers from the Scheie Eye Institute at Pennsylvania University discovered that even a simple nightlight could cause myopia in children and lead to significant vision problems later in life. In the study, 479 children under the age of two were put into one of three categories: Sleeps in a) total darkness b) with a nightlight on or c) with a room light on. The results were shocking.

The researchers found that 10 percent of children who slept in the dark ended up being short-sighted, while 34 percent of the children who slept with a nightlight and 55 percent of the children who slept in a lightened room developed short-sightedness. Though the study didn’t account for every variable possible, it’s definitely something to consider. This isn’t just important for us, as adults, it’s also important if you have children and grandchildren as well.

Sleeping in total darkness is something that our genes expect us to do. Today it’s not uncommon to have lights of some type beaming in your room all night long. Because you can’t control the world outside, you need to take full control of the world in your home. New headlights and street lamps that use LEDs emit some of the most sleep zapping light spectrums of all. This is why getting some blackout shades is so significant.

Take action to turn your bedroom into a nice, cozy sleep cave. Personally, this is the one thing that *instantly* had a beneficial impact on my sleep. I blacked out my bedroom and have been getting the best sleep of my life ever since.



GETITBLACKEDOUTPOWER TIP #1

You don't just want to block out the light from outside, you want to eliminate the troublesome light inside your bedroom too. One of the biggest culprits is that angry alarm clock staring at you. The alarm clocks with the white or blue digits are more disruptive than ones with red digits. You can start by simply covering the alarm clock up as one tactic. But personally, I have a digital alarm clock made by Sony that has a dimmer adjustment that allows me to turn the clock light all the way off. Cover the clock up or get a better clock, either way you'll be doing yourself a favor.



GET IT BLACKED OUT POWER TIP #2

Once you have your blackout curtains, you may find that there is still some light that sneaks in over the top. You can simply roll up a blanket or towel to cover up that area. Dr. Eric Mercola recommends that, even during the midday sun, your room will be pitch black when you go in there. There shouldn't be any light sneaking in there unless you want it to. Getting rid of the light pollution in your bedroom is a huge key to getting the most peaceful and rejuvenating sleep possible.

———— Chapter 11 ————

TRAIN HARD (BUT SMART)

Exercise is often considered a virtual fountain of youth if used in the right way. Muscle, for example, is a reservoir for anti-aging hormones that help to protect your DNA from oxidation. The research shows that you can stay younger, longer if you have more lean muscle on your body.

How does exercise relate to sleep? Well, the two go together like peanut butter and jelly. You actually don't get in shape at the gym while you're exercising. You're literally tearing down your body while working out, increasing inflammatory biomarkers and creating thousands of micro-tears in your muscle fibers. When you leave the gym, you're actually in worse shape than when you came in.

The secret is that your body transforms from your workout while you're asleep. This is when your body releases all of the beneficial hormones and elicits repair programs to build you up better than before. You just exposed yourself to a

significant healthy stressor with a workout, but you only get the reward if you properly rest and recover.

The big issue for many people is that they are turning this healthy stressor into an unhealthy stressor. Add exercise to the already big list of work issues, family issues, unpaid bills, poor diet, mental and emotional struggles, etc., and this creates what's known as your overall *stress load*.

Your stress load is the compilation of stress in your life. Stress doesn't have to be bad, but when you put yourself under too much you can breakdown.

Exercise can be amazing for you. As a matter of fact, it's essential to being the healthiest version of yourself. You get so many positive benefits from improving insulin sensitivity, to boosting healthy hormone function, to enhancing your metabolism. But, when it's placed on top of an already overwhelming stress load, it can lead to some significant problems.

It's not so much the exercise itself, but the when and how the exercise is done. To optimize your sleep (and thus, optimize your results from exercise) you've got to utilize a few principles when it comes to working out.

NIGHT TIME IS NOT THE RIGHT TIME

A recent study at Appalachian State University found that morning workouts are ideal if you want to get the best sleep at night. Researchers tracked the sleep patterns of participants who worked out at three different times: 7 a.m., 1 p.m., or 7 p.m.

What they discovered was that people who exercised at 7 a.m. slept longer and had a deeper sleep cycle than the other two groups. In fact, the morning exercisers had up to 75 percent more time in the reparative "deep sleep" stage at night. This is so impressive, and a huge leverage point if you're interested in a longer life and a better body.

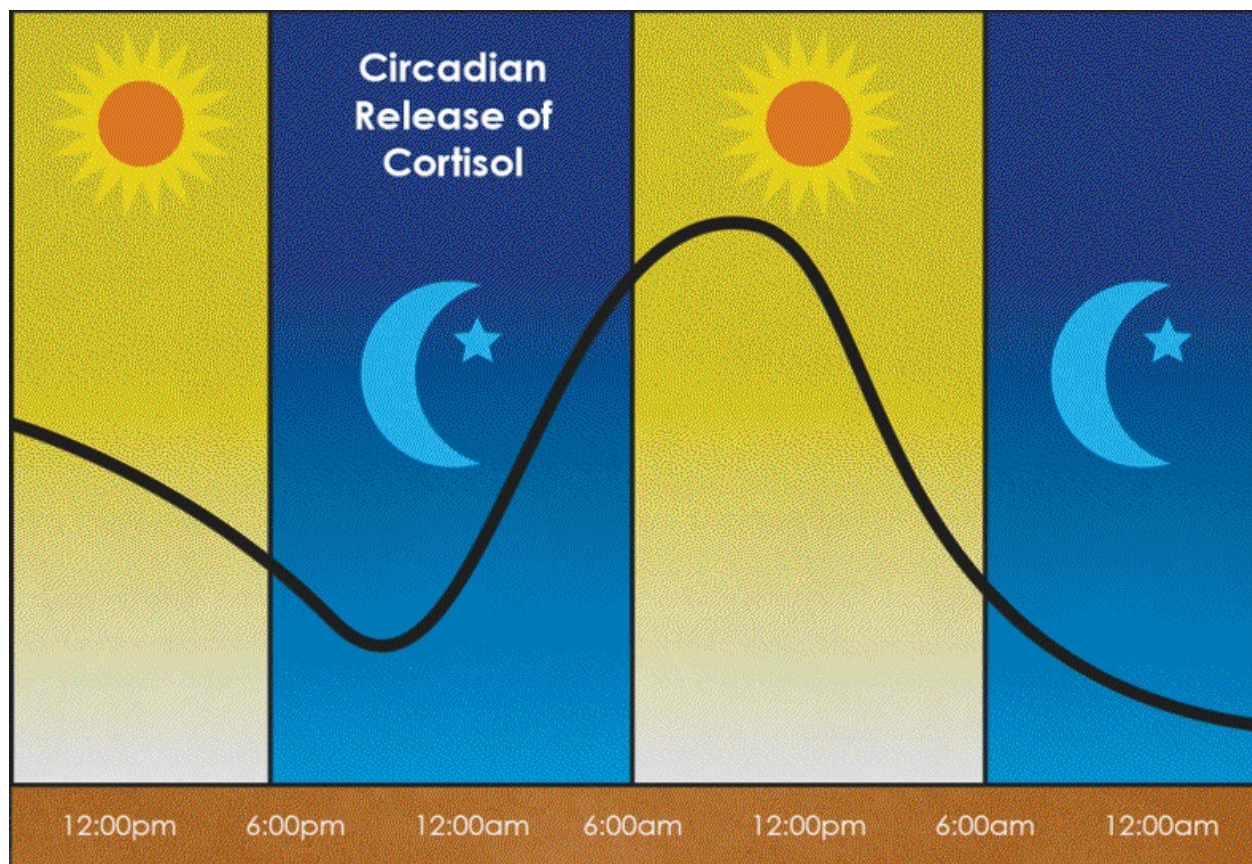
This may be counterintuitive for people who believe that you can fall asleep faster after going through a tough workout. One of the big issues with working out late in the evening is that it significantly raises your core body temperature, and it can take upwards of five to six hours for it to come down again. As we

discussed in Chapter 5, your body goes through a process called thermoregulation to lower your core temperature to create the optimal environment for sleep. By artificially raising your core temperature with a workout too close to bedtime, you can prevent yourself from getting the best sleep possible.

But, no need to be worried if you choose to workout later in the day. It's been found that when your core temperature comes down after exercise, it actually goes a little bit lower than it normally would. So, if you time things up intelligently, this can be money when it comes to getting the best sleep.

Exercising in the late afternoon/early evening is a great idea from a thermoregulation perspective. If you workout at 4:30 p.m., for example, it can set you up nicely to hit the hay at 10:00 p.m. The stress hormones secreted from your workout have subsided, your parasympathetic nervous system (the “rest and digest” system) has had time to take over, and your core temperature has dropped down to set the optimal internal environment for sleepy time.

If you had to pick a time, morning is the best when it comes to sleep, early evening can provide some benefit (if you time things right), and smack-dab in the afternoon showed little to no benefit at all. Exercise and movement is important no matter when you do it, but we have natural hormonal cycles that we need to honor if we're going to get the most from it.



As you can see from the previous chart, we have a big spike of cortisol in the early morning that is for the sole purpose of us doing activity. It gradually drops during the day and bottoms out when it's our natural time to get to sleep. Working out at 1 o'clock in the morning is cute for a Facebook status to show your dedication, but it's plum dumb when it comes to protecting your mind and body from the deleterious effects of stress.

And, it's not just about staying up late and working out in the evening, it's also foolish to interrupt your sleep to get up at 3 a.m. to go trudge along on the treadmill. Your natural hormone cycles are not designed to be up at those hours going hard in the gym. Take full advantage of this knowledge and structure your life in a way that you exercise at the best time to have the body and health you deserve. You have more power in this than you think. Remember, we are not just products of our environment; we are *creators* of our environment!

INSANE IN THE MEMBRANE

I had a client a few years back that moved here from France to go to college. He came to work with me in the gym and had some very specific physical goals that he wanted to accomplish. After doing an analysis, I found out that he had been suffering from a sleeping disorder for about eight years. He typically didn't sleep more than four hours a night, and he was diagnosed with clinical insomnia.

I can tell you, it was written all over his face and body. I said to him, "I can kick your butt all day in the gym, but you'll never get the body you want until you get this sleep component in order." He was reluctant to focus on it because it had been so difficult for him in the past, but he agreed to try a few of my suggestions, and the rest, as the French say, was "historie."

Instead of the long-duration cardio he used to do, I *banned* him from cardio temporarily. We focused on heavy, superset-style strength training. His workouts were short, but intense, and within days everything changed.

He came in to see me about a week after he started training with me and said, "I don't know what you did, but I slept like a bay-be." (remember, it was a French accent). This was quite transformative for him, and his life was changed forever.

Number one, I made sure that he didn't train after 5 p.m. (we'll call that Captain Obvious). Number two, I made sure that he avoided long-duration catabolic exercise that could potentially overload his endocrine and nervous systems.

Conventional moderate pace jogging is the mother of all long-duration catabolic exercise. You're keeping your sympathetic nervous system firing continuously for the 30 minutes or so that you're jogging, plus all of the stress hormones you secrete don't get a chance to be broken down and eliminated—they build up in your body like a balloon being filled with too much water.

Can running be good for you? Absolutely. But, it comes with some important caveats. We've been mislead to believe that "cardio" in the form of jogging for long time periods is the ideal way to lose fat. The reality is that nothing could be further from the truth. Running for long distances can radically increase muscle loss through a process called gluconeogenesis. Muscle is your body's fat-burning

machinery, and if you lose it by running too much, you will depress your metabolism and find that if you don't keep running you'll start getting fat very quickly. You and Forrest Gump can keep on running, but I'm going to go ahead and sit this one out. Bottom line, you don't need to run for long time periods to lose fat. Thinking that is like thinking unicorns exist.

The *biggest* caveat is that you should do long distance running only if you truly love it. If the purpose of your running is not for fat loss, but instead, it's meditative and something that you just enjoy, then go for it! Just be aware and be smart about it, and make sure that you do some of the other stuff you're about to learn.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

To get the best hormonal response, you need to lift heavy weights. This will trigger your body to secrete more anabolic hormones that will enable you to feel better, look better, and sleep better.

Most men have no issues with this, but many women still have the idea that lifting heavy weights will make them “bulky.” The reality is that most men who lift weights like crazy struggle to put on size (and they have better genetics for it!). So, unless you’re taking a steroid cocktail and eating like it’s your full-time job, you don’t have to worry at all about getting bulky.

As a matter of fact, if you lose weight through the traditional way of dieting and cardio, you’ll simply be able to go from an apple shape to a smaller apple shape. By lifting weights you can actually change your body’s composition, and potentially go from an apple shape to an hourglass shape. Lifting weights enables you to express your true genetic potential. Your genes expect you to lift heavy things, and when you do that your body changes accordingly.

Bottom line, lifting weights doesn’t make you big, eating a large amount of food makes you big. Lifting weights won’t make you big and bulky, chocolate croissants will make you big and bulky (I’m still in my French state of mind right now).

