



Achieve Your Goals Podcast #71 - Sleep Your Way To Your Goals (An Interview with Shawn Stevenson)

Nick: Welcome to the Achieve Your Goals podcast with Hal Elrod. I'm your host, Nick Palkowski, and you're listening to the show that is guaranteed to help you take your life to the next level faster than you ever thought possible. In each episode you will learn from someone who has achieved extraordinary goals that most haven't. He is the author of the number one best-selling book, "The Miracle Morning," a Hall of Fame business achiever, and international keynote speaker, ultra marathon runner, and the founder of VIPSuccessCoaching.com, Mr. Hal Elrod.

Hal: All right, Achieve Your Goal podcast listeners, this is it. This is it. You're here. It's week number... I don't know. I'm just making stuff up. I'm excited for today. Today's topic, right, this is the Achieve Your Goals podcast. By the way, this is your host, Hal Elrod. I'm getting ahead of myself here. But the Achieve Your Goals podcast, everything we talk about is designed to add value, give you strategies, additional techniques, even just enhance your mindset toward achieving any and every goal that you have in your life, creating the most extraordinary like that you can imagine. That's it.

That's what this is about, whether it's hearing from me or bringing on guests. Well today's guest is going to come at this angle of achieving your goals from a very unique perspective, one you wouldn't imagine. In fact, he's literally going to teach you how to achieve your goals by sleeping. I mean, that's pretty fascinating. You achieve your goals by sleeping, but not just sleeping, sleeping better. Sleeping

better or, based on the title of his book, "Sleep Smarter," that's what we're going to talk about. How does sleep impact your ability to function at an optimal level?

My guest today is Shawn Stevenson. Shawn Stevenson, the host of one of the top podcasts on iTunes, "The Model Health Show." In fact, I know that he has surpassed, that show, over one million listener downloads, which is just absolutely huge. He's also the author of the best selling book, "Sleep Smarter: 21 Proven Tips to Sleep Your Way to a Better Body, Better Health, and Bigger Success." All things we want, but again, very rarely do people think about, "How does sleep impact our body, our health, and our success?" But we're going to dive into that on the podcast today.

Shawn, are you there, my friend?

Shawn: I am here, Hal. Man, I'm so pumped to be here. Thank you for having me on.

Hal: Dude, I'm pumped to be here. Your name keeps coming up in conversations, and it's always, "Oh, you know Shawn Stevenson? He's one of my favorite people! I love Shawn!" I mean, dude, people love you.

Shawn: Yeah.

Hal: What's going on?

Shawn: You know you're doing something right when people are talking good behind your back. You know?

Hal: That's right. That's what we hope for. Yeah, that's what we hope for. I think I probably get a little of both. I don't know. But anyway, Shawn and I met at dinner out in Austin, Texas, when he lives, and have become better friends. I think I'll be on The Model Health Show sooner than later, right?

Shawn: Yes, you will, absolutely, You've got to share your story. You've got to share your strategies. That's what it's about! We were just talking about this. It's people bringing their strength to the table, so we can help each other and also help our community to do the amazing job that's possible for all of us. But we can't do that if we're off on our own little island trying to figure everything out. So I'm

really excited to even talk about this topic today, and give people some very tangible strategies to help them achieve their goals.

Hal: Beautiful. Before we talk about sleeping, you know, Sleep Smarter, your book, but really the strategies within that people can immediately apply, talk about, real quick for anyone that is listening to this podcast and they're always looking for great podcasts, what's the premise of The Model Health Show, in your words?

Shawn: Awesome. Well, I'm actually here at my clinic, and I've been in practice as a clinical nutritionist for about a decade and a half now. And people wouldn't know that when they see me. I look kind of you, you know. I was just out with my teenage daughter the other day and the waitress was like... She literally stood there for two minutes and argued with us that I wasn't her dad, which is a good problem to have. High quality problems, right?

Hal: That's right, yeah.

Shawn: But it's just a matter, of course, of taking care of yourself, and understanding, "What does that actually entail?" It's oftentimes totally contradictory to the popular paradigm.

Hal: Oh, sure.

Shawn: Just look at the results, you know. We're at a state now where approximately one in every two people, like one in every two people is either diabetic or pre-diabetic right now.

Hal: That's insane.

Shawn: And 90% of them, 90% of them, who are pre-diabetic, don't know it. So when we're talking about diabetes, pre-diabetes, we're talking about an accelerated aging disease. We're also talking about a situation that's tied very closely to obesity, so there's a new term that's been coined called "diabesity." We actually just did a show breaking that down.

What I do here, especially having all this experience from working with thousands of people in my clinic, I've taken that data... Highly successful by the way, around 90% reversal rate for type 2 diabetes in my clinic, 91%-ish reversal rate for

hypertension, high blood pressure, cancer, just go on down the line. What we do is we help people to reverse-engineer their disease.

Basically take them from the very beginning and show them how the disease was created. Oftentimes their physicians don't do that for them. And oftentimes, because their physicians just don't know; they're not trained in this. And I've got some amazing physicians in my network: wonderful osteopaths, wonderful MDs, chiropractors, so many amazing teachers. But they'll tell you that it's really about... We've got the best and brightest minds in the world who are in our medical profession, as you know, Hal, in this country.

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: But if you take the smartest people in the world and you teach them the wrong thing, they become amazing at doing the wrong thing, like the best of the best. So we've lost track of being what a doctor really means, which is "teacher," and helping somebody to understand their condition, so that the doctor becomes a partner with them in their own health. So that's what we really do.

I take that data and I put it into The Model Health Show, so we reverse engineer and tell people to break down, "What is cancer?" How does this thing that we're so afraid of, that most people have never actually seen... They haven't seen late-stage-four breast cancer before, but we're so afraid of it. What is it? How does it manifest? What is diabetes? How do I actually get fat? And how do I get rid of it? It's not about calories in, calories out. There are certain enzymes in play; there are certain hormones.

