

FINDING BALANCE AND OPTIMIZING SLEEP WITH DR. NISHI BHOPAL

Dr. Adrienne Youdim 00:03

Hi, this is Dr. Adrienne, Welcome to Health Bite the podcast where we explore all things health and wellness. Hi again and welcome to Health Bite. I'm your host, Dr. Adrienne. This is the podcast in which we discuss all things health and wellness. And I believe that we all can take small steps that make a big impact in our health and well being. And to that end, I'm very excited to introduce to you our guest today Dr. Nishi Bhopal, Dr. Nishi is an integrative psychiatrists and sleep specialists. She's also the founder of inter balance, which is an online educational program that focuses on sleep and mental wellness. So thank you, Dr. Nishi, for being here. And welcome.

Dr. Nishi Bhopal 00:51

Thank you, Dr. Adrienne, for having me. It's such a pleasure to be here today.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim 00:55

This is such a timely topic. I mean, I think sleep is always timely. But I have noticed in my own personal life, and in my own professional life, that maybe 10 years ago, we really de emphasize sleep, we didn't talk about it much. And we were all trading in sleep for the interest of productivity, and, you know, all those other things. And then slowly sleep education kind of crept up into our consciousness. And then I think, really, during the time of the pandemic, and Coronavirus, it's really become much more prominent in the conversation. And we've even coined the term, Corona somnio, which maybe we can discuss later. So, so much to talk about, Dr. Nishi. But before we get started, I think it would be really helpful if you would just give us kind of a overview on unsleep. The stages of sleep, we all know that REM is important. I don't know that we really know why. Right?

Dr. Nishi Bhopal 02:02

Yes, absolutely. So no, I mean, you're absolutely right, there is so much more interest in sleep these days. And you know, we've all heard that term will sleep when we're dead. But you know, we're learning more and more that sleep is so crucial to productivity, and efficiency and health and well being and mood and so many things. And so yes, there are different stages to sleep. And so like you said, most people have heard about REM sleep, which is rapid eye movement, sleep. But there's actually multiple stages of sleep that we go in and out of throughout the night. And so this pattern of these different sleep stages is called our sleep architecture. And so our sleep does follow this specific architecture throughout the night. And when we're not going through all of those stages, or if we have imbalances in those stages, it affects our sleep quality. So one of the best markers of sleep quality is that we actually go through this specific pattern, we have good sleep architecture, and the sleep is in the right proportions. So as far as the different stages, REM sleep, take makes up about 25% of our sleep during the night, then we also have what is called Deep sleep. So REM sleep and deep sleep are often conflated people People often think that REM sleep is deep sleep. But there's actually a totally separate stage of what we call non REM stage three, which is considered deep sleep. And that is about 20% of our sleep architecture, then most of the night actually is in what we call stage two sleep, which

is non REM stage two. And that makes up about 50% of our sleep architecture. And so I'm kind of going backwards here. So we have REM sleep deep sleep, stage two, and then we have stage one, which is the lightest stage of sleep. And that's where we transition from wakefulness to sleep. And that's about 5% of our sleep.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim 03:50

