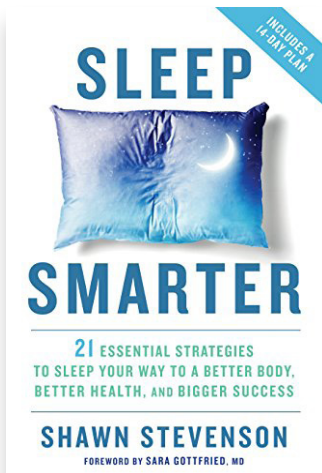


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES



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Sleep Smarter

THE SUMMARY

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Chapter 1: Know the Value of Sleep

Many people are negligent about getting enough sleep because they don't truly understand the benefits they could be getting from it. Once you understand the advantages of getting high-quality sleep, you'll be passionate about putting these strategies into action for yourself.

The Free Dictionary defines sleep 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. There is a decrease in bodily movement and responsiveness to external stimuli. 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.

What's more important are the big prizes that sleep gives you. Generally, being awake is catabolic (breaks you down) and being asleep is anabolic (builds you up). Sleep is 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 your physical energy, and improves the function of your brain. Unless you give your body the right amount of sleep, you will never have the body and life you want to have. Working hard is 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

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radically compromised. Research shows that after just 24 hours of sleep deprivation, there is a 6 percent reduction in the glucose reaching the brain. Simple translation: You get dumber.

This is also why you crave candy, chips, doughnuts, 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. It could also mean 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.

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; protect you from diseases; and make your mind work at its optimal level. The shortcut to success is not made by bypassing dreamland. You will work better, be more efficient, and get more stuff done when you're properly rested.

Chapter 2: Get More Sunlight During the Day

Humans have evolved with a predictable pattern of light and darkness that has always controlled our sleep cycles. Your sleep cycle, or circadian timing system, is heavily impacted by the amount of sunlight you receive 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. Light actually signals your hypothalamus and all corresponding organs and glands to be alert and "wake up." That light exposure triggers your body to produce optimal levels of daytime hormones and neurotransmitters that regulate your biological clock. Too little light exposure during the day and too much artificial light exposure in the evening will negatively impact your ability to sleep well at night. One of the most vital compounds affected by light exposure is the powerful neurotransmitter serotonin.

Our eyes have special light receptors that send information to the center of the brain (where your hypothalamus is hanging out) to trigger the production of more serotonin. This is happening day in and day out when we are living in sync with nature and our body clock is set to the right time. However, if our body clock is on the fritz, and we are not getting enough exposure to natural light, our serotonin production is going to suffer.

Melatonin is produced by the pineal gland and other tissues in your body that send signals to your cells to prepare you 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 really the "sleep hormone" because it doesn't directly put you to sleep. But it can definitely be considered the "get good sleep hormone" because it improves your sleep quality by helping to create the optimal conditions in your body for getting amazing sleep.

One of the other important daytime hormones is cortisol, as it is essential to your circadian timing system for sleep. You naturally have an increase in cortisol in the morning, which is for the purpose of getting up, being active, and enjoying life. Then there is a natural reduction in cortisol as the day goes on, bottoming out in the evening to set up a great night's

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sleep. This is a normal cortisol rhythm, but as you know, our lives can be anything but normal. Cortisol and melatonin have somewhat of an inverse relationship. Essentially, when cortisol is up, melatonin is down. When melatonin is up, cortisol is down. Encouraging the production of the right hormone at the right time will automatically support the normal function of the other hormone.

Chapter 3: Avoid Screens Before Bedtime

Cutting out some screen time at night is likely the number one thing you can do to improve your sleep quality immediately. Computers, iPads, televisions, smartphones, etc., kick out a sleep-sucking blue spectrum of light that can give you major sleep problems. The artificial blue light emitted by electronic screens triggers your body to produce more daytime hormones (such as cortisol) and disorients your body's natural preparation for sleep.

Researchers have found that the use of light emitting electronic devices in the hours before bed time can adversely impact overall health, alertness, and the circadian clock that synchronizes the daily rhythm of sleep. In a study, nighttime iPad readers took longer to fall asleep, felt less sleepy at night, and had shorter REM sleep compared to test subjects who were assigned to read regular printed books. The iPad readers also secreted less melatonin, which meant they were also more tired than book readers the following day, even if both got a full 8 hours of sleep.