So we teach people that stuff but we make it fun. We've got to make this stuff engaging so that I don't seem like, "Oh, wow, Shawn knows everything. Oh, my God, I love him." People can say that, but it's more so like, "Shawn makes me feel like I am brilliant, because I am." Everybody listening is genius-level intelligent. It's just, "How are you being taught?" Oftentimes it's from a very dictated place.

Our teachers, also our professors in a university setting, of course that I went to as well, were taught to just disseminate information and not make it engaging, and make it so the people own it. That's really the premise of the show. The whole thing got kicked off by me getting my own health together, when I was in a bad spot many years ago.

Hal: Got it. What you just talked about, I think that everybody there, there's actually a really powerful, hidden lesson in what you just shared. Most people don't go very deep in terms of self-educating, with the knowledge on what's gotten them where they don't want to be, or what do they need to do to get where they want to be. Most people just wake up and go through the motions every day, and life pretty much stays the same.

Shawn: Right.

Hal: I think that you're about strategy, and I love that.

Shawn: Yeah. We're in a situation. I remember about 20 years ago, I was driving to work and I just had a thought. I was like, "I hope I don't get cancer." It just popped in my head, you know?

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: It's this underlying fear and I didn't even know what it was. It's not something that you get. There are certain underlying conditions that most of the public is not aware of. We haven't really had the opportunity to learn about it. It's just a normal process of cell replication that happens every day for every single human being on the planet. It's just a matter of, "What is your immune system doing?"

This is what it's really about, is empowerment. And by the way, why this is important, and you just said it is you live with yourself all the time. You should know about how you operate. It's kind of important. And once you understand how you operate, it's not to the nth degree, like what your atoms are doing. you don't have to know that much.

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: But you should know about the general operating system of your body, so that you can help to modulate things, so that you can feel the way you want to. You have that right. You deserve that. Because really, the results in your life are going to be a direct reflection of how you feel. When you feel good, it's a miracle what you can accomplish. But when you don't feel good, when you don't feel on top of your game, it's a struggle to do even the most minute task.

Hal: Yeah, physical, mental, and emotional health and vitality, I think that's what you guys really target on The Model Health Show. And by the way, I just checked on iTunes. You guys are at 325 ratings, 4.9 out of 5 stars. That's insane.

Shawn: That's the thing.

Hal: That's not bad.

Shawn: I can't even fathom this, and the whole...

Hal: This show has like 130 -- I'm sorry I'm cutting you off -- but this show has 133 ratings. You're crushing me. I don't feel good about this any more. No, just kidding.

Shawn: It's all love, man.

Hal: It's all love.

Shawn: These numbers, they're beyond my ability to really comprehend, you know, over a million downloads. We're almost a 1.5 million now.

Hal: Wow!

Shawn: It's just like, "How did this happen?" And what I really hope people walk away with is that I started this with nothing. I had no presence online. We built this up by doing a couple of things. Number one is caring, funny enough. Just caring. If you want to be successful, if you really want to achieve your goals, it's going to be with and through the assistance of other people. So, do you actually care about the people whom you're working with and who you're serving?

The second thing is just doing good work, doing excellent work, and putting in the energy and the time. By the way, that energy and time that goes into that, if you love what you're doing it doesn't even seem like it. It doesn't even seem like you're putting a lot of energy and time into it. It's just happening. So finding something you're passionate about, putting in good work, and caring can go a very, very long way.

Hal: Yeah. I love it, man. I love it. I've got a sign on my wall that reminds me, "Think of my clients as dear, valued friends." Right?

Shawn: Yes.

Hal: Just remember, they're not just clients. They're not just income. They're human beings that have their own hopes, and dreams, and fears, and doubts. And I think that you're right. We've got to care. We've got to really care. I think most people go to work every day and they don't care very much for their boss, or their colleagues, or their clients, or their employees. They're showing up, and just collecting a paycheck, and going home. Right?

Shawn: Yeah, and that's no way to be. What we're doing in that situation -- and it's probably valid -- if your boss is always on you, or is always complaining, it's probably valid, the way that you feel. But you're kicking out that vibe of, "I've got problems. I've got things in my life that I can't change." And the world around you is going to answer accordingly, to that vibe that you're kicking out, because you're seeing through Problem Glasses. When you can just as easily pick up the Gratitude Glasses, and the Optimistic Glasses, and start to see the possibilities around you. But it's very difficult, again, if you don't feel good.

Hal: Yeah, you're absolutely right. It all comes down to how we feel. Everything we do is to try to achieve that feeling, where we do feel better. So let's dive into the sleep component. This is something that... Well actually no, before we do, I just realized we went a little out of order on this episode. Tell me who you are. I mean, I know a little about who you are, but I don't even really know your background.

Shawn: Got it.

Hal: I call this "humble beginnings." Give us your story and where you got started, and let's go from there.

Shawn: Okay, sure, sure. I'll give you the short version. It's 16 years ago now. I was 20 years old and I was just clipping along at life. I was in college and everything was going well. Then all of a sudden I started having a difficult time walking.

Hal: Huh.

Shawn: I go in to see my physician and he tells me to go get an MRI of my spine, which I'm like, "My leg hurts! My leg is the problem. Why am I getting a picture of my spine?" Because I didn't have any understanding of the connection

throughout the human body, that anything connects to anything. And also, the physician didn't tell me. He didn't share with me why it was important. I just did what he said.

So I came in and he put the MRI up for me to see. I was like, "Okay," because I was used to working with my college trainers in sports, and my high school trainers. I was just like, "All right, doc, fix me up. What do we have to do? Let's go!" He literally is like, "Whoa, slow down, son. Take a look at this MRI. You've got something called 'degenerative spinal disease, and basically your spine is deteriorating. The discs in your back in particular are deteriorating rapidly, and there's nothing you can do about this."

