

# **Sleep Smarter by Shawn Stevenson | Book Summary by Paul Minors**

# INTRODUCTION

## Who is this summary for?

*Sleep Smarter* by Shawn Stevenson is the ideal book for anyone looking to really take your energy and wellness to the next level and at the same time improve the quality of your sleep. Sleep Smarter is a quick and easy read packed with facts, studies and scientific insight all about getting better quality sleep. Shawn takes you through the essential components of a good nights sleep. The book also contains a few surprises about how much impact sleep has on your day to day health. When you improve the quality of your sleep, almost every aspect of your life improves, including, yes... you guessed it, your productivity. By the end of the book, you'll definitely be settling in for a good nights sleep.

## About the author

Shawn Stevenson is an author, keynote speaker and podcaster. He has really made a name for himself in the health-world being interviewed for magazines like Men's Health, Muscle & Fitness, Entrepreneur and Woman's Health. Shawn is possibly best known for his podcast; *The Model Health Show*, the #1 Health and #1 Fitness & Nutrition show on iTunes. Shawn's real passion lies in encouraging his readers and listeners to become the very best version of themselves; healthy, strong and happy. He draws a lot of his inspiration from his own experience with a diagnosed degenerative spine condition which was deemed 'incurable.' He knew that he could do more than just manage his disease but cure himself, so his research into the human body began!

## In the summary

In this summary, we'll briefly outline Stevenson's top 21 tips for getting a good night sleep. These vary from avoiding screens before bed, to getting exercise to creating night-time routines.

After reading this summary, hopefully, you'll be amazed at how much of an impact sleep has on your health and productivity and you'll be ready to make some changes!

# BOOK SUMMARY

## SLEEP IS VALUABLE

Stevenson's first tip is that you need to truly understand the value of sleep. It's not just about closing your eyes, sleep has a direct impact on your mental, emotional and physical performance. Stevenson explains that a simple lack of sleep can lead to so many health issues such as depression, obesity, and immune deficiencies.

It's not something we think about a lot but getting enough sleep also has a direct impact on your productivity. Many of us lead busy lives and assume that getting a few hours less of sleep means a few hours more of work. However, Stevenson points out that prioritising work over sleep is actually counter-productive. Instead of allowing you to get more work done, you'll find yourself burnt-out, stressed, slower and your creativity will suffer. Evidence suggests that you actually make 20% more mistakes when you are sleep deprived, only creating more work for you.

Stevenson gets a bit scientific and explains that sleep directly correlates to the amount of glucose in your brain, if you're not getting enough sleep, your glucose is reduced. Alas, the cravings for sugar when 3:30 pm hits - your body is actually telling you that your sleep is deprived and you require more glucose.

*"When you have a big project due or a deadline looming, schedule enough time to make sure you complete the job at hand. Don't sacrifice sleep in order to meet deadlines."*

## SUNSHINE

Stevenson encourages us to get outside and experience more sunshine hours every single day. The science behind this explains that light sends direct signals to your organs and a critical hormone gland in your body and encourages you to wake up.

It's important that you use natural light, sunlight sends a trigger to your body which assists in the regulation of your body clock and allows your body's production of hormones to be at an optimal level.

Everyone's heard of melatonin before? The magical substance that aids sleep. Well, it's actually created naturally in the body and encourages sleep. Melatonin is influenced dramatically by your physical exposure to light. If you can work to get

more sunlight in the day, and dull your exposure in the evenings, you'll be working towards creating an optimum body clock and even better sleep.

*"Maximise sunlight exposure, particularly between the hours of 6:00 and 8:30 am. If you work in an office, get out during the day and go for a walk to get some natural sunlight."*

## **NO SCREENS AT BEDTIME**

We live in a highly technological world, and it's hard to escape the screens. Whether it be your laptop at work, your phone while you're on the go or your TV set at home, we are constantly looking at screens. And ask yourself this, is the last thing you do before bed every night stare at some form of screen?

Stevenson explains that the light these devices send out are actually pretty damaging to our sleep cycles. Devices emit a blue light which will affect the melatonin we discussed previously. This will keep you awake and you'll find it harder to fall asleep at night.

*"Limit device use 90 minutes before sleep. Read a book instead."*

## **CAFFEINE CURFEWS**

For many of us, caffeine is our go-to first thing in the morning, and we continue to rely on it throughout the day as we navigate our busy lives. However, Stevenson stresses the importance of understanding that caffeine is a powerful stimulant. It's best used first thing in the morning and can be beneficial in promoting productivity. But, when consumed within 6-8 hours of your bedtime, caffeine can be detrimental to your sleep quality. Stevenson explains that you need to set a curfew, for example, if you go to bed at 10 pm every evening, your last coffee should be no later than 2 pm.

