

# 15 Tips to Own Your Sleep, Maximize Your Energy, & Live Your Optimized Life



Sleep was searched a total of 237 million times on google during 2021 in North America alone. Meaning 48% of people, almost 1 in 2 searched for something in relation to getting better sleep.

Sleep is one of the four things our body cannot live without. It impacts us in so many ways but yet so many of us struggle with it. My research on HRV, sleep and recovery; helped shape our mission at OWN IT; which is to **empower sustainable habit change to enhance performance and quality of life that impacts the world.**

We know stress leads to hormone alterations that lead to sleep disruption, and we know sleep disruption leads to further stress and depleted capacity to only further drive this detrimental cycle. Using HRV as a guide and these 15 habit adjustments we can help you build a framework that will fit your lifestyle and enhance every aspect of your life while allowing you to realize your potential.

As we say here at OWN IT...

*Success is different. Own YOUR #different.*

Sleep tight!

**Justin Roethlingshoefer**  
**OWN IT Founder**



## There are 4 things in life we cannot live without...

Meaning that if we don't get any of these four we, as humans, cannot function. They are:

1. Water
2. Food
3. Air
4. Sleep

We are rarely willing to skip a meal, don't regularly hold our breath, and constantly have some form of beverage to wet our whistle (even if it is not optimal), but we are more than ok with sub-optimal sleep. Google has shown the topic of sleep to be the most searched topic in the last 3 years and it is because getting a great night's sleep is so hard for many people. When it comes to health people normally think of exercise, nutrition, and supplements, but forget the most important item that bridges them all together. SLEEP.

Beyond the basics of energy, sleep provides the foundation for which recovery can be built. It optimizes hormone production, craving regulation, blood sugar stability, stress hormone release, mood, toxin removal, lean to fat mass ratios, and many other crucial components of health enhancement.

In a study supported by Harvard health, the CDC says that 1 in 3 Americans are sleep deprived and 2 in 3 struggle to get good sleep on a regular basis. The tough part about this is it is not because everyone has sleep disorders but rather the habits that create optimal sleep are simply not understood.

**By looking at the following 15 tips** we can help you prepare for one of the most important things you will do for your health, and improve the quality of your sleep!



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In the last few years, the importance of sleep has finally started to get the recognition it deserves.

The “I’ll sleep when I’m dead” language and mindset has slowly left the worlds of various high-performance circles, from athletics to business.

We now recognize that the ideas of “time management” are outdated, and “energy management” is much more important. A well-slept, well-recovered person is more productive than a sleep-deprived person. And more importantly, they’ll be happier and healthier.

While the general advice to prioritize sleep is a huge step in the right direction, it’s **not enough for optimal performance, health, or happiness.**

I know this to be true from working with, and **seeing the data** of thousands of people, from athletes to CEOs to everyday people trying to be healthier. If you want to improve your sleep and reap the never-ending list of benefits from good sleep, then **you need concrete, simple steps.**

You need to build new habits, shift your routines, and change your environment. Over time, you can develop the sleep habits to **live your life with the energy and vitality of a 21-year-old.**

A key component of the Own It Coaching system is to use our HRV scores to inform us about our overall recovery and sleep quality. That way, when we make adjustments to our routines, we can quantifiably see the difference.

And to make those adjustments **we pull from our list of action steps.** These contain many of those specific steps, **15 tips you can actually use to improve your sleep.**

## It's All About Hormones

Before we get into the actual tips, though, there’s one overarching concept that governs all of them. **If you understand this, then you’ll be able to make your own changes, in addition to the ones we recommend.**

How we sleep is all about regulating our “parasympathetic” and “sympathetic” nervous systems. The parasympathetic nervous system is known as our “rest and digest” system. When it’s active, **we secrete hormones that help us relax, unwind, and sleep.** With regards to our sleep cycle, **the hormone we’re talking about here**



