

THE BIG IDEAS

Value Your Sleep
= Tip #1.

Avoid the Screens
Easiest way to optimize.

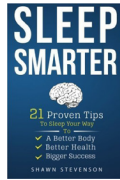
Adenosine
How caffeine really works.

Stay Cool
Think: 60 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit.

Vitamin G
You getting enough?

Meditate in Morning
To sleep better at night.

Night-time Ritual
The ritual of doing what works.



Sleep Smarter

21 Proven Tips to Sleep Your Way To a Better Body, Better Health and Bigger Success

BY SHAWN STEVENSON · MODEL HOUSE PUBLISHING © 2014 · 160 PAGES

“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 (say it ain't so!).

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

~ Shawn Stevenson from *Sleep Smarter*

[Shawn Stevenson](#) is a health coach who has one of the most popular health & fitness podcasts out there called [The Model Health Show](#).

This is a short, quick-reading, funny and practical little book featuring 21 tips on how to optimize your sleep. (Get the book [here](#) on Amazon where it's really highly rated. :)

I read it as part of my preparation for teaching Optimal Sleep 101. (Check out our [growing collection of Notes on sleep/rest/nap books!](#))

I could have riffed on any one of these tips/Big Ideas. I'm excited to share some of my favorites (including some that have already positively impacted my life) so let's jump straight in!

... We'll kick it off with a quick reminder of just how important your sleep is:

REMEMBER THE VALUE OF YOUR SLEEP

“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 its 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.

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

~ Shawn Stevenson

"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."

~ Shawn Stevenson

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."

That's Tip #1: Know the Value of Sleep.

Now, I'm not sure where you are on the "Sleep is important" spectrum, but I KNOW that a great night of sleep is my #1 non-negotiable self-care habit that keeps me most plugged in.

(btw: [This little Micro Class](#) will probably always be one of if not THE most important Micro Class I do.)

If I don't get my 8-ish + hours of sleep a night I just don't have the same zip in my mind I REALLY like to have. Less than 6 and you don't want to be around me. (Hah.)

So, I don't need a lot of convincing that sleep is super important.

If you do, KNOW that it's super important. :) But only if you want to optimize and actualize.

It's the secret sauce.

Let's remember just how important it is.

And let's take a quick look at some Ideas on how to dial it in.

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."

That's Tip #3. (Right after getting morning sun.)

Avoiding the blue-light emitting screens before bedtime is, as Shawn advises, probably the #1 thing we can do to optimize our sleep.

At least (!) 90 minutes before you intend to go to sleep, turn off all your electronics.

Your computer. Your iPad. Your TV. Your smartphone.

OFF. OFF. OFF. OFF.

Although these devices are ubiquitous these days, we've gotta remember that we evolved for MILLIONS of years without them.

Back in the day, the sun went down and we slowed down. We weren't wandering around getting all jacked up at night. We would have been prey. And we would have been dead.

It's only over the last few decades (starting with the TV) that these devices have become such a big part of our lives. And, really, only over the last DECADE (with the introduction of the smartphone) that they've become SO omnipresent.

So, if you want to optimize your sleep, turn them off. Starting tonight!

P.S. In Optimal Sleep 101 we'll have a complete "Sleep Gear" sheet, for now, check out [f.lux](#) if you haven't already, and think about getting these [sweet blue light blocking glasses](#) if you want to be really cool.

"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."

~ Shawn Stevenson

P.P.S. Shawn tells us that 50% of Americans sleep with their cell phones by their side. Research (sponsored by the mobile companies themselves!) shows that people who check their phones before going to bed take longer to reach deep sleep and spend less time there. Get your phone out of your room if you want to optimize your sleep.

P.P.P.S. Here's another fascinating thing: Did you know your skin has receptors that can pick up light? Your skin can LITERALLY see. Nuts. So... Make sure you're sleeping in a super dark environment (so dark you can't see your hand in front of your face). My sleep environment is pretty good but black out curtains will be arriving soon. You?

ADENOSINE + HOW CAFFEINE REALLY WORKS

"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."

So, this is from Tip #4: Have a Caffeine Curfew.

Basic Big Idea? Caffeine has a half-life of around 5-8 hours—meaning that if you had a coffee with 200 mg of caffeine in it at 10 a.m., half of that (or 100 mg for the non-Math majors) is still in your system as late as 6 p.m. (That's a lot.)

So, if you're going to use caffeine, do it earlier in the day. Have a "caffeine curfew." (For most people, Shawn tells us that curfew is no later than 2 p.m. Jacking yourself later in the day just isn't wise if you're hoping for a good night of sleep.)

Most of us know that at this point.

Here's something I didn't know: Caffeine doesn't actually "give you energy." What it really does is mask your fatigue. And the way it does that is fascinating.

So, short story: Your neurons are firing all day long. As they do so, they produce a by-product known as adenosine. The more firing, the more adenosine. Adenosine usually binds with receptors and basically alerts your body to the fact that you're working hard and nudges you toward sleep and recovery. As the adenosine piles up, you get more tired—a VERY important signal for you to REST.

Apparently caffeine can fit into those adenosine receptors and basically block them from doing their job—so you don't get the signal that you're actually tired.

Now, that can be great in the moment.

But you're basically borrowing energy. And, that energy needs to be paid back at some point.

If you do it once in a while, you can get away with it and pay back the debt. But if you use it all the time to mask an underlying failure to recover properly, you're overextending yourself and in for a much bigger issue.

I like the way my friend [Brendan Brazier](#) puts it in [The Thrive Diet](#) (see Notes): "I consider coffee drinking an uncomplementary stress. I view it as a form of credit, similar to shopping with a credit card. You get energy now that you don't actually have, but you pay for it later—when the 'bill,' or fatigue, hits. (Simply drinking more coffee to put off the inevitable is like paying off one credit card with another: It will catch up with you sooner or later.) You'll most likely pay a high interest rate as well, needing more time to recover than if that energy had not been borrowed in the first place. This is the beginning of a vicious cycle."