To optimize my former insomniac client’s sleep, I had him lift weights for just three 30-minute sessions per week. He dropped body fat, improved his health biomarkers, and most importantly got the sleep he really required.



TRAINSMARTPOWER TIP #1

Take out a schedule and block off specific appointment times for you to workout using the info above. You can set a time for the morning or evening, just ensure that you're giving yourself the best advantage for getting great sleep. If you're really serious about being the healthiest person you can be, you'll set your personal exercise appointment time first, and then schedule everything else around it.



TRAIN SMART POWER TIP #2

Make sure that you're lifting weights at least two days per week. Focus on compound lifts like back squats, deadlifts, dumbbell presses, overhead presses, rows, and pull-downs. There are numerous step-by-step protocols in different programs I create, including the free Waist Reduction Quick Start Plan (visit www.QuickStartPlan.com). You will get access to some exercise basics, and I'll be able to send you more advanced strategies as you progress. You'll also receive training on how to line up your nutrition and supplementation (like caffeine) to accelerate fat loss from your workouts.

Even though the program is amazing, a little planning and common sense here will do just fine. If you have a history of sleep problems, I recommend short "Superset" training sessions that last no longer than 30 minutes. You can do this by pairing two exercises together for non-competing muscle groups. We'll use legs and chest in this example. Do six to ten reps of weighted squats followed immediately by six to ten reps of incline press. Rest until fully recovered (upwards of three minutes) then repeat the Superset again. You can switch up the exercises and rest time, but the basic format remains the same. This is great for fat loss *and* optimizing your hormones for a better night's sleep.

———— Chapter 12 ————

GET YOUR "FRIENDS" OUT OF YOUR ROOM

Cell phones, televisions, desktops, laptops, iPads, Kindles, tablets, and more. Many people have turned their bedrooms into miniature Best Buy locations. But what are the health risks associated with this? And, what in the world is it doing to our sleep?

A study sponsored by mobile companies themselves found that using cell phones before bed caused people to take longer to reach critical deep stages of sleep *and* they spent less time in deep sleep. This translates to a diminished ability for the body to heal, depressed immune function, depressed hormone function, and poorer performance the following day.

The most alarming part is that at least 50 percent of Americans sleep with their cell phones right by their side. Many people will admit to checking message alerts in the middle of the night (and needlessly disrupting their sleep patterns). Plus, many more will admit that the first thing they do is reach for their cell phone as

soon as they wake up each day.

Our attention is enormously valuable, and how you begin and end your day has a huge impact on the results in your life. Starting the day checking emails and messages on your phone *immediately* puts others priorities ahead of yours. You start the day addressing other people's needs instead of taking time to care for yourself physically and getting focused on your own goals for the day. You are, in essence, saying, "I know I have things that I want to accomplish, but I would much rather try to take care of them last when I'm stressed out, out of time, and out of energy."

Ending your day by kissing your cell phone goodnight and laying it by your side is another surefire way to set yourself up for failure. Your thoughts are lingering on your last interaction on your phone and not your goals. And as we discussed in Chapter 3, the spectrum of light emitted from your cell phone screen triggers your brain to secrete more "daytime hormones" which delays and reduces the secretion of the sleepy time hormone melatonin.

COOKINGUPCANCER

We already covered some powerful reasons to keep your cell phone out of your bedroom, but the issues go far deeper than that. Our appliances and electronic devices emit both electric and magnetic fields known as EMFs. Electric fields are easily blocked by walls and other objects, but magnetic fields can pass through walls, buildings, and the human body with ease. EMFs have been found to cause disruption in communication between the cells in our bodies.

Take a look at these two words and tell me what the difference is:

EAT

FAT

If you've got a keen eye, you'll notice that the only difference is the *one line* at the bottom of the "E." One line, one piece of data, caused an entirely different end result. Cellular communication within the body is just like this. If the wrong

information is communicated amongst the upwards of 100 trillion cells you have, autoimmune diseases can manifest, hormones can be thrown out-of-whack, and even cancer cells can show their ugly faces.

EMFs from our common electronic friends have been linked to leukemia, brain tumors, and breast cancer, along with several other serious issues. So, what about cell phone EMFs?

The World Health Organization has now classified cell phone radiation as a Class B carcinogen.

Dr. Siegal Sadetzki testified at a U.S. Senate hearing that cell phones were identified as a contributor to salivary gland tumors. The report states that your risk of getting a parotid tumor on the same side of your head that you use for listening to the cell phone increases by:

- 34 percent if you are a regular cell phone user and have used a mobile phone for five years.
- 58 percent if you had more than about 5,500 calls in your lifetime.
- 49 percent if you have spoken on the phone for more than 266.3 hours during your lifetime.

Still not convinced yet?

The results on children are far worse. Unfortunately, children and teens are at greatest risk, both for parotid gland tumors and brain tumors, because their thinner skull bones allow for greater penetration of cell phone radiation.

The radiation can deeply impact tissues all the way to their midbrain, where tumors are more fatal. Additionally, children's cells reproduce faster, so they're more susceptible to aggressive cell growth. The biggest issue today is that kids face longer lifetime exposure. I remember a time very clearly when cell phones didn't exist, whereas countless people alive today were born into the widespread use of cell phones. According to Professor Lennart Hardell of Sweden, people who begin using cell phones heavily as teenagers have four to five times more brain cancer as young adults.

Moral of the story here: Don't keep cell phones around your body needlessly, and communicate this to the young people in your life as well. And, knowing these effects, why in the world would you sleep with your cell phone near you all night long?

People hang on to their phones and electronic devices like they are their best friends in the world. They act like they're going to fallout and die if they don't have their cell phone within texting distance.

Trust me, you'll live... and if you don't pay attention to this, all the rest of your years are not going to be very fun. Get the electronics *out* of your bedroom! If sleep is important to you, then you'll do this. If being healthy and not having a chronic disease is important to you, then you'll do this. Television, laptops, cell phones, all of these things are kicking out radiation that is disrupting your sleep. Have your entertainment in the entertainment area of your home. Keep your bedroom reserved for sleep and sex.

Numerous studies have confirmed that watching television before bed disrupts your sleep cycle. It might seem like a mundane activity to sit back and watch TV in your bed, but parts of your brain are being set off like fireworks. You're actually putting a stressor on your brain and body, especially if it's time to be winding down for bed.

Data shows that children with televisions in their bedrooms score lower on school tests and are more likely to have sleep problems. And, to top it all off, having a TV in the bedroom is associated with a greater risk of obesity.

What about for mama and papa? Couples who keep a TV in their bedroom have sex half as often as those who don't (This is the part of the book where some people smack themselves then go and get the television out of their bedroom).

More and better sex should be reason enough for most people. I'll bet that after the world discovers this data, you'll be shocked if you see a television in a bedroom from then on. You'll walk into someone's bedroom, see a TV, then put your hand over your chest as you gasp and say, "Really? People still watch TV in bed...? Really?"

Having these electronics in your bedroom is like a first-degree assault on your

sleep. Take action on this now, out of respect for your body, and get those gadgets out of your bedroom. Stack the conditions in your favor to ensure that you're creating an environment to get the sleep you deserve.



FRIENDS OUT POWER TIP #1

Many people use their phone as a Swiss Army Knife to replace a lot of other useful devices. One of those useful devices is an alarm clock. To avoid this seduction of keeping it near your bedside, simply take action to use an alternative alarm clock. You can use the alarm clock I recommended in Chapter 10, with the full shut-off dimmer, you can use a traditional buzzer alarm clock, or you can even use a rooster for all I care. Just stop using your cell phone if you don't have to.



FRIENDSOUTPOWER TIP #2

The importance of communication in a relationship has become cliché. Yet, the reality of the situation is that communication is the basis for any successful union. If you want to get the TV out of your bedroom and you are worried that your partner won't want to go along with it, simply have a compassionate heart-to-heart with them. Explain why this is important to you, and ask them if they'd be willing to work with you on this because you respect them and want them to be happy as well. You'll probably be surprised what a little extra love and communication can do (plus give them a copy of this book as a backup).



FRIENDSOUTPOWER TIP #3

I know it might sound crazy, but everything will be okay if you keep your phone in another room while you sleep. It's 99.999 percent likely that you won't miss anything important. But, you *will* radically improve your sleep quality if you're not allowing your cell phone's notifications and radiation to disrupt your valuable sleep. Go on a cell phone free test drive. Just give it a shot for one week, and if the world ends while you're sleeping peacefully during that period, I'll try to call you the next day and let you know.

———— Chapter 13 ————

LOSE WEIGHT AND DON'T FIND IT AGAIN

One of the most overlooked problems with getting great sleep is having too much body fat on your frame. Being overweight causes severe stress to your internal organs, your nervous system, and disrupts your endocrine system like few things can.

Your endocrine system (aka your body's hormonal system) is responsible for producing hormones like melatonin, serotonin, and cortisol that we've talked about in relation to sleep.

Let's take a look at the impact that being overweight has on cortisol for example. Research presented by Deakin University in Australia showed that after consuming a meal, overweight individuals secreted radically higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol. People with a healthy weight showed a five percent increase in cortisol levels after consuming a meal, while cortisol levels of overweight and obese individuals increased by a whopping 51 percent! These

high cortisol levels translate to higher blood sugar, lower insulin sensitivity, and increased levels of inflammation.

The biggest issue is that cortisol is as close to an anti-sleep hormone as you can get. Having higher levels of these stress hormones in your body will inherently damage normal function, no matter what time of day the meal is eaten. To know that each time you eat a meal that your stress hormones are shooting through the roof is scary. This is one of the most important reasons to get the weight off, because it's killing you softly like that old Fugees song.

One of the more obvious issues that being overweight can have on sleep quality is *sleep apnea*. The term sleep apnea refers to a sleep disorder characterized by pauses in breathing or infrequent breathing during sleep. Each pause in breathing, called an apnea, can last from at least ten seconds to several minutes, and can occur from five to thirty times or more an hour. Basically, you stop breathing, and that results in abnormal blood pressure, depressed brain function, and dozens of other problems.

Margaret Moline, PhD states that, "As the person gains weight, especially in the trunk and neck area, the risk of sleep-disordered breathing increases due to compromised respiratory function." Currently, 18 million Americans have sleep apnea and several million more have severe organ stress and breathing problems due to the excess weight they're carrying around.

One of the common treatments for sleep apnea is to hook yourself to an assisted breathing machine known as a CPAP when you get into bed. It basically makes you look like Bane from *The Dark Night Rises*. Cool if you're into that look, but it will likely have a negative impact on your love life.

The real solution is to not treat the symptom, but address the underlying *cause* of most sleep apnea in the first place. Get that excess weight off your frame! When we talk about weight loss, we're talking about an issue that plagues millions of people worldwide each year. Good people, smart people, truly determined people, it doesn't matter. If you give a determined person the wrong map, they will inherently end up at the wrong destination.

That's what I've found to be the biggest problem when it comes to weight loss. A

serious lack of honest, safe, and effective information. You have to understand that the weight-loss industry is a multi-billion dollar industry, and it doesn't work well if there aren't lots of people struggling and pumping out cash.

By using those backwards methods taught by most health gurus, the majority of people lose the weight and then they proceed to find it again. They work so hard to get the results they want, then eventually put the weight back on, and often times a little bit more than they started with. If this is your story, then it's time now to step up and stop letting this happen to you.

I'm about to make this so easy that chances are you'll take it for granted. I've helped people lose thousands of pounds collectively *and* keep it off long-term. What I'm going to share with you works. But, you've got to make the decision to implement it.

THE LOWDOWN

If you're focusing on cutting calories to lose weight, then you might as well go and buy yourself some larger-size clothes right now. Research shows that up to 70 percent of the weight you lose through traditional calorie restriction is coming from a loss of your lean muscle tissue. As mentioned in Chapter 11, your muscle is your body's fat burning machinery, and if you lose it through dieting, you'll depress your metabolism, and set yourself up for long-term weight gain.

The problem is that people are thinking in terms of weight loss instead of *body-fat loss*. You don't want to lose weight. You want to lose fat. When it comes to this, it's all about the hormones. You've got to incite your body to secrete hormones that use stored body fat for fuel, and it's really as simple as that.

So how do we make this happen?

The first thing to understand is that you are either burning fat or storing fat... there is no in between (Sounds very Zen doesn't it?). If you're activating hormones that store fat all the time, then you're automatically throwing yourself out of the game, even if you're carefully counting your calories.

Your body's major fat-storing hormone is insulin. You may think of it only in regards to diabetes, but it's one of the most important hormones to your survival (and it can make you very fat if you don't know how to turn it off).

Now comes the easy part. The number one thing that insulin reacts to is carbohydrates. This includes all starches like bread, pasta, and potatoes, refined sugar products like cakes, candy, and soda, and even healthier carbohydrates like fresh fruit. To your body, it doesn't matter. These carbs come in and insulin is turning on.

