

DEMENTIA PREVENTION

Session 3 - sleep

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Resources

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BOOK: *The End of Alzheimer's Programme* by Dr Dale Bredeesen

PLEASE NOTE:

These class materials are intended as background for the lifestyle support I'm giving you as your brain health coach. My element of Goldster's dementia prevention course is based on my training with Dr Dale Bredeesen's team and my experience as a health coach. I'm here to support you on the Wicking Centre/University of Tasmania Dementia Prevention MOOC (Mass Open Online Course) and I'll be doing the course along with you. Please do ask me any questions about the course and I'll do everything I can to help.

You can sign up for the Dementia Prevention MOOC here:

https://dementia.utas.edu.au/partner/partner_course/12-17-b4bbe54b15

Disclaimer

I'm not a doctor or a nurse. I can't prescribe, I can't give you advice on individual health issues. You need to talk to your GP about those. I'm here to guide you to make your own healthy choices, and to coach you to discover what's right for you.

The purpose of this course is to help you prevent dementia

There are two elements

1 = Dementia Prevention Mass Open Online Course from the Wicking Centre at UTas

2 = coaching support from me each week to complement that – I'm here to support you on the course and to add more practical lifestyle advice from my own training.

SLEEP

20 Sleep Optimisation Tips

YOUR SCHEDULE:

- **Try to stick to a regular sleep schedule.** It's not always possible because of family or work responsibilities but do your best to have a regular bed and waking time.
- **Your goal is to achieve seven to eight hours of quality sleep.** Research shows that people getting less than six hours and more than nine hours are negatively impacted. The idea that older adults need less sleep is not true.

DURING THE DAY:

- **Get light in the morning.** This has been a game changer for me. If our eyes see bright outdoor light first thing, they send a signal to the brain telling it to kickstart the circadian rhythm that will make us sleepy again 12-14 hours later.
- **Refrain from caffeine past noon.** Caffeine has a quarter life of 12 hours, so one-quarter of a midday cup of coffee is still in our system at midnight.
- **Eat your last meal of the day at least 3 hours before bed.** This makes intermittent fasting more effective and it's also much easier to sleep when we're not digesting.
- **If you struggle with sleep, this is another reason to refrain from alcohol.** The sedative effect of alcohol may seem to help, but research shows that it powerfully fragments sleep; dramatically disrupting the REM sleep cycle and depriving you from the restorative effect of sleep.
- **Avoid exercise within three hours of bedtime.** Vigorous exercise ramps up adrenaline and prevents sleep.

YOUR BEDROOM

- **Transform your bedroom into your sanctuary.** Keep it clean, uncluttered, free from work and any other projects
- **Avoid TV in the bedroom.** If you must watch TV, use the sleep timer so that it will automatically turn off. Also, consider the use of a blue blocking vinyl overlay that you can apply to your TV screen at night.
- **Minimize low level radiation in the bedroom.** Mounting evidence suggests that electro and magnetic fields (EMF) radiation (including WiFi) can impact overall health negatively. Make sure any electronic device in your room is either turned off, placed as far from the bed as possible, or placed on airplane mode when you go to sleep.

- **Completely darken the bedroom or use a sleep mask.** Any small bit of light during the night will interfere with melatonin production. I use a silk eye mask every night and it makes a huge difference.

- **Keep the bedroom cool.** Research shows that the temperature should be around 65F/17C for optimal sleep. Feel free to adjust up or down a few degrees to suit your preference. If you tend to be cold, be sure to have a warm blanket to cover up.

- **Try a white- or pink-noise machine.** This is helpful if you're regularly interrupted with extraneous noise from your heating system, outside traffic, neighbours, etc. Many have relaxing nature sounds (like rain, wind, or waves) that you can set to your desired volume to drown out bothersome noise.

- **I swear by my ear plugs.** I can't sleep without ear plugs to drown out noise. I use a brand called Macks (I buy them on Amazon).

- **Consider aromatherapy.** Lavender essential oils have proven helpful in slowing heartbeat, relaxing muscles, and promoting slow wave sleep. Put a few drops on a cotton ball near your bed, or on your pillowcase.

EVENING PROTOCOLS

What about reading before bed?

- Consider using either an eBook or tablet, that lights up (set to the dimmest setting), with an automatic shut-off feature, and a blue-blocking program, like Night Shift for iPads.
- Books are best! Consider an inexpensive red incandescent lightbulb or a blue blocking LED light bulb for your bedside lamp.

Some people prefer to listen to a gentle voice or soothing background sounds as they drift off to sleep. There are many apps designed just for this purpose. Calm and Headspace are a few that offer sleep stories, guided sleeping, and "sleepcasts". To reduce Wi-Fi exposure, only listen on airplane mode.

- **Consider a warm shower, bath, or even a sauna before bedtime.** The transition to cold air following exposure will help to make you sleepy.

Anxiety or Stress Interfering with Sleep?

If you find that you're mulling over a negative event from the past or feeling stressed about a future event, consider using a breathing technique like the 4-7-8 technique (I'll show you how to do that in the video) or writing an 'accomplishments list' so you can look back on the day with positivity.

What If You Just Can't Fall Asleep?

- Don't panic and don't just lie in bed – this can lead to a negative association with your bedroom.
- Go to another room and engage in a quiet, calming activity, such as reading with a low light and blue blocking glasses.

- Only return to your room when you begin to feel drowsy and suspect you can easily fall asleep.

A FEW NON-MEDICAL SLEEP AIDS TO TRY:

Magnesium

- Many people are unaware that they're deficient in magnesium. This mineral is necessary for hundreds of biochemical reactions in the body and, most importantly, critical for brain function
- Magnesium has sedative properties. Taken before bed, magnesium decreases circulating cortisol, increases melatonin, and improves sleep quality
- A more neurally bio-available form of magnesium, magnesium threonate, has been shown to improve cognition in older adults.

Ashwagandha

- This herb, commonly used in Ayurvedic medicine, is an adaptogen that helps the body adapt to stress and exerts a normalizing effect upon bodily processes
- Ashwagandha has many health benefits including stress reduction that leads to improved sleep
- Ashwagandha has also been found to improve memory in people with mild cognitive impairment as well as improving executive function, attention, and information processing speed.

Bacopi Monnieri

- This is another Ayurvedic adaptogen that, among other effects, increases acetylcholine (a neurotransmitter), and improves cognitive performance
- It may be particularly helpful for those experiencing trouble sleeping due to stress. Be aware that it can have a paradoxical energizing effect for some people
- Be sure to initially experiment with a low dose (100 mg) taken several hours before bed to test how it works for you

PLUS – camomile tea, valerian root tea, lavender tea.