

Live Well Be Well

Title: How to get the most out of your Sleep!

Introduction

Welcome to Live Well, Be Well! A podcast where we speak candidly about all things health and well-being! My name is Reese, and my pronouns are she/her/hers -

- and I'm Ashley, and we're both Well-Being Peer Educators at UC San Diego, and on this episode of Live Well Be Well, we'll be discussing the importance of sleep and strategies for improving sleep outcomes - in honor of National Sleep Week!

So we hope you get inspired, we hope you feel connected, and we hope you discover new ways to live your best life. Let's get started!

Reese: So let's talk about Sleep! I recently listened to an amazing podcast and read an article from the Model Health show by Shawn Stevenson on the importance of sleep. Shawn Stevenson is a nutritionist, Wellness expert, best-selling author and creator of the model Health show he's a graduate of the University of Missouri, St. Louis with a background in biology and kinesiology and has spoken on Tedx.

Ashley: So - going off of this, we have 10 tips to help you all get the best sleep ever! So starting off with tip number one, which arguably might be the most important, is to know the value of sleep. So Shawn Stevenson says that "high-quality sleep fortifies your immune system, balances your hormones, boosts your metabolism, increases your physical activity and improves the function of your brain", and according to a lot of sources, it's recommended that the average person gets about 7 to 9 hours of sleep. According to the National College Health assessment, sleep difficulties was the third leading factor impacting academic performance, only preceded by stress and anxiety - so it's pretty obvious that sleep not only helps you physiologically, but also could help your academic performance.

Reese: Yeah Ashley I can definitely relate to you know getting those 7 to 9 hours of sleep is something super important, I definitely noticed that like my mood is a lot better when I really prioritize my sleep! And with that being said, our second point of our top 10 tips to get the best sleep is to get more sunlight during the day. So according to wellness expert Shawn Stevenson, sunlight provides the natural spectrum of light that we need to help coordinate the cycle of melatonin production. So melatonin is super important to our bodies, because this is sort of our sleep hormone. So in that sense, when melatonin is released, your body is sort of getting ready to go to sleep. By getting

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that vitamin D and all that sunlight, it's helping your body produce this critical sleep hormone.

Ashley: I think this is a great point too! I know personally, if I can't go outside and exercise in the sunlight, I definitely try to study in a brightly-lit room - sometimes in my kitchen, just because I can open the blinds and like the screen door, sometimes hear the birds sing. I feel like sunlight just helps me be overall more productive when I'm studying throughout the day. Okay - and now moving on tip number 3, we have to avoid your screen, especially because artificial blue light can be admitted by these electronics and these triggers your body to produce more daytime hormones, such as cortisol, our stress hormone, and can disorient your body's natural preparation for sleep. - and this information comes from Harvard health. So one of the tips that we have for you to help deal with screens (because that's obviously inevitable in today's online education) is to use a blue light blocker! Flux is a free app on MacBooks that serves as a blue light blocker or another more portable way to do this would be to invest in blue light glasses especially if you have a laptop and maybe you want to go outside or just if it's night time I know personally I have blue light glasses and I feel really smart when studying, just because I don't normally wear glasses.

Reese: Yeah actually I can totally relate to just trying to avoid the screen before going to bed. Something that I've utilized in quarantine is like a 30-minute to 60-minute no tech rule before going to sleep. And this is something that's really helped me, rather than like aimless scrolling on Instagram or Facebook, or doing homework right before bed, I really try to work to have a safe space right before I go to sleep where I'm kind of avoiding all that Tech, and I am definitely utilizing bluelight glasses as well. So with that being said, our fourth point to get the best sleep ever is to have a caffeine curfew. So according to Shawn Stevenson, you know it's really important to set a caffeine curfew. For most people, he recommended that you should stop drinking caffeine between 3 and 4 p.m. I know for me personally, I'm very sensitive to caffeine, whether that's coffee or tea, and so I really tried to avoid it, you, know honestly from like 12 p.m. and Beyond. But, I know that everybody's body is different but caffeine definitely can negatively impact your sleep routine. It can actually keep you up rather than allowing the melatonin to be produced in your body, so I know that being careful with caffeine is something that y'all should definitely be considering.