That basically went in one ear and out the other, because I wasn't even prepared for anything like that. And so I'm like, "Okay, so what do we do to fix this?" Again, he looks at me kind of frustrated and he says, "There' nothing you can do about this, son. You've got the spine of an 80 year old."

Hal: Wow.

Shawn: "It's something that you're just going to have to deal with. You're going to have to live with this. But we're going to get you some medication. We're going to get you a back brace. You're going to be able to manage it, but there's nothing you can do." Just to even talk about it, I could feel my spirit just sinking away, and almost disappearing, because I'm like, "My whole life is ahead of me."

I had been in pain every single waking moment, up until that moment, and I'm just like, "So this isn't going to go anywhere?" And the interesting thing, Hal, this is the big, powerful takeaway. In that moment, I don't know to this day if it's like... You know, a friend of ours, Pat Flynn, he's really obsessed with "back to the future," right?

Hal: Yeah!

Shawn: So I'm like, "Did my future self now get in a DeLorean and go back, and jump into my body then?" Because I asked him this question, which I had no idea mattered. I asked the doctor; I looked him right in his eyes and I said, "Does this have anything to do with what I'm eating? Should I change the way that I'm moving my body and exercising?"

He looked at me like I was straight up from another planet, like I was from the future. He said, "This has nothing to do with what you're eating." But then he wrote me a prescription to eat some pills. Right?

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: So this is the paradigm that I'm dealing with. Fast-forward the story, two and a half years go by. I progressively get worse and worse as far as the pain is concerned.

Hal: Wow.

Shawn: To the degree that basically I spent most of my days just laying on my floor in my apartment. Also I had gained about 50 pounds, and this was not the sexy kind of weight. This is like Chuck-E.-Cheese-pizza weight. Right?

Hal: Right, right.

Shawn: I'm not looking or feeling too good. At this point...

Hal: And you're how old at this point?

Shawn: Twenty-two and a half.

Hal: Twenty-two and a half, got it.

Shawn: Twenty-two and a half years old, I have my medication in my hand. I'm sitting on my bed and I'm about to take my medication to knock me out. Because the pain was so bad I couldn't sleep. If I moved and changed positions at night, it would wake me up, which is just crazy to even know somebody had to live like that.

I'm looking at the bottle of pills, and into my mind just rushed... I just thought about my grandmother, and I thought about all the different things that she would say about me, the things that she instilled in me. She would tell everybody about how I'm so special; I'm going to do all these amazing things. I'm looking at this pill bottle, and I'm looking at my life, and I'm looking at what my blueprint was. And it wasn't matching up.

In that moment I realized that I had been giving my power away to the physicians, from the very well-meaning physicians who had told me there was nothing I could do. I just submitted to that. It's called a "nocebo affect." They gave me a negative injunction that something was going to happen and it did. I believed them, and every cell in my body believed them, until that moment.

When I realized this, I made a decision right there that I was going to learn everything that I can about the human body. I was going to learn everything that I can about health, not disease, and I was going to not just get my health back. I was going to be better than I ever was. Most people never do that, Hal, especially when talking about achieving your goals. Most people never make a real decision about something. It's more wishful thinking.

The word "decision" itself -- I'm a big student of lexicon -- it's from the Latin, "de," meaning "from," and "caedere," meaning "to cut." So when you make a real decision about something, you cut away the possibility of anything else but that thing.

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: When I made the decision to get well, nothing was going to stop me. It's like, "Burn the boats." There's no other possibility except me being well. So that was the first night. And it wasn't like a unicorn came out and I rode off over a rainbow, or nothing like that. It wasn't a fantasy thing. It was very real and tangible. I slept through the night for the first time without medication. I woke up the next day and I put together a plan.

This plan entailed a six-week strategy, and we can talk a little bit about some of these components, but the main thing is, Part One was, "What is my spine actually made of?" Your body needs the raw materials that it requires to rebuild you, rebuild your collagen, your ligaments, your cells. If you're not providing the raw materials, it can't do the job.

I studied and found out, okay, I need sulfur-bearing amino acids. I need vitamin C. I need all these different things, but I'm drinking Kool-Aid, and having Sausage McMuffins everyday, so I'm so deficient on these things my body has no chance to regenerate. Number one, right nutrition.

Number two was movement. Your body literally requires you to move in order to heal itself. And how I found this out, really, there was a study. It was an animal study. I don't know if you know this, but I was kind of surprised. Now it's kind of obvious actually. When a horse breaks a bone, this is grounds for the animal to get put down, basically they're going to terminate their life if they break a bone.

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: And so, what they wanted to do was to increase the bone density of the horses in the study, so they broke the horses up into two different groups. Group One got a supplement, including some calcium, and that kind of thing, to help to improve their bone density. Group Two got the calcium supplement, but also they walked the horses.

At the end of the study they found that the horses that were just dormant, who got the calcium supplement, their bone density growth was negligible. It was almost nothing. However, the horses who were walked and given the supplementation had a radical increase in their bone density. Right?

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: Because your body needs... If you don't move it you lose it. When you move it actually helps to drive that nutrition into your cells, into your ligaments, your tendons. It helps to stimulate stem cell production. Stem cells become anything that you need. So that's Part Two, movement, so I began to move again, which I had been in fear about moving.

And then Step Three -- and this is the secret sauce -- was sleep. Yep, sleep. This is the actual stage where your body heals. This is the stage when your body actually changes from all of the good stuff that you do while you're awake. It's the most anabolic state that a human can be in, and so this is when you're producing the vast majority of your repairing enzymes, anabolic hormones. In particular something like human growth hormone, which is a driver for healing and regeneration.

When people hear "HGH" and think of Barry Bonds, and Alex Rodriguez, or whatever.

Hal: Hal Elrod, yeah.