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**is melatonin.**

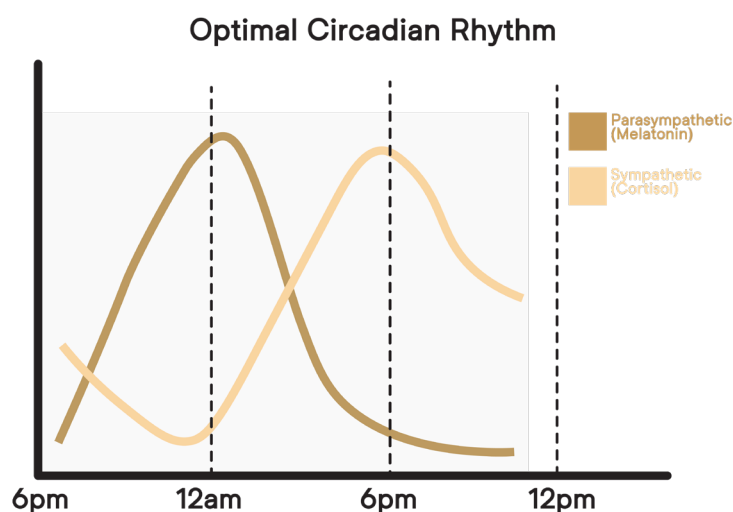
The sympathetic nervous system is known as our “fight or flight” system. When it’s active, **we secrete hormones that keep us alert, focused, and awake.** With regards to our sleep cycle, **the hormone we’re talking about here is cortisol.**

The interplay between these two branches of the nervous system is a switch. They’re inverses. They don’t like interacting together, like oil and water. When one is activated, the other is suppressed. When melatonin is low, cortisol is high and vice versa.

## Melatonin, Cortisol, and The Circadian Rhythm

What we call our “circadian rhythm,” on a physiological level, is the natural rise and fall of these two hormones.

**In an optimal circadian rhythm, melatonin is high at night, and cortisol is high in the morning.**



The problem is, our modern lifestyles often lead us to reverse this, which creates a vicious “tired and wired” cycle where you can’t fall asleep at night, and then you’re sleepy all day. All of our tips are geared towards increasing melatonin in the evening and increasing cortisol during the day.

The end result is that we’ll function the way humans were designed to: we’ll be **alert and focused all day long, then hit the pillow and sleep our best in the evening.**

## 01

## Keep a Consistent Sleep and Wake Time

The cortisol-melatonin cycle works at its best if we follow the cycle. Going to sleep and waking up at consistent times regulates this pattern, so we get the proper ebbs and flows of alertness and sleepiness.

When we have a consistent sleep and wake time, our body will get into the routine of producing cortisol as we wake up, so we'll be alert right from the jump.

Likewise, when we're ready for sleep, our melatonin will peak at the right time, decreasing our sleep latency, or the time it takes to fall asleep.

If we vary our sleep time wildly in either direction, our body will get confused, like we're switching into a different time zone.

Does this mean you should never stay up late or sleep in? Of course not.

**On the days you stay up late, wake up at the same time.** As we'll talk about later, this is where caffeine in the morning and a nap in the afternoon can be used as a tool so the whole day isn't a battle to try and stay awake just for the sake of your circadian rhythm.

**If you sleep in, get to bed at the same time that evening.** Once you sleep in, it can be easy to stay up late, creating a cycle where you become more and more nocturnal and out of line with your circadian rhythm. This can lead you to throw your other good habits out the window. That's why this tip is first, because it helps establish a **routine of prioritizing healthy habits**.

That's one explanation for the findings of this [cross-sectional study](#), which reported that those with inconsistent sleep and wake times had less healthy lifestyle.

Further, this ideal circadian rhythm should match the rhythm of the sun. That is, after all, what creates the circadian rhythm, and this is why getting to bed on the earlier side is better for our health: it matches this natural rhythm.

Our melatonin levels naturally peak earlier in the evening, **so we'll get our highest quality sleep 2-3 hours before midnight**. The old saying that "every hour of sleep you get before midnight is the equivalent of two hours

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after midnight” turns out to have the right sentiment.

This study showed that those who went to bed between 9 and 10 had the highest sleep quality. We recommend you aim for before 11, at the latest, for your normal sleep time.