Yeah, that's very helpful. And REM specifically is talked about so often because it's where we kind of, we create concrete memories, and we solidify our knowledge for the day, right? So it's important to education and to talk a little bit more about that. Yeah, absolutely. So REM sleep is really important for learning for consolidation of memories, it's also really important for learning motor skills. So if you are like working on your golf swing, or you're learning how to play an instrument, or you're learning something that involves a lot of physical movement, that information and that memory is encoded in your brain during your REM sleep. REM sleep is also really important for creativity and problem solving. And so, you know, it's really interesting because when you look at Children's sleep patterns, they sleep a lot, right? So we know that babies need a lot of sleep, children needed a lot of sleep and a lot they got a lot more REM sleep than we do as adults. And one of the reasons for that is they're taking in so much information during the day that they have to make sense of and consolidate because everything's new for them. So that's why they get so much REM sleep. But even as adults that REM sleep is super important for us to restore our brain encode that information, and improve our creativity and our motor skills. Right. So I'm sure we'll get into this a little bit more, but I always tell my patients that let's work smarter, not harder, right. And by getting adequate sleep, you really are working smarter, because you're giving your body and your brain the opportunity to consolidate that memory, for example, or to enhance productivity, for example, or so many more other benefits to the work that we do. Whereas when we often burn the midnight oil and sacrifice our sleep for these things, we don't recognize that all of that effort that we're putting in, we're not really giving it the opportunity to land, so to speak. Yes, that's exactly right. And, and that's one of the reasons that I'm so passionate about sleep is because you cannot explore your full potential without restorative sleep. And you're really doing yourself a disservice if you're not making sleep a priority for your health and well being but also your productivity. And you know, I work with a lot of really busy professionals, I'm here in the Bay Area. So a lot of the people that I see in my practice are executives, or they work in Silicon Valley, or, you know, they're very high achievers, and they have long work hours. And there's a lot that they need to get done in a day. And so what I emphasize to them is that if you want to be more efficient, if you want to be on your A game, it's really important that you make sleep a priority, because there's so much growth and restoration and cognitive enhancement that happens during sleep. Right. Right. And and again, restoration, which is often what we attribute sleep with, but also gross. And so this concept that sleep is for laziness or you know, sleep when you're dead. It's so really obsolete now, because that's really not what's going on. You mentioned the fact that kids or young children require so much sleep, and that is different than what adults require. There's always a question as to how much sleep is enough. So can you tell us what the recommendations are? And also maybe speak to the variability? The variability in that? Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So most of us have heard that you need eight hours of sleep to feel rested. But actually, there is quite a bit of variability between individuals. So most people need somewhere between seven to nine hours of sleep on average. And so like I said, that varies between different people, there are people who are considered short sleepers. So they might need a little bit less than seven, they might need six. But that's only like 5% of the population. That is not most people think

they're in that short sleeper category. But that is actually not true for 95% of the population, then there are people who are long sleepers, so they might need a little bit more than nine hours of sleep. So one of the things with this eight hour focus is that it can actually create more anxiety about sleep. Because if you're a seven hour sleeper, and that's all you need, but you're focusing on your you know, you're actively trying to get eight hours, that can actually create more anxiety and more of a preoccupation and worry that you're not getting enough sleep and create more stress. And then on the other hand, if you're someone who actually does need nine hours of sleep, which I see a lot of this in my practice, people feel like they're getting enough sleep, they're sleeping seven and a half hours a night, but they're still tired, well, they actually might be a nine hour sleeper. And when you're a nine hour sleeper, for example, and you're only getting, let's say, seven, that's two hours of sleep deprivation every night. And that adds up over time. And that you cannot make up for Yeah, and and is, is kind of characterized by that term sleep debt, which I want to get to as well. But can you talk also about? So that's great in regards to the amount of sleep can you also speak to the timing of sleep, you know, like, whether it's a you know, we always kind of strive for an early bedtime, Is that really necessary or evidence based. So we all have a have a circadian rhythm, which is our body clock. And that kind of governs our sleep wake cycles. The circadian rhythm is involved in so many different processes in the body, like hormone regulation, and hunger and metabolism and, you know, many different physiological processes. But one of its main processes that most of us know about is the sleep wake cycle. And there are variations in that. So there are people who have what we call delayed sleep phase syndrome. So this is the classic night owl. And you see this a lot in in teenagers and young adults, but it can carry over into adulthood as well. And then we have people who have more of an advanced body clock, and that's where they are what we call morning larks. So they fall asleep earlier and they wake up earlier. So they're Natural morning people, but most people kind of are somewhere in between. So one of the issues that I see is that if you're trying to force yourself to get sleep at times that are not aligned with your natural body clock, that can also cause a host of other issues that can cause anxiety and stress. But it can also lead to conditions that I see in my practice like depression, or even make bipolar disorder worse, or create mood instability, and it can also lead to metabolic dysregulation, as well. So it's really important to understand what your natural body body rhythm is, and to try to stay in alignment with that. Now, having said that, that can be really difficult to do, because a lot of us have work obligations and other obligations that don't necessarily align with our body clock. But that is the first step is to have that awareness of what your natural body rhythm is. Right. And I think you kind of alluded to this point of how how it changes over the lifespan. I think for the parents out there, it's important to acknowledge that our teenagers that have this, and we did as well, right, this kind of wonky rhythm of like staying up all night and then sleeping in, it's kind of in alignment with what's age appropriate and developmentally appropriate, right? It's not them just being chatty at night are lazy and not getting up, right. Oh, yeah, that is so true. And, you know, I'm a night owl, so I can completely, you know, empathize with with, you know, the other night owls out there. And one of the things that I see a lot in my practice, which I think is really unfortunate is that these young adults and teenagers can get diagnosed as having insomnia, when actually they have a circadian rhythm disorder, or insomnia. You know, I don't even like to think of it as a disorder, it's just a difference. It's a circadian rhythm difference. And I'll see them, you know, being prescribed Ambien or other sleeping pills to try to force their body clock earlier. But that doesn't work. And then, you know, you can imagine how many issues that causes downstream. So, yes, teenagers, about 16% of adolescents have what we call delays, sleep, delayed sleep phase syndrome. And that's why there's this huge push in the sleep community to delay school start times. Because, yes,