Shawn: Right, Why are they taking it? Because it helps you to come back faster and better.

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: It doesn't give you super batting skill and power, but it helps you to be able to do more than the next person, because you get better faster. You can produce all of that endogenously. Your pituitary gland will actually secrete that, if you know how to get yourself into the most anabolic stages of sleep. That's really what we talk about in the book.

It's not about quantity. It's about quality. So getting yourself into the deepest, most rejuvenative stages of sleep more frequently, that's the real secret sauce. That's something I did at the time unknowingly, that really led to my recovery and being able to regenerate my spinal tissue, going back to see the doctor and him saying, "Whatever you're doing, keep doing it." He's never seen this before.

Hal: Wow.

Shawn: And since then, that was the birthing of my career. I've been able to help thousands of people. Hundreds of thousands of people at this point have been impacted by my work, by my going through that challenge myself. And I wouldn't change it or trade it in for the world.

Hal: Yeah. And your spine now, is it completely healed? Reversed? Managed? Where is it at? I'm just curious.

Shawn: Yeah. And of course, me being a scientist and looking at it. I want to know the results, so I get a scan done maybe every year. Maybe sometimes I wait every two years. And yeah, my spine looks "normal." It looks like a normal person's spine. There's no trace of degeneration any more. Whereas I had some severe degeneration of my L-4, and L-5, S-1 discs, and it was pretty substantial, and also my vertebrae. I had actually lost about three-fourths in my height, three-fourths of an inch. I'm sorry, not three-fourths, but three-fourths of an inch, and I regained a half inch in my height.

Hal: Wow.

Shawn: So, that's pretty impressive.

Hal: Very. So nutrition, movement, and sleep. That's what we're going to dive into. Your book talks about why you need to sleep more and exercise less to get the best fitness results. It talks about how to feel more energized and refreshes on less hours of sleep. Obviously this is a topic that's really near and dear to me, so to speak, because of *The Miracle Morning*. In the book I talk about the impact -- in a very nonscientific way, by the way -- I just say the experience I've had is that our belief about how much sleep we need, that mind-body connection really impacts how we feel.

Shawn: Right.

Hal: If you go to sleep going, "Man, I'm only getting six hours and I need eight to feel refreshed," well then you're going to wake up going, "Yep, I only slept six hours, I knew I was going to be tired." It's that self-fulfilling prophecy.

Shawn: Yes.

Hal: That's kind of where my experience with sleep ends, self-experimentation. You've got the science on it so let's dive in. You mentioned sleep being the secret sauce. You obviously wrote an entire book about it, that's getting 89 reviews, 4.7 out of 5 stars on Amazon. People rave about the book and say it's changed their lives. Now we know what the secret sauce is; it's sleep. How do you implement that? What are the keys to making this impact and really improve people in terms of their bodies, their health, and their performance to be more successful and achieve their goals?

Shawn: Awesome. Well, I'm going to give some very tangible walkaways that people can actually go and apply today.

Hal: Love it.

Shawn: And help them improve their sleep. But first I want to set up a little bit of a context. When we're talking about achieving our goals, and as you know this very, very well, it's really about being able to see opportunities. It's about being able to be flexible and creative, and also just to have a high level of energy, because we're going to need to do a lot of stuff, you know?

Hal: Yep, yep.

Shawn: And so, what really compelled me to write this and really tie in the success component is the fact that there was a really interesting study done. There's actually two that I cited in the book, but the first one was they took individuals and they sleep-deprived them for just 24 hours, only 24 hours of sleep deprivation. That's just like from today until tomorrow, just 24 hours, the same time.

What they discovered was that, after 24 hours sleep deprivation, there's a 6% decrease in glucose reaching your brain. But that's not even the scary part. The scary part is about 14 to 16% of that is going to prefrontal cortex. This is the more human-evolved part of your brain, the part of your brain that's responsible for decision-making, for distinguishing between ideas, for your "willpower."

So, this part of your brain, basically you start to get dumber. Your brain starts to kind of starve this particular area and what that drives you to do is to make poorer decisions. You're showing up as a lesser-quality version of yourself, and you can't do anything about it.

Also how this ties into fitness, and health, and you looking good and feeling good is the fact that, when that part of your brain is starving, if you've ever had a cookie before in your life, if you've ever had ice cream, if you've ever had a Goldfish cracker, if you've ever had a Funyun, ever in your life, there is data stored away that I can get quick glucose from those sources, to get it back to my brain. I can get a quick source of carbohydrates to get converted into glucose.

That is called "evolutionary biology," where we've evolved, and our DNA, what's going on with our genes is very, very similar to the same people tens of thousands of years ago. We're not much different except we've got all this technology, and we can put a tie on. Right?

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: But we're the same blueprint. If your brain was deprived then, this could mean death, because this could be a lack of ability to procure your food to avoid danger. The world was a much more dangerous place than it is right now in our cushy lives.

Hal: Sure.

Shawn: You're going to be compelled to go and get quick sugar to go and get your brain right again. So what's going to happen is you might be saying, "I'm going to be eating the best food ever. I'm on it. I'm no this diet. I'm on this exercise program." But it's 2 o'clock in the morning. You're sleep deprived. The next thing you know, your hands, you've got those orange-yellow fingers, because you've been eating some Flamin' Hot Cheetos, or some Doritos.

It's a real truth here, Hal, and tell me if I'm wrong. If you've ever done this. I'm pretty sure nobody has ever been up at like 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, and they're like, "You know what? I want a salad. Let's go make a salad." Right? It doesn't happen.

Hal: Yeah, yeah.

Shawn: It doesn't happen. Your body is going to compel you to go and get the salty, snacky, sweetie, crunchy-type things. It's an evolutionary response, and this is where we get into your willpower versus your biology. So you want to stack the conditions in your favor so that this doesn't even happen, and you will be winning. So that's number one, really quickly.