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. We 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 has discovered that participants given caffeine at different times (immediately before bed, 3 hours before bed, and 6 hours before bed) all showed significant measurable disruptions in their sleep. This means that not only is it not a good idea to have caffeine right before bedtime but having a cup of coffee or caffeinated tea even as much as 6 hours before bed can cause sleep troubles.

In this study 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! They thought they were fast asleep even though they weren't actually dipping into normal ranges of REM and deep sleep according to the sleep monitor.

This is exactly how the vicious cycle of sleep deprivation gets started. Not getting enough deep sleep due to caffeine consumption inevitably makes you more tired. Being tired makes you want more caffeine. Extra consumption of caffeine will, in turn, make your sleep problems worse. You need to have a strategy to break this vicious cycle to ensure that you're getting the sleep your body deserves. Caffeine is a powerful stimulant, and it can be a wonderfully pleasant part of your life, if you respect it as such. You need to rewire your body to use it on a regular, yet cyclical basis so that you can get the most bang for your buck.

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Chapter 5: Be Cool

Something called thermo regulation heavily influences your body's sleep cycles. Contrary to popular belief, your body temperature doesn't stay uniformly 98.6°F. That is merely an average. Your body temperature cycles from about 1 degree below to 1 degree above this average over the course of the day. 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 optimal room temperature for sleep is really quite cool at around 60° to 68° F. Anything too far above or below this range will likely cause some difficulty sleeping.

Chapter 6: Get to Bed at the Right Time

You can literally get amplified benefits of sleep by sleeping at the right hours. Renowned neurologist Kulreet Chaudhary, MD, 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 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. You get the most rejuvenating effects during this period, and any sleep that you get in addition is a nice 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.

Human beings are literally designed to go to sleep within a few hours after it gets dark, so if you've made a habit of ignoring this innate law, it's time to take action to readjust. For example, you may be sleeping from 1:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and getting eight hours of sleep, but you are missing out on most of that money time when the beneficial hormone secretions are at their highest. Melatonin, human growth hormone (HGH), 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 HGI, 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 states, "If your body is chronically deprived of the regenerative sleep between 10:00 p.m. and 2:00 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 hormone production and missing out on that money time is not a very smart investment.

Chapter 7: Fix Your Gut to Fix Your Sleep

The food that you eat can dramatically impact the quality of sleep that you get. Remember, food isn't just food—it's information. The types of food that you eat, along with the nutrients they contain (or lack thereof), automatically incite processes that determine what your body, health, and sleep will look like. Not only that, the environment in your belly itself can either make or break getting a good night's sleep.

Upwards of 95 percent of your body's serotonin is located in your gut. Serotonin is produced in the entero chromaffin cells in the intestinal mucosa. Once it's released, it activates your system to increase intestinal motility. Serotonin literally helps the ebb and flow of your digestion overall. The obvious sleep connection is that serotonin is the building block

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for the “get-good-sleep” hormone, melatonin. The not-so-obvious connection is that serotonin, and the health of your digestion, can impact your brain and sleep more powerfully than almost anything you can think of.

You have approximately 10 times more bacteria that live in and on your body than you have human cells, and most of them are camping out in your gut. This is exactly how it’s supposed to be. We have evolved to have a symbiotic relationship with these bacteria. When in natural balance, they help to regulate your immune system, your digestive system, and even your sleep.

There are bacteria referred to as friendly flora that have tremendous resonance with your health. There are also unfriendly flora, opportunistic bacteria, that can cause a lot of damage if things get out of sorts. Yet, even the unfriendly bacteria have a role. It’s really the ratio of friendly bacteria to unfriendly bacteria that matters. You want the good guys controlling your ship, because if the bad guys take over, they will keep steering you right to the fast-food drive-thru causing a ruckus that keeps you up at night.

It has been found that your gut bacteria also have a circadian timing system, and there’s a virtual “changing of the guard” that happens every night to help keep the good guys in control of your vessel. If you don’t sleep, or don’t sleep well, then it gives the opportunistic bacteria a chance to take over your gut (and thus, your brain). Sleep deprivation has been proven to lead to poorer food choices and overeating, which both serve to keep the unfriendly bacteria in control. Many of the things people have accepted as normal in our society are anything but. They have to take their blinders off and see that the consumption of man-made, processed foods is doing a number on their brain-body connection and damaging their health overall. It’s not just about putting in the good stuff for your sleep and health; it’s avoiding the not-so-good stuff that can help ensure that the right things will actually work.