It's important to note that coffee isn't the only source of caffeine. It can also be found in tea, chocolate, and most energy drinks. Sometimes even cold & flu medication will contain caffeine.

*"Set a caffeine curfew at around 2pm. Caffeine has a half-life of 8 hours i.e. 200mg of caffeine becomes 100mg in 8 hours, and 50mg 8 hours after that. It*

*hangs around in your system for a long time so be careful when consuming caffeine."*

## **OPTIMUM TEMPERATURE: COOL**

I bet you're all familiar with that feeling of being too hot to sleep, tossing and turning trying to find a cool patch in the bed. Temperature is actually really important when it comes to getting a good sleep. Stevenson explains that 'thermoregulation' has a big influence on your sleep cycle. Instinctively, your body should know to drop your body temperature to the optimum sleeping temperature when it's bedtime. But, if the conditions are too hot it can become extremely challenging for your body to regular. This is why it's so important to have a cool environment in your bedroom. But ensure that it's not too cold also!

*"Take a warm bath/shower an hour or two before bed. the increased core body temperature from the heat will fall accordingly and level out a little cooler right before bed."*

## **BEDTIME**

Getting to bed at an appropriate time can be really difficult, it's easy to stay up late watching Netflix, and all of a sudden it's after midnight and you realise you need to be up again at 6 am.

Stevenson explains how getting to sleep at the right time will improve the quality of your sleep dramatically. He explains that the time between 10 pm and 2 am is considered a 'magic window' of sleep. Scientifically explained, this is because your hormone secretion and recover is doing it's best work during this time. Stevenson explains that it doesn't come down to how many hours you get a night, you might still only get 6 hours but if 4 of those hours were between 10 pm and 2 am you're already doing better than someone who got 6 hours from 2 am till 8 am.

Stevenson explains that your body gets a 'second wind' after about 10 pm if you're not already asleep, this is a release of melatonin that will as a result, make getting to sleep harder. So try your best to be asleep by 10 pm whenever you can.

*"Sleep cycles are your bodies natural rise and fall of sleep depth which take about 90 minutes. By waking up at the top of a cycle, you wake up feeling*

*refreshed and alert. Wake up at the bottom (about 45 minutes in) and you'll wake up feeling pretty groggy."*

## **MAGICAL MAGNESIUM**

Stevenson raves about magnesium. It's a naturally occurring mineral that has numerous benefits to the body including blood sugar regulation, circulation improvement, pain reduction, muscle relaxation and in general an all-over stress reducer. As an all-rounder, when it enters the body, magnesium has so many areas to work on that it's quickly used up. Stevenson explains that approximately 80% of us are deficient in magnesium.

Stevenson suggests magnesium bath salts or body oils, these will get some extra magnesium into your body, reducing your stress and encouraging a better night's sleep. Stevenson suggests either of these sources of magnesium over pills as the benefits can be lost during digestion.

*"Keep the magnesium infusion beside your bed and apply it to areas that are sore, stressed, on the chest, neck, and shoulders."*

## **SLEEP SANCTUARY**

Many of us are probably guilty of using our bedroom as a multi-purpose room, for entertaining friends, for getting work done, or as a make-shift dining room for eating take-out while watching a movie. However, this can have a big negative impact on our sleep.

*"The bedroom should only be used for two things: 1) sleep and 2) the 'other thing'."*

Stevenson explains that doing work in bed is possibly the worst thing you can do to your sleep quality. Even this simple task of replying to emails is a big no-no. The last thing you want to do is associate your bed with any kind of stress.

Another consideration to take is the air in the bedroom, Stevenson recommends ensuring that there is a source of fresh air every day. He explains that without the intake of fresh air, the room's air will stale and the ions in the air literally lose their negative charge. We want as many negative ions as we can as they are energising,

they eliminate odours, mould and other nasties in your house. Another great idea from Stevenson is to have a houseplant in your room!

*"Get at least one house plant. Keep work out of the bedroom."*

## O

As we mentioned above, the bedroom should be used for only two things. Sleep, and sex. Stevenson explains the effect of orgasm on your sleep, the intense conception of chemicals released in the body through orgasm is the perfect sleep inducer.

*"This should be pretty self-explanatory. Just remember, you don't necessarily need a partner to get the benefits."*

## BLACKOUT

There's a reason we go to sleep at night, and that's because we are naturally wired to sleep in the dark. Stevenson explains that any source of light will have an effect on the quality of your sleep, and it's not something you can fix with a simple sleeping eye mask. Light actually has the ability to penetrate your skin, so if there's light entering the bedroom, you need to fix this!

