

THE BIG IDEAS

Sleep Is Powerful

Even more so than you may think.

How About You?

Getting enough sleep?

Sleeping Ten Hours

Yah. Every night.

Power Sleep

It's time to rock it.

Absolute Synchrony

Rhythms are huge.

Optimal Sleep

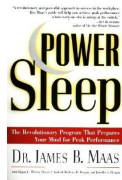
For optimal living.

The Four Golden Rules

Of sleep.

Sleep Strategies

Ten of 'em.



Power Sleep

The Revolutionary Program That Prepares Your Mind for Peak Performance

BY DR. JAMES B. MAAS · HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS © 1999 · 320 PAGES

“For anyone who wants to be successful, sleep is a necessity, not a luxury. The conclusions presented in *Power Sleep* are based on recent studies of the neurological, chemical, and electrical activity of the sleeping brain, which show that even minimal sleep loss can have profound detrimental effects on mood, cognition, performance, productivity, communication skills, accident rates, and general health, including gastrointestinal system, cardiovascular functioning, and our immune systems. Given the role of sleep in determining daytime functioning, most alarming to me is the current extent of sleep deprivation in our society. At least 50 percent of the American adult population is chronically sleep-deprived and a similar percentage report trouble sleeping on any given night. And it's getting worse by the decade. This devastating trend can be found throughout the industrialized world.

... If you understand exactly what the brain accomplishes during various stages of a night's sleep and what your individual sleep requirement is, you're in a position to become a very different person. People who learn about sleep come to value sleep and adopt better sleep habits. After a few weeks they discover, perhaps for the first time, what it really feels like to be **fully alert all day long**. Their increased efficiency gives them enough hours in the day to work, and to play. They become better spouses, better parents, and better in their careers. They become more energetic, healthier, more successful, and happier with their lives. That's life as it should be.”

~ Dr. James B. Maas from *Power Sleep*

“Sleep plays a major role in preparing the body and brain for an alert, productive, psychologically and physiologically healthy tomorrow.”

~ Dr. James B. Maas

Sleep.

It's super important. And, in today's hyper-busy world, it's easy to overlook its importance. There's some odd quasi-heroic ideal associated with *not* getting sleep. Weird.

The fact is we are wired to sleep a LOT more than we do. It's quite obvious that if we want to optimize our lives, we need to prioritize our sleep!

Who better to help us do that than Cornell Professor [James Maas](#)—one of the world's leading authorities on sleep?!

This book is fantastic. I highly recommend it and I'm excited to explore some of my favorite Big Ideas so let's jump right in!

SLEEP IS POWERFUL

“The process of sleep, if given adequate time and the proper environment, provides tremendous power. It restores, rejuvenates, and energizes the body and brain. The third of your life that you should spend sleeping has profound effects on the other two thirds of your life, in terms of

alertness, energy, mood, body weight, perception, memory, thinking, reaction time, productivity, performance, communication skills, creativity, safety, and good health.”

“Often we are totally unaware of our own reduced capabilities because we become habituated to low levels of alertness. Many of us have been sleepy for such a long time that we don't know what it's like to feel wide awake.”

~ Dr. James B. Maas

Sleep.

It's incredibly (!!!) important.

We'll leave it at that for now. Check out the book for all the supporting details. Let's take a quick look at whether you're getting enough of the zzzzz's and look at how to rock it.

ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

“Ask yourself:

How much sleep do I get each night during the week?

Does it differ on weekends?

Do I fall asleep the minute my head hits the pillow?

Do I need an alarm clock to wake me up?

If you're getting less than eight hours of sleep each night, including weekends, or if you fall asleep instantly, or need an alarm clock to wake up, consider yourself one of the millions of chronically sleep-deprived people—perhaps blissfully ignorant of how sleepy and ineffective you are, or how dynamic you *could* be with adequate sleep.”

Let's slow down and actually answer those questions, shall we? :)

—> How much sleep do I get each night during the week? *I get ____ hours of sleep each night.*

—> Does it differ on weekends? *Yes or No*

—> Do I fall asleep the minute my head hits the pillow? *Yes or No*

—> Do I need an alarm clock to wake me up? *Yes or No*

Alrighty. That's the quick assessment. How'd we do?

