

Diet vs Disease Module 7 Mindset Is The Key

Sleep Hygiene Transcript

00:01 Thanks for joining me today as we talk about sleep, how to give yourself the time to rest and recover. I'm Julie Gold.

00:09 I'm one of the mindset coaches here at Diet versus Disease, and I'm excited to talk to you about this. Oh, so important thing that can be so super elusive for many of us.

00:22 So why do we need to sleep? There are about a million reasons. Here are some of the top ones. Sleep impacts chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

00:35 It impacts our mental health, depression, anxiety, and mood disorders. It impacts our immune system. It impacts our memory, creativity, decision making, and our ability to learn new things.

00:49 It impacts our cognitive function. It gives our bodies time to rest and to recover so that we can safely function in the day.

00:57 It allows for gut rest. And in case you weren't aware, adults 18 and over. The recommendation is to get between seven and nine hours of sleep a night.

01:13 So many people struggle with sleep and there are many fairly easy things to do that can improve your sleep. There are basically three types of people.

01:27 The first are people who can't fall asleep at night. They lay in bed, they toss and turn, they roll over, they toss and turn, they look at the clock, they can't fall asleep.

01:36 The second group of people has one or more wakeful periods during the night. And I want to make sure I say this, it is normal and expected for you to have brief wakeful times in the night.

01:52 Many of us believe that when our head hits the pillow, we should just sleep straight through and wake up in the morning.

01:58 That is not how our sleep cycles work. So, it is not unusual to wake up for a second couple seconds and then fall back to sleep.

02:08 It is only considered problematic when we are awake for more than 20 minutes in the night. And then there are those people who unfortunately can't fall asleep at night, and then they also have wakeful times during the night.

02:24 So understanding where you fall into these three categories will help us identify some ways for you to improve your sleep.

02:35 When we're talking about improving sleep, what we really want to do is improve our sleep drive. What build sleep drive. And you can think of sleep drive like appetite.

02:45 So we want to be hungry at mealtimes, just like we want to be sleepy at bedtime. And so there are kind of three key things that we want to do.

02:55 We want to associate bed with only sleep and sex. So that means we don't get in bed and do other things.

03:02 Watch tv, scroll on social media, play games, read a book knit whatever it is that you might do in bed.

03:12 We really want to reserve bed for just sleeping and sex. We also want to make sure that we're not snacking and quote unquote ruining our dinner.

03:22 So eliminating naps, eliminating sleeping in on the weekends or on days when, when you don't have commitments. And then what we really want to do is we want to connect our wake time, the time we get up in the morning with our circadian rhythms.

03:41 And the circadian rhythm is this kind of 24-hour clock that most of us function on. And it has to do with the light and dark cycles of our 24-hour clock on earth.

03:55 And so we want to connect our sleep, our wake times with that circadian rhythm. So, if you were having trouble sleeping, there are many, many things you can do to improve your situation.

04:12 And the thing about increasing sleep drive is we want to attempt multiple changes at once. We want to make a number of different shifts in your approach to sleeping and do that consistently for a few weeks to see if that improves your overall sleep.

04:37 So the number one most important thing recommendation based on current research is to have a consistent wake time every morning, regardless of how you slept the night before.

04:51 The old recommendation was to have a consistent bedtime and wake time. Current research says actually the most important thing is a consistent wake time.

04:59 And this goes back to that tying wake times here, your circadian rhythm. We only want to get into bed when we are sleepy.

05:10 So if you are wide awake, if you are you know, tired but not sleepy, you don't want to get into bed quite yet.

05:22 If it takes you more than 20 minutes to fall asleep, you want to get up and do something relaxing until you fall, feel sleepy again.

05:31 If you're awake in the night for more than 20 minutes, you want to get up and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again.

05:39 And the caveat with both of these is it is a perceived 20 minutes. We do not want you watching the clock and, you know, keeping track of, of how long exactly it's taking you to fall asleep.

05:54 If it feels like about 20 minutes, then it's probably best to get up and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again, I already mentioned this one, but is for sleep and sex only.

06:07 So no TV reading, playing games, social media, scrolling, knitting, whatever. We just want to be sleeping and having sex in bed.

06:20 Oftentimes one of the big challenges we have is our mind is racing when we get into bed. And so practicing relaxation and mindfulness to help me fall asleep.

06:31 And that might be in the period before you get into bed, and it also might be as you're lying in bed, we want to make sure that we're not consuming caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs for several hours before bed.

06:46 And all of these substances, chemicals impact individuals differently. And so, you may have to, to play with this and figure out what works best for you in the one to two hours before bed, taking some time to wind down and engaging in relaxing activities.

07:07 So these are activities that don't engage your brain or your physical body. So, you don't want to be doing Sudoku or your taxes or riding a stationary bike in the one to two hours before your bedtime.

07:24 You wanted to be doing something, relaxing, reading, watching some tv chatting on the phone, chatting with your partner, knitting, sewing painting, coloring, any of those types of things.

07:37 We all know that regular exercise is good for us for a variety of reasons, but it's really important to improve sleep drive.