To shift your body into more of a fat-burning state, you need to put more of your focus on the other two macronutrient groups: protein and fat. A study published in the *Journal of Nutrition* showed that increasing protein intake led to enhanced weight loss and improved blood fat levels. And a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* split 132 people (many of which had metabolic syndrome or type 2 diabetes) into either a low-carb group or a low-dietary fat

group for six months. The low-carb group lost an average of 12.8 lbs while the low-fat group lost only 4.2 lbs. The lower-carb, higher dietary fat group literally lost three times as much weight!

It's not about having a low-carb diet necessarily; it's about having a better ratio of all three macronutrient groups for you and your unique metabolism. This seems pretty simple, right? So why aren't people doing this?

I was there on the front lines. I was sitting in the nutrition classes in college and being told *repeatedly* by my professors that we need to eat less fat and more carbohydrates to be healthy and maintain a healthy weight. You heard that right. They told me to have my clients do the exact opposite thing of what actually works. Side note: my professors were overweight, as are many dietitians who follow that advice. If they're not overweight, they're usually struggling mightily with it, and keeping their own health and weight issues to themselves. The political reasons of why they promote this are not as important as you getting this information and using it to your advantage right now.

By eating a higher ratio of protein and healthy fats you'll enable your pancreas to produce more glucagon instead of insulin. Glucagon triggers the breakdown of stored fatty acids for fuel, and is essential to utilize if fat loss is your goal.

I want to keep this on the topic of sleep as much as possible, so I'm not going to get into too much more detail here. If you've had a history of weight problems, or you simply want to be the leanest, healthiest version of yourself possible, then I highly recommend you head over and check out the Waist Reduction Quick Start Plan at www.QuickStartPlan.com. From there I'll be able to send you additional training, complete with nutrition and exercise strategies that can be catered to your individual needs as you progress.

We are all unique, and understanding this is one of the most critical components when it comes to what works and what doesn't for weight loss. At the same time, there are still some consistent things to pay attention to across the board, because if you are human, then they are essential to you.

THE MICRONUTRIENT SECRET

There is so much talk today about the *macronutrients* we need to be in great shape that the amazing *micronutrients* are often overlooked. Micronutrients are things like the vitamins, minerals, trace minerals, phytonutrients, and enzymes that all enable our body to function at its highest level. Simple mineral deficiencies like low magnesium can lead to over-eating regardless of your macronutrient focus.

Also, micronutrients are essential to achieving healthy hormone function, and remember, fat loss is all about the hormones! Eating micronutrient-rich foods can trigger your body to secrete more leptin (the satiety hormone) to keep you balanced, healthy, and in control. This is the exact opposite of most diets that restrict calories and advocate the use of micronutrient-deficient diet products like instant shakes, bars, and reduced calorie pre-packaged snacks.

It doesn't matter that your pack of "healthy" processed cookies are only 200 calories. What is the quality of those calories, and what are they doing to your hormones? I'll tell you. They're basically kicking your hormones in the groin.

Where do you get all of these micronutrient rich foods?

Easy: Just eat real food!

I told you I was going to make this easy, right? But, how can you know if something is a real food or not? Well, I've put together a special little list for you.

Here's a simple list of things to help you know if it's a real food or not:

- If you can't tell where it comes from, chances are it's not real food (i.e. a bagel doesn't have any resemblance to a strand of wheat).
- If it comes through a drive through window, chances are it's not real food.
- If there are more than four or five ingredients, chances are it's not real food.
- If it even has to list the ingredients on it, chances are it's not real food.
- If it has a mascot or a special toy for buying it, chances are it's not real food.

Bottom line... to get the body you want to have, you have to get reconnected to nature again. Your genes literally expect you to eat certain things. Once you get

yourself reprogrammed through real food and smart exercise, there's literally no limit to how good things can get.

For more on real food recipes and resources, be sure to visit my website www.TheShawnStevensonModel.com.

IKNOWYOUARE,BUTWHATAMI?

Being overweight or obese is a double-edged sword. Not only does obesity contribute to sleep problems, but sleep problems can also contribute to obesity.

A study out of Stanford University showed that when individuals were sleep deprived they ended up with significantly decreased levels of leptin in their system. Again, leptin is known as the “satiety hormone” because it plays such an important role in regulating appetite. Chances are, when you're tired or sleep deprived, this is the hardest time to resist the junk food that you know you should be avoiding.

When you're physically and mentally tired, your brain is looking for extra calories to keep everything functioning at a baseline level. Your brain knows that it can find those calories quickly and easily in chips, cookies, ice cream, and other kiddie foods that your grown-up butt suddenly can't resist. It's not an issue of willpower anymore, it's an issue of *survival* because the story goes deeper than this...

Researchers discovered that sleep deprivation reduced the “higher order” functions of the brain, and created excessive response in the primitive parts of the brain. Brain imaging scans done at UC Berkley showed that sleep deprivation caused more brain activity in the amygdala, an area associated with motivation to eat. The amygdala is very much a more emotional, reactive, survival-based part of the brain. Study participants that these scans were taken from did, in fact, make poorer choices in food.

Tie this together with reduced activity in the frontal cortex and insular cortex, the parts of the brain associated with evaluation, self-control, and rational decision-making. With these two changes in your brain due to sleep deprivation, you've got a surefire recipe for struggle and failure.

You see, it isn't always about our willpower. So many really amazing and strong people fail at weight loss because they've unknowingly stacked conditions against themselves. By being sleep deprived, your inner incredible hulk hijacks your brain and you can't resist doing the very activity that you promised yourself not to do.

Are the past diet failures your fault? Well, it really isn't a failure until you make an excuse. And, it doesn't really matter if it was your fault if you were unaware. But, now that you know these critical insights to changing your body, you've got to consciously stack the conditions in your favor to make future failures impossible.

Eve Van Cauter, PhD, called sleep deprivation "The royal route to obesity." Now understanding the fact that sleep deprivation decreases your insulin sensitivity, disrupts your hormonal cycles, and depressed your brain function, we know that her statement is 100 percent true. It's time to put all the excuses to the side and give your body the sleep it requires to finally lose the weight and get the body and health you truly deserve.



LOSE WEIGHT WHILE SLEEPING POWER TIP #1

If you really have to have something closer to bedtime, have a high-fat, low-carb snack. This will ensure that your blood sugar stays stable. Whereas if you eat a higher carb snack before bed, your blood sugar will spike, and the impending blood sugar crash can be enough to wake you up out of sleep. This is why, in our culture, we have the concept of waking up to get a “midnight snack.” But hey, that’s why they put a light in the refrigerator in the first place, right?

If you want to get truly restful sleep, one of the worst things you can do is eat right before bed (especially if you’re overweight, because cortisol levels go much higher). Give your body a solid 90 minutes (more is better) before heading off to bed after eating. Again, this is especially true if you’re eating carbs, because if you’re asleep when hypoglycemia hits, it will likely wake you up and give you difficulties falling back asleep.



LOSE WEIGHT WHILE SLEEPING POWER TIP #2

Have your first meal be an epic one. Start your day off smart. Most people in our modern world have been programmed to start their day by having dessert for breakfast. Oatmeal, toast, pancakes, bagels, cereals, fruit smoothies, and more. You're starting your day with a huge insulin spike and setting yourself up for a day of fat-storage because of this.

Here we have one of the biggest secrets to long-term fat loss: *keep insulin down through the first part of your day.* The morning is the ideal time to get in your real food, superfoods, and healthy fat supplements because you're right next to your cabinets at home. A breakfast of a vegetable omelet, sliced avocado topped with kelp granules (a sea veggie that's great for thyroid function), and some omega-3 supplements is a hormone healthy way to start your day.

I'm not villainizing all smoothies, by the way, but if fat loss is your goal you want to keep the fruit to a minimum (even though it's better than glazed donuts, it's still going to spike insulin if you're not careful about it). Instead, if you're going to make a smoothie, then make a green smoothie with a focus on the *green*. Load that blender up with a ridiculous amount of green leafy vegetables like spinach, some berries, protein powder, some cacao powder (real chocolate powder), cinnamon, unsweetened almond milk, and maybe half a small banana or stevia to make it taste nice. The greens and micronutrients will help to keep that insulin response to a minimum.

Even though green smoothies are okay, the best option for most people is to go with some protein (like eggs, steak, or salmon), veggies

(cooked or raw), and some healthy fats (like avocado, coconut, olives, or nuts and seeds). Stop having breakfast look like a meal served by Willy Wonka. If you want to lose fat, redefine your definition of a healthy breakfast, and start your body off in a fat-burning state, instead of a fat-storing state.

Note: Everyone is unique, and uncovering the ideal breakfast and other meals for your unique body type is a centerpiece of what I teach through my website. The info that I want to share with you about nutrition and fat loss in this chapter can take up an entire book, plus weeks of additional training. That's why I created the Waist Reduction Quick Start Plan as a starting point, and provide additional support for you along the way from there. Visit www.QuickStartPlan.com.

———— Chapter 14 ————

GO EASY ON THE BOTTLE

Did you know that you actually get smarter while you sleep? One of the most valuable, and overlooked aspects of sleep, is an operation called memory processing. This is where short-term memories and experiences get converted into long-term memories.

Memory processing is predominantly affected by different stages of REM sleep. Studies have proven the good news about drinking alcohol late in the evening is that you do, indeed, fall asleep faster. But, the bad news is that REM sleep is significantly disrupted by alcohol being in your system. You won't be able to fall into deeper levels of sleep, and your brain and body won't be able to fully rejuvenate. This is why people generally don't feel that great after waking up from an alcohol-laced sleep.

You already know this to be true... that's why the word "hangover" has become so popular in our vocabulary today. And, of course, you've seen the movie *The*

Hangover, right? That's just an extreme case of waking up, not knowing what happened the night before (because you screwed up your memory processing), and possibly having a new tattoo on your face.

Additionally, researchers at Washington University in St. Louis found that participants who had disrupted sleep cycles were more likely to show Alzheimer's disease-related signs than sound sleepers. This is another blatant cry to not mistake sleep quantity for sleep quality, and to avoid things that hurt your sleep and hurt your brain.

LADIES' NIGHT

There's strong evidence that drinking late in the evening is even more problematic for women. A study published in 2011 had people drink alcohol in the name of science. Drinks were passed around to men and women, based on their weight, and everyone was equally drunk (measured by breath alcohol content). The findings showed that female participants woke up more often during the night, stayed awake longer, and slept for less time overall, than the men. This could be significant news if you're planning on doing shots for the next ladies' night out.

It's possible that alcohol affects women's sleep more because women metabolize alcohol faster than men. Essentially, women can speed through alcohol's sedative effects quicker. If the alcohol is consumed close to bedtime, women can fall asleep faster, but the proceeding stages of sleep will have a much greater chance of being interrupted. In some cases, this can cause sweating, anxiety, or even nightmares (if they do happen to get some REM sleep).

Now, this isn't a get-out-of-jail-free pass for the fellas, nor is this an anti-fun stamp for the ladies. Drinking late at night affects everyone in some way, it's just about being able to navigate this to get the sleep we really need.

IGOTTA GO

One of the more obvious sleep interruptions from drinking alcohol before bed is the uncanny need to urinate. Getting up to relieve your bladder interrupts your sleep pattern because, well, you're peeing.

Every time you wake up from an alcohol-influenced sleep, it can be more difficult to fall back into the deep sleep stages you need to recover. Bottom line—if you do drink closer to bedtime, be sure to give yourself ample time to go to the bathroom before turning in.

Drinking close to bedtime can also exacerbate current health problems that someone is dealing with. Obviously, prostate and bladder problems come to mind, but what about diagnosed sleeping problems?

People with sleep apnea need to be careful here. Sleep-disorder specialist, Dr. Reena Mehra, says that alcohol decreases muscle tone in the upper airway, meaning that breathing-related sleep issues are exacerbated after you've had a couple of drinks. People dealing with sleep apnea will tend to stop breathing more frequently and for longer periods of time after drinking. You have to consider if it's worth it because your chances of potential life-threatening side effects radically increase if you mix a cocktail of booze and sleep apnea.

As we talked about in Chapter 13, the real solution is to get the excess weight off of your frame to reverse the sleep apnea and improve your sleep quality. Drinking alcohol is synonymous with belly fat, so obviously this will not help in your weight-loss campaign. Am I saying not to go out and have fun with your friends? Of course not! But, you've got to get your priorities in order, and take care of the things that are most important, so that you can enjoy your time with your friends and family even more.



DRINKING SMART POWER TIP #1

Wrap it up at least four hours before hitting the sack. If you want to play at a high level and still hang out with your friends for drinks, then hook up with them for happy hour instead of an all-night bender.

If you want to be a champ at this rejuvenating sleep thing, consider having a booze curfew so that your body can have a couple hours to get it out of your system. The amount you drink, your weight, and your body fat will play a role in exactly how long that is. There's a great alcohol metabolism rate chart and blood alcohol level calculator at www.drinkfox.com.



DRINKING SMART POWER TIP #2

Drink more... water, that is.

Alcohol is assimilated into your blood very quickly, in part, because it's in liquid form. To help nullify the effects of the alcohol faster, you need to drink more water to help flush out the metabolic waste products left behind.