The second study was this, super interesting stuff. It was a physicians' study, and so they had the physicians complete a task. Then they sleep deprived them for just 24 hours, again, just 24 hours. Then they had them come back and complete the same task. What they discovered was that they made 20% more mistakes, doing the same exact task. And it took them 14 times longer to do the same exact thing. The only difference is sleep deprived.

Hal: Yeah, and I can related to that. The other night, we were working on our Quantum Leap Mastermind Program the last two days. And I think it was the first night, we were working until midnight, and I don't... My bedtime is 9:30 p.m. normally, and I was up until midnight. And to do a task that should take 30 seconds, took me three minutes.

Shawn: Exactly.

Hal: I'm just staring at the computer, and my brain is just not functioning, yeah, like you mentioned. So keep going, man, this is fascinating.

Shawn: You just said it perfectly. That's real world experience. But most of us, it's become our norm, so we don't notice it. But you noticed it because you're more in touch with your stuff.

Hal: Sure.

Shawn: You've got a certain ritual that is who you are. It's your identity, so when you get outside of that, you notice. Like, "Whoa, wait a minute. My processing system isn't up to par right now." Just imagine how many millions and millions of people are going through that every single day because they're trying to get more work done, not understanding that there's a difference between doing work and being effective. Right?

Hal: Yeah, sure.

Shawn: You can actually be more effective in your work when you get the high quality sleep that you really need. You're going to be more creative. You're going to just generally get more stuff done faster because your brain is operating. And also you're going to be able to be more open to flexibility, more opportunities, rather than just -- especially if you're tired - -just kind of hammering away. Like, "I'm just going to get this thing done."

A lot of times more difficult problems and challenges that we have in our business require creative thinking, and require flexibility, and not just hammering away at it. All of a sudden we can get that idea, but that generally is going to happen when your body is in that high quality state, in that more anabolic state form getting great sleep. So now if you want to, of course, we can get into some "how to actually make this happen."

Hal: Yeah. My next question, "What are the keys to optimum sleep for optimum performance?"

Shawn: Awesome. All right. I'm going to give the low-hanging fruit first.

Hal: All right, good.

Shawn: Now, an amazing study that just blew my mind. This is one of several studies that helped to reiterate this. There was a study done at Appalachia State University. They took exercisers and they broke them up into three different

groups. Group One exercised at 7 a.m.. Group Two exercised at 1 p.m., and Group Three exercised at 7 p.m.. What they discovered at the end of the study -- and this was a sleep study -- what they discovered at the end of the study was that Group A, the morning exercisers, the people who exercised at 7 a.m., spend up to 75% more time in the deepest, most rejuvenative stages of sleep.

Hal: Okay.

Shawn: So exercising in the morning can help you sleep better at night.

Hal: Oh, sounds like a #MiracleMorning tip right there.

Shawn: There you go, see? And this is what it really boils down to, guys. What you're doing by engaging in some physical activity in the morning is you're helping to set up your circadian timing, basically your hormone secretion pattern. And all of us... You know, a lot of times guys don't identify with that, but women are more in touch with this stuff because of the cycle that they've been experiencing since teenage years, so they understand there's a hormonal cycle. But guys, we have it too. And the women listening, they're like, "Yes, you do."

Hal: That's right.

Shawn: We all have these hormonal patterns, and when you get up in the morning, you should have a pretty significant increase in your cortisol level. When people hear "cortisol" now, they think it's bad. Cortisol is not bad. It's just when it's out of balance. Cortisol helps you to get up and do anything. So cortisol should be high in the morning, and I actually put a cortisol chart in the book that people can look at. Gradually through the day it's going to come down and it's going to reach its low point in the evening, where inversely, melatonin is going to go up. These two have an inverse relationship, so when cortisol is down, melatonin is up. And melatonin is the get-good-sleep hormone.

Hal: Got it.

Shawn: When you secrete the optimal amount of melatonin, that's when you're going to get that deep, anabolic stage of sleep. So by you getting up in the morning and doing some exercise in the early part of the day, you're going to help encourage it to go down in the evening. This is why it works.

And just as a little parentheses here for everybody, when I'm saying "the deepest, most anabolic stage of sleep," I'm going to make this super simple. Depending on which expert you talk to, there's five stages of sleep. I really make it two: REM sleep and non-REM sleep. REM sleep, that's rapid-eye-movement sleep. This is when you're getting your dream on, and this is valuable. This is a time when your brain is actually doing a significant amount of the process called "memory processing."

This is where your short-term memories get converted into long-term memories. This is very important, but this isn't what changes your body. This isn't what changes your hormones. This isn't what helps you to recover the most. The non-REM sleep, this is the anabolic state. This is when your body is producing the most anabolic hormones, repairing hormones, and the most healing to your brain and nervous system, so this is the sleep that we want to spend the most time in.

There are certain things that you can do during the day, which we're already talking about, exercising in the morning, that can get you into that more often, so that when you wake up in the morning you feel refreshed, whether you got six hours of sleep or eight. There's plenty of people who get eight or nine hours of sleep and they wake up tired.

Hal: Absolutely.

Shawn: So that's Tip Number One. What do you think? We could share maybe two more?

Hal: Yeah, absolutely. Let's do it.

Shawn: Okay. Let's move to something that's just a little bit more uncomfortable than the low-hanging fruit, because I think everybody can get out there and do some exercise in the morning. By the way, you don't have to hit the gym in the morning per se. You can still work out in the afternoon if that's your gym time, but in the morning you need to do something. Power walk. Do some yoga. Hop on the mini-trampoline. You have to do something. Or you can hit the gym.

So, Tip Number Two, and this is something very important today. And I think you've probably heard this before too, Hal, is that we're the most over-communicated society in human history.

Hal: Sure, absolutely.