right, because high school starts so early in the morning, which is completely out of alignment with the teenagers body clocks. But yeah, I was going to say, just before, you mentioned, the schools, that a lot of this kind of friction between our children's or our teenagers schedule. And what they physiologically need is like it's culturally driven, you know, the schools are starting earlier and earlier. And that forcing them to kind of be in alignment with something that, again, is not physiologic for them. And so this work that you're doing is so very important, because I think, as more people learn about it, and as more parents learn about it, then they can really advocate on behalf of their children to kind of push for this shift. Absolutely. And you know, and I think it's really important for us as adults as well. And you know, I see a lot of adults in my practice, who have a delayed body clock, and it might not be very delayed, compared to like a teenager who sleeps in until noon. But even if you're an adult who has trouble getting up before 8am, or 9am. And I see a lot of patients like this, it creates a lot of friction and a lot of stress. And it even creates issues at work. So I think it's also important that in the workplace, we understand that there are these biological differences. And it's interesting with the pandemic, because I think that has opened up employers to the idea that we can work in different ways that we can work on different schedules, we can work from home. And with the corona Samia that you mentioned earlier, I'm seeing two sides of that I'm seeing the Cronus on Samia aside, but also, I'm seeing people's sleep improve, in some ways, too, because they're able to work in a way that's more aligned with their natural rhythm. Yeah, that is true. And for our teenagers and our children, too, who now have later start times and can essentially roll up to their desk. Yeah. I'm just as you were talking, I was thinking about, you know, residency. And when I was a resident, I was splitting the difference with my husband, who was also a resident, so I had about an hour drive. And when I had my surgical clerkship which I needed, or this was actually medical school, but my surgical clerkship, we had to be there at five I had set my alarm for 3am. You know, and then, you know, to get ready for work, and then fast forward, you know, as working in my academic practice, we've consistently had meetings at six and 7am. And while it was so distressing, it felt like we couldn't protest, you know, because that was just the way things were But I'm hopeful, you know, with these conversations that we also will make, as you said, impact in the workplace. Yeah. And I mean, it's it's ironic too, because I mean, I struggled in residency because I'm a little bit of a night owl, I'm a little bit of a longer sleeper. So it was a tough go for me to work those really long days, and those really long hours with those early starts. And then it was funny when I was in my sleep fellowship, the three of us fellows there was there was three of us who were going through the fellowship together. We were all night owls. Yeah, we had a clinic at 7am. And so our program director used to laugh about this all the time, because it's like, you know, it's just so ironic that we were trying to help people with these issues, yet we were struggling ourselves. So it is such a pervasive issue, right, because everyone has to sleep, like no one is immune to this. And so that's why I'm so passionate about it, because every single person deserves to know how to sleep. Well. Absolutely. And, again, there's so many things I want to touch on. But it's not just a matter of, it's not just a matter of like feeling well, which in and of itself is important. We shouldn't, we shouldn't dismiss or diminish, right, the value of that. But there's certainly significant health consequences to inadequate sleep, even certain cancers that are associated with poor sleep, metabolic diseases, like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, are all associated with sleep deprivation. That's absolutely right. And, you know, sleep is a pillar of health. And if you no one if you want to optimize your wellness, but also if you are experiencing any of those kinds of conditions, if you have, you know, a metabolic issue like diabetes, or even a thyroid condition, or if you have heart disease, or any number of other things, I'm a psychiatrist. So I see people with anxiety, bipolar disorder, ADHD, depression, it's so important, no matter what condition you're dealing with, that

