



Human Optimization

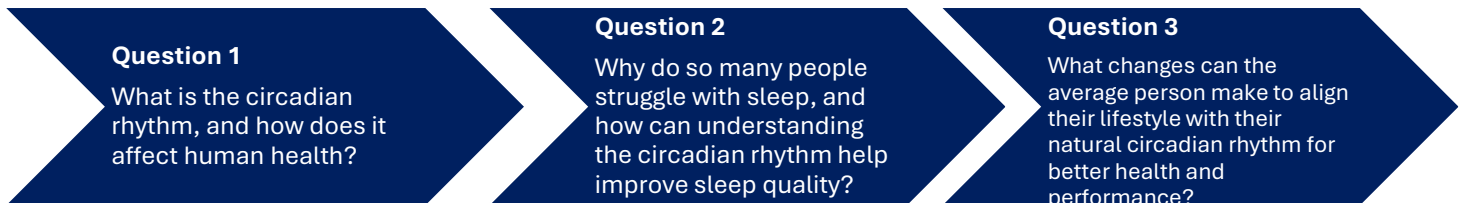
Pod Club Discussion Questions



E7 Understanding Your Circadian Rhythm: The Foundation for Healthy, Quality Sleep

Guest: Michael Howell, M.D.; Sleep Medicine Physician at the University of Minnesota

The three big questions explored in the podcast:



Discussion Questions:

1. Dr. Howell explains that the circadian rhythm impacts our sleep and our mood, productivity, appetite, and more. What aspects of your daily life do you notice are most affected when you feel "off" or out of sync?
2. The concept of "social jet lag" describes when our lifestyle doesn't match our natural circadian rhythm. How significant is your own "social jet lag" (e.g., the difference between your weekday and weekend wake-up times), and what consequences do you observe from it?
3. The podcast highlights that morning light is the biggest external factor for resetting our internal clock. What practical steps could you take to increase your exposure, especially during darker seasons or if you're a "night owl"?
4. Dr. Howell suggests a thought experiment: if you could sleep later, guilt-free, in a perfect environment, what time would you naturally wake up? How does it compare to your current daily schedule?
5. The episode discusses using tools like light therapy and very low dose melatonin to adjust your circadian rhythm. Which of these tools seems most feasible for you to try? What specific goal would you aim for?
6. Dr. Howell claims that "the whole world would be better if we all took a nap." Based on the advice (short power nap vs. 90-minute cycle), how might you optimize your napping habits, if at all?

7. The phrase "How did you wake today?" is introduced as a way to assess overall well-being. Beyond just sleep, how would you describe "waking well" for yourself? What daily habits might contribute to or detract from that feeling?
8. The podcast emphasizes that adjusting your circadian rhythm takes practice and intention, and your body will naturally try to revert to its equilibrium. What strategies for consistency and patience (e.g., small, gradual changes, understanding the "three days per hour" rule) resonate most with you for making lasting changes to your sleep habits?
9. This episode discusses the benefits and problems with "sleeping in." They suggest doing an experiment where you let your body sleep as late as it wants for a day, and then comparing your wake time for that day with your normal routine. Give this a try and report back to the group. How far off was your "sleep in" wake time from your normal wake time? What changes do you think you need to make based on this?
10. 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).