Shawn: Right? We're just swimming in it, swimming in data.

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: And this is having a severe impact on the way our brains work, and also our relationships. So one of the great tactics is this. And here's a study just to preface this. There was a study done at Rensselaer Polytechnic. It did a study showing that two hours of iPad use right before bed was enough to dramatically suppress melatonin secretion.

Hal: Wow.

Shawn: All right? We just talked about it. This is the get-good-sleep hormone. You're suppressing that secretion by your being on that iPad right before you go to bed. Why? Very simple. It's not about because you're engaged in something. It's because of the light. We're still, again... We can put on ties now. We can say fancy words, but we really have that cave man blueprint.

Hal: Sure.

Shawn: And when light is coming in through your optical receptors, your brain is picking up that it's daytime, whether it's 10 o'clock at night, or whether it's 10 a.m. in the morning. In particular, our devices have this very troublesome, blue spectrum of light, so my Mac that I'm looking at right now, your iPhone, your iPad, all these wonderful...

And I love my devices! But we have a mutual understanding. We have a certain type of relationship. So there's some hack that we can use by the way, which I am going to share. But also the main thing is understanding that, if I'm on my devices and they're hitting my optical receptors, and sending signals to my brain to secrete more daytime hormones, namely cortisol, this is a problem. I can go to sleep, but this doesn't mean I'm going to get the deep sleep that I need.

So what I recommend for people to do, in the book, is to give yourself a screen curfew. If your goal is to go to bed, just say, 10:30, then give yourself a 90-minute curfew. So you can work up until 9 o'clock, and be on your devices. Just

give yourself some time. More is better, but a 90-minute curfew is powerful. So for some people, that's going to start to push into their discomfort.

I just did an event the other day. I was doing an event for a corporate bank and we were having an awesome time. Everybody was engaged. And so I'm just like, "Okay, so we've got this 90-minute window now, guys. What are some of the things that we can do in these 90 minutes, once we get off our devices?" And people were looking around like they had no clue.

These are adult people. They're looking around like they have no idea what to do if they're not on their technology devices. There was one brave woman over to the left, and she slowly raised her hand. She was like, "Read a book?" I was like, "YES! You can read a book!"

Hal: That's right.

Shawn: And then, it encouraged another person on the other side of the room. She raised hand and she was like, "Talk to your spouse?" I'm like, "YES! Talk to your spouse! Yes."

Hal: Fascinating, fascinating.

Shawn: "Great!" It's like, "What a concept." And everybody is laughing now because they're seeing how disconnected we are, and just like, "Why didn't I think of that? Why didn't I think of I can actually just go and read a book or talk to somebody? Actually talk to a person face to face." And so, there's a plethora of things that you can do there.

This is a great time to get your day ready for tomorrow, set your goals for tomorrow. To just do some gratitude practices, to talk to your family. You can of course talk on a regular phone, a land-line. You can obviously read a book, like we talked about, which can help you to set up for the next day, some tactics, some strategies, maybe some stuff in marketing or business, if it's about goal-setting.

Or also, fiction can be valuable too, because it helps your brain to be more creative, because you're literally making a movie in your head, reading a book. There's so many things that you can put in that slot. But let's be real, and I know this happens with you too, Hal. Sometimes we've just got stuff to do. We've got deadlines. We've got to do stuff.

Hal: Sure.

Shawn: And so, there's a couple of hacks that you can use. Option Number One, superhero level, is give yourself 90-minute curfew.

Hal: Got it.

Shawn: The other option is there are some apps now, on Mac in particular. I'll just share this one because I'm still trying to find some better ones for the smart phones, and for the PC. But for Mac there's an app called "flux," f.lux, and you can download that for free. What it does is, based on your timezone, it will actually pull out that troublesome blue spectrum of light from your computer screen. It basically cools your screen off, automatically, and you can continue working.

You can actually turn the app off if you want to, with just a click of a button, but it helps to allow your body to produce a little bit more melatonin. You shouldn't be on the device really anyway, but this is going to help, so that you're not producing the most cortisol possible ever. Right?

Hal: Yeah.

Shawn: So that's Option Number One hack.

Hal: So I'm looking. I just want to see if I've got the right app. So if you're in the app store -- I'm on the app store right now -- do you do f.lux?

Shawn: You got it, yep.

Hal: And is it the pink one that's \$4.99?

Shawn: There's a free one. I know there's a free one. That might be a new one.

Hal: Let me just try "flux." All right. I'm just wanting to make sure we get this in the shot as well.

Shawn: I've you can hop on Google, just Google "flux."

Hal: Okay. All right, so Google "flux." All right. That will do it. All right, listeners. Google "flux." Okay. All right, brother, keep going. This is good. I know you've got one more tip.

Shawn: All right. So, the other thing here, the other little hack is to get yourself some shades that actually block out that troublesome blue spectrum as well. These are going to be shades that are tinted in orange, so any type of orange-tinted shades. You can go to Amazon right now. you can get yourself some fancy blue blockers.

Hal: There you go.

Shawn: Or you can get some regular ones, and that's what I started off with. When I was playing around with this stuff, like a couple of years ago, I got some that looked like I just built a birdhouse, like some straight-up, wood-shop glasses. Five bucks, and people would come over, because I just got used to wearing them.

Somebody would come over at night, they're like, "What? What are you doing? Did you just build that chair you're sitting on?" I'm just like, "No, these are just my, you know." Anyway, but now everybody is doing it. So you can get yourself some orange-tinted shades, another little hack there for the devices.

And so, last tip I'm going to share with you guys to help you get more of that anabolic, deep, rejuvenative stage of sleep more frequently. And just to recap really quickly, exercise in the a.m., give yourself a screen curfew. And the third one, we're going to push in to the discomfort just a little. And by the way, there's 21 strategies in the book, and this is ranging anywhere from supplementation to sex. There's a big variance in different things and strategies that you can use.