*"Blackout curtains are a great way of getting rid of light pollution. Remove light up devices and get a dim alarm clock."*

## TRAIN

Sleep is a process not only of rest, but also of recovery. Stevenson explains that working out is the act of tearing your muscles and damaging tissues. Sleep is designed to repair the tears and aid your body in recovery. Someone who works out will create more of the hormones required to keep repairing and recovering.

However, Stevenson only recommends morning workouts. If you workout just before bed, your body doesn't have enough time to reduce the core temperature, and as we discussed earlier, you need to be cool in order to have a quality sleep. It also matters how you workout, simple cardio is good, but lifting weights will get the best results for your body. You'll sleep better and feel better.

*"Lift weights at least two days a week. Focus on shorter super-sets."*

## **TECH STAYS OUT OF THE BEDROOM**

This one should be self-explanatory, especially after we've already discussed the damaging blue-light of screens and the dangers of bringing work into bed.

There's scientific evidence to suggest that people who have these devices in the bedroom and use them before bed take a longer period of time to reach the deep sleep that we require, they also don't manage to spend as long in this state.

Stevenson also explains that these devices are known to emit harmful electric and magnetic fields, with links to health concerns it's best to keep them out of the bedroom altogether.

*"Use a good old fashioned alarm clock to wake you up. Talk to your partner before bed, or have a big 'O'. This should keep you more than entertained."*

## **BE HEALTHY**

Another contributing factor to your quality of sleep is interestingly, your weight. If you're sitting at a heavier weight than you perhaps should you may find that your sleeps is lower quality. The stress to your organs, endorphins and nervous system from being overweight is linked to decreasing your quality of sleep.

Stevenson explains that cortisol (the anti-sleep hormone) is more common in people who are overweight.

It's important to focus on quality nutrition, getting a good balance of fats, protein and carbohydrates at each meal. Too many carbs will affect your insulin levels, focus on quality fats and proteins for optimal health.

*"Focus on whole foods and avoid processed food. Avoid food, especially carbs before just bed. Start your day with a good meal - not carbs as this will cause an insulin spike."*

## **BOOZE**

A lot of people associate drinking alcohol with drifting off to sleep quickly, However, the speed at which you fall asleep does not correlate to the quality of your sleep.



Stevenson explains that your brain and body don't completely turn off when you've been drinking and you won't reach the optimal deep sleep state.

*"If drinking, wrap it with some time to spare before sleep. Ideally 4 hours. Also, make sure you drink plenty of water before you hit the sack."*

## **SLEEPING POSITION MATTERS**

It's pretty important to be as comfortable as possible when sleeping, and Stevenson explains that the way you sleep actually has an impact on the quality of your sleep.

Blood flow to your brain, oxygen and your breathing are obviously critical processes for the body, and certain positions improve these functions.

- Back sleeping: good for your spine and digestion, although it can be related to sleep apnea and snoring.
- Front sleeping: prevents snoring, be careful that you don't hurt your neck so get rid of your pillow and lift a knee to open up your hips.
- Side sleeping: one of the most common positions and the most natural. Good for digestion and eliminating heartburn.

*"Choose the position that best works for you and try and stick with it."*

## **CALM BEFORE BED**

How familiar is the feeling of jumping in to bed and suddenly, your brain shifts into overdrive, planning, thinking, questioning. This can be extremely disruptive to your sleep and will keep you awake longer. Stevenson recommends meditation as a solution not only for sleep but for all areas of your life.

Stevenson explains that meditation is a process that will release good hormones and endorphins while reducing stress. It doesn't have to take long, all you need is 10 minutes a day.

*"Meditating in the morning is often the most beneficial time to do so. It's when your brain is already near the alpha state. Start with guided meditation to begin with."*

## SUPPLEMENTS

Stevenson stresses the point that supplements shouldn't be your first port of call, but once you've addressed some of the other tips we've discussed you can turn to some natural supplements to aid sleep.

- Chamomile - is a calming herb that relaxes your muscles and nervous system. Try it in tea form at night before bed.
- Kava Kava - actually a drink deriving from Fiji, it has a natural sedative reducing the time it takes to drift off to sleep.
- Valerian - another herb that is actually slightly stronger than a sedative. In tea form it can help with uninterrupted sleep.
- Don't rely on melatonin supplements as there is evidence to suggest it decreases your natural ability to produce the hormone.

*"Address all the other tactics in the book before using supplementation to help your sleep."*

## EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM

Earlier in this summary we discussed the importance of sunlight on your sleep cycle, waking early is the perfect way to set you up for the day with a dose of natural light. It aids your natural circadian rhythm and helps your body stay in synch.