Other signs you might be sleep deprived include needing an alarm clock to get up in the morning, struggling to get out of bed, feeling tired, irritable and stressed during the week, having trouble concentrating and/or remembering, falling asleep watching TV, dark circles under your eyes, etc. There's a full assessment in the book!

Keep this in mind: “Most of us need at least one more hour of sleep every night than we get. The consequences of gradual yet continuous sleep deprivation might not be readily apparent at first glance, but over time, the insidious sleepiness will begin to take its toll on your mood, your performance, and your health. Your education, your job, and your family and social life will be affected.”

SLEEPING TEN HOURS PER NIGHT

“Ten hours of sleep is operationally defined as our need because that's what is often required for optimal performance.”

~ Dr. James B. Maas

“Before Thomas Edison's invention of the electric light in 1879, most people slept ten hours each night, a duration we've just recently discovered is ideal for optimal performance. When activity no longer was limited by the day's natural light, sleep habits changed. Over the next century we gradually reduced our total nightly sleep time by 20 percent, to eight hours per night. But that's not nearly the end of the story. Recent studies indicate that Americans now average seven hours per night, approximately two and a half hours less than ideal. Amazingly, and foolishly, one third of our population is sleeping less than six hours each night. Are we losing our minds?”

Did you catch that?

Before Mr. Edison gave us electric light in 1879 (which is less 150 years ago... not even a blink of the eye evolutionarily), most people slept TEN (!!!) hours per night which, Dr. Maas tells us, is

“ideal for optimal performance.”

Now?

Now we only average seven hours per night with a third of us getting less than six hours.

Wow.

(Yes, motivational speakers will convince us we can get by on 4 hours of sleep but that just isn't wise if we want to perform optimally. Period.)

“According to Dr. William Dement, chairman of the National Commission on Sleep Disorders Research, “The national sleep debt is larger and more important than the national financial debt.” Are you a contributor to this deficit? If so, you're far from being the person you can be.”

~ Dr. James B. Maas

IT'S TIME TO POWER SLEEP

“We do not understand the need for sleep and the consequences of sleep deprivation. We must learn to value sleep as much as we value the importance of proper nutrition and exercise. To become peak performers we must change our habits so we can emerge from the fog of sleepiness in which we have become habituated. We must learn to “Power Sleep.””

Yesterday I worked on the Note for [Dan Siegel's *Mindsight*](#) (check it out!).

Dan is one of the world's leading psychotherapists and neuroscientists.

Here's how he puts it: “I reminded him that with regular exercise, a good diet, and sleep, he could set the foundation for promoting neuroplasticity. Jonathan and I made a verbal agreement that he would follow this “prescription” for health. It's amazing how often these basics of brain health are ignored. Exercise is an underrated treatment—and now we know that aerobics not only releases the endorphins that can combat a down mood but also promotes the growth of the brain. Eating regularly and well, balancing the various food groups, and avoiding excess sugar and stimulants can help to reduce mood swings. And sleep, though in short supply and difficult at times to initiate for Jonathan, is a healer that can be approached in a systematic way. Sleep hygiene includes setting up a calming routine before bed. Minimizing caffeine or other stimulants once evening approaches, if not before; shutting off digital stimulation an hour or two before sleeping; and quiet activities such as taking a bath, listening to soothing music, or reading a book can all help the body as well as the mind to settle. With these brain hygiene basics in our contract, we could move into our specific efforts to promote integration.”

Basic brain hygiene. From one of the world's leading psychotherapists + neuroscientists.

Exercise. Nutrition. And SLEEP.

If you have *any* emotional funkiness/irritability/anxiety/depression/ick sauce, check out your fundamentals.

If you're not moving your body, eating whole foods (and less sugar/refined stuff), and getting adequate sleep (that's 8-10 hours not 6 or 7!!!), then guess what? You're not giving yourself a fair shot at being *functional* let alone optimal.

