



The Club at Rutland Hall

April Healthy Lifestyle Tip:

The Value of sleep

"Oh sleep! It is a gentle thing, beloved from pole to pole." ~ Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The undeniable value of sleep has led to a recent expansion of the body of science around sleep. New understandings of sleep may be pleasantly surprising and a welcome relief to those feeling pressured to adopt the mythical 'early bird' lifestyle dogma so commonly promoted.

The Early Bird Gets the Worm

It is especially common in the life optimisation space to pressure ourselves to get up early and 'crush the day.' However, this attitude has little scientific basis or proven success in the historical human experience. Instead, it may be simply a by-product of trying to fit ourselves into modern day schedules.

In sleep research, there are different 'chorotype's' referring to genetically predisposed best times to wake up and best hours to keep focused. An 'early chorotype' commonly also known as 'early bird' refers to someone who likes to rise very early – usually before sunrise. A 'normal chorotype' typically rises around sunrise or just after and a 'late chorotype' refers to what we commonly known as 'night owls. Most people fall naturally into one of the three types.

The Hazda people of Tanzania are hunter-gatherers whose lifestyle remains like the early humans. At any given time during the night, no fewer than eight of the tribe members are awake. This is in line with the 'sentinel theory' first proposed in the 1960s. In essence, it says that somebody needs to stay awake to keep watch for predators at any given time of the day.



As a result, there are genes for staying up late, getting up very early and everything in between bred into us as a product of adaptation. Health is optimised when you follow what personally works best rather than what 'should' work.

Brain Flushing

When you are asleep, your body may be resting, but your brain is busy clearing up the debris from your wake-time activities.

The network that drains waste from the brain is called the glymphatic system. It works by circulating cerebrospinal fluid throughout the brain tissue and flushing any resulting waste into the bloodstream, which then carries it to the liver for detoxication. Brain cells even shrink when we're asleep, allowing cerebrospinal fluid to enter and flush out the brain.

Neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's are believed to be caused by inflammation and the accumulation of cellular waste products from energy production. These waste products are cleared out of the brain more effectively and rapidly during sleep.

So, in addition to the already familiar immediate effect of sleep quality and quantity on your mental function and mood the next day, there are apparently significant long-term brain health benefits to getting proper rest.

"I firmly believe that sleep and recovery are critical aspects of an effective and holistic training program."

Tom Brady, NFL Quarterback for 19 seasons