This one is pretty simple, but a lot of people aren't doing it. The third tip is to make sure that you're getting exposure to natural light in the morning. Here's why this is so important, because we already talked about how light triggers the cortisol. So by you getting access, in particular to sunlight, in particular to sunlight, in the early part of the day, mainly most valuable time, between 6 and 8 a.m., you're going to get radically improved sleep quality.

Hal: Really?

Shawn: I've actually cited some studies in the book to back this up. There was one really interesting study with office workers. What they found was that office workers who were not exposed even to windows, basically they're in a little desk dungeon, and a lot of people work in situations like that. They're not getting any

natural light, because even though sun will still reflect and get in here, you want to get it on your skin directly. But it just matters if you're getting exposed to that light, that natural light period.

What they found in the study was that individuals who are not exposed to any natural light during the day, they got an entire hour less sleep, reading this through brainwave activity, with brain monitors. So this isn't just like, "Oh, you got seven hours and they got eight." They could have been on the mattress for eight hours, but their body was not in that deep stage of sleep because they weren't getting exposures to natural light.

So make it a must that every single day you get some time getting exposure to natural light, even if it's just sitting by your window if it's cold where you are. It's best to get out there and get into the sunlight. We know that we should be doing this, but most people are just caught up in our day to day. So by you getting some more light in the morning, by you giving yourself a screen curfew, and by you getting some exercise in the morning, all these things are going to help you to sleep better at night.

Hal: So, quick question. Does the vitamin D have anything -- you know, from the sunlight -- have anything to do with the sleep? Or is it different than that?

Shawn: You know what? And this is something I actually looked into. I had to really pack the book and make it super easy to assimilate, but I was going to get into the conversation about vitamin D. This is really, really important, because it does actually lend to the sleep quality. Vitamin D is tied very closely to the function of melatonin.

Hal: Hm.

Shawn: Check this out, Hal. The World Health Organization has just come out and said that shift work, which is basically working the overnight shift, is a Class 3 carcinogen. Okay.

Hal: Wow.

Shawn: Carcinogen is a cancer-causing agent, and so by you not sleeping overnight, they've now confirmed that this is a cancer-causing agent. And why is

that? It's because melatonin might just be the most powerful anticancer hormone that the human body produces.

Hal: Wow, wow. That's fascinating. Therefore, that quality of sleep and the melatonin that you're producing, wow, interesting.

Shawn: Yeah. And so vitamin D and melatonin match up. They do some fun biochemical work together, so all this stuff works in synergy, and this is really just about being a more sovereign, natural human being. We require certain things, and when you don't obey the laws of the body basically, we get pain. We don't have to go through that. We can enjoy all of our wonderful advancements, but at the same time, respect our body's template and our DNA, and do the things that our body requires so that we can feel awesome when we're doing our other work.

Hal: All right. I love it. I love the three tips because they're three actionables. People can start exercising in the morning, if you're not doing that. Right? Set the no-electronics curfew 90 minutes before bedtime. And also, for those days you've got to work on the computer, if you Google "flux," F-L-U-X, I see the app. JustGetFlux.com is where you find that app for the Mac computer. And if you have a PC, just get a Mac.

I'm kidding; that's bad. But no, I'm not sure. Google and see if there's a PC option. But real quick, I've got three, sleep-related, rapid fire questions to wrap this up, Shawn. Are you ready for this?

Shawn: I'm ready.

Hal: All right. Number one, how many hours of sleep is ideal? Is there an answer to that question?

Shawn: It depends on you.

Hal: It depends on the person?

Shawn: Yes.

Hal: What's the best way to figure it out? For me, I'm all about self-experimentation. I slept for eight hours, slept for seven, slept for six. I found that five and a half to six is actually where I can actually function. That to me becomes ideal.

Shawn: Yes. Really it boils down to the self-experimentation like you said. So what I do in the book, I actually share sleep cycles, which is generally going to be 90 minutes if you're getting high quality sleep. So you want to generally fall in line with sleep cycles. You get four complete sleep cycles, Hal, when you get six hours, so that's probably why you're waking up feeling good.

Hal: Got it.

Shawn: And then, the next rung up would be seven and a half, then nine, so you can play around with that to find out what your magic number is. And for each person it's going to be a little bit different.

Hal: Got it. Got it. Okay. And then as far as you mentioned in the book I know, in Sleep Smarter, that the time you go to bed is almost more important than the hours that you get. So is there an ideal time of day that's the ideal bedtime? Or an ideal wake up time?

Shawn: Absolutely, yes. According to the research, timing your sleep is like timing an investment. It's not about how much you invest. It's about when you invest. And so there's what we call "money-time sleep." What the research shows is that it's generally going to be between the hours of 10 p.m. and 2 a.m., right. This is going to vary a little bit between the time zone that you're in, the time of year, all these things, but generally 10 p.m. to 2 a.m..

Why this is is that you're getting the vast majority of melatonin secretion, number one. We talked about how powerful that is. And also, there's this enzymatic activity that kicks on around about an hour before that Money Time, so just say around 9 p.m.. This enzymatic activity kicks on in order to repair your brain, your body, your nervous system, your endocrine system, all the cells in your body.

But if you find yourself up past 10, 11, 12, and then all of a sudden you're like, "I'm wired! I'm wide awake!" What's happened is that enzymatic activity has now been siphoned and used to keep you up, and that's called the "energy second wind." So basically you've just wasted a lot of the things that you've done during the day that were good for you, because your body is not really repairing and recovering from it.

Hal: Ah, interesting. Yeah, for me, I'm always in bed before 10, so I think that might be a reason that I'm able to get up at 3:30 and be fine.

Shawn: Yes.