Alcohol is also a diuretic, meaning it will cause your body to expel more fluids and increase your likelihood of dehydration. For every alcoholic drink you have, your body can eliminate up to four times as much liquid. Dehydration is one of the primary causes of nausea and other non-appealing symptoms of a hangover.

To recover faster and keep your body hydrated, wine expert Anthony Giglio recommends having one eight-ounce glass of water with every alcoholic drink that you have. Keeping a pitcher of water at your table doesn't take Jeopardy-level intelligence, but I bet you'll feel like a genius when you wake up the next day without a hangover.

———— Chapter 15 ————

PLAY YOUR POSITION

It might seem surprising to need to talk about sleeping positions. Most people think that it's as simple as lying their butt down and then the magic will happen from there. We tend to not think about the importance of our sleeping position because it's something that we've done for so long that it's become automatic.

The reality is that your sleeping position matters. A lot.

Here are just some of the things that are affected by your sleeping position:

- Blood flow to your brain
- Stability of your spine
- Hormone production
- Joint and ligament integrity
- Oxygen supply and efficient breathing

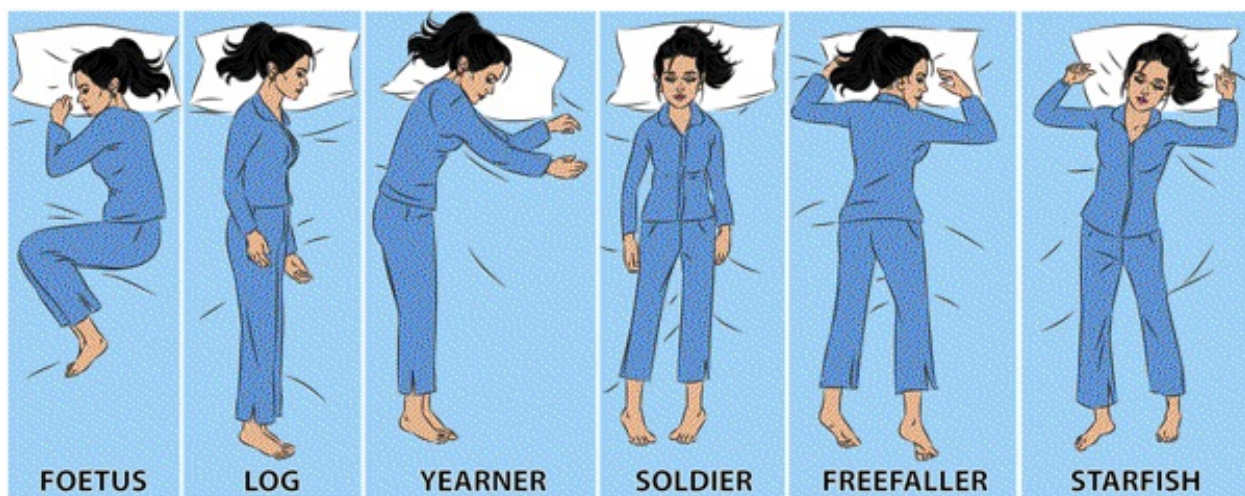
- Muscular function and healing
- Heart function and blood pressure
- Digestion and cellular metabolism

If you're sleeping in a position that compromises your body's ability to function and recover, it doesn't matter how many hours you get, you're still going to feel like a piñata the day after the party when you wake up.

One of the most important facets of your sleeping position is maintaining the integrity of your spine. Any good chiropractor can educate you on the fact that the brain stem running through your spine is directly connected to every major organ in your body. If your spine is compromised and there's a break in the information between your brain and your body, chronic and catastrophic problems can take place. Some of these problems can be rooted in the way you're sleeping.

There are many flavors of sleeping positions that people use to get their beauty sleep. From the Starfish position, to the Free-Faller, to the Soldier, there are many ways to get cozy in bed.

Even though there are many sleeping styles that people put themselves in, there are only one or two that we tend to gravitate to personally. Have a look the chart and see which sleeping style you tend to use.



There are many variations of these positions, but these are the basics. And to

make it even simpler, we're just going to focus on getting you in the best position on your back, your stomach, or your side.

HAVE YOUR OWN BACK

Many experts will tell you that sleeping on your back is the ideal position to be in. There are several reasons that this could be accurate. First of all, your spine can be in the best position here (as long as you don't make some of the mistakes we'll talk about in a moment). You will also have less likelihood of digestive distress, like acid reflux, in this position. And, for all those who are cosmetically conscious, sleeping on your back allows your facial skin to breathe and you'll be less prone to having breakouts and early-onset wrinkling.

The downside of sleeping on your back is the greater likelihood of snoring and sleep apnea. This is partly because when we sleep on our backs, gravity can force the base of the tongue to collapse into the airway, obstructing normal breathing. Other reasons for this are general throat weakness that's extenuated by lying on your back, causing the throat to close during sleep. If someone has too much body fat on their frame (as we discussed in Chapter 13) fat gathering in and around the throat can cut off the normal air supply. This can be remedied by losing excess body fat and utilizing a different sleep position.

Back-sleeping is the most politically correct choice but, admittedly, not the most comfy position to be in. It's definitely safer for your spine, but not the best position if you're making these big mistakes:

Using a huge pillow: Some people's beds look like a full-on pillow convention. It's okay to have a bunch of pillows for decoration, but this does *not* mean that you have to sleep on all of them. Having a pillow (or pillows) that are too big under your head while lying on your back, totally misaligns the natural curve of your spine. You can end up with neck pain, back pain, headaches, or even worse. There's also poor circulation to your brain all night because the blood is trying to move uphill past Mount Pillow.

During sleep, you'd naturally have your head lower, because this is the one time that your body shouldn't have to work harder to pump blood to your brain. Break the pillow addiction immediately, because it's bad business for your back and your brain.

Using a worn out mattress: Seriously, you're better off sleeping on the floor.

The mattress is supposed to support you. Not too much (like the floor) and not too little (like having your butt sink into a fluffy abyss). You don't have to get the most fancy-pants mattress in the world, just make sure that you're not sinking in so much that your spine's natural curve is compromised.

SLEEP LIKE A BABY

Sleeping on our stomachs used to be synonymous with sleeping like a baby. Laying an infant on their stomach to sleep has gone in and out of favor and is still much debated in our world today. Child development specialist Dr. Václav Vojta states that lying on our stomach as infants is actually critical to our development. Over 50 years of research, Dr. Vojta has identified that there are specific pressure points on our bodies that “activate” nervous system programs when we are infants. These pressure points are engaged when children are allowed to lie on their bellies and do subtle movements that we would naturally do while sleeping.

Update that to our adulthood and many people just feel more comfortable and peaceful lying on their bellies. There are many pros and cons to this, so if you’re going to do it, do it right.

Lying down face-first with your legs straight and your arms right by your side is probably a bad idea. This is compromising your back by taking away the natural curve of your lumbar spine. Add having your head to one side, smashed into a pillow for hours on end, and you’ve got a serious recipe for disaster.

On the brighter side, some research shows that lying on your stomach can help prevent snoring and some symptoms of sleep apnea. Sleeping facedown keeps your upper airways more open, so this could be okay for you if you follow a few simple rules.

Lift a knee: Lift one knee up to open your hips and take some of the pressure off your spine from laying with your legs straight.

Lose the pillow: If you’re going to sleep on your belly, then ditch the pillow, because you really don’t need it. Using a pillow will hyperextend your neck all night and that’s just silly. Think of walking around all day with your head tilted back looking at the sky. Yes, you’ll look crazy, but you’ll also have neck problems.

Use the pillow for something else: Placing a small, firm pillow underneath your belly and hips will reduce the stress on your low back and neck. Simply

place a pillow in a comfortable spot on the same side that you've lifted your leg and you're in a much healthier position to sleep on your stomach.

ON THE WINNING SIDE

Most people report that they prefer to sleep on their side, and for good reason. Our most intense times of sleep and development happened while we were in the womb, curled up in the fetal position. Sleeping on our side is the natural sleeping position to emulate this developmental template.

Side sleeping can be a quick fix for snoring and help to improve breathing, more so than lying on your back. Sleeping on your side (the left side in particular) has been reported to ease troublesome digestive problems like acid reflux and heartburn.

The downside, as most side-sleepers know, is the dreaded “dead-arm” and finger numbness from this position. Sleeping on your arm for too long can cut off blood flow and nerve function. You can wake up feeling that someone played a prank on you and slathered your arm with novocaine.

Here are some simple tips for sleeping on your side:

Shoulder lean: Instead of sleeping with your shoulder directly under you, move it forward slightly to avoid constriction of your shoulder and arm muscles.

Pillow proposition: Make sure that your head isn’t propped up too high on pillows. You want to ensure that you’re maintaining the natural straight position of your spine with a pillow that supports your neck, but doesn’t raise your head too much.

For those with back pain: Experts recommend sleeping on your side with a soft pillow between your knees if you have a history of back problems. This helps to stabilize your spine and alleviate pressure from your hips and lower back.

ARE YOU SLEEPING WITH YOUR SOUL MATE, OR SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY?

Often times, sleeping with someone you love is a great comfort. There’s nothing better than going to sleep with, and waking up with, your favorite person each

day. But, take notice. If you want to keep them as your favorite person, and continue to be theirs, you've got to navigate this sleep situation with intelligence.

Make no mistake; sleeping in the bed with another live body can make for an entertaining experience. Some people can get along in the bed just fine. While other people prepare to go into battle each night. Some people are peaceful and don't move much; others act as though they're an acrobat in Cirque du Soleil. Some people hog the covers, some people snore, some people talk in their sleep, some people even scream out loud. The relationship goes to a whole new level when you meet somebody's sleep alter ego.

Obviously, communicating and following the guidance in this book is going to be invaluable. But what about the sleeping position itself? Unless you have a double California king size bed, the Starfish position isn't going to cut it.

To make this really easy, the chart below will provide you with some sleep positions to try. Simply test them out and find which one(s) work best for you and your partner so that you can both get the best sleep possible.





PLAY YOUR POSITION POWER TIP #1

Our sleep position habits are just like any other habits: they can take some time to change. Start off the night in your ideal sleep position, and if you wake up during the night and find yourself in a position that you don't want to be in, simply make a conscious effort to get into one that you prefer.



PLAY YOUR POSITION POWER TIP #2

Make sure to communicate your sleeping needs and preferences with your partner—this simply cannot be emphasized enough. Talk to them with intention and compassion. Understand their sleeping needs, and make sure that you're doing what you can to make them feel comfortable too.

There are few things more intimate in life than sharing a sleeping space with someone else. It can create a greater connection, or it can create more irritation than you can imagine. The simple solution is to communicate *with* love and respect.

———— Chapter 16 ————

CALM YOUR I N N E R CHATTER

There is a great quote that says, “My bed is a magical place where I suddenly remember everything I was supposed to do.”

People hop into bed, and then proceed to think about the when, where, who, why, what, and hows of their life... all while they’re supposed to be sleeping. If this sounds familiar to you, then you have a serious issue with something we call “inner chatter.” But, don’t worry, there is a solution.

It’s important to realize that there is nothing “wrong” with you just because you have a lot of thoughts. It’s part of being human. It’s actually a great gift to be able to process as much information as we do. Experts estimate that we have upwards of 50,000 thoughts-per-day; most of them random, and most of them short-lived. But, in our over-informed, over-stressed, and hyper-sensitized world today it can all be a bit much. We need to learn to turn the volume down when we want to. And, it’s really as simple as that.

What I'm going to share with you is not just a tool to help you improve your sleep; it's a powerful tool to help transform your life. The inner chatter that you experience is a result of the stress and untamed busyness of the day. Now, more than ever, with the constant flow of information coming at you, it's important to have a practice to help you buffer that stress. That important practice is *meditation*.

Meditation doesn't have to be complicated, and it definitely doesn't require that you subscribe to any weird spiritual belief (no drinking the Kool-Aid please!). It also doesn't require you to sit cross-legged on the floor, chanting a mantra, either. It can be as simple as sitting quietly and focusing on your breathing, counting your steps as you walk around the park, or you can even turn everyday activities like taking a shower or washing your clothes into a great meditation by following a few basic principles.

Meditation is like a tonic. A tonic is something that you can use everyday, and the results continue to get better and better. The more you meditate, the more calm and presence you'll have in your day-to-day life.

Now when I say more, I'm talking about frequency, and not a specific time requirement. Once you find the right meditation for yourself, you can almost instantly feel a sense of calm and presence by doing your practice throughout the day.

I started off meditating for 30 to 45 minutes every morning for three years. Today, I do more "mini-meditations," often five minutes or less, and I feel the same focus and peace that I felt all those years when meditating for a half hour or more. How? Because the effects are cumulative, and the neuro-association my brain and body have made to closing my eyes and focusing on my breath, instantly puts me in that calm space.

Numerous studies show that meditation increases "feel-good" hormones and endorphins, lowers stress hormones like cortisol, and even reduces inflammation in our body. Now, you can buy stuff that can give you similar experiences, but it'll probably cost you a lot of money (and you might get arrested too).

