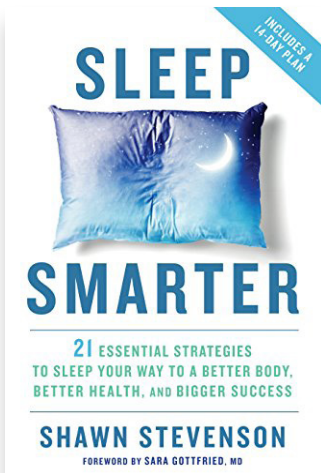


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Shawn Stevenson is the founder of Advance Integrative Health Alliance, a company that provides wellness services for individuals and organizations worldwide.

Sleep Smarter THE NUTSHELL

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Sleep is not an obstacle you 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.

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.

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.

Sleep Smarter

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, smart phones, 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.

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. You just have to learn how to navigate your consumption of coffee and other caffeinated goodies to make sure that you're still getting the best sleep possible.

You can literally get amplified benefits of sleep by sleeping at the right hours. 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. This is what I call money time. 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.

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.

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 we've accepted as normal in our society are anything but. We have to take our blinders off and see that the consumption of man-made, processed foods is doing a number on our brain-body connection and damaging our 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.

Neurons that fire together, wire together. So what you do repeatedly will, in fact, 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. 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.

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. 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 as well. 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.

Sleep Smarter

Something called thermo-regulation heavily influences your body's sleep cycles. 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.

The best clothing for bed will be non-restrictive 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.

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.

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.