

Module 1

Title: Introduction to Sleep

Subtitle: A well-rested mind is a high-performing mind

Learn: Understand sleep as a vital investment in mental fitness

"Sleep is the greatest legal performance-enhancing drug that most people are probably neglecting." — Matthew Walker, author of Why We Sleep and founder of The Center for Human Sleep Science at UC Berkeley

Do you ever find yourself laying in bed at night, trying to fall asleep, only to have your mind scroll through old memories, tomorrow's to-do list, and random thoughts like, "Why do I always lose socks in the laundry?" Instead of drifting off into restful slumber, you end up tossing and turning into the wee hours of the morning.

Falling asleep shouldn't feel like an impossible task but it's a common struggle. In fact, the National Sleep Foundation's 2025 Sleep in America® Poll reveals that 6 out of every 10 adults report that they're not getting enough sleep, and nearly half of adults struggle to stay asleep for 3 or more nights each week. Why does this happen? **The root of the issue lies in how we perceive and approach sleep.**

We commonly view sleep as something that takes away precious hours from our day. But we need to change that narrative and recognize that sleep actually enhances everything we do while awake.

Sleep isn't a luxury--it's the key to optimal performance

We often treat sleep as something to squeeze in if there's time left at the end of a busy day. In a culture that glorifies productivity, we push ourselves to achieve more and consider exhaustion as a symbol of dedication. We utter phrases like, "I'll sleep when I'm dead," as if burnout is simply part of the path to success.

But if we don't actively prioritize sleep, our daily functioning takes a direct hit. We tend

to feel irritable and sluggish. We have trouble thinking clearly and can feel easily overwhelmed. Our work, health and relationships suffer.

Sleeping isn't just rest—it's brain maintenance. Neurologist Dr. Vernon Williams describes sleep as the brain's "house cleaning" process. (Williams, 2023) It acts as a reboot for our brain, clearing away the mental clutter of the day to provide the energy, resiliency and clarity we need to take on whatever lies ahead.

Instead of viewing sleep as something to be sacrificed, we need to recognize sleep for what it is: a non-negotiable investment in mental fitness. By prioritizing sleep, we are choosing a healthier, more balanced version of ourselves.

Getting good sleep is a skill

The reality is that life can be hectic; we can't always meet the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep each night. It might sound strange, but the number of hours we sleep doesn't matter as much as we think. Many studies show that **sleep quality is a more important factor in your overall functioning than the amount of sleep you get; what's important is how restorative your sleep is.** (Kohyama, 2021)

Learning how to sleep well is a skill and something you can implement, even with a busy schedule. With a few intentional changes to your routine, you can experience better sleep and a more sharp, calm and resilient you.

In this module, you will:

- Learn how a lack of quality sleep impacts your daily performance
- What "good" quality sleep is and how to achieve it
- Learn how to break the cycle of stress and poor sleep
- Discover science-backed practical strategies to help maximize your quality sleep, even on a busy schedule

Now, let's get you on the road to better sleep!

Module 2

Title: What Prevents Us From Having Good Sleep

Subtitle: Understanding the Cycle of Stress and Sleeplessness

Learn: Identify the root causes disrupting your sleep quality

"Sleep is not a luxury, it's a biological necessity. Yet in our always-on society, it's often the first thing we sacrifice." — Dr. Shannon Makekau, Sleep Medicine Specialist

How often do you wake up feeling refreshed? For many of us, the answer is "rarely." Day-to-day stressors dominate our lives. In the process of trying to keep up with society's relentless demands, we've normalized sleep deficiency. **In our effort to "get it all done," we sacrifice the very thing we need to be more present and productive—sleep.**

Think of our mental energy as a bank account. Each day, we make withdrawals—working, making decisions, remembering tasks. Sleep is our nightly deposit, replenishing our balance. But if we withdraw more than we deposit, we build a deficit. Unlike financial debt, sleep debt quietly accumulates until we're mentally and emotionally drained. We end up operating below our optimal capacity day after day, often without fully realizing it.

What keeps us awake?

It should come as no surprise that the primary disruptors of sleep stem from the stress, anxiety and worry we carry. The ongoing mental strain of juggling responsibilities and processing the non-stop flow of digital information keeps our minds incessantly activated, making it difficult for our brains to power down.

Stress is like a sleep thief, keeping our brain from reaching the deep, restorative sleep it craves. Without sufficient sleep, small annoyances can feel overwhelming and it often

leads to a vicious sleep-stress cycle where stress causes poor sleep which amplifies stress the next day, further perpetuating poor sleep and so on. (Zhang et al., 2024)

With **anxiety** and **excessive worry**, our minds are stuck in hyperarousal mode, keeping our mind buzzing exactly when you need it to quiet down. We lay awake replaying conversations in our head and projecting worst-case scenarios; sometimes our minds are trapped in “analysis paralysis” obsessing over a minor mistake or past regrets. Even our worry about whether we can fall asleep at bedtime keeps us up at night.

What happens when we don't get enough sleep?

Ongoing sleep deprivation creates a dangerous effect on our self-perception: **as we normalize feeling exhausted, we lose our ability to recognize our own cognitive decline.** Research shows that even though we may feel we've adjusted to insufficient sleep, this is a subjective illusion—our mental sharpness is silently degrading in the background even when we don't realize it's happening. (Durmer & Dinges, 2005)

When we get stuck in a cycle of poor sleeping habits our:

- Cognitive performance declines, making decision-making and problem-solving more difficult.
- Memory weakens, making it difficult to retain or recall information.
- Judgment is impaired, making it harder to make sound decisions.
- Impulse control weakens, leading to regretful reactions.
- Emotional sensitivity rises, causing overreactions and irritability.
- Motivation drops, leaving us sluggish and unfocused.
- Creativity declines, hindering innovative thinking and problem-solving.
- Outlook becomes more negative, focusing on problems instead of solutions.

When we don't get enough restorative sleep, its impact extends far beyond just feeling tired.

Beyond "one size fits all" sleep advice

Following generic "good sleep hygiene" advice isn't always sufficient because of the complex links between our sleep and factors like stress, anxiety, and our unique situations. Getting to the core of our personal sleep barriers, therefore, is a critical part of determining which sleep habits will benefit us the most to reach our optimal level of mental fitness.

In the upcoming modules, you'll learn evidence-based strategies to address the root causes of poor sleep rather than just treating the symptoms.

Sleep enhances everything we do every day. By tackling our sources of stress and making consistent "deposits" through quality sleep, we can restore balance to our mental energy account and engage more fully with life.

References

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