07:44 So if you are not engaging in regular exercise, let's get started doing that because it will help your sleep drive.

07:53 This is the, this is the recommendation that I personally hate, which is don't take a nap during the day. And so, if you are one of those people who likes nap but is struggling with sleep difficulties, it's a good idea to eliminate those naps during the day.

08:13 On the mindset side of things, making sure that you're not catastrophizing the consequences of a lack of sleep. I know many of us climb into bed and when we can't fall asleep or we wake during the night, we think, oh gosh, tomorrow's going to be horrible.

08:27 I'm going to feel so tired and I won't be able to do X, Y, and Z. And so, we can create this really big story about how horrible it's going to be.

08:36 And so if you are mind is going down that road reminding yourself, "Hey, it's not pleasant for sure, but you've functioned fine in the past on little or no sleep, and you can do it again."

08:52 All right, so just checking that catastrophizing. And then this last one again is about connecting your wake time with your circadian rhythm.

09:02 So the recommendation is to get at least 15 minutes of sunshine on your skin within the first 60 minutes of waking.

09:09 And that can literally be going outside and, and having the sun on your skin, or it can be sitting in a window.

09:15 You can also use those sun lights or the sun lamps that people use for like seasonal effective disorder. So again, this just helps reconnect your body to that light, dark, circadian rhythm cycle that, that we exist in on this planet.

09:37 So one of the hardest recommendations for people, and this is one that people really can struggle with, is if you were awake for more than 20 minutes, and again, that's a perceived 20 minutes during the night, the recommendation is to get out of bed and go do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again.

09:57 And this is can be really hard for folks. And so, tips to make this successful include, have a plan, right?

10:05 If you know you're one of the, those people who has night-time wakefulness, have a plan of where you're going to go and what you're going to do so that in the middle of the night you're not trying to think of what you're going to do while you're trying to convince yourself to get out of bed.

10:21 I recommend creating kind of a nest, a place where you're going to go. So, a place with a warm blanket and maybe a book or something else that's relaxing for you to do and have it ready to go.

10:35 So again, you're not wandering around your place in the middle of the night trying to assemble your nest. Having a drink of water or warm non-caffeinated tea is great if that is relaxing to you.

10:48 But don't drink or eat other things, right? Because we don't, we don't want to kick our digestion in, into activity in the middle of the night.

10:59 Again, being mindful of your catastrophizing and your thinking around, you know, having a poor night's sleep. Honestly, it is way better to be awake and relaxing in your little nest than lying in bed super mad and catastrophizing.

11:19 And I will say, one, there's one qualification to this recommendation of getting out of bed if there is a risk of you falling at night while you're out of bed.

11:30 We do not want you to risk that. And so, the recommendation is to plan for a relaxing activity, but stay in your bed.

11:39 So if there's any chance of a fall risk, please just stay in your bed and, and have a book, have you know, a snugly blanket ready to go so that you can do something relaxing while you're getting back into that kind of sleepy space.

12:00 So there are lots of behaviors that get in our way, and I've already touched on some of them, but I want to call some of them out because these are behaviors that we can control, and if we can control them, we can change them.

12:12 So I think the biggest one I hear from folks is I climb into bed, my head hits the pillow, and all of a sudden, my mind is racing.

12:21 I'm thinking about every challenge, every worry, every to-do list, everything under the sun, and I cannot get my brain to quiet.

12:30 This is incredibly common and I would guess is probably the number one reason people struggle to fall asleep at night.

12:36 And there's a good reason why. And, and this is it. Most of the time when we climb into bed and our head hits the pillow, that is the very first time in the entire day when we have had a moment of quiet.

12:50 And in that moment of quiet, our brain decides, okay, she's got some space here, let's think about everything. And so, if this is something that you struggle with, couple tips.

13:03 One is in the couple hours before bedtime, take some time, find some quiet, sit down and give your brain this unoccupied space to process the day process the to-do list process concerns.

13:20 Sometimes people will find it really helpful to journal during this process. So just move that time up, the time that you normally spend worrying lying in bed.

13:29 Move it up to sometime when you're sitting on the couch. Another thing that can be really helpful if this is something you struggle with, is to practice some mindfulness activities or physical activities like P m R, progressive muscle relaxation.

13:47 And so if your brain is, is struggling, engaging your senses doing some meditation can be really helpful to just distract your brain so that you can get to that place of falling asleep.

14:00 Watching the clock and worrying about how late it is or how early it is, is a really problematic behavior. And so, if you are someone who likes to have a clock in your bedroom, make it hard for you to see it, right?

14:15 If that means turning it around, if that means leaning a book up against it, but you really want to avoid clock watching because it just activates your brain and then it activates all that catastrophizing about how late it is and how tired you're going to be.

14:31 Another one that that impacts a lot of people is they have strict rules around bedtime. And this may be from childhood, right?

14:39 Like it, it 10 o'clock is bedtime. Or it may be some perception about where you are in life. My lovely 76-year-old mother refuses to get into bed even if she's sleepy and tired because she doesn't want to feel like an old person, right?

14:56 So she will fall asleep in her chair and then have to drag herself to bed later because she doesn't want to be perceived as an old person.