Let's take a look at the proven ways that a meditation practice can improve your

life.

PERFORMANCE

In a study published in the journal *Brain Research Bulletin*, researchers discovered that people trained to meditate over an eight-week period were better able to control specific type of brain waves called “alpha rhythms.”

The lead author of the paper, MIT neuroscientist, Christopher Moore, stated, “These activity patterns are thought to minimize distractions, to diminish the likelihood stimuli will grab your attention. Our data indicate that meditation training makes you better at focusing, in part by allowing you to better regulate how things that arise will impact you.”

Could you use more focus in your life right now? Would being less distracted be helpful to you?

If you're like most people, then focus is a huge issue. Our ability to focus and get things done is a huge component of overall success. Meditation literally changes your brain and enables you to utilize your ability to focus like nothing else can. Not in an “oh, that sounds nice” kind of way, but in it actually changes the way your brain grows and operates.

After eight weeks, the subjects who had been trained in meditation showed larger changes in the size (amplitude) of their alpha waves when asked to focus on one specific thing. Essentially, their focus was stronger and deeper than at the beginning of the study. Researchers at Harvard Medical School have also found that meditation alters the structure of your brain, thickening the regions associated with attention and sensory processing.

There is an absurd amount of data mounting about the beneficial impact of meditation on work performance, productivity, memory, and focus. Don't be the one who misses the boat because you didn't take advantage of this valuable resource.

HEALTH

Research at the Medical College of Georgia found that meditation lowered blood pressure and reduced the risk of heart disease and stroke. Numerous studies also demonstrate that meditation can reduce chronic pain and associated inflammatory biomarkers.

Today, over 80 percent of physician visits are for stress-related illnesses. Stress is at the top of the list of reasons why people begin a meditation practice. Countless studies show the stress-reducing effects in healthy individuals, as well as in patients suffering from a variety of diseases. Meditation has proven to be good for your brain, good for your body, and good for life overall.

SLEEP

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine published research showing that meditation is an effective treatment for insomnia. The study showed that over a two-month period sleep latency, total sleep time, total wake time, wake after sleep onset, sleep efficiency, sleep quality, and depression improved in patients who used meditation.

Principle investigator in the study, Dr Gourineni stated, “Results of the study show that teaching deep relaxation techniques during the daytime can help improve sleep at night.”

The most important takeaway is that the only side effects associated with meditation are a better quality of life. Whereas using drugs to treat insomnia is associated with organ damage, hormone disruption, and significant chemical dependency.

RIDE THE WAVE

We all have four different brain wave frequencies that are most often expressed, measured in cycles per second (Hz). Each of these brain wave frequencies have their own set of characteristics that demonstrate specific brain activity and a unique state of consciousness. Here is a brief description of the four:

Beta waves (15-40 Hz): This is the brain rhythm in the normal state of wakefulness, associated with thinking, conscious problems solving, and attention towards the outer world. You are most likely in a “beta state” while reading this right now.

Alpha waves (9-14 Hz): When you are truly relaxed, your brain waves slow from the hyper-alertness of beta waves to the gentle waves of alpha. The “alpha state” is where meditation begins and it’s a brain wave frequency that heightens your imagination, visualization, memory, learning, and concentration. This is the gateway to the subconscious mind and reprogramming your thinking.

Theta waves (4-8 Hz): Theta brain waves are present during deep meditation and light sleep, including the important REM dream state. This is the domain of your subconscious and only experienced momentarily as you drift off to sleep from alpha *or* wake from deep sleep (delta waves). We are more receptive to insights and information beyond our normal conscious awareness in this state. Some experts state that theta meditation amplifies intuition and other extrasensory perception skills.

Delta waves (1-3 Hz): The delta frequency is the slowest of the frequencies and is experienced in deep, dreamless sleep. It is also seen occasionally in very experienced meditators. The delta state is critical to the body’s healing processes. Most regeneration and healing happen in this brain-wave state, making getting enough deep sleep critical to our survival.

The ability to change your brain waves is why meditation works. You can consciously, proactively change the way your brain operates, and the potential benefits are tremendous.

Now that we know the power of meditation, here's how to do it to improve your sleep and get a better brain, starting now.

PRIMETIME

One of the best times for meditation is when you're already close to the alpha and theta brain waves. This would be as soon as you wake up in the morning, or right before bed at night. As the American Academy of Sleep Medicine research showed, meditating in the morning is proven to help test subjects sleep at night. You're creating a conscious neuro-pathway to relaxation, a buffer against stress, and a profound sense of presence that will help you sleep better at night.

Start your own meditation practice beginning tomorrow morning (or right now if you're an A-player!). We hear all the time about unhealthy habits, but this is a *healthy* habit you can create to benefit your life in numerous areas. As little as five to ten minutes to start your day will have a cumulative effect on your energy, focus, and ability to sleep better at night.

If you ever find yourself in a situation where you wake up too soon and have trouble going back to sleep, simply lay in your bed and practice a breathing meditation to put your brain into the alpha and/or theta state to mimic some of the benefits of the sleep you would normally be missing out on.

This is an incredible resource to have at your disposal when you need it.

It's all about having tools and strategies to perform in our day-to-day lives. Meditation can help rejuvenate your body and mind, supplement your sleep, and improve your performance. If you need some help with meditation techniques, I have some for you below, plus some bonus tips to help your mind and body recover when you're in a pinch.



CALMITDOWNPOWER TIP #1

If you decide to meditate at night to help you wind-down for sleep, try doing it *before* you get into the bed, not while you're in bed. Again, the neuro-association you want to have with your bed is sleep (and sex if you're too sexy for this party) and that's it. You can sit by your bedside and meditate for a few minutes, then slide your way into bed for a great night's sleep.



CALMITDOWNPOWER TIP #2

Use guided meditations to help you get acclimated when you're first starting out. They can be really helpful for extremely busy-minded people because your attention goes to the instructions along the way. Try out the guided meditations provided by UCLA at:

<http://theshawnstevensonmodel/guided-meditations>



CALMITDOWNPOWER TIP #3

If you do want to use a simple meditation/mindfulness practice to help you fall asleep while lying in bed, try this:

- Lay peacefully on your back with a comfortable pillow to support your head if you need one.
- Take a deep breath, breathing in for five seconds, holding for five seconds, then breathing out for five seconds, and holding out for five seconds. Do this sequence three times.
- Now shift your focus to breathing and circulating that oxygen to your toes. Visualize the air coming in through your nose then traveling down to your toes, and then back out (following the same breathing count above).
- Next, move your attention to your feet. Breathe in through your nose and circulate the air to your feet following the same breathing count above (five seconds in, five seconds hold, five seconds out, five seconds hold).
- Next, move your attention to your ankles, then your shins, then your knees, then your thighs, going all the way up your body until you gently drift away. Many people fall asleep before reaching their knees. You've got to experiment and find out what works best for you. Give this one a try anytime you like.

———— Chapter 17 ————

USE SMART SUPPLEMENTATION

This is what most people are looking for to help them sleep, but it comes with a huge caveat. Ideally, you need to address the lifestyle issues *first* that are actually causing the sleep problem. If you jump to taking drugs or supplements then you'll just be treating a symptom and increase the likelihood that you'll develop a dependency on something that can harm you long term.

I'm going to share with you four of the more gentle-to-moderate natural sleep aids. Focus on the lifestyle stuff first, and if you want, you can respectfully add these things in too. Let's get started with the most time tested sleep aid of all.

1. Chamomile: This herb has been used for thousands of years to treat everything from skin disorders, to heart disease, to inflammation. Today numerous studies are proving the true efficacy of this ancient plant. For example, a study highlighted in *Molecular Medicine Reports* showed that chamomile flavonoids have significant anti-inflammatory properties and

trigger COX-2 enzyme activity that reduces physical pain.

There's currently much more anecdotal evidence of chamomile being a safe sleep aid than peer reviewed studies. What studies do show is that chamomile can help calm the nervous system, relax muscles, and set you up for a better night's sleep when you need it.

Chamomile is an excellent tea to have before bed. Simply have a standard size cup of tea with an organic, pre-packed chamomile tea bag and you'll be good to go.

2. Kava kava: This is actually the national drink of the beautiful island of Fiji. Kava kava is well known to have sedative properties and is commonly used to treat sleeplessness and fatigue. A 2004 study also found that 300mg of kava kava may improve mood and cognitive performance. Several additional studies show that it's effective for reducing the signs and symptoms of anxiety (which is definitely an anti-sleep state to be in).

The most important sleep-related data on kava kava demonstrates that it may help to improve sleep quality and decrease the amount of time needed to fall asleep. Preparing a cup of kava kava tea can be part of a relaxing evening ritual.

3. Valerian: This traditional herb is the strongest of the three and a moderate sedative. It's indicated for individuals that have a difficult time falling asleep and also promotes uninterrupted sleep. The root of the valerian plant is used as medicine and pressed into fresh juice or freeze-dried to form a powder. For tea, pour one cup of boiling water over one teaspoon (two to three grams) of dried root, and steep five to ten minutes. There are also tinctures and dried powder supplement capsules of this and the previous two medicinal herbs.

4. 5-HTP, GABA, and L-Tryptophan: I bundled all three of these together because they are not the ideal choices, due to the fact that they're not natural herbal preparations like the previous three. These are isolated chemicals, and can be helpful if intently monitored and used with caution.

5-HTP is a neurotransmitter precursor to serotonin. In our bodies, serotonin is converted into melatonin (the get good sleep hormone). In one study, people who took 5-HTP went to sleep quicker and slept more deeply than

those who took a placebo. Researchers recommend 200-400mg at night to stimulate serotonin, but it may take six to twelve weeks to be fully effective.

GABA is an important neurotransmitter in the central nervous system. In fact, it is the major inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brain. Therefore, it blocks the action of excitatory brain chemicals. Some people swear by the sedating effects of GABA to help manage stress. If GABA is of interest to you, 500mg in the evening is a good place to start. Also, consider looking into the GABA precursors picamilon and phenibut.

L-Tryptophan is actually the precursor to 5-HTP. Although you can't get 5-HTP in food, there are several foods that are rich in tryptophan like turkey, chicken, pumpkin, sunflower seeds, collard greens, and sea veggies. Although these foods can be part of a healthy diet, the trace amounts found in them may not be enough to get the effects you're looking for. L-tryptophan is a simple, over-the-counter supplement you can use in addition to what you get from your diet. It can be taken 90 minutes before bed.

These, like all other supplements, will influence people differently. One supplement might be a miracle for one person that helps them reestablish their sleeping cycle, while for someone else it may cause them to have bad dreams or even feel more groggy in the morning. Bottom line, it's unique to you whether something is going to be helpful or not. This goes for food, supplements, and even exercise. You've got to experiment to find out what works best for you with intelligence, safety, and the best results long-term.

THE MELATONIN MISTAKE

You will notice that I didn't include melatonin. This has become a very popular supplement as of late, with all of our societies sleeping issues. Many experts agree that melatonin supplementation can be very effective for *some* people. But, what's critical to understand about melatonin is that it is an actual hormone you're taking. And just like any other hormone therapy, like testosterone therapy or estrogen therapy, it comes with a greater risk of side effects and potential problems.

One of the main issues with melatonin supplementation is that it can potentially down-regulate your body's natural ability to produce melatonin on its own. Again, this is an actual hormone supplement, so unless you want to chance creating a dependency on this, I'd say avoid it and try other things first.

Taking precursors to melatonin can be a few degrees safer, but still, a word of caution taken here: the best way to use a supplement is in a short-term period to establish a normal sleep pattern, or to reestablish a normal sleep pattern after a time zone change from travel or a time change due to daylight savings.

Do safe, smart, natural things first, then only bring the supplements in to "supplement" the good things you're already doing.



SUPPLEMENTATION POWER TIP #1

It can't be stressed enough that all the other strategies in this book are recommended before supplementation. In nature, you would not see compounds like these anywhere. They typically only have a few decades of testing (if that) versus the thousands upon thousands of years that homo sapiens have been on the planet. Think about it. Your body has an ancient, infinitely intelligent design; then in comes a chemical isolate made by Harry at the science lab last week, and things might not go according to plan. There are some brilliant scientists and innovators making progress in supplementation and medicine that can be lifesaving, but please, never mistake a product in a capsule for being real food.



SUPPLEMENTATION POWER TIP #2

Find the right dose for yourself. Some companies recommend dosages of their product that are often too low or too high for each person. For example, if someone were to use melatonin (though it's not recommended), 150mcg for men or 100mcg for women would be the ideal place to start. Yet, the common dosage you'll find with melatonin providers is around 3,000mcg. Height, weight, gut health, stress levels, inflammation, and more are all factors that play into how much of a supplement would be ideal for you. The best advice is to start low and work your way up, unless you are 100 percent certain in what you are doing.