## 02

### Use The 3-2-1 Rule

The 3-2-1 rule is a simple protocol to help increase melatonin production in the evening.

**3 hours before bed - No food**

**2 hours before bed - No work or big decision-making**

**1 hour before bed - No blue light exposure**

Food is a stressor, in the broadest sense. When we eat food, our body now has to get the gears moving for the heavy task of digesting food. This will increase cortisol and decrease melatonin potential.

More specifically, melatonin isn't just released by the brain, it's also released by the gut. If the body is busy digesting food, it won't have the resources diverted to releasing gastric melatonin.

Two hours before bed, stop working or doing activities that involve intense decision-making. Thinking hard, like digesting food, is a stressor on our bodies. It carries with it intense caloric demands, and raises cortisol levels.

Anecdotally, we've all known the feeling of not being able to sleep because our brain is running in circles with thoughts. That's why **the last few hours of the day should be dedicated to relaxing activities** that won't invoke stress or cause these thoughts loops that leave us awake at night. Don't worry, we'll have a list of ideas for what to do later on.

As a general rule, then, finish work two hours before bed and shift your attention towards activities that provide pleasure.

One hour before bed, avoid all blue light.

This means no screens. **Our brain associates blue light with the sky.**

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From an evolutionary perspective, we evolved to raise cortisol and alertness at the sight of blue light, because we want to be alert when the sun and blue sky is out.

[A study](#) by the Harvard Medical School found that for every 30 minutes of blue light exposure after sunset, our body suppressed melatonin secretion for an hour. This is massive.

One of the most important steps we can take towards improving our sleep quality is to get off our phones before bed, and keep the TV out of the bedroom.

### 03

## Create Your Sleep Cave

Think of where you sleep like your own little cave. Like any good cave, **it should be pitch black**. As we mentioned, you should ditch the TV and move it to another room.

Not only that, but we should limit or eliminate all of the light coming in. Devices should be turned off. If you live in a place with artificial light (like the neighbor's driveway, or city lights) coming in, then make sure you have high-quality curtains that cover the whole window.

You may think this isn't a big deal, because your eyes will be closed. **However, we have photoreceptors on our skin, so our body will sense any light in the room, and reduce melatonin production as a result, as was shown in [this study](#).**

We also want to eliminate incoming sounds in our room. If anything we could have binaural sounds. These are two sounds of slightly different beats played at the same time, and can calm and relax us.

**If you live in a city, you may need something like earplugs. We recommend silicone ear plugs because they form to the shape of your ear and are more comfortable.**

As we'll talk about more, your sleep cave should be relatively cold. Our optimal sleeping temperature varies from 63-68 degrees Fahrenheit. To support this cooling, especially in hot summers, you can look into [Sheex](#), which are bed sheets that use the same fabrics as luxury athleisure



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companies to create a cooling effect.

Another more heavy-duty, expensive option is the Ooler (Chilipad), which allows you to set the temperature of your sheets, keeping you cool.

## 04

### Sun Exposure in The Morning and Evening

While blue light before bed harms our sleep, in the morning it supports our sleep and circadian rhythm by stimulating cortisol. One of the best steps we can take to stay alert during the day is to **get direct sunlight within 30-60 minutes of waking up**. In [this study](#), sun exposure correlated with better sleep.

Then, outdoor breaks throughout the day keep us awake. This is also a productivity hack to do your best work. The sun provides us with the blue light-fueled cortisol boost to keep going.

If you can't get sunlight during the day, then light up the room with blue light and turn on overhead lights. If you can at least open a window, that will exponentially increase the benefit.

The best option is direct sunlight, the second is light coming in, and the third is artificial blue lights.

While there are fancy devices for this, something like a ring light, which originally were made for those filming content on their phones to have a bright background, provides a shot of blue light.

In the evening, we don't need to avoid light altogether. Our ancestors didn't. First, the sun's light spectrum doesn't magically go from blue to pitch black. Evening sunlight and sunsets emit red light. **This red light signals to our body that sleep is approaching, and red light has been shown to decrease cortisol.**

Just as blue light sunlight in the morning regulates our circadian rhythm, so does warm, sunset sunlight in the early evening.