Chapter 8: Create a Sleep Sanctuary

Neurons that fire together, wire together. What you do repeatedly will become a solid structure in your brain. When it comes to your sleeping environment, if you allow your bedroom to be a place where a lot of random activities take place, then you probably aren’t creating a strong neuro-association to sleep when you go in there. When you step into your bedroom, parts of your brain might light up expecting to watch television, or to break out the laptop for doing work, or answering e-mails, or scrolling through social media sites. Your brain is going to do what it’s used to, not necessarily what you want it to do. You may think that you are a big “grown-up” adult and can make your own decisions about when to sleep, but we are all just super-size babies with the same basic programming. The environment you create in your bedroom, and the things you do in your bedroom, can have a significant impact on the quality of sleep you get.

One big takeaway point is that bringing your office work to bed with you can be 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. Whether it’s getting some plants, adding 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. Then, when you walk into your sleep sanctuary, it’ll be easy to peacefully drift off to your dreams.

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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 oxytocin, serotonin, norepinephrine, vasopressin, and the pituitary hormone prolactin. Not only does good sex lead to good sleep but good sleep also leads to good sex. A study published in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* found that women who got a more optimal amount of sleep had greater levels of sexual desire and greater arousal during sex. There was also found to be a 14 percent increase in the likelihood of sexual activity the next day after good sleep. This should be a big note to the significant others out there: if you want a healthy, happy woman, then you have to do what you can to ensure that she gets great sleep at night.

Lack of sleep leads to lowered libido and poor sexual health in both sexes. Testosterone is a huge player in this, and data provided by the journal *Brain Research* found that sleep deprivation intrinsically leads to reduced testosterone in men. Low testosterone can give way to a whole host of issues such as increased storage of body fat, depression, and even erectile dysfunction. To improve your sexual health, it is a must that you improve your sleep. This is one of the force multipliers that people commonly look past in efforts to regain their vitality, energy, and desire. Lack of sleep can make things exponentially worse, and high-quality sleep can make things exponentially better.

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. 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.

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. Instead of a 12-hour day, we can now artificially create a 24-hour day with nonstop light exposure. Though research indicates that some ancient human civilizations slept a similar amount of hours as our society today, it's the quality of sleep that's so drastically different. Our natural light and dark cycles are being disrupted, and our sleep is suffering as a result.

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. Get yourself some of the now popular “blackout” curtains that are available from most retailers. Also get any other sources of nonstop light out of your bedroom. Sleep experts suggest that your room be so dark that you can't see your hand in front of your face.

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Chapter 11: Train Hard (But Smart)

It's not so much the exercise itself, but the when and how the exercise is done. To optimize your sleep you have to utilize a few principles when it comes to working out. A recent study at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina 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: 7:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., or 7:00 p.m. What they discovered was that people who exercised at 7:00 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.

We have a big spike of cortisol in the early morning that is for the sole purpose of doing activity. This is precisely why morning exercise is so helpful for improving your sleep. It can help to encourage that normal release of cortisol in the morning and put your cortisol cycle right on track. From there, it gradually drops during the day and bottoms out when it's our natural time to get to sleep.

Making regular exercise a part of your life isn't just about having a great body; it's also about having great sleep. A study published in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine* found that patients with primary insomnia had a radical improvement in sleep quality when they added in a consistent exercise regimen. Other studies show that though there are improvements immediately, the substantial benefit to sleep health kicks in after a couple weeks of consistent exercise. The key word here is consistent. It's not surprising that world class athletes utilize sleep as a part of their overall training programs. Usain Bolt (the fastest man in history) said, "Sleep is extremely important to me—I need to rest and recover in order for the training I do to be absorbed by my body." This quote perfectly states how your body doesn't change from the training alone; it changes based on the quality of sleep that you get.

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. A study sponsored by mobile companies themselves found that talking on 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 diminished ability for the body to heal, depressed immune function, depressed hormone function, and poorer performance the following day. 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. Having these electronics in your bedroom is like a first-degree assault on your sleep and your body. 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.

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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 and nervous system, and it disrupts your endocrine system like few things can. Your endocrine system (aka your body's hormonal system) is responsible for producing hormones like melatonin, oxytocin, and cortisol, which have important roles 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 5 percent increase in cortisol levels after consuming a meal, while overweight and obese individuals' cortisol levels 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 this stress hormone 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 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.