Stevenson highly endorses waking up early in the morning, having a purpose and getting some things done. It's a great way to get your day started with a dose of motivation and you'll find you get more done.

*"Go to bed within 30 minutes of the same time every night. Many people think they can sleep less during the week and "catch up" at the weekend. All this does is throw your schedule out of whack."*

## BED WEAR

What do you go to sleep in? Stevenson suggests using PJs as a way to trigger your body into a relaxed mood. It's important that PJs are incredibly comfortable and loose fitting. If you're a woman, try sleeping without a bra, it's better for blood flow.

*“Men, try wearing boxers, loose fitting tops, basic t-shirts or go naked.  
Women, try boy shorts, your significant others t-shirt, flowing lingerie, yoga  
pants or going naked”*

## **GROUNDING**

Stevenson stresses the importance of getting grounded in our every day life. He explains that we lead busy lives, leaving the house to drive our cars to work, always wearing shoes as a barrier between our bodies and the earth and this can actually impact our sleep and health.

Scientifically, there is an electromagnetic surface on the earth, and our bodies act as a conductor. We need to remain connected to the earth in order for our bodies to repair cells, reduce inflammation and neutralise free radicals. Evidence suggests that the free electrons available on the earths surface can only be absorbed by direct contact with the earth.

*“Make an effort to ground yourself regularly. Simply touch the ground or a tree. Going to the beach is a fantastic way of doing this, and it's often why we sleep so well on holidays. Grounding yourself after a long flight can also help to overcome the effects of jet lag and the stress long-distance travel puts on your body.”*

## **NIGHTTIME RITUALS**

Stevenson explains that have rituals and implementing a routine is essential in continuing to get good quality sleep. By making a habit out of your evening routine you'll have to put less thought into it and it will become an unconscious process.

*“Make sure you get in the mood before bed and take time to unwind and relax. Read some fiction, take a bath, write in a journal, thinking about things you're grateful for or meditate.”*

# CONCLUSION

## Key Takeaways

1. Get sunshine during the day.
2. Don't look at screens before bed.
3. No Caffeine 6-8 hours before bed.
4. You need to be cool in order to get a good sleep.
5. Sleep between 10pm and 2am.
6. Use magnesium to aid stress-reduction.
7. Only use the bedroom for sleep & sex.
8. Have an orgasm before bed.
9. We require complete darkness to sleep well.
10. Keep technology out of the bedroom altogether.
11. Be a healthy weight.
12. Exercise, specifically, lift weights. But not before bed.
13. Don't drink too much alcohol. It's a stimulant.
14. Consider the best sleep position for you.
15. Consider practicing meditation
16. Use herbal supplementation such as chamomile.
17. Get up early, don't sleep in.
18. Use pyjamas as a mental trigger for bedtime.
19. Ground yourself often.

20. Create a ritual in the evenings that you look forward to.

## Further Reading

If you enjoyed this book you should definitely check out *The Miracle Morning* by Hal Elrod. This is an instructional book and is ideal for anyone looking to make a change in their life for the better. Sustaining a morning routine is the most effective way to create the lifestyle you've always dreamed of. This book is straight-forward and has easy to follow steps and suggestions making it the perfect guide for anyone ready to start taking action and changing their life.

Another great read is *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duhigg, a must read for anyone interested in training themselves to create new habits and rituals. This book clearly defines what a habit is and how we can shape, mould and change them for individuals, organisations and societies. Similarly, *50 Positive Habits to Transform Your Life* by Michael Chapman is worth a read, a checklist of things you can add to your day to get the most out of your life!

Through Laura Vanderkam's research and interviews, *'What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast'* is a comprehensive guide that reveals how to plan your mornings, weekends and work time to achieve greater productivity and happiness. It was after reading Laura's book that I transformed my morning routine which is now one of my favourite times of the day. If you'd like to learn the most common productivity skills among the world's top performers, then this is the book for you.

*Guidelines* is my eBook that summarises the main lessons from 33 of the best-selling self-help books in one place. It is the ultimate book summary; Available as a 80-page ebook and 115-minute audio book. Guidelines lists 31 rules (or guidelines) that you should follow to improve your productivity, become a better leader, do better in business, improve your health, succeed in life and become a happier person.

## Action Steps

- Take a listen to his podcast on iTunes: *The Model Health Show*- he has over 274 podcast episodes so there will definitely be a few topics that resonate with you. If you want to hear more on sleep then check out TMHS episodes 004, 005 & 006.
- Note down what your sleep is like currently, assess what areas need work.

- Try and take on at least one of Stevenson's suggestions. Start slowly but continue to add more and more into your daily life and evening ritual.
- Download the complete book on [Amazon](#)