Ashley: That's a good point, I know me personally, I am NOT very sensitive to caffeine. I do consider myself a pretty avid coffee drinker. When the Sun goes down, I do try and switch over to drinking more water and leaving my coffee mug behind just because I know that caffeine late at night could potentially affect my quality of sleep. So, I just try and remind myself to hydrate more with water. So that will lead us to our next tip, number 5, which is to go to bed at the right time. Our expert Shawn Stevenson says that humans get their most significant hormonal secretions and Recovery by sleeping during the hours of 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

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Reese: Yeah so I can definitely relate to this. I think going to bed at the right time is totally crucial for how you're going to interact and communicate with yourself, and other people the next day. I really think it's super important to you know if you can, depending on the week and what you have going on, try to get to bed by 10:30-11:00 PM I think I would be totally awesome. With that being said, our 6th tip of our top 10 tips to get the best sleep ever is to try to sleep in a fully dark environment. So our expert Shawn Stevenson was really talking about how keeping your room dark allows your skin and melatonin to get your body prepped and ready to go to sleep. So when there's a lot of light in your room, your skin has receptors that take in this light and help keep you awake because it thinks that your body is trying to deal and act as if it were daytime. So when you have a lot of light in your room, whether you're studying, or you have a big lamp, this is negatively impacting your sleep routine in your body hormones. So something that Shawn Stevenson really recommended was to try to keep the room dark right before going to go to sleep. and also keep your room cool. He mentioned that the ideal room temperature would be about 68 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition to this, he also mentioned that it's really important to create a sleep sanctuary when you're ready to go to sleep. So this means turn your lights off, making sure you have a window open or you have some air conditioning available to you, also that you're keeping those Electronics you're out of your room or completely silenced so you're not interrupted during your sleep. And lastly, Stevenson mentioned that it's really important that use your bed for sleep and sex only. I know that it's super tempting to study in bed or to watch Netflix right before you go to sleep but if y'all can kind of stick to these few tips of keeping a room dark, avoiding Tech and just using your bed just for sleep, I'm I think y'all will definitely see improvements in your sleep cycle.

Ashley: I agree! I think all of those are really important points, especially if I recall from my first year of living on campus and in a dorm, it might be difficult with some roommates to be able to control your sleep environment because you have all these external factors that you can't necessarily control. I know personally, investing in like a sleep mask or like some earplugs or even just like having a conversation like with your roommate so you can kind of set those sleep boundaries. Just being really open about that, I think all of those really help solidify getting a good quality of sleep. And then moving on to our next tip, tip number seven, is getting enough exercise! So train hard but smart! So you don't need to spend two to three hours in the gym every day going crazy. It can be as simple as just making sure that you're getting movement, which I think is the most important part, especially since a lot of us are really sedentary nowadays and aren't able to maybe go outside or even just have a lot of free time. So some examples that we have for y'all are yoga, stretching, a 10-minute walk outside (or even in between study breaks), taking a lap around the house, walking up and down the stairs, or even lunging up and down the stairs if you can! I think just movement in general when you can fit it in is just great!

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Reese: Yeah Ashley I definitely can relate to this. When I get more exercise in my weeks, I definitely notice an improvement in my sleep. So you definitely do not have to spend hours on end working out or running around your neighborhood doing a bunch of cardio because that's just going to tire you out. But, if you can really focus on moving your body- whether it's a quick break from studying or doing work to actually like doing a workout you know where that's like a 30 minute or 60-minute routine that you have- that's really going to help improve your sleep. So with that being said, let's move into our 8th tip, and that is to have a high protein low carb snack before bed. So according to Shawn Stephenson, our health expert, giving your body a solid 90 minutes (more is better) before heading off to bed after eating is truly ideal. So with this being said, I know something that works for me is that if I find myself getting hungry- you know whether that's a few hours before bed or kind of close to bedtime- I like to have a little snack. Depending on the time but I really enjoy having a yogurt Bowl I use plain Greek yogurt. I might add some banana in it, and maybe you like some nuts, like walnuts or almonds- and that really helps keep me full because it's very high in protein. If it's a little bit turn back time and something that I tend to do just to come to help my body relax is actually drink hot tea. You know I make sure that it's not caffeinated, and some teas I really enjoy are like lavender chamomile tea and also peppermint.

Ashley: I definitely love peppermint tea myself and if I do recall, another sort of tip on a sleep snack was actually recommended by AP psych teacher - and I remember her telling us that about half of a turkey sandwich and a glass of warm milk before bed really helped people get their body in that sort of "sleep mode". I know Turkey does have tryptophan amino acid that does help you feel a little bit sleepy. My AP psych teacher was a therapist, and I know she recommended this to her patients when they had trouble sleeping and I think another part of it was just if they sort of had this on a regular basis and created a routine, it would definitely help their body sort of realize "okay it's time to start winding down, getting ready for bed" and sort of put them in this mindset like "okay! we can you know start going to sleep". And so that being said we'll go into tip number 9, which is to meditate or journal. And it doesn't have to be a 30 minutes to an hour meditation! It can be anything from even 5 to 10 minutes or possibly whatever you have time for! And this can also even extend to static stretching or maybe you're just focusing on your breathing and how your body feels at that time, just really focusing on getting loose and releasing all those stressed or tight joints- or even gratitude journaling, which is also great, and just being able to reflect on the positives of your day, and on what went right - even if they are really small points

