**Sleep Better for Greater Waking Intelligence**

We as humans have a tendency to overcomplicate. Those interested in boosting their brain power for instance might feel tempted to focus on strategies such as brain plasticity, or nootropics *before* considering the most fundamental and basic changes they could make.

Nutrition is one. But even more basic is sleep. If you want to upgrade your performance tomorrow, sleep better today.

Not only will this clear adenosine from your brain, replenish key neurotransmitters to avoid things like adrenal fatigue and provide you with greater energy for more focus and energy, but it will also help to support learning by enabling the growth and reinforcement of neuronal connections while you rest. Sleep is the ultimate anabolic state – the ultimate example of rest and digest – and it is when what we learned during the day is consolidated.

**How to Sleep Better**

So, to that end, what can you do to improve your sleep?

The most important thing to do is to put yourself at the less aroused and more relaxed end of the spectrum in terms of your chemical balance.

That means you need to avoid anything that will psych you up – which includes loud noise, bright lights and anything that causes physiological stress. This is why as most of us now know, looking at computer screens and phones is so bad for you before bed. It’s also why having a cup of coffee is not a good idea. Even doing something seemingly harmless like turning on the light in the bathroom can cause a flood of cortisol and ruin your release of melatonin.

To avoid this, it is recommended that you take half and hour to an hour of ‘down time’ before bed. During this time, you should read by a low-level light and avoid looking at phones or anything else.

Eating right also helps. While you shouldn’t eat too much before going to bed, this is an ideal time to have a slightly sweeter, carb-rich meal. In fact, it has even been suggested that we *evolved* to eat sweeter things last (hence dessert) because this encourages the release of serotonin and then melatonin. Eat well, but give it a couple of hours before you hit the sack.

Having a warm bath can help too, as this encourages the release of growth hormone and melatonin and relaxes the muscles. Consuming magnesium threonate can also relax the muscles and supports plasticity during the night.

**Waking Healthy**

Also important is to make sure that you wake up in the right state, in order to help set your biological rhythms. External Zeitgebers (time-givers) help to set your ‘internal pacemaker’ (body clock) and these include things like light and even social interaction.

One fantastic tool to this end is a daylight alarm that will wake you up with a simulated sunrise using a wave-length similar to that of the sun. This gradually stirs you from deep sleep and increases the production of cortisol, readying you for when the alarm goes off. It is *hugely* preferable to being startled out of deep sleep in a pitch-dark room by a conventional alarm! I’ve started using one and now my wife and I would never consider turning back.

Oh and supplementing with vitamin D first thing in the morning may also be beneficial.