Seriously.

GET YOUR FUNDAMENTALS IN ORDER.

Like NOW.

Ahem. (Seriously.)

ABSOLUTE SYNCHRONY

“It's important to keep your biological clock in absolute synchrony with your daily routine. In this way the hours you spend in bed will correspond with the sleepy phase of your circadian rhythm and the hours you spend out of bed will correspond with the awake phase of your

“The only way to repay your sleep debt is to get more sleep. You can't repay years of sleep debt by one night of good sleep, any more than you can compensate for years of overeating by a one-day diet.”

~ Dr. James B. Maas

" If possible, you should avoid sleeping pills and over-the-counter sleep remedies. They make you drowsy and appear to induce better sleep, but in reality they lead to disturbed, fragmented sleep. Natural sleep is always best and can usually be achieved by following good sleep strategies."

~ Dr. James B. Maas

circadian rhythm. The only way to do this is to maintain a regular sleep schedule, going to bed at the same time every night and waking up at the same time every day, seven days a week."

Let's make a note of an important word in that first sentence. (Hint: It was "absolute.")

—> "It's important to keep your biological clock in **absolute** synchrony with your daily routine."

I've learned to take great teachers at their literal word. When conservative scientists use a word like "absolute" I pay attention.

If we want to optimize our lives, we need to create rhythms. There's no more important rhythm to rock than our circadian rhythm. And, there's no better way to get in harmony with that than to be ABSOLUTELY consistent with our routines, maintaining "a regular sleep schedule, going to bed at the same time every night and waking up at the same time every day, seven days a week."

Alexandra and I have been having a lot of fun dialing this in. It's not easy. (States obvious.)

The #1 key for us?

What we call a "digital sunset." The sun goes down and all of our electronics and bright lights go off with the setting sun—allowing us to slow down and honor the ending of the day. We even bought dorky blue-light blocking glasses ([these ones](#)) and some awesome no-blue-light lights ([these](#)) so we can play nice with our melatonin.

I used to jack myself up at night checking out ESPN.com or watching a Jon Stewart/Colbert episode (or ten) on my iPhone but even when I wore the blue-light blocking glasses, my sleep was sub-optimal.

Now we have an early dinner, get the little man ready for bed, go on our nightly walk around town and put him to bed super early then do our night-time routine and hop in bed shortly after we put him down. It's a sort of sport for me to see if I can get to bed by 7pm this winter. :)

Then what?

Then I pop out of bed 4am-5am feeling like a rock star on an energy drink (uh... a little more mellow than that but you get the idea :), smiling at the start of the new day, taking 5 deep breaths as I think of all that's amazing in my life and go get at it.

P.S. Yes, our routines are extreme. But only because we live in such a nutty society. As [Krishnamurti](#) tells us (see Notes on [Think on These Things](#)): "It is no measure of health to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society."

P.P.S. Come on. What are you really staying up late for? To watch TV? Surf the Internet/check your email + Facebook one more time? Um... Yah. We can do better than that, no? (And, you couldn't pay me to do that stuff any more. Feeling GREAT when I wake up + throughout the day feels *way* better than any late night soul-numbing activities ever could!)

As [Seneca](#) says (see Notes on [Letters from a Stoic](#)): "How much better to pursue a straight course and eventually reach that destination where the things that are pleasant and the things that are honorable finally become, for you, the same."

P.P.S. Let's do this! :)

OPTIMAL SLEEP FOR OPTIMAL LIVING

"Do you want to be alert, dynamic, and full of energy all day long? Be in a good mood? Be productive, creative, and capable of making good decisions? Be able to express yourself well? Have good concentration and memory? Not be unduly susceptible to disease and viral infection? In general, do you want a chance at optimal living?"

"If you need an alarm clock to wake you up, if you find it hard to get out of bed in the morning, or if you're tired during the day, you haven't slept enough."

~ Dr. James B. Maas

If so, you'll need to get optimal sleep, the amount and quality of sleep that allows you to function throughout the day without feeling drowsy. Without optimal sleep you don't stand a chance of reaching your potential. With optimal sleep you'll be amazed at what you can do with your newfound life. Optimal sleep is Power Sleep.