you optimize your sleep quality, because if you're not getting good quality sleep, so it's not just about the quantity of sleep, it's not just that you're you need to be getting enough sleep, but you need to have good quality sleep. And if you don't have good quality sleep, it's very hard to get a handle on any of those other conditions. And conversely, if you're not getting good quality sleep, it puts you at risk of developing any number of those conditions. And we you know, we see some really interesting studies with people who are nightshift workers. And we see that people who are night shift workers. And there's an interesting subset of people who do well with night shift work because of the nature of their body clock, but most people do not adjust Well, tonight, night shift work. And we know that nightshift workers have a higher rate of certain types of cancers, especially breast cancer. And also when people are sleep deprived, whether a night shift worker or they're just chronically sleep deprived, you have a lower immune response to vaccinations. And so that is a really timely issue as well, during this pandemic.

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You know, I,

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I had a patient actually who was was working three jobs, and one of her lines of work was volunteering, she was actually getting her master's in psychology, and she was volunteering in the evenings at a crisis center. And she was seeing me for, you know, metabolic issues. And we were able, fortunately, to convince her that that volunteer work, you know, would have to wait. But there are some people who just can't make those changes. And I don't want to leave this discussion without addressing that. But before we get there, there's so many nuggets in everything that you say, so I don't want to miss anything. You brought up the point early in your discussion about sleep quality, and I want you to please touch on some of the things we do to affect our sleep and wakefulness and how they ultimately impact our sleep quality, right. So many of us, myself included, open our eyes with the promise of a delicious cup of coffee. And some people will continue that coffee all throughout the day in order to allow for wakefulness. And then another kind of common misconception is using, you know, a nightcap or maybe a glass of wine or alcohol at night to help this you know, helping to sleep. But both of those are flawed in some way, right when it comes to sleep quality. So talk a little bit about that. Yeah, so with the caffeine piece. Um, one thing I always like to assess for is if someone is relying on caffeine to stay awake and alert throughout the day, then I wonder Okay, what is your sleep quality like so it's kind of like a you know, it's a two way street. So if you're drinking caffeine all day, it's gonna affect your sleep quality. But if you don't have sleep, good Couldn't sleep quality to begin with, then you're going to want to rely on caffeine to get through the day. So it's like this vicious cycle. The thing with caffeine is that caffeine has about a seven hour half life. So your morning cup of coffee is probably not going to have that much of an impact on your sleep quality. But if you are drinking caffeine or or you know, having coffee or a strong tea after about two or 3pm, that could certainly have a significant impact on your sleep. And that affects something called adenosine, which is a neurotransmitter. And so adenosine builds up during the day as we stay awake. So the longer we're awake, the more adenosine we build up, and adenosine makes us sleepy. So that's part of our sleep drive. So that would make that's what makes us fall asleep at night. Caffeine blocks that. So you're you're physically blocking the neurotransmitter of sleep when you're drinking coffee throughout the day. We're at caffeine throughout the day. So that's that's really important to recognize. I don't want to take people's coffee away. Yeah. Right, right. Don't do that, please. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But what I do recognize is just notice, just notice.