SUPPLEMENTATIONPOWER TIP #3

Don't mix sleep aids with alcohol. By mixing the two together, you can relax muscles too much, stop breathing, and find yourself waking up like Bruce Willis in *The 6th Sense* (Spoiler alert: he was dead and didn't know it). Seriously, taking any sleeping aids (be it medication or supplements) along with alcohol is a really bad idea. Be smart, be safe, and don't talk to the kid who says, "I see dead people."

———— Chapter 18 ————

BE EARLY TO RISE

We talked at length about the benefits of sunlight in helping us get better sleep in Chapter 2. To take it a step further, it's not the sunlight alone, but waking up in the early part of the day that sets the template for a great night's sleep.

According to Dr. Tracey Marks, "Going to sleep early and waking early syncs the body clock with the earth's natural circadian rhythms, which is more restorative than trying to sleep while the sun's up."

It may seem totally ironic that getting up early can help you sleep better at night, but this goes back to the fact that humans have certain patterns of sleep and wakefulness that we've only, within the last hundred years, found a way to override. There was a time, not that long ago in our history, that humans were prey, and in tremendous danger if they were rummaging around at night.

It's often forgotten that humans are not nocturnal creatures, so let me give you a little proof to remind you:

Our eyesight sucks in the darkness. Wild predators like lions have many more rods in their eyes that enable them to see better at night. You can't see them, but they can see you = You're invited to dinner.

We don't have a very strong sense of smell either. Sure, you can smell the lady walking past you at the gym wearing far too much perfume (what is she trying to cover up anyway?) but nocturnal animals like the opossum can smell trouble from a mile out.

We can't hear well enough to navigate the darkness either. A small noise from hundreds of feet away can perk up the ears of a grey fox. They can't see as well as other nocturnal animals, but their keen sense of hearing allows them to hunt and avoid danger at night.

Humans have amazing senses that are really accentuated during the day. This allows us to see vivid colors and beautifully blend together our other senses to understand our environment like no other creature can.

The invention of the light bulb helped to brighten our world and enabled us to innovate, grow, and create better communities. Yet, the use of artificial light has morphed into an addiction that has seen our sleeping hours and health plummet to all-time lows. Truly, what good is innovation if we don't have our health to enjoy it?

You might think, "Well, we're not out in the wild anymore anyway. Time for a Netflix all-night marathon. Woohoo!" It's true that we're not out in the wild anymore, and our modern amenities do make life nice and comfy. Yet, it's also true that your genetics haven't changed much from your ancestors who lived closer to nature. Genetic adaptations can take thousands of years. And, unless you're a character from the *Twilight* series, you just don't have that kind of time.

Humans, as well as other organisms, have evolved to adjust to predictable patterns of light and darkness. These patterns establish our internal clocks and hormonal cycles every day of our lives. Once artificial light stepped into the picture, it effectively varied the length of our days. As a result, the average person's sleep has decreased from around nine consistent hours to just around seven, varying from one night to the next.

The lack of consistency may be one of the biggest issues of all. The irregular sleeping hours prevents your brain from settling into a pattern, creating a state of perpetual “jet lag.” It’s not just *how* you sleep, but *when* you sleep, that helps to create the best version of you. It’s critical to create a smart sleep schedule in our world today, and it starts with getting our buns up in the morning.

BEING PART OF THE EARLY RISER CLUB HAS BENEFITS

In 2008 a study from the University of North Texas found that students who identified themselves as morning people earned significantly higher grades. In fact, the early risers had a full grade point higher than the “night owls” in the study at a 3.5 to 2.5 GPA respectively. Waking up earlier obviously isn’t the only factor with getting good grades, but it’s definitely a correlation to take notice of. A better GPA could mean better career opportunities, and bigger levels of success overall.

Speaking of career opportunities, research published in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, showed that early birds are more proactive than evening people, and so they tend to do well in business. The study went on to state that morning people also anticipate problems better and minimize them more effectively. This is a huge leverage point in business today as everything is changing so fast.

It’s not that people who identify themselves as early risers are better people, or better at everything for that matter. Other studies suggest that night-lovers tend to be smarter and more creative than morning types, have a better sense of humor and can be more outgoing in some instances. The big issue is, according to the *Harvard Business Review*, is that night owls are out of sync with the typical corporate schedule, and miss out on critical opportunities more often because their timing is off.

So, whether you identify yourself as a morning person or night owl, you can do amazing things with your life. I just want to ensure that you have the greatest advantage possible, and that your health is up to par to create the life you really want. This leads to the reality that your health is radically improved when you’re honoring your body’s natural hormonal clock. Humans are designed to be

up during the day and sleeping at night. Being a “night owl” is a new idea, and you’re not really an owl anyway.

NOT A MORNING PERSON?

Some people just love getting up early in the morning to take advantage of the day. It’s a very empowering feeling to have accomplished so much long before other people have even gotten out of bed. Various studies show that morning people tend to exhibit character traits like optimism, satisfaction, and conscientiousness. Getting started on your work goals by 8 a.m. gives you an extra sense of optimism in and of itself, whereas by 4 p.m. you’ve had seven minor problems that have tried to throw you off your course.

Being a “night owl” is a new idea that’s only been possible in recent human history. This is a trained behavior that, like it or leave it, is influencing your health and results in your life.

Still, if you firmly believe you are a night owl and want to make the switch to get your circadian rhythms, hormones, and priorities in order, then here are the simple steps to do it.

Leo Babauta from the wildly popular website *Zen Habits* recommends using *The Gradual Method* when changing your sleep schedule. Rather than making the decision to suddenly get up at 6 a.m. when you normally get up at 8 a.m., take gradual 15 minute increments off your wake up time until you get to your desired destination.

This is a much more graceful way to do it. Often times when people decide to get up early, they throw their sleep cycle into such a shocked state that they’re more tired and irritated, plus creating a neuro-association to more pain in waking up early. This causes you to burn through your will power within days and revert back to your old habits before you know it.

So if your goal is to wake up at 6 a.m. and you are currently getting up at 8 a.m., set your alarm for 7:45 a.m. instead. Do that for a few days, then move to 7:30 a.m., then move to 7:15 a.m. and so on. This will allow your body to adapt to the new schedule in a much healthier and sustainable way.

So how do you resist the urge to just hit the snooze alarm and forfeit your commitment to getting up?

Leo Babauta offered these three suggestions, and I have to say they're pretty brilliant:

1. Get excited. The night before, think of one thing you'd like to do in the morning that excites you. It could be something you want to write, or a new yoga routine, or meditation, or something you'd like to read, or a work project that's got you fired up. In the morning, when you wake up, remember that exciting thing, and that will help motivate you to get up.

2. Jump out of bed. Yes, jump out of bed. With enthusiasm. Jump up and spread your arms wide as if to say, "Yes! I am alive! Ready to tackle the day with open arms and the gusto of a driven maniac." Seriously, it works.

3. Put your alarm across the room. If it's right next to you, you'll hit the snooze button. So put it on the other side of the room, so you'll have to get up (or jump up) to turn it off. Then, get into the habit of going straight to the bathroom to pee once you've turned it off. Once you're done peeing, you're much less likely to go back to bed. At this point, remember your exciting thing. If you didn't jump out of bed, at least stretch your arms wide and greet the day.

Putting your alarm across the room is also ideal to reduce the amount of EMF exposure that we covered in Chapter 12. The EMFs from electronic devices disrupt the communication between the cells in your body, and are obviously stronger if they're plugged in right next to you. It's not a smart move to sleep with any electronic devices near your body, so don't do it.

Here's one more bonus suggestion to beat the urge to go back to bed, and instead energize your body to be ready to take on the day: Wake up your senses.

When you get out of bed get your senses stimulated with something good. A common thing to do is to get that coffee or tea brewing and drink it. The smell, taste, and touch are all enlivening for your senses.

I'm a huge advocator of drinking a big glass or two of water first thing in the morning. I call this an "inner bath." This will replenish your hydration levels that went down while sleeping, help your body to clear out metabolic waste products,

and give you a sensory stimulation to help wake up your body. You can also take a regular bath or shower too to get you going. Or use more of your senses by turning on some good music and opening the curtains to let in the natural light. There are so many things that will automatically get your mind and body stimulated when you're exposed to them. Try these things out and start your day with real momentum.

By waking up early, you start helping your endocrine system link up with the diurnal patterns of the earth. Get up when the sun rises. It might be challenging at first, but after less than a couple of weeks, your body will adapt to that pattern and you'll feel much more rested and refreshed when you wake up. You can break the old pattern of being up at night "tired and wired" by being early to rise and having a natural release of cortisol, then going to bed earlier and taking advantage of the natural release of melatonin. A quote from one of my son's favorite books, the epic masterpiece, *Winnie the Pooh*: "For early to bed, and early to rise will make a bear happy, and healthy, besides."



EARLY TO RISE POWER TIP

Go to bed within 30 minutes of the same time each night and wake up at the same time each day. Many people in our modern world try to “catch up” on sleep and sleep-in on the days that they don’t have to get up for work. By throwing off your sleep schedule like this, you’ll usually find that you’re more tired than you want to be on your off days, and really dreading getting out of bed once Monday rolls around. Remember, a consistent sleep schedule is important for your health.

Try to avoid staying up much later just because you’re off the next day. Actually go to bed and get up so that you can *use* that day to do the things you want. I promise you, Netflix does still work during the daytime, and you can get a mini-marathon in without the same side effects you’ll experience if you’d stayed up all night.

To stay within your body’s desired sleep pattern, you don’t have to go to bed at exactly 10:02 p.m. each night, but do your best to make it within 30 minutes of what your ideal sleep time is.

———— Chapter 19 ————

DRESS FOR THE OCCASION

Humans are unique in the fact that many of us get dressed up just to go to bed. We have special bed attire that we call pajamas, and it's just one of those words that's synonymous with comfiness. Go ahead and say it slowly and tell me it doesn't feel good. "Pajamas... Pajamas..."

Putting on your PJ's can be like a mental trigger to relax and wind down for the day. You're getting out of your outer world uniform and putting clothes on your body that make you feel safe, relaxed, and at home. The reality is, you're not just wearing clothes that only your inner circle of friends and family can see you in (unless you're going to a Pajama Jammy Jam) but you're also putting on clothes that will inherently affect the quality of your sleep.

As we covered in Chapter 5, thermoregulation is a critical aspect of managing sleep quality. Research shows that certain forms of insomnia are linked to faulty body temperature regulation, and an inability to cool down enough to enter

deeper stages of sleep. It's important to realize the fact that your body is better at keeping itself warm than keeping itself cool, so you'll make it easier on yourself by wearing fewer and looser clothes to bed.

In a Dutch study, scientist had participants wear thermosuits to lower their skin temperature less than one degree Celsius (without affecting core body temperature) to measure its impact on sleep. The study results showed that the participants didn't wake up as much during the night and the amount of time spent in stages three and four (deep sleep) had increased.

If you think that what you're wearing to bed doesn't matter, think again.

Now, I'm not saying that you have to freeze your tootsies off just to get better sleep, but I am saying that if you're used to dressing up like an Eskimo to hop in the sack, you might want to consider pulling off a layer or two.

If you live in a home where you can regulate the temperature, you're more fortunate than billions of other people on the planet. With that said, overdoing it on the warmth can result in you sleeping the "right" amount of hours but not feeling rested when you wake up. If you've got seven covers, an electric blanket, and you're dressed like you're going hunting, you just might be preventing your body from getting the most rejuvenating stages of sleep.

MIDNIGHT STRANGLER

The form and fit of your bedtime clothing is more significant than any fashion statement you can make. Wearing tight, restrictive clothing to bed is a huge sleep mistake you need to avoid. Clothing that is too tight can literally cut off the flow of your lymphatic system. Your lymphatic system is the cellular “waste management” system of your body, and an important part of your immune system. It transports and circulates extracellular fluid throughout your body, and you actually have four times more lymph fluid than you have blood.

When your lymphatic system gets cut off due to restrictive clothing, that extracellular fluid can start to pool in different places in your body, and real nastiness can ensue from there.

The most common culprit here is tight socks. You’ll know this because when you pull your socks off, you can still see the imprint of the sock perfectly on your skin. It’s a nice party trick, but this is not good at all.

It’s through the lymphatic system that toxic substances can move out of the body. If it’s cut off in any way, it’s like bending a water hose and blocking its ability to flow out. The water pressure will swell, and you can mess up your internal plumbing or worse.

In Chapter 5, I recommended that you keep the bedroom cool, but also wear a pair of warm socks if you tend to get cold easily. To remedy the problem of choking your ankles out while you sleep, simply vie for a pair of loose, fuzzy socks as your go-to choice. Many types of hiking socks have a looser fit, so that might be a good place to start.

Beyond the lower extremities, there could be an even bigger and more dangerous issue for women. This may come as a shock, but a 2009 study found that women who slept in their bra had a 60 percent greater risk for developing breast cancer.

Numerous studies are now confirming the link between breast cancer and habitual bra wearing. This doesn’t mean you should throw your bras away, but it does mean that you need to be conscientious of this connection. When you take off your bra and see those indentions around your back, sides, shoulders, and

breasts, that's a clear indication that you're cutting off lymphatic flow and circulation.