Where do you start? By becoming familiar with and practicing the four golden rules outlined here. When do you start? Tonight!"

That. Is. Awesome.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. And YES!

Take note: "Without optimal sleep you don't stand a chance of reaching your potential." That makes it pretty straight-forward, eh? Thank you, Good Doctor.

Now what are those four golden rules of sleep?

THE FOUR GOLDEN RULES OF SLEEP

"1. Get an adequate amount of sleep every night.

2. Establish a regular sleep schedule.

3. Get continuous sleep.

4. Make up for lost sleep."

Dr. Maas has an entire chapter dedicated to unpacking those golden rules. Great stuff.

The short story?

"1. Identify the amount of sleep you need to be fully alert all day long and get that amount every night."

Note: "At minimum most people absolutely need to obtain at least sixty to ninety minutes more sleep than they presently get."

How much sleep is it for you? For me it's 9+ hours. (I feel rejuvenated just saying that. haha.)

btw: I was originally inspired to go for 9 after attending a Conscious Capitalism event where [Tony Schwartz](#) (coauthor of [The Power of Full Engagement](#) (see Notes)) was keynoting. He's one of the world's leading experts on Energy. He said he gets 9 hours of sleep. That was good enough for me!

"2. Go to bed at the same time every night, and wake up without an alarm clock at the same time every morning, including weekends. That's 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Regularity is important for setting and stabilizing your internal sleep-wake clock."

If you sleep in on the weekends you're just going to confuse yourself. Dr. Maas describes Sunday night insomnia and the resulting fatigue on Monday morning. Avoid that by being consistent.

No, it's not easy. But it's worth it. (Assuming you like feeling good consistently and enjoy putting yourself in a great position to reach your potential. If you like feeling craptastic ignore this advice. :)

"3. For sleep to be rejuvenating you should get your required amount of sleep in one continuous block."

Pretty straight-forward. Go to sleep. Stay sleeping. Wake up. Rock it.

"4. Pay back your sleep debt in a timely fashion. Make up for any lost sleep as soon as possible."

Always wise to pay back debt snappy-like. Miss some sleep? Make it up!

" And if tonight my soul
may find her peace in sleep,
and sink in good oblivion,
and in the morning wake
like a new-opened flower
then I have been dipped again
in God,
and new created."

~ D.H. Lawrence, "Shadows"

TWENTY GREAT SLEEP STRATEGIES

1. "Reduce stress as much as possible.
2. Exercise to stay fit.
3. Keep mentally stimulated during the day.
4. Eat a proper diet.
5. Stop smoking.
6. Reduce caffeine intake.
7. Avoid alcohol near bedtime.
8. Take a warm bath before bed.
9. Maintain a relaxing atmosphere in the bedroom.
10. Establish a bedtime ritual..."

Well, there are 10 of the top 20 tips for great sleep. Get the book for the rest and for a whole chapter outlining how to rock each one for optimal sleep!

I really hope you loved this Note. And, I hope I impressed upon you the importance of sleep and properly (and playfully!) kicked you in the butt to go out and optimize if this is an area of your life that needs some attention. (It's the #1 complaint doctors get so I'd be surprised if it *wasn't* an issue for most!)

Here's to optimizing our lives and starting with an optimal night of sleep! :)

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

If you liked this Note,
you'll probably like...

[Take a Nap, Change Your Life!](#)

[The Power of Rest](#)

[Mindsight](#)

[The Power of Full Engagement](#)

About the Author of "Power Sleep"

DR. JAMES B. MAAS



James B. Maas, Ph.D., is professor, Stephen H. Weiss Presidential Fellow, and past chairman of the Department of Psychology at Cornell University. He is a recipient of the American Psychological Association's Distinguished Educator Award. Dr. Maas makes frequent appearances on such programs as *NBC Nightly News*, *Prime Time Live*, *The Today show*, and *Good Morning America*. (from Barnes & Noble)

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at brianjohnson.me.