And so I have a lot of people who tell me that Oh, coffee, coffee doesn't affect me like, Okay, well just notice, notice if it's affecting your sleep quality. Notice, if you're wanting to have coffee compulsively to stay awake, are you doing it more for the enjoyment and the routine in the habit of it? So just notice how it's affecting you? Yeah, and I think, you know, a good rule of thumb is, I usually say noon, because I want to give them a little bit of a buffer. But good rule of thumb is really by 2pm, you should, you should really be wrapping it up when it comes to caffeine. And the other point being that speaking about the the adenosine, so the caffeine is blocking the receptor, the place where that sleepiness, neurotransmitter lands, but it's not affecting the overall amount of adenosine. So if you're blocking that receptor that adenosine is building up, kind of, you know, waiting. Yes, that's exactly right. So you're not paying off your sleep debt. Your sleep debt is just growing and growing and growing and growing. And you can't pay that off. And the caffeine is like you're gonna burn yourself out if you're just trying to use caffeine to stay awake. So that's why it's really important to make sure you're getting adequate sleep and not using caffeine as a substitute for sleep. Yeah, that's a great point. And so now at the other end of the spectrum is, is the alcohol right? which most people will, will acknowledge that when they do consume alcohol, that they'll feel sleepy. And so it makes sense to use that, you know, for sleep. But that's but talk about that. It makes absolute sense, because we all know that drinking alcohol will make you fall asleep faster. And so we know that it actually reduces sleep latency, which is the amount of time it takes to fall asleep. But we also know that it reduces sleep quality. And so what happens with alcohol is that as your body metabolizes that cocktail, or that glass of wine or two, or whatever you had, is that it's going to create more awakenings throughout the night. So it's going to cause more sleep disruption as the night goes on. The other thing that alcohol does is it suppresses REM sleep. So we were talking about the importance of REM sleep for cognitive capacity for creativity, for learning also for decision making. So if you're in a high pressure job, and you need to make important decisions, that lack of REM sleep is going to affect your performance at work. So alcohol, it reduces your sleep quality, it causes more awakenings and reduces that REM sleep, and then it also can cause grogginess the next day. So then that feeds into using caffeine to stay awake. So then you get into this vicious cycle of drinking coffee to stay awake, having a nightcap to fall asleep, and that is just not a good cycle to get into. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think it's really important. The points that you make, and people don't realize that while there is a sedative quality to alcohol, which means that yes, you do get sleepy or sedated, that there's also a stimulatory effect, which is what wakes people up throughout the night. And sometimes people are aware to that awakening, right, and sometimes they're not, but that doesn't mean they're not actually waking up or kind of being disrupted in their sleep cycles. And in their REM specifically, correct. There was this interesting study I heard where

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they,

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they tested people based on the amount and timing of alcohol as compared to learning a nugget of information or maybe it was a task and they found that any amount of alcohol would impair their ability to really create or formulate a memory That educational nugget, even if the alcohol consumption was days after they learned the material when they were tested a week later, and you're probably familiar with this and other studies that are similar, that it that that alcoholic beverage three days in still affected their ability to retain the information A week later, as compared to people who did not consume any

alcohol in that seven day period. That's really fascinating. And I think that's such an important point to remember that we're not talking about, you know, one night here and there or one day here and there. We're also talking about habits, and building healthy habits in the long term that are going to improve your sleep quality, and that are also going to improve your health and wellness and help you stay balanced. Yeah. So important, again, to highlight how important sleep is in terms of cognition and memory. But also, as you said, Before creativity and productivity. And these things have all been borne out in studies where they've taken like entrepreneurs, for example, right, and put them in think tanks and compared good sleepers to sleep deprived individuals, and shown how the entrepreneurs who are sleep deprived don't have the same level of creativity problem solving, as the ones who are well slept. So it's so profound that impact, it really is. And I think the statistic is something like 20% 27% of tech workers are sleep deprived. And studies show, you know, along the lines of what we're talking about that if you stay up for 20 hours straight, your cognitive capacity is the same as if you're inebriated. So it's like being drunk. So that is how your brain is functioning, your brain is functioning like you're drunk when you're chronically sleep deprived. Yeah, it just makes me think of how crazy it is that we used to run codes in the hospital on, you know, 20 hour 20. And thankfully, as a result, you know, there have been some residents who work restrictions so that that kind of training no longer is allowed. And that was met with so much resistance back then. Right?