The lymph nodes and lymph function is a critical component in preventing the development of diseases, including breast cancer. Many women have been trained to wear their bra 24-7 for fear of what society will think, sagging breasts, and even back pain. Though these ideas can become very real to an individual, the research simply shows that these worries are not valid.

A 15-year study involving more than 300 women concluded that, "Medically, physiologically, anatomically, the breast does not benefit from being deprived of gravity." Overall, it was found that women who do not use bras developed more muscle tissue to naturally support the breasts, they had greater nipple lift (in relation to their shoulders), and women who wore bras had actually accelerated breast sagging.

Again, this is contrary to a deeply ingrained public opinion, but it's actually based on sound science. Bras can make breasts look *amazing* while they're being worn. But if the breasts are constantly held weightless by the bra, they have very little opportunity to develop the ability to support themselves. It's just like any other body part, if you don't use it, it will atrophy.

Our main focus here is improving your sleep, and improving your health as a result of it. At night while you're sleeping is an obvious time to go bra-free and cut your risk of major problems from wearing a bra 24-hours a day. We don't have to start up a bra-a-holics anonymous. But, if you want to get more information on the bra-breast cancer connection, check out the book *Dressed to Kill* by Medical Anthropologists Sydney Ross Singer and Soma Grismaijer.

The best clothing for bed will be non-restricting and hypoallergenic (both the fabric itself and how it's washed). I'm not saying to wear a flannel onesie, nor am I saying to wear one of those old-school night gowns from the TV show *Mama's Family*. Be comfortable, and get comfortable with your own body being more free. There are countless attractive options for bed attire if that's important to you. I'm just going to share the basics.

Here are just a few options on what to wear to bed:

Men: Boxers, loose fitting pajama bottoms, basketball shorts, basic t-shirt if you want, or go naked

Women: Boy shorts, your own or your significant other's t-shirt or boxers, flowing lingerie, yoga pants or "tights" that don't strangle your legs and hips, loose fitting pajama bottoms, or go naked

BIRTHDAY SUIT

If you and your partner both sleep in the nude, you can be reaping the benefits of the feel-good hormone oxytocin. It could be from intimacy (like sleeping in the same bed), massage, sex, or simply cuddling, the skin-to-skin contact is all that's required. Oxytocin is a potent anti-stress hormone. It reduces signs and symptoms of depression, combats negative effects of cortisol, and helps regulate blood pressure. It's also been shown to decrease intestinal inflammation and improve gut motility as well. All the more reason to get as close as possible.

On top of all this is the obvious: More sex. As we covered in Chapter 9, an orgasm might just be nature's number one sleep aid.



DRESS FOR THE OCCASION POWER TIP #1

A 1991 Harvard study found that women who do not wear bras had half the risk of breast cancer compared to avid bra users. Take bedtime as an optimal opportunity to go bra-free. This is a great start to improving your health and cutting down on your programmed bra dependency. For the fellas, avoid wearing tight underwear to bed that keep your testicles pressed against your body. You're potentially overheating your family jewels, and not allowing them to extend and retract based on a more natural temperature.



DRESS FOR THE OCCASION POWER TIP #2

Another nighttime good sleep fashion accessory you might want to look into is what I call *Mr. & Mrs. Smith Glasses*.

Okay, so you want to stay up a little later and watch a movie, go on wild adventures through YouTube (the other day I started off researching rehab exercises for knees and eventually ended up watching bloopers from the TV show *Parks & Recreation*. You know how YouTube can be...), or maybe you just want to take this sleep mastery to the ultimate level. Well, I've already given you recommendations for eliminating the "blue light" from your computer screen, but what about the rest of the house?

If you're really passionate about this stuff, and don't mind looking like someone from the future, then you can rock these glasses that block blue light and give everything a much safer, softer, orange tint. They're similar to the glasses that Brad and Angelina wore in the movie *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* during an epic fight scene. If you get the cheap ones, then you won't look that cool... but hey, this is for science not social points. Although, if someone comes into your house and sees you wearing them, you'll totally look like a badass (a little weird, but still a badass). Just visit www.LowBlueLights.com or Google "orange safety glasses" and you'll see a bunch to choose from.

———— Chapter 20 ————

GET GROUNDED

Since the beginning of time, humans have had a constant interaction with the earth. Our ancestors would come in contact with the earth's surface on a daily basis: walking, hunting, gathering food and water, communing, playing, relaxing and more. Nearly everything they did required a connection with the earth.

Today, in our industrialized world, many people go days, weeks, or even longer without coming in contact with the surface of the earth itself. We are cooped up in our homes or offices, spending more time indoors consuming technology, and less time interacting with the source that all of our technology comes from. Sure, we may walk outside to get into our cars, but most of us wear non-conductive rubber-soled shoes that ensure our bodies never get that intimate connection. We rarely touch the ground, rarely touch a tree, and rarely touch the source that creates every cell in our body.

Scientists are discovering that this is having a huge impact on our health.

Overwhelming research is mounting that shows the impressive benefits the earth's electromagnetic surface has on the human body. We may not realize this, but the human body is highly conductive. We, like the earth, are running on electromagnetic energy. Our nervous system is like internal wiring that's transmitting information throughout our entire body. We're also made of minerals, and our tissues hold water, so we are very much like a walking, talking, conductive battery.

You've probably noticed that we can accumulate static electricity and "shock" someone who touches us. We all know not to stick a metal object into an outlet or we'll "short out" our system. Even in scary movies, one of the worst ways to go is having an electric device tossed into your bathtub while you're trying to exfoliate.

Bottom line: You may not be able to see it, but you are highly conductive. You give off and receive energy every second of every day. The misuse and misunderstanding of your body's electrical system is a catalyst for chronic health problems.

How does this relate to you, the earth, and your health?

Currently, over 90 percent of physician visits are for stress and inflammatory-related issues. Stress and inflammation go hand-in-hand and are a huge undercurrent in the vast majority of diseases. It may sound a little strange, but touching the earth may be the biggest key to eliminating our issues with chronic inflammation.

INFLAMMATIONNATION

We now understand that the human body is conductive. Every tissue in our body carries a charge, and this is actually what allows many functions to happen. Inflammation, in particular, is a natural function facilitated by a type of white blood cell called a *neutrophil*. Neutrophils deliver reactive oxygen species (also known as free radicals) to the site of an injury or need. These free radicals carry a positive charge that will tear harmful bacteria apart and break apart damaged cells to create room for healthy cells to move in and repair tissues. Pretty cool, right?

Inflammation is not supposed to be a catastrophic thing. The real problem arises when free radical activity goes unchecked and some of those free radicals can leak into the surrounding tissue and damage healthy cells. This is the real cause of inflammation, and most people are dealing with this at chronic levels on a day-to-day basis.

Everyday you have cellular damage, simply by the nature of being alive. Damaged heart cells, liver cells, muscle cells, *etc.* all set off an oxidative burst of free radicals to address them. This is basic chemistry, featuring a *positive* charged event that needs to be neutralized.

All the rage in health and nutrition today has been centered around antioxidants. Antioxidants carry free electrons that neutralize free radicals and stop overly-aggressive oxidation right in it's tracks. Inflammation is reduced, and health is improved.

The reality is that you can eat high antioxidant foods until you're blue in the face (from eating a lot of blueberries, of course) but this isn't going to swing the battle of oxidation in your favor as much as you think.

First of all, the antioxidants need to be in the right form, and conventional food processing techniques tend to strip the antioxidant potency from our food. Secondly, the dietary antioxidants have to withstand the digestive process, make their way through the gut lining, and hopefully find their way into your blood. Thirdly, dietary antioxidants have been found to pale in comparison to your

body's own endogenous antioxidant capabilities. The ability of your liver to support production of the antioxidant *superoxide dismutase*, for example, is more potent than any antioxidant you can consume. The key is getting your body into the right state so that your organs and tissues can do the great job they already know how to do. Lastly, it's been discovered that the number one source of free electrons is actually the source of where all of our food comes from: the earth itself.

Scientists have discovered that the earth's surface is brimming with free electrons that are readily absorbed by the human body when they come in contact with each other. This is known as an electron transfer. The effects of this electron transfer are being researched rigorously, and the impact on sports performance, healing, and overall health are shocking.



Researchers are calling this connection with the human body and the earth “grounding” or “earthing.”

In a 2013 issue of the *Journal of Alternative and Complimentary Medicine* a study was published showing that, “Grounding increases the surface charge on red blood cells and thereby reduces blood viscosity and clumping. Grounding appears to be one of the simplest and yet most profound interventions for helping reduce cardiovascular risk and cardiovascular events.”

Wait, hold up... Just getting in contact with the earth's surface can improve my blood and lower my risk of a heart attack?

Another study had this to say:

“Reduction in inflammation as a result of earthing has been documented with infrared medical imaging and with measurements of blood chemistry and white blood cell counts. The logical explanation for the anti-inflammatory effects is that grounding the body allows negatively charged antioxidant electrons from the Earth to enter the body and neutralize positively charged free radicals at sites of inflammation. Flow of electrons from the Earth to the body has been documented.”

As for stress, it's been confirmed that earthing has a measurable impact on stress reduction by shifting the autonomic nervous system from sympathetic to parasympathetic dominance, improving heart rate variability, and normalization of muscle tension.

I wouldn't have believed that something so simple as coming in contact with the earth would be so powerful if the data wasn't so thick. For a comprehensive understanding, you can check out the book *Earthing: The Most Important Health Discovery Ever?*

For now, just don't be the last person to make this connection, and utilize the free, health-giving resource you have right outside your front door.

WHAT ABOUT SLEEP?

A study published in 2004 looked at the biological effects of grounding the human body during sleep as measured by cortisol levels and subjective reporting of sleep, pain, and stress.

The study found that the patients who were grounded during sleep had reduced night-time levels of cortisol and an overall normalization of cortisol secretion during the day. Remember, cortisol is the arch nemesis of sleep. If your cortisol levels are off, your sleep will be off. Subjective reporting by the study participants also indicated that grounding during sleep improved sleep quality, reduced pain, and lowered stress.

Getting yourself grounded can have a life-changing impact on your sleep quality. Now, I'm not saying you need to go camping outside like Canteen Boy (old

Adam Sandler character; look him up) just to get all of these benefits. Today you can utilize incredible earthing technology that brings the benefits of the earth's energy right into your home.

I've been using an Earthing Mat under my desk and sleeping on Earthing Sheets for about five years. These are well-designed products that can be connected to a grounding rod outside your home, or easily into the grounding plug you'll find in most electrical outlets. They safely and effectively deliver the free electrons from the earth right to you, and all you need to do is touch them with any part of your body. The above sleep study utilized grounding products to connect the test subjects with the earth, and trigger all of the impressive results they received.

Whether or not you decide to utilize these advancements in grounding technology, it's absolutely critical to get your body in contact with the earth on a regular basis to displace the positive charge you're carrying, absorb free electrons to improve your recovery, hormones, and heart health, and most importantly to get a great night's sleep.



GET GROUNDED POWER TIP #1

Get your direct Vitamin G. Make it a regular practice to get some quality time with your feet on the ground. This means conductive surfaces like soil, grass, sand (at the beach), and even living bodies of water like the ocean. There are other surfaces that are conductive, like concrete and brick, but their effectiveness depends on several factors. It's best to get your Vitamin G (your daily interaction with the earth) from the soil and grass itself. By the way, have you ever noticed that when you take a vacation and go to a beach, you tend to get really amazing sleep? Now you know that it's truly not a coincidence.



GET GROUNDED POWER TIP #2

The earthing products allow you to not have to shift your life around too much to get the benefits of earthing. You can simply continue doing things you normally do: work at your computer, sleep, etc., and be connected to the earth the whole time. You can have one earthing product or earthing everywhere—there are mats, sheets, mattresses, mouse pads, and even bands you can put on specific pain points on your body that are used clinically to reduce pain and inflammation. Nothing replaces getting in direct contact with the earth, but these items can be a great alternative to get the benefits you need.



GET GROUNDED POWER TIP #3

Because grounding has been proven to sync your body's circadian clock with the normal diurnal patterns of the earth, getting grounded after a flight is a powerful thing to do. I have found that this practice usually eliminates jet lag, and helps me to adjust to the new time zone that I'm in very fast. Humans were not designed to skip time zones in a few hours, so utilizing advances like this can really help to revitalize you. If at all possible, I get some direct Vitamin G from the earth after travel. Plus, I bring my Earthing Sheets with me, and always get a great nights sleep just like I'm at home.

Chapter 21

RITUALIZE YOUR NIGHT

Humans are creatures of habit and habitat. We've covered how to make your environment more sleep-friendly, how to put your body in the ideal *state* for sleep before bed, and even practices to calm your mind and put you in the mood for restful sleep. Now it's time to put these things together in a succinct pattern that really works for you long-term.

Your brain loves to fall into patterns so that it can free up space to do other things. The more unconscious competencies we have, the more apt we are to have greater success and productivity.