## 05

## Get Red Light at Night

Additionally, our ancestors had fire, another form of red light. We evolved to be in the presence of red light into the evening. So firstly, switch your devices to a warm red tint.

In [this study](#) of female basketball players, they found that **red light exposure in the evening improved sleep quality**.

In your home, invest in a few red-orange light lamps to use in the evening in place of the normal overhead lights. We recommend the [Mito Red Light](#), which was made specifically for red light therapy. The inexpensive option is to pick up a bunch of \$10-\$20 lamps that you can scatter throughout the house. Just make sure they have a warm, red-orange tint. As long as it's after sunset, this will support your melatonin production.

Although they aren't always the most fashionable, this is also where a pair of blue light blocking glasses can come in. We're big fans of the [Swanick](#) blue lightfilter glasses because they also look great.

## 06

## Top Lights Until 4, Bottom Lights Until Bed

Let's think about the path of the sun and how our circadian rhythm evolved with it.

When the sun is at its highest point, and the light hits us from above, that's when we have to be alert and awake. Then, as the sun moved to the flanks, we ease into a pre-bed routine. At least, that's how it worked pre-artificial light.

To optimize our alertness, we should **work in an environment that has overhead lighting**. The typical office environment has this. In fact, [this case study in offices](#) showed improved alertness with overhead lights. There's also some emerging research that higher ceilings (since the sun is a VERY high ceiling) promote this alertness as well.

In the evening however, we want the lights to come at us from the ground up, similar to fire. That's why lamps are a better option than overhead lights. And of course, we want to make sure it's a soft, red spectrum light.

## 07

## Keep it Cool

We already hinted at temperature. Once again, the optimal temperature for sleep is a cool 63-68 degrees Fahrenheit. One of the reasons for this is because heat exposure specifically affects slow wave (deep) sleep and REM sleep. [One study](#) found that sleep disturbance during heat exposure was 75% greater.

In contrast, with a cooler temperature, resting heart rate dropped, which allows us to get into deeper stages of sleep.

To make your room cooler, of course you can turn to your thermostat, but that's not the only method. Investing in cooling sheets like [Sheex](#) can allow your whole body to “breathe” while you sleep. You can put your room on the lower floors of your house, because heat rises. You can simply close the shades in your bedroom during the day to keep heat from trapping in. [The Sleep Foundation](#) has a wide range of options to regulate room temperature.

In order to test which temperature specifically works best for you, use your HRV and wearable data as a guide. Try sleeping at 68 degrees for a while, then 63 degrees, and use your data and subjective experience to figure out what's best for you. This isn't a perfect controlled study, but the data will help you learn how you sleep best.

## 08

## No Exercise 90 Minutes Before Bed

Exercising in the evening will have a few detrimental effects on our sleep. It increases our body temperature. A lot. In order to sleep, and especially to get into deep sleep, our body has to cool down. This is going to take some time.

Second, exercise will flood our body with cortisol and epinephrine (adrenaline), another key sympathetic hormone. This will stunt melatonin production.

The question then becomes, when should we stop exercising? [The research](#) seems to point to the 90-minute mark as absolutely crucial. Within 90

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minutes, your ability to get into deep and REM sleep will be affected for the entire night.

Ideally, you perform your hard training during the day, but if training at night works best for you, then try to wrap up within 90 minutes of your ideal bed time.

And if, for whatever circumstances, like athletes playing games, you have to exercise late at night, then you can check out my article on SimpliFaster on [How to Maximize Recovery After Evening Exercise](#), including sleep and nutrition strategies for these instances.

## 09

### Time Your Hydration

At OWN IT, we'll be the first to tell you about the importance of hydration. As a simple framework, we recommend you drink half your bodyweight in ounces of water per day. And for every 15 minutes of exercise, you should add your bodyweight divided by 30 in ounces. So if you weigh 180 pounds, that's 6 ounces per 15 minutes.

When you're hydrated, your body releases a hormone called vasopressin, which supports melatonin secretion and ideal circadian rhythms. In [this study](#), for example, inadequate hydration was associated with shorter sleep times. However, the timing of this water intake is also important. **Getting up to pee interrupts your sleep.** That's why your water intake should be higher earlier in the day.