27:15

Yep, it Well, yeah.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim 27:18

Um, so, so but we do have this problem with insomnia, right. And you mentioned 20, some odd 27% or so of tech people, but I think about 33 plus percent of Americans are not getting adequate sleep or report some type of sleep disturbance. And so oftentimes, the first thing people turn to or sleep aids, either over the counter sleep aids or prescription drugs. And I think people would be surprised to know that that many of the societal guidelines, right, like my professional society, American College of Physicians, and many others, actually don't recommend sleep aids, because the data shows that it is ineffective for sleep. So can you talk about that a little bit and talk about maybe also the over counter age that people turn to. So sleep aids are a big business, it's like an over \$400 billion business in the US. And as you said, the reason for that is that one in three Americans are sleep deprived. And, you know, the American Academy of sleep medicine does not recommend recommend sleep aids as a first line treatment. So the recommendation is, is that if you're trying to improve sleep or reduce insomnia, the first recommendation is behavioral measures. And specifically, if you have insomnia, cognitive behavioral therapy is recommended. First, these sleep aids were not meant or designed for long term use, they were only meant for short term use. So it's not that sleeping pills or sleep aids are bad, per se. I see them as a tool that you can use appropriately. But it's when you use them inappropriately for extended periods of time that they become problematic, because they can cause lots of other side effects down the line, they can cause more cognitive impairment and cognitive issues, they can cause falls and this is especially important for our older population, where they're at risk of falling and maybe even breaking a bone or sustaining a fracture. We also see that people who use sleep aids long term have twice as high of a risk of getting into a car accident. So these medications, whether they're prescription medication, like Ambien or an over the counter sleep aid, which are usually Benadryl based or diphenhydramine, a dog fin Hydra mean based, these are not without risk. Yeah, and also that the

studies also show that they become ineffective at some point. So for these Chronic users, and I have a handful of patients, more than a handful that I've worked with, who had been on, you know, 10 plus years of using sleeping aids. And one of the recognitions, we needed to have to kind of get them get their buy in to try to, to sleep without. So one of the things that I have needed to, to share with these patients in order to get their buy in is the reality that it actually doesn't make a difference at some point, whether you are taking this leap paid or not, because it is an effective, and they find that when they do stop taking the medication on behold, they're having the same sleep issues that they were having now, even with the medication. And then that's where the CBT, or cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia comes in. And I want you to talk about that a little bit. Because I think when we talk about behavioral therapies for sleep, what where our minds always go to is good sleep hygiene, right? So no caffeine later, late in the day, like we discussed making the bed only for bed. That's right. sleep hygiene. Studies have shown that teaching sleep hygiene alone actually doesn't improve sleep, because that is only one component of CBT, or cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia. And as he said, when people are taking sleep aids long term, they can develop a tolerance to them. But they can also get rebound insomnia. So what happens is if you try to stop the sleep aid, you can't sleep because you start going through withdrawal. And then you treat the withdrawal by going back on the medication. So it creates this idea that you cannot sleep without the medication. So there's a lot of fear and anxiety as well about tapering off of these things. So I always recommend if you're taking sleep aids to introduce measures from cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia, and then start doing a very, very slow taper so that you can do it safely without going into withdrawal and without experiencing rebound insomnia. And there are lots of different components to chti. So sleep hygiene is one of them. There's another technique called sleep restriction, which is very effective. And this is especially helpful for people who have nighttime awakenings. So if you're waking up a lot throughout the night, and I'll just say quickly about there's so much to say about sleep. So I'll just say quickly about the nighttime awakenings is that it is normal to wake up throughout the night here and there after a sleep cycle. But when those nighttime awakenings become prolonged, that is when it can cause more of a hyper arousal response, it can cause stress and anxiety and frustration about those awakenings. So if that is happening for someone, sleep restriction can be very effective. Managing thoughts and cognitive distortions. So negative thoughts, negative associations with sleep can develop over time. So managing those is a very, very important part of CBT. And that is why medications don't work long term because they don't address all of those pieces. You're you're just trying to like hit hit this nail with with the hammer, but there are all these other pieces of the puzzle that need to be addressed. So talk a little bit about sleep restriction, because that's so counterintuitive for people. Explain what that means and, and why it's important. Sleep restriction sounds really backwards. And it's the thing that nobody wants to do. But essentially, what sleep restriction does is it improves something called your sleep efficiency. And sleep efficiency is one of the best markers of sleep quality. And sleep efficiency refers to how much you're sleeping compared to the amount of time you're in bed. So for example, if you're in bed for 10 hours, but you're only sleeping for six of those hours, that's a sleep efficiency of 60%. And your goal is to get a sleep efficiency of at least 85% or higher. And the way you do that is you can't force your brain to sleep more. But you can cut down that bottom number, you can cut down that 10 hours to closer to that six hour mark so that your sleep efficiency is increasing. And, you know, people often ask me, but you don't want me to be sleep deprived. So why do you want me to spend less time in bed, but what we're trying to do is to increase your sleep quality, to get rid of those negative associations with the bed. Because what happens is if you're spending way too much time in bed, and you're tossing and turning, you're

