



Human Optimization

Pod Club Discussion Questions



E56 How to Get More Mileage from Your Brain

Guest: Amit Sood, MD MS FACP, CEO - Global Center for Resiliency and Wellbeing | Fellow, Atria Health and Research Institute | Member, Scientific Advisory Board, Thrive Global | Industrial Fellow, U.C. Berkeley | Professor of Medicine (Retd.), Mayo Clinic

The three big questions explored in the podcast:

Question 1

What does it mean to "get more mileage" out of our brain, and why are we currently so inefficient?

Question 2

Why is it so hard to stay in "Focused Mode" as our brain tries to pull us towards distraction?

Question 3

What is the solution and what are the specific steps we can take to get the most out of our brains?

Discussion Questions:

1. The podcast defines "getting more mileage out of your brain" as accumulating more experience, learning, insights, and making a difference, rather than just increasing intelligence. How does this broader definition of "brain mileage" resonate with your personal goals for growth and impact?
2. Dr. Sood states that our biggest challenge is our "inability to influence our attention and emotions." In what specific areas of your life do you feel this lack of influence most acutely?
3. The discussion highlights that we spend 60-80% of our time in the "default/automatic mode," which is linked to unhappiness and anxiety. What are some common triggers that pull you into this default mode?
4. The podcast explains that our negativity bias, while once crucial for survival, now often protects our "emotional body." What emotional "threats" do you find yourself constantly guarding against?
5. The concept of "willpower depletion" is linked to poor sleep, nutrition, and lack of exercise. How do your daily lifestyle choices impact your ability to exercise self-control and stay in a focused, intentional mode?
6. Dr. Sood suggests that overthinking occurs when "thinking is happening to you" rather than you choosing your thoughts. What strategies do you currently use, or could you commit to trying this week, to regain control and choose your thoughts more intentionally?
7. The "rum" analogy (Rest, Uplifting emotions, Motivation) is presented as a way to be kind to your mind. Which of these three elements do you find most challenging to incorporate into your daily routine, and why?
8. Based on this episode, what is one small change you are going to make to help improve in this area. How are you going to keep yourself accountable to that and measure your success? (Be sure to keep it simple, start small, and make it very clear).