If you're consistently waking up to pee, that's a sign to shift your fluid intake earlier. Try to get **75% of your water intake before 4pm**. If you start that day with at least 16 ounces, as we recommend, this will be a good start.

Along with the heavy water intake in the morning, include some electrolytes, like a pinch of sea salt. Throughout the day or during your workout, including something like [LMNT electrolytes](#) to replenish your salt balance lost from sweat.

If we drink a lot of water and not a lot of electrolytes, we'll be flushing out all the important salts in our body. In serious cases, this can lead to the dangerous hyponatremia. Adding in electrolytes ensures you keep this hydration balance.



## 10

## Breathe Deeply

Deep breathing activates our parasympathetic nervous system, reducing cortisol and increasing melatonin. As anyone who's ever taken a deep breath knows, it helps us relax.

It also increases vagal nerve activity, which increases HRV and helps us get into deeper sleep.

[In one 30-day study](#), replacing phone use with deep breathing led to huge increases in subjective sleep quality. And in [this study](#), deep breathing increased overall parasympathetic activity.

Breathing and breathwork is a fascinating area, which deserves its own article. For now, just understand that deep breathing is a parasympathetic activity.

A simple breathing protocol you can do in the is called box breathing. It follows a 4-4-4-4 count. You breathe in for four seconds, hold for four seconds, exhale for four seconds, and hold for four. Do that for eight rounds, as an easy protocol to implement in the evening time.

If you're struggling to learn how to breathe properly, and are looking for guidance, the [CORE by Hyperice](#) provides vibrations, lighting, and guided meditations to get you started.

## 11

## Put the House on Airplane Mode

Okay, we don't need the tinfoil hats just yet. We just need to turn off our devices. All of our devices have electromagnetic frequencies, or EMFs. Between our phones, wifi, and other devices, there's so much EMFs that it can actually change our brain waves.

Specifically, it will increase our brain waves and limit our ability to get into slow wave sleep.

Notice why we call deep sleep "slow-wave" sleep. It's defined by our brain activity literally slowing its frequency. But EMFs increase our brain frequency. So we might not lose out on sleep time, but as is shown in this

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[study](#), it can harm our sleep quality.

In the study, when they removed EMFs from the sleeping environment, the participants got more REM and slow-wave sleep, and had higher quality sleep in cycles 1-3. Typically, our later cycles are when we get the deepest sleep, but when they took away EMFs, the cycles were almost equal, so they got deeper sleep faster.

Ideally you can put all the devices in your home on timers. Have the wifi automatically turn off and on at certain hours. Get in the habit of putting everything either off, or at least on airplane mode.

## 12

### Institute Caffeine and Alcohol Curfews

Caffeine can be a wonderful tool. It can enhance performance and increase alertness by blocking the receptors that tell us we're sleepy. On mornings after staying up late, for example, a bit of caffeine will jumpstart us with cortisol to power through the day with focus.

And, we all know that caffeine impacts our sleep negatively. However, sometimes this impact isn't so obvious to us. One of the problems with caffeine is that a lot of the time **you can still fall asleep normally under the influence of caffeine, but it will prevent you from getting into deep sleep and REM sleep.** So you won't even know it's hurting your sleep.

Caffeine has an [average half-life of 5 hours](#) (this can vary for individuals, ranging from 1.5-9 hours). This means that for the average person after five hours, HALF of the caffeine in your body is gone. If you have a cup of coffee with 200mg of caffeine at noon, at 5 o'clock there's still 100mg active in your body. That's why we have to have a caffeine curfew.

In [one study](#), three groups had caffeine 3 hours before bed, 6 hours before bed, and right before bed. Even in the group that had coffee six hours before bed they still lost about one hour of quality sleep. A full hour.

For the majority of people, in order to not impact sleep, **you need to have a caffeine curfew at 10am.**

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Alcohol also crushes sleep quality, as is clear from a [number of studies](#). It tanks HRV, raises our resting heart rate, and raises cortisol. It helps us “pass out” but this is very different from deep sleep.