worrying you're preoccupied, maybe you're doing other things, you're scrolling on your phone, you're looking at the news, social media, you're training your brain to be awake in your bed. And so we want to disconnect your brain from associating the bed with being awake. And that is what sleep restriction in part is targeting. Are there modalities though that also advise for people to wake up early or earlier than they would in sleep restriction and that's the part that I feel like is really counterintuitive. Yes, yeah. So sleep restriction. So when you're restricting the time in bed, you can do it on either end so you can wake up earlier. Or you can also go to bed a little bit later. So when I'm teaching a patient, how to implement sleep restriction, I'm also taking their body clock, there's natural circadian rhythm into consideration, because that does have an impact on how successful they're going to be with this technique. Yeah. It's all it's very interesting. And I bring it up because I just had a patient this week, actually, who was doing CBT I, and was at the point where they were asked to wake up early, and it just was so painful, you know, but again, the idea is that, in doing so, you're enhancing the quality of sleep, so people feel more restful in the end. Yeah. So we touched on, you know, this idea of sleep debt. And we also touched on night shift workers and how harmful that is. But also, you know, the fact that, you know, like, for us, as residents, you know, we needed to be up at night, and to our all our heroic health care workers right now, who are up at night doing night shifts, and the many other people who are supporting us by working at night, it's a necessity. So can you speak to a little bit about how we can address that, you know, that shift in circadian rhythm as well as sleep that where naps, maybe play a role and what the evidence is there? Yes. So naps can be particularly helpful for people who are sleep deprived, but not for people who have insomnia. So for night shift workers, it's very, very challenging, especially if your shift is completely out of alignment with your natural body rhythms. So essentially, you want to get sleep where you can get it. And if that means that you need to take naps or I mean, part of the work is that you have to sleep during the day, then that is recommended. And that is where sometimes sleep aids can be helpful in certain situations, to ensure that you're not building up too much sleep debt with an inability to sleep during the day. So in certain situations like this is where sleep aids could be a useful tool, but also trying to stay This is the recommendation is to try to stay on the same schedule on your days on days off. We know that's not necessarily realistic. I certainly didn't do that when I was in residency. So you want to just make sure that you are getting adequate sleep whenever you can, and spacing out your shifts. So I have a lot of patients who are nightshift workers who will then try to get a few days off in a row where they can have some time to at least get some sleep in between their work shifts. And for the general person who's has an kind of normal work schedule, are more aligned work schedule, we should say, who, again, we don't recommend, as you said, naps for insomnia. But they there can be a benefit of appropriately timed short naps, right? Correct. Yeah, so we naturally have a circadian dip. So a dip in our alertness around two or 3pm. And there are some cultures that have that built into their workday, like with the the siesta, we don't have that anymore. Unfortunately, that would be a huge proponent of that if we could bring that back. But we do you have that natural dip in the afternoon. And if you want to take a 15 minute or 20 minute nap or a 30 minute nap, that can actually be quite restorative and, and that can even enhance your performance. At work in the afternoon, it's when that nap becomes prolonged. So if it goes into, you know, an hour or longer than that, you can start going into deeper stages of sleep, which can then take away from your nighttime quality of sleep, and also can make you more groggy when you wake up. So you need to really pay attention to how you feel after that nap. So ideally, it should be like 1520 minutes, not longer than that. Yeah, that timing is important. Because a lot of your right a lot of times people will say, oh, but I feel worse afterwards. Yeah, so that's probably a function of how much time