Scientists at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine conducted a study on people with reported sleep problems (such as sleep apnea, daytime fatigue, insomnia, and restless or interrupted sleep). Half of the volunteers went on a weight loss diet with supervised exercise training. The other half did just the diet. After 6 months, participants in both groups had lost an average of 15 pounds and reduced their belly fat by 15 percent. As a result, the researchers found that each group equally boosted their sleep quality by about 20 percent, with a reduction in belly fat being the best indicator of improved sleep. This study also demonstrates that even without the vast benefits of exercise, the power of simply changing your diet has a huge impact on the results that you get.

Chapter 14: Go Easy on the Bottle

Did you know that you actually get smarter while you sleep? One of the most valuable, but overlooked, aspects of sleep is a function 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. If you get optimal REM sleep, all is well, but if your REM sleep is disrupted, your memory and your health can suffer.

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, consistent levels of REM 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.

There's strong evidence that drinking late in the evening is even more problematic for women. A study published in the *Journal Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 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

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content). The findings showed that compared to the men, female participants woke up more often during the night, stayed awake longer, and slept for less time overall.

It's possible that alcohol affects women's sleep more because women metabolize alcohol faster than men do. 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 any REM sleep).

Drinking late at night affects everyone in some way so it's just about being able to navigate this fact to get the sleep we really need. One of the more obvious sleep interruptions from drinking alcohol before bedtime 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 optimal 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.

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 laying 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. If you're sleeping in a position that compromises your body's ability to function and recover, it doesn't matter how many hours of sleep 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.

Research indicates that more than 70 million Americans suffer from sleep-related pain. Instead of waking up feeling refreshed, millions of people are waking up with aches and pains due to the mattress they've been sleeping on. *Consumer Reports* states that you need to replace your mattress every 7 years, but this is something that most of us just don't take into account. One of the biggest reasons that switching out your mattress every 7 years is recommended is that most mattresses sag 25 percent within the first 2 years, and they continue to degrade rapidly from there. This has been found to be the greatest contributor to sleep-related back pain.

When you're lying down, your hips are the heaviest part of your body, so mattresses layered with foam break down and degrade there first and lose what's known as their mattress resiliency (its ability to push back). Inconsistent push back leads to problems with your spinal integrity and disorganized muscle tension within your hips and spine. You may think you're relaxed, but because of the uneven distribution of your weight, some muscles are relaxed while other muscles are on all night long.

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At first the mattress will feel fine, but over time it loses its resiliency, and you might not even realize that problems you're having are related to when you lay your head down at night. It's not just back pain, but neck problems, issues with internal organs, and even your risk of injury during your waking hours all increase when your body gets out of sorts from a tired mattress.

Chapter 16: Calm Your Inner 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 how 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. Meditation or brain training, as I like to call it, can be as simple as sitting quietly and focusing on your breathing, or counting your steps as you walk around the park. You can even turn everyday activities like taking a shower or washing your clothes into a great meditation by following a few basic principles.

It's said that your mind is the kite, and your breath is the string. Where our breathing goes, your mind will tend to follow. Short, shallow breaths are connected to stress and anxiety. Deep, rhythmic breaths are connected to relaxation and control. This is why your original design has put the ability to go on manual breathing in your hands. No matter what's going on around you, and what you may have perceived as a threat, you have the ability to control how you respond, and you can always take your power back if you choose to do so. Breathe deeply, relax, and remember how powerful you are to change your state.

Another valuable strategy for meditation is mindfulness meditation. There are entire books written on the subject, but I'll give you the brief summary: Be...Here...Now! You can turn just about anything into sensory-filled mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness is really about noticing and tuning in to things in the here and now. While walking, you can notice the feel of the ground under your feet, or even breathe deeply, syncing your breath with your steps. You can tune in and be more mindful while you're eating, while you're talking to a friend (instead of thinking about what you're going to say, actually fully and completely listen to them), while taking a shower or a bath, while exercising, while having sex, while cleaning the house, and on and on. Really, anything you do can be more meditative. You'll be changing the way your brain operates and improving the health and well-being of your body, and by increasing your parasympathetic tone, you'll be setting yourself up for a lot more really great sleep.

What meditation truly does is give you the uncanny ability to focus. This directly affects sleep because when it's time to sleep, your focus should be on sleep. You can take your focus and put it on what you want, instead of the bazillion other things that your mind can jump around to. Meditation is a skill, a tool, and a necessity to help you relax.

Chapter 17: Use Smart Supplementation

Many people look to supplements to help them sleep, but they come with a huge caveat. Ideally, you first need to address the lifestyle issues that are actually causing the sleep problem. If you jump to taking drugs or supplements, then you'll just be treating a symptom and increasing the likelihood that you'll develop a dependency on something that can harm you long term. So, focus on the lifestyle stuff in this book first. Then, if you want, you can respectfully add a natural sleep aid.