15:05 So check your rules and check your perceptions around what it means to be getting into bed and bedtime, hitting that snooze button.

15:16 I know I'm certainly guilty of this one. Hitting that snooze button means that you're not going to have a consistent wake time.

15:22 And so that is going to disrupt that circadian rhythm. So again, lots of great ways to manage this. Move the clock out of reach.

15:32 If you use your phone as your alarm clock, put that out of reach. There are many things you can do to make the snooze much harder to achieve falling asleep on the couch, right?

15:47 I just mentioned my mom doesn't like to go to bed because she doesn't want to feel like she's old, but she falls asleep on the couch and then a few hours later she wakes up and she has to get up and brush her teeth and climb into bed and then she's awake.

15:59 And so if you are feeling sleepy, regardless of what time it is, go get into bed and go to sleep.

16:06 Don't fall asleep on the couch and then have to wake yourself and, and get into bed later. Another big one.

16:15 And, and this is important because we want to associate bed with only sleep and sex. So we do not want to be holding a phone or a tablet in bed and scrolling social media, reading any book, checking the news, any of that stuff.

16:31 And part of the reason is because the blue light can be disruptive to sleep. All right, so those are all the recommendations about your behaviors.

16:44 Then there's a whole bunch of recommendations and kind of best practices around your environment. So, research shows that people sleep best when they are in a cool space.

16:55 So you want to keep your thermostat between 60- and 67-degrees Fahrenheit, which is 15.6 to 19.4 degrees Celsius for the most comfortable sleep.

17:06 You want your room to be dark, so you can use blackout shades, you can use a sleep mask. Make sure that things that emit light.

17:14 Computers, tablets, phones are either off or not in the room. I've already said this one before, but make it hard to see the clock.

17:25 You don't want to be doing that clock watching. Oftentimes you'll find it really helpful to have some white noise to create kind of a neutral sound environment.

17:36 People often will leave the TV on or the radio. And while it's similar to having some white noise, the challenge is, is that when you can hear talking or you can hear music, it is engaging to your brain and your brain won't shut off.

17:53 So there are many white noise apps that you can put on your phone. They make white noise devices that it's just like a standalone thing you can have in your room.

18:02 So if the noises around you cause difficulty or you like having something in the environment, so it's not just dead silent, consider one of these having a supportive mattress and pillow, right?

18:16 If you're not comfortable, it's going to be really hard to fall asleep. Same goes for sheets. Some people find it really comforting to use a weighted blanket, and this is literally a blanket that is heavier than a normal blanket.

18:34 And so if you haven't tried a weighted blanket, I would recommend giving it, giving it a go because a lot of people find it really comforting, wearing comfortable clothes at night, right?

18:47 Making sure that you're comfortable and that you know, it'll help maintain your, your temperature is, is obviously important. And then this one is challenging but limiting the number of distractions in your room, right?

19:02 So does a dog sleep on the bed with you? Do you have kids or grandkids who come bustling into the room?

19:09 Anything you can do to limit the disruptions will also help you sleep at night. All right, so there are a number of sleep disorders that all of, all of these recommendations will not fix.

19:24 And so if you have one of these some of these symptoms, please talk to your provider. I think one of the most common ones is sleep apnoea.

19:33 And this is literally where you stop breathing for a short period of time at night. People with sleep apnoea often experience very loud snoring or they kind of sound like they're choking.

19:48 They also are always tired and have a lot of daytime sleepiness. And, and that's because they are not actually getting any rest.

19:56 They might be quote unquote asleep, but because of the sleep apnoea, they're not getting any rest. Sleep. Brx is a phenomenon where you grind or clench your teeth in your sleep.

20:10 And oftentimes people aren't aware that they're doing this unless it's reported by a partner or they wake up with jaw and neck pain, morning time headaches, or they have damage to their teeth.

20:24 So if you're at the dentist and he makes a comment about some cracks in your teeth or wear on your teeth, you might want to explore a dental appliance that is specific for this condition.

20:39 Narcolepsy is not super common, but it is very problematic and, and frankly dangerous if it's impacting you. So excessive daytime sleepiness.

20:52 And, and this is basically when your brain is, is not able to regulate the wakeful and sleepful sleep cycles. Another one that's really common and really difficult for people to fall asleep with is restless leg syndrome.

21:06 And this is, people describe it all sorts of different ways, but it's, it is this tingling stinging, prickling crawling this great urge to move your legs in bed.

21:18 And so you can imagine if you constantly feel like you need to move your legs to alleviate an itch or some tingling, it's going to make it really hard to fall asleep.

21:29 So these are just some of the sleep disorders that we know of. There are other ones like sleepwalking, night terrors sleep eating is another one.

21:41 So if you have any challenges in your sleep that seem unusual or people have common to that they are unusual, it would be a good idea to talk to your provider.

21:57 All right. It is your turn to take some action. So, if your sleep is not where you want it to be, you can improve it through your behaviors.

22:09 We have a worksheet that goes along with this training that you are very welcome to download and complete as frequently as you like.

22:20 And I look forward to hearing about how your sleep has improved. Thank you so much.