they spent. So almost setting. If I was to say, if I were if I ever take a nap. Yeah, it's a moot point. Because I don't know that I've ever seen if I were ever to pick it up, or what I recommend to my patients and set a timer for like 1520 minutes, so you don't oversleep during the day. Well, this has been such an informative conversation, so many nuggets, so I really appreciate your expertise. And I'm wondering if there's anything we haven't covered that you think is important for people to know, in regards to all of this? Yeah, so I would say if you're having sleep issues, and or if you're on sleep aids and you want to taper off, the first step is to identify the root causes of and this is a step that's often overlooked is as people often jump to the end, it's no fault of is no one's fault. But it's just that we don't have enough sleep education out there. So the first thing is to understand what's causing the sleep issues. And so there could be medical issues, it could be certain types of medications, it could be nutritional, there could be some sort of nutritional deficiency or even eating at the wrong times. It could be environmental, I had a patient who couldn't sleep for many years, because it turned out there's no ventilation in her room, she was sleeping in her closet in a studio apartment. So simple things like that can have a huge, huge impact. And then also your mind. And you know, untangling those cognitive distortions, those negative associations, dealing with anxiety, or depression or other conditions that may be going on, it's really important to make sure you address all of those things. And then once you've done that, you want to focus on understanding your body clock, optimizing your sleep drive, and then again, looking at your mindset and reducing that hyper arousal response that can interfere with your sleep quality. I think, as I hear you talk, there's this whole other category of you know, of things that we could discuss it, I would love to maybe have you back so that we can talk about those things, but talking about, you know, mindset and even mindfulness and awareness of those thoughts. In the context of insomnia, right, which is probably the more there are some organic causes of insomnia, but probably the bulk of the population suffers from insomnia is suffering from too much thoughtfulness at night. And there's so much strategy around that.

41:34

Yes, yeah,

Dr. Adrienne Youdim 41:35

that's exactly right. So promised me you'll come back and we can have a conversation that would take a good 45 minutes plus,

41:42

I would love to It would be my pleasure. Yeah.

Dr. Adrienne Youdim 41:44

Well, thank you, Dr. Nishi. For for those who are listening, who want to learn more about you and want to connect, where can we find you? You can find me at [intra balanced.com](https://www.intra-balanced.com) that's I am tra balanced.com. And I also have a sleep optimization program. There's more information about that on my website, as well. And then I have a free holistic sleep guide for anyone who wants to jump more into some of these recommendations. And that's available on the website as well. Wonderful. Well, again, thank you so much. And thank you for to our listeners for tuning in. Please join us next week for our next segment of health bites. You can learn more about me at [Dr. Adrian youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and on Instagram for daily health tips at [Dr. Adrian medium](https://www.instagram.com).

42:31

Thanks again, Dr.

42:32

Nishi. Until next time,

42:34

thank you