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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 crazy dreams or even feel groggy in the morning. It's unique to you whether something is going to be helpful or not. This goes for food, supplements, and even exercise. You have to experiment to find out what is the most, intelligent, safest, and most effective long-term choice for you. The best way to use a sleep-regulating 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 saving time. Do safe, smart, natural things first, then only bring the supplements in to "supplement" the good things you're already doing.

Chapter 18: Be Early to Rise

We talked about the benefits of sunlight in helping us get better sleep. To take it a step further, it's not the sunlight alone, but waking up during the early part of the day that sets the template for a great night's sleep. According to psychiatrist and psychotherapist Tracey Marks, MV, "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."

Humans, as other organisms, have evolved to adjust to predictable patterns of night 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. The result, as we've discussed, is that the average person's sleep quality has dramatically decreased, and our body clocks are out of order as sleep and wake times constantly vary from one night to the next.

The lack of consistency may one of the biggest issues of all. The irregular sleeping hours prevent 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 this starts with getting your buns up in the morning.

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, *Winnie-the-Pooh*: "For early to bed and early to rise will make a bear happy, and healthy, besides."

Chapter 19: Use Bodywork That Works

In a study on chronic pain sufferers, it was found that, in addition to decreased long-term pain, test subjects receiving massage therapy experienced improved sleep and an increase in serotonin levels.

We all know that massage feels great. But many of us underestimate just how powerful it can be for great sleep. Massage is like a secret key to unlocking your sympathetic (flight-or-flight) nervous system and activating our parasympathetic

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(rest-and-digest) nervous system. When you add in the clinically proven benefits on serotonin production, oxytocin, and reduction of cortisol, it's no wonder that massage can be so helpful for gliding off to dreamland.

At night, right before bed, is a great time to employ some bodywork and self-massage to deactivate your sympathetic nervous system. On a popular episode of my show, *New York Times* bestselling author Kelly Starrett, DPT, told me that he's found a very specific form of bodywork that is also a powerful sleep aid. He said, "One of the biggest problems we have in society right now is people aren't very good at down-regulating. What we see is people getting into a constant sympathetic nervous system versus parasympathetic nervous system tug-of-war, and the sympathetic nervous system is turned all the way up to 60. We know that you can power up by drinking some coffee or chugging an energy drink and be ready to go, but show me how you can go (in reverse) from 60 to 0. One of the ways that we know makes a big difference is doing this very complex, very sophisticated thing called gut smashing."

Get yourself a ball that has a little give to it. Dr. Starrett recommends the inexpensive plastic balls you might find in a bail bin at a discount department store. You want a ball that's about the size of a soccer ball or kickball, and, again, it should have some give to it, so make sure it's not too full of air before you use it. Now, get down on the floor and lay belly-down on the ball. Dr. Starrett says, "Spend 5 to 10 minutes 'ungluing' your abdominal musculature—just rolling back and forth, stopping where it's uncomfortable, contracting and relaxing, just breathing into that ball. It's safe and effective, and it triggers your parasympathetic system to turn on." After working with thousands of athletes and patients from all over the world, he says it's one of the most efficient ways to help your system down regulate.

Chapter 20: Dress for the Occasion

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, but you're also putting on clothes that will inherently affect the quality of your sleep.

Thermo regulation is a critical aspect of managing 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 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. 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.

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 extra cellular fluid throughout your body, and you actually have 4 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.

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The most common culprit here is tight socks. You'll know your socks are probably too tight if, when you pull them off, you can still see the imprint of the socks perfectly on your skin. The best clothing for bed will be non-restricting and hypoallergenic (both the fabric itself and how it's washed). I'm not saying you should wear one of those one-size-fits-all nightgowns that look like a bed sheet with a hole cut in the middle to stick your head through. Be comfortable and get comfortable with your own body being freer.

Chapter 21: Get Grounded

We now understand that the human body is conductive. Every tissue in the 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. 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 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.

Every day 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.

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 is shocking. Researchers are calling this connection with the human body and the earth grounding or earthing.

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 nighttime 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.

I've been using an earthing mat under my desk and sleeping on earthing sheets for about 7 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.

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. It is important to absorb free electrons to improve your recovery, heart health, and hormones, and, most important, to get a great night's sleep.

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Conclusion: It's 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.

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 with nature, reconnect with joy, and reconnect with what is most important about yourself.