Hal: Last question is your thoughts on taking a melatonin supplement. Yeah? Nay? Maybe? What are your thoughts on that? Because a lot of times when I travel and I'm in a different environment, where I'm in a hotel and not my bed, I'll usually take the minimum, three milligram dosage of melatonin about an hour before I want to fall asleep. And that for me, I sleep like a baby every night. I used to have insomnia, so I'm very fortunate now. But yeah, any thoughts on it?

Shawn: Absolutely. You're using it in the one instance that I would encourage people to use it. Just as a little bit of a reset if you're traveling, if you're changing time zones, that's the ideal time to use it. But using it consistently is not a good idea and here's why.

More and more research is coming out, because people are popping melatonin like candy because it's at a supplement store. You've got to understand that this is a very powerful hormone. We've talked about it already, all the different influences that it has on your life. So by you taking a supplement form of melatonin, the research is showing that it can actually suppress your body's own, natural, endogenous production of it.

Hal: Got it.

Shawn: You can actually shut down your body's ability to produce the optimum amount of melatonin it needs to naturally. What it is is a very habit-forming supplement, so in the book I actually go through a rung of like, "Do this thing first. Try this, and then this, and then this, and this." We get all the way down to precursors for melatonin, instead of taking melatonin itself, which I really think that the only time and best time is if you're traveling and it's just for a spot treatment.

Hal: Got it. Got it. Yeah, for me it's not a consistent, daily thing. But that's what you're saying, that for some people it becomes habit-forming. They take it every night before bed.

Shawn: You got it, yeah, some people, that and many other things.

Hal: Got it. And I guess, here's a last question, because I've heard things on this and it just popped in my head. What about drinking? I know a lot of people like to drink alcohol in the evening, a glass of wine to relax or whatever. I've heard that that actually hinders the quality of your sleep. Any knowledge to drop on that topic?

Shawn: So these are the things that make me not popular, man! No, really, I mean, I'm pro-alcohol for the right circumstance, and I'm very much pro-caffeine. But you've just got to know how to respect this stuff and how to use it properly. I actually share strategies in the book of how to drink smarter, so that it doesn't impact your sleep, because it does very, very much. And here's why.

Number one, what the research shows -- and by the way, this is actually, again, sticking people to brain monitors and finding out whether they're actually in deep sleep or not -- alcohol does in fact help you to fall asleep faster. Yes, it does, absolutely. But because of some of the metabolic processes that happen when you consume alcohol, it basically blocks your body's ability to get into the deep, anabolic stage of sleep that we've been talking about.

Again, you're passing out but you're not actually falling into deep sleep, and this is where the whole concept of a "hangover" comes, because you're waking up feeling beat up and feeling tired. Because you didn't get that deep, anabolic stage of sleep that you really needed, even if you got ten hours of sleep.

Hal: It wasn't restorative.

Shawn: Exactly. So it can help you fall asleep faster, but it's going to block you from getting that anabolic sleep that you really want.

Hal: Got it. So Shawn, fantastic, man. I hope people will... I hope and I think that after hearing the amount of research and the approach that you take, really going in depth and then synthesizing the best practices, making it practical, breaking the myths, the things that we've either been led to believe, or has become pop culture, etc., I love the way you approach knowledge, and you approach impacting people with it.

So I hope our listeners will check out your book, Sleep Smarter, on Amazon.com. I'm guessing that's the best place to get it?

Shawn: That's right.

Hal: Cool. And like I said, 89 reviews, 4.7 out of 5 stars, people are talking about changes in their life. And of course, if you want to go deeper with Shawn, check out his podcast, The Model Health Show. Shawn, if anybody wants to reach out to you, say "Hello," get more info, book you to speak, what have you, what is the best way to get in touch with you?

Shawn: Awesome, Hal. My home online is the ShawnStevensonModel.com. So you can just Google me, Shawn Stevenson, S-H-A-W-N, Stevenson, S-T-E-V-E-N-S-O-N, and I'll pop up there. And you can access to the podcast there. We've got some awesome video we're now adding to the mix, great articles, all this stuff, so much free goodies out there for everybody.

I'm really late to the game on social media, but I've been crushing lately on Instagram, so I'm at ShawnModel on Instagram. And people are just loving the Instagram, and I'm at ShawnModel on Twitter as well, so people can drop by and say "Hi." I'm very active on those platforms now, so yeah, I would absolutely love to connect with everybody. And Hal, you're the man! You know you're the man! And I appreciate you so much!

Hal: Ditto, my friend, and I appreciate you coming on and adding a ton of value. And for all you Achieve Your Goals podcast listeners, I think that sleep is one thing that we overlook. We try to get less of it, or you know, it's just something that we don't prioritize, and it really is such a priority. I know that a lot of my colleagues and friends, the more successful they become, and the more they get out of that scarcity mindset, where it's like, "I need every second of every day to maximize my productivity!" The more they get out of that scarcity mindset and in the abundant mindset, the more sleep becomes a priority, which is interesting. Think about that.

And so, I think that they lesson is don't wait, don't wait to make sleep a priority until you hopefully get where you want to go, and then all of a sudden now you take the time. Realize that recharging your batteries, restoring your optimum, mental, and physical, and emotional capabilities is so crucial, so crucial. And if you want a quick read, Sleep Smarter is I think the book to get.

So Achieve Your Goals listeners, thank you for tuning in to another episode. I hope you got at least one thing that can add extraordinary, measurable value to your life from the episode. I know I got at least a few from Shawn today, and we will talk to you on next week's episode. Take care, everybody.

Nick: And thank you for tuning in to this episode of the podcast. So hopefully you are now ready to go out there and to sleep smarter, to actually use sleep to help propel you to your goals, and just, simply live a healthier, better, more productive life. Now let us know your base takeaways from this interview with Shawn by simply going to HalElrod.com/071, for Episode #71, and just leave a comment there in the show notes page. We greatly appreciate all your feedback and we want to know what your takeaways were.

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