What is an unconscious competency?

Well, there are ultimately four stages to learning any new skill or habit.

1. **Unconscious incompetence** — when you're doing something wrong and you don't know you're doing it wrong

2. **Conscious incompetence** — when you're doing something wrong but you know you're doing it wrong
3. **Conscious competence** — when you're doing something right but you have to consciously focus on doing it the right way
4. **Unconscious competence** — when you're doing something right and you don't even have to think about it

Initially, putting the things that you've learned in this book into action will put you in a phase of conscious competence. You're going to have to think about them and put conscious effort into doing them right. It's sort of like when you first learned to drive. You're very mindful of everything, you have a checklist when you get into your car: adjust seat, mirrors, seat belt, *etc.* and you make sure you have them right. While driving, you're hyper-aware. Eyes moving, paying attention to your speed, monitoring road signs, other cars, and being extra careful.

Then fast-forward a few months. When you hop in your car, key goes in the ignition and you're out of there. Not being reckless, by any means, but you've got the checklist automated. Your brain notices that the seat and mirrors are right even without your conscious awareness needing to go there. The driving process itself can become so second nature that you can get into your car for a 20 minutes drive, and not even consciously remember all the steps you took to arrive at your destination.

It's not that you were hypnotized by an evil mutant, it's that your brain has freed up space to do other things because driving has become a strong unconscious competence. Your conscious mind can hop in if there's an irregularity or problem, but overall your brain has this activity on cruise control.

To put getting great sleep every night on cruise control, it's simply a matter of ritualizing things just like when you first learn to drive. The word ritual is derived from the Latin word *ritus* meaning "a proven way of doing something." A ritual is a small sequence of step-by-step actions that put you in a certain mood, state or frame of mind for getting something done.

Whether or not you've had a history of sleep problems, a regular bedtime ritual

will help you wind down and prepare your body for the best sleep possible.

Jessica Alexander of The Sleep Council stated, “A bedtime ritual teaches the brain to become familiar with sleep times and wake times. It programs the brain and internal body clock to get used to a set routine.”

Parents throughout time are well aware of the power of bedtime rituals for their kids. Some may include a warm bath, putting on pajamas, a bedtime story, relaxing music, or something as simple as a kiss on the forehead and a loving tuck into bed.

If you establish a consistent bedtime ritual, your kids drift off to sleep before you know it. Their brains and bodies have completely linked those systematic activities to going right to sleep. And, as I said before, in many ways we’re just big adult babies, and the same basic programming is still there. We just need to learn to tap into it.

Dr. Lawrence Epstein of Harvard Medical School said, “Our body craves routine and likes to know what’s coming.” By creating a pre-sleep ritual, you’re establishing a clear association between specific activities and sleep.

Let’s look at some common and effective activities you can add to your evening ritual to help you get a great night’s sleep.

GET IN THE MOOD

Relaxation before bed is essential. You're going to discover that maintaining an evening ritual is like having an off switch for the stress in your life.

Stress is typically tied up to an unwillingness to let things go, and keeping things ping ponging around in your mind. Here are some specific strategies to help relax, de-stress, and get into the right state for sleep:

Read some fiction: It's not a surprise that kids sleep better than most adults. Reading fiction or having someone else read you fiction is powerful for relaxing our overused, analytical left-brain. There are few things more capable of disconnecting you from your stress, worries, and tension than escaping to another world within the pages of a book.

Non-fiction can be okay if it's a biography or something along those lines. But the best bet is to avoid the analytical, methodical, teaching, or training types of books.

Also, where you read may be important too. Dr. Epstein advises to create a clear association between your bed and sleep. It's recommended that you read anywhere in your home other than your bed itself if you don't have this strong association built. You can read in your bedroom, just not in your bed if you can't handle the reading rainbow juice.

Take a bath: A warm bath or shower shortly before bed can help you unwind and relax. Water by itself can have a very calming effect, but adding aromatherapy or magnesium bath salts to the equation can make it even better.

Be sure that the water isn't too hot or you run the risk of raising your core body temperature too much. Also, be sure that you don't hop right out and go straight to bed. Allow several minutes for your core temperature to come back down, or some experts recommend finishing up with a cold bath or shower for this purpose.

Journaling: This is a powerful practice that some of the most successful people in the world do. From Oprah, to Tony Robbins, journaling has been a consistent

part of their lives. For the intents of a pre-bedtime ritual, you can use your journal to capture stray thoughts; to get any of the random ideas out of your head and out onto the paper. That alone will help free up mental space.

You could also use the journal as a check-in. To look at your progress and affirm what steps you need to take next. Again, getting it out of your head and onto the paper.

Gratitude log: Part of the reason people have anxiety and trouble sleeping is a fixation on the things they haven't done and what they don't have. If you're reading this right now, chances are you are far more fortunate than you realize, and you may have gotten out of touch with just how much you have to be grateful for.

You can use a gratitude log to simply capture three to five things that you were grateful for today. It could be big things, it could be small things. Just the act of paying attention and writing them down to end your day will make you more receptive to all of the good things that happen that we end up taking for granted.

Meditation and/or prayers: I remember when I was little; my grandmother would always have me say my prayers before I go to bed. The prayer ended with me asking for the people I love to be protected. I remember saying each person I could think of by name. My grandmother was incredibly patient with me, because that list would be pretty long sometimes. In Chapter 16, we talked in-depth about the positive affects of meditation on sleep quality. The results are real, but only useful if you use it.

Now that we have some more relaxation tools to add to the mix, here's a simple, easy checklist to create a strong neuro-association between your bedtime rituals and getting amazing sleep.

Evening Ritual Checklist:

- ☐ Electronic screens off 90 minutes (minimum) before bed
- ☐ Stretch and/or bath or shower
- ☐ Read some fiction

- ☐ Brush your teeth
- ☐ Use the bathroom
- ☐ Journal
- ☐ Meditation, prayers, or give gratitude
- ☐ Lay down in bed to sleep
- ☐ Time to say goodnight

Sleep is the secret sauce.

The human body is brilliantly designed to utilize sleep to improve virtually every function that you have. You don't plug into a socket. You are made anew by honoring your body and getting the sleep you require.

The path to success will not be made by bypassing dreamland. You require sleep to be the greatest version of yourself, and no pill, potion, or tactic can change that.

To be great at something, you have to make a study of it. I'm truly honored and happy that you picked up this book and decided to make a study of something that will bring you great health and happiness for many years to come.

In our world today, it's the simple things that help us reconnect with what is most valuable. It is my hope that this book helps you to reconnect to nature, reconnect to joy, and reconnect to what's most important about yourself.



RITUALIZEIT POWER TIP #1

While driving, abnormal things can happen on the road, just like things can come up and interrupt the flow of your evening rituals. Roll with it, be flexible, and do the very best you can to stay on track. It's not about being perfect by any means, but it is about being aware of what you need to do, and consistently putting a priority on yourself.

If your evening ritual is a little off, because of travel for example, just do the majority of things that you would normally do in the same, systematic fashion. Stretch, read some fiction, brush your teeth, journal, and get into bed. Do your best to work with your body and your body will work with you.

Remember, your best is usually a lot more than you think it is. Sometimes we will put our own well-being on the back-burner and throw up our hands in conceit. We will say that we are trying our best, but if we do an honest assessment, we'll usually find that we had much more skill and creativity to bring to the table than we will admit.

Be honest with yourself. And, if you make a mistake, forgive yourself and fix it. In our world where sleep has become an enemy, it may take some time to get reacquainted with the friend that sleep really is.



RITUALIZEIT POWER TIP #2

It's commonly believed that it takes around 21 days to form a new habit. The reality is that it actually depends on the size and scope of the habit, with research finding some habits taking a few weeks, while other habits can take several months.

To really ensure that you make your evening ritual "automated," take action to follow it as close as possible for a minimum of 30 days. In the beginning, you have to experiment a bit to find out what works best for you, but once you find it, it's all about consistency from there.

A great quote I once heard, in regards to people being successful, stated that, "We find something that works, and then we stop doing it." Don't fall into that trap. From this point forward, hold yourself to a higher standard, and structure things in your life to support your success rather than tear it down. There is so much greatness in you waiting to be shared, and it starts with passion, consistency, and getting a great night's sleep.

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Would you like Fitness & Nutrition Expert Shawn Stevenson to speak for your group or event? Simply go to TheShawnStevensonModel.com/speaker and use the contact form. Tell us about your group or event, and we'll work together to create the perfect program for them.

Here's what people are saying about Shawn Stevenson's presentations and workshops:

"You did an amazing job at the conference! I really appreciate your contribution to my program. Honestly, I've only heard great input from everyone about you! The entire weekend was filled with "what am I putting in my mouth" commentary. You made an impact - as was reflected in many conversations. Thanks for helping me look good!"

Dr. Tawana K. Ware, President
American Association of Women Dentists

"You are amazing! I wanted to thank you for the fabulous event last night! I wanted you to know how much I appreciate the information you have shared and let you know how much you have prompted me to get going again. Please continue to share your passion and your purpose. Bless you Shawn for the spark you ignited in me!"

Kimberly Smith, Attendee

"Myself and the attendees were blown away by the timely and very valuable information that you presented. I received multiple messages from people stating that their lives had been changed, that they learned things that they'd never heard before and were left feeling, as one attendee put it, like it was their independence day! A day of breaking out of the poor habits of yesterday into a new empowered state of mind surrounding their health and overall life."

Selena Johnson, CEO
Holistic Health, Fitness & Life Success Group

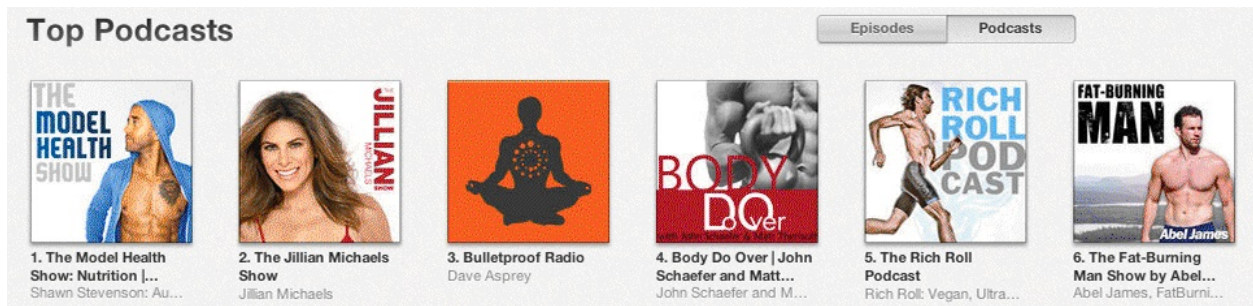
"Thank you so much for coming to our event and teaching us so many great ways to better our life... You are awesome and amazing, thank you again."

Melissa Crow, Attendee

"One of the best speaking events I have seen to date! I have had the honor of hearing some outstanding presentations from legendary speakers. Shawn Stevenson is by far one the the most inspirational and engaging speakers I have heard."

Larry Hagner, Founder
The Good Dad Project

TUNE INTO ONE OF THE #1 HEALTH SHOWS ON ITUNES!



The Model Health Show is a fun, entertaining, and enlightening look at health & fitness. No subject is off limits here! World-renown author and nutritionist Shawn Stevenson breaks down complex health issues and makes them easy to understand and overcome.

Whether it's weight loss, chronic fatigue, heart disease, diet, exercise, sex, hormones, sleep problems, or countless other health topics, the insights you get here will help you transform your health and live your best life ever.

HEAR WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW: "Hi Shawn, I've hardly moved from my laptop listening to your podcasts. I'm learning so much, so just want to say thanks, I am grateful for the advice and knowledge and I think you're fantastic." —**Carol S.**

"I learned of Shawn Stevenson through listening to him as a guest on Underground Wellness. Shawn was captivating and informative, breaking down very complex health concepts. I quickly subscribed to his podcast which is equally informative, topical and entertaining. I have learned a

wealth of information on health and fitness. He is well worth listening to and learning from.” —**Frederick K.**

“I love, love, love this show! The chemistry is perfect and I’m learning so much. Keep being a blessing guys!” —**DiRon J.**

“Just had to let you know that I listened to three of your podcasts on my phone today (one at work during lunch and two this evening). I was going to listen to another one but then remembered I needed to get plenty of sleep so I’ll be well rested tomorrow. lol. I look forward to listening to the rest of your podcasts this week. Take care and thank you for sharing all this information.” —**Jasmine W.**

“There are few people I listen to and respect when it comes to health and wellness. Shawn delivers true health wisdom that comes from a genuine place of caring. Rock on!” —**Larry O.**

“Listening to The Model Health Show has been life changing for me! Shawn is a walking university of good health. I’ve already made changes to the way I eat and take care of myself from listening. Go ahead... listen!!! You’ll be surprised at how much you learn from each podcast. I continue to be inspired and I SHARE, SHARE, SHARE with others. Thanks Shawn for sharing with me!” —**Gina J.**

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