Reese: Yeah Ashley, I can definitely relate to this point. I really found that meditating right before bed has been something really helpful for me during quarantine. Sometimes I'll just do you know like a five-minute meditation, or some kind of gratitude journal, and just kind of pick three things in the day that I've been you know grateful for- whether that is the sunshine, my family or just being able to attend school and study even if it's from home. With that being said, we're coming to our last tip number 10 and

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that is to maintain a consistent bedtime routine. So this is probably the hardest point, but definitely probably the most important, in the sense that having a good bedtime routine will really allow you to be more organized in a lot of other aspects of your life. I've definitely noticed that personally when I really focus on getting that 7 to 9 hours of sleep, that I do a lot better in kind of getting my schoolwork done, making sure that I am keeping myself clean and in check, you know making sure my own room is clean, that I'm being respectful of other people on living with Etc. So I've definitely just noticed that having that bedtime routine just makes me a lot better person in other aspects of my life.

Ashley: I agree 100%, just like you said Reese, I think that this point really helps sort of pull everything together, and like on YouTube with lifestyle bloggers, you'll hear a lot of them say "oh, this is my morning routine" or "this is my study routine" but, I think it's also important to have a bedtime routine just because, it really helps you (like you said) be organized, which maybe a lot of people underserve their need for Sleep, which clearly is so important - it helps us function and prepare for the next day, and that being said - sleep in general is just great!

Reese: Yeah totally! Something else I want to add is sort of like a bonus tip for y'all. Ashley and I wanted to mention something like an add-on accessory or something that can help level up your sleep. I know something I really like to use to help get me ready to go to sleep is a neck pillow. This is something totally extra, but it definitely helps like support my neck from all the tension has had through the day-whether that's from working out or studying, or just kind of being in that bent over like sitting position- having that neck pillow right before I go to sleep if I'm journaling or just have a candlelit or something like that, it definitely helps just kind of relax me and get me in the mood to go to sleep. What about you Ashley?

Ashley: I know for me personally, I do have a weighted blanket - I got it for Christmas - and I was so excited when I got it because I had wanted a weighted blanket for so long! I think it does help me sleep a little bit better, not really sure why or maybe the exact science behind it, but it just makes me feel comfortable. I think having that specific blanket or being able to use it, just as another signal for my body to be like "okay we are ready to go to bed now".

Reese: Yeah for sure! I know that my sister actually has a big weighted blanket too. And this is not scientific, but her love language is touch, and she described that using the weighted blanket kind of makes her feel like she's getting a big hug right before she goes to sleep.

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Closing

So with that being said y'all, this is coming to an end of our Lives Well, Be Well podcast. If you like what you heard and would like to learn more about topics related to health and well-being, there's much more to come! Be sure to follow us on Instagram and Facebook under @UCSDWPE. Stay tuned for our next episode of Live Well, Be Well!

Until next time, be kind, be true, be you. And remember, to be well is to live well!

General notes and guidelines:

- The easiest way to record group episodes is through Zoom.
- Some of your options when recording include:
 - You can select one person to be the moderator who asks questions
 - You can take turns asking each other questions
 - You can share the floor to discuss your experience with XYZ. For example, if you're discussing how to stay motivated with online classes, one person can discuss their experiences and provide advice, and another person can do the same.
 - Figure out a flow that feels most naturally to you!
- The episode should be around 10-12 minutes in length
- Be sure to develop and finalize your script in this Google Doc - this document will serve as a transcript for your episode.
- If you make any mistakes when recording, NO WORRIES! Just let us know in the audio that it needs to be edited out "please edit that last section out - re-recording that section now" (or something along those lines).
- **Once you have recorded your episode, please send your audio to Renee, Christopher, and Bria (rdellacqua@ucsd.edu, cspurling@health.ucsd.edu, bhamlet@health.ucsd.edu). We will insert the opening and closing music, make any edits as needed, and schedule its release date.**
- Please be mindful of what you say and how you present yourself. This is a department-led podcast so we need to ensure that we're professional and that the content is aligned with our goals of promoting health and well-being as it relates to behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions.
- Please do not use explicit language or advocate for or suggest engagement in unhealthy behaviors (e.g., Inappropriate: "one of the ways that I like to destress and relax is smoking cannabis and drinking a 6 pack" → Appropriate: "one of the ways that I like to destress and relax is by taking a warm bath, listening to my favorite music, talking to a friend, and drawing")
- Have fun with this! When you have fun and enjoy what you're saying, it'll radiate through your voice!