"Eve Van Cauter, Ph.D., called sleep deprivation 'The royal route to obesity.' Now understanding the fact that sleep deprivation decreases your insulin sensitivity, disrupts your hormone cycles, and depressed your brain function, we know her statement is 100% true."

~ Shawn Stevenson

All part of a longer chat on the optimal use of caffeine (I drink coffee twice a month on the days I teach my Master Classes as it's a nice little performance booster) but for our purposes remember: if you use caffeine, have a curfew.

Let adenosine do it's job.

STAY COOL

"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 difficulty sleeping."

~ Shawn Stevenson

"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 your 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."

Shawn shares a couple Tips on the importance of being cool—one related to setting the thermostat just right and another on not bundling yourself up like an arctic hunter.

There's some fascinating research he shares re: thermoregulation. Here's what we need to know: Our bodies can keep us WARM a lot easier than they can keep us COOL.

And, being cool is a really important part of getting an optimal amount of sleep.

So, stay cool.

Specifically, the ideal room temperature is 60 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit.

One of the biggest little things I ever did for my sleep was to set my thermostat for 68 degrees. (And I actually took that down to 66 degrees to run a little experiment after reading this book.)

So, what's YOUR thermostat set at these days?

And are you overly dressed for night time?

Stay cool!

YOU GETTING YOUR VITAMIN G?

"Since the beginning of time, humans have had a constant connection 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 that 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."

That's from Tip #20 and probably the one that most impacted me: Get Grounded.

As I was reading that passage, I tried to remember the last time my bare feet actually hit the earth.

I'm almost a little embarrassed to say, but I *couldn't remember!* :o

I'm pretty sure it was maybe a year ago when Emerson and I went to the beach. (Oh, my!)

"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."

~ Shawn Stevenson

I thought I was ALL about "being a good animal" and leaning into certain behaviors that we've evolved to follow (like circadian rhythms, less technology, etc.) but I pretty much NEVER touch the earth. Yikes.

Shawn calls this Vitamin G.

As in Vitamin Grounding. Making connection with the good ol' Earth.

A growing body of research says it's essential.

The short story: We run on electromagnetic energy. So does the earth. "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."

I have to admit that I've always found the whole "earthing"/"grounding" thing to be a little too far out there. After reading this chapter, I no longer feel that way. As I type this I'm finally using the grounding mat Alexandra told me to get a long time ago as she's our family vanguard on such things. Thank you, darling. :)

I'll be actively looking for ways to make more pure contact with the earth. (And... I'll be looking into grounding sheets and other gear. More on all that soon. Wish me luck!)

How about *you*? When's the last time your bare feet touched the bare earth? You getting enough Vitamin G?

MEDITATE IN MORNING TO SLEEP BETTER AT NIGHT

"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."

That's from Tip #16: Calm Your Inner Chatter.

This isn't a news flash but we want to remember: We're going to have a hard time falling asleep if we've got drunk, crazy, hyperactive little monkeys swinging around in our heads.

We need to get REALLY good at flipping what Shawn calls the "off switch."

Imagine that.

You're up and on and rockin' it during the day.

Then, you're done. [Shut down complete.](#)

You flip the OFF switch.

And, as we discuss all the time, one of the best ways to build that off-switch muscle? Meditation. (You check out [Meditation 101](#) yet? Got a solid practice?)

Meditate in the morning to sleep well at night. Flip the off switch.

P.S. One of the things I do every.single.night is take 5 deep breaths (always 5!)—breathing in to 6, holding for 2 and then exhaling to 8. Nice, slow, deep breathing where I'm not thinking about *anything* other than the count and deep breaths. I do that the moment I am flat on my back.

EVERY night. No thinking allowed—no matter what's going on. I also do the exact same thing to start every single one of my meditations (+ napitations)—grooving my consciousness to know that when I take those 5 deep breaths everything shuts down. Period. It's amazing.

Which leads us to the importance of rituals:

"There is so much greatness in you waiting to be shared, and it starts with passion, consistency, and getting a great night's sleep."

~ Shawn Stevenson

HOW'S YOUR NIGHT-TIME RITUS?

"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 Alexandra 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.'

That's from the final Tip: Ritualize Your Night.

Did you know that the word *ritual* comes from the Latin *ritus* which means "a proven way of doing something"? <— I love that!!

And, more importantly, do YOU have a PM ritual that you go through to help you get a great night of sleep? We want to figure out what works then do it again and again remembering that a great day starts the night before.

Ritus-style.

Check out Habits 101 for more on how to install habits that'll help you rock it and have fun experimenting with different things as you dial in 4% by 4% night after night—compounding that goodness into deep, restorative sleep that sets you up to rock it day in and day out.

To smarter sleep and smarter living! :)

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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

[Power Sleep](#)

[The Power of Rest](#)

[Take a Nap Change Your Life](#)

[Sleep for Success!](#)

About the Author of "Sleep Smarter"

SHAWN STEVENSON



Shawn Stevenson is the creator of *The Model Health Show*, featured as the #1 Nutrition and Fitness podcast on itunes, and a leading health expert who's transformed the lives of thousands of people around the world. A graduate of The University of Missouri - St. Louis with a background in biology and kinesiology, Shawn went on to be the founder of Advanced Integrative Health Alliance, a successful company that provides Wellness Services for both individuals and organizations worldwide. Shawn is a dynamic keynote speaker who has spoken for TEDx, universities, and numerous organizations with outstanding reviews. Connect: theshawnstevensonmodel.com.

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.