This doesn’t mean you should never drink, but you should pick your spots. Second, even when you do, remember to drink extra water and electrolytes, because it will dehydrate you, which has its own host of problems. Adding a serving of [LMNT electrolytes](#) to your night out can keep you hydrated, prevent hangovers, and limit the damage to your sleep.

(LMNT also has some amazing drink recipes, like a sugar-free margarita.)

Second, consider a happy hour drink instead of a night out. Unlike caffeine, our body can metabolize alcohol within a few hours. If you hydrate and add electrolytes afterward, you’ll limit the impacts to a minimum.

## 13

### Learn the Fine Art of The Nap

Some people say they just can’t nap. On some level, that may be true, but they might be picking their nap time wrong.

Your ideal nap time is 12 hours from the midpoint of your sleep. So if you go to bed at 10 and wake up at 6, 2am is the middle of your sleep cycle. That means if you nap, you should aim for 2pm.

If you “just can’t nap” there may be other factors at play too. Do you have the right nap environment? Is it part of your routine? Often, like anything, it takes time for your body to adjust to the habit, so it will be harder the first few times.

Now, a nap isn’t totally necessary. On nights you stayed up late, it can provide the alertness boost that a cup of coffee does. But even if you sleep great, a short nap still gives you a boost of focus to have a strong second part of the day. As we see in [the studies](#) short naps increase perceived alertness.

However, the nap length is crucial. An ideal nap is 10-20 minutes, with 30 minutes at the upper limit of optimal. After that point, your body will start to

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go into deeper stages of sleep and produce more melatonin.

This will throw off your melatonin production and circadian rhythm. You'll wake up groggy, and you'll have a harder time falling asleep. So keep the naps short and sweet.

## 14

### Add Meditation... Any Time of Day

Meditation can directly improve our sleep quality by literally shifting our brain waves. Studies show an increase in sleep quality, decrease in fatigue, even a decrease in insomnia, depression, and anxiety in those who meditate

And it doesn't have to be in the evening. [One study](#) found that a group of insomniacs that had to meditate in the middle of the day (10am-2pm) for 8 weeks were no longer sleep deprived by the end.

When we meditate, we can enter "Alpha" brain waves, which are slower than our typical waking rate, and one step faster than our sleep states. Simply, then, meditation, even earlier in the day, **seems to train our brain to get into slower brain waves states, and therefore into deeper stages of sleep.**

As for a meditation protocol, you can pair your box breathing with a focus on the breath. You can also try the 4-7-8 breathing, where you inhale for four seconds, hold for seven, and exhale for eight. This long exhale will further activate the parasympathetic nervous system, making it a great option for an evening meditation.

Again, as we talked about in the breathing section, CORE by Hyperice is a fantastic tool to curate a meditation environment.

However, even a few minutes with a number of meditation modalities will tap into these benefits.



## Create a Parasympathetic Buffet

To bring it all back to our overarching concept, we want to activate the parasympathetic nervous system in the evening to get the best sleep we can. Regardless of the interventions, it's clear in [the research](#) that the higher the parasympathetic activity in the evening, the better people sleep.

There are more ways than we could think of to do this. Anything that takes away from our stress and helps us enter a relaxing, calm state, will increase the likelihood of getting into the deeper stages of sleep quicker.

That's why our main suggestion is to have a buffet of options at your disposal. This can, and should, be unique to you. Ultimately, the shortcut to habit formation is to choose activities you enjoy. This way, you'll actually stick with them. If you hate meditating with all your heart, you don't have to do it.

You can select other options from the buffet. It could include...

- A bath
- Quiet music
- Peaceful walks
- Hot tub
- Sauna
- Stretching
- Meditation
- Breathwork
- Massage
- Foam rolling or soft tissue work
- Massage guns
- Sensory stimuli like Doterra essential oils
- Journaling

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- Reading (particularly fiction and story-based books)
  - Sex

When your routines get monotonous and you want to mix it up, you have other options at your disposal.

Finally, **when you take activities out**, like watching TV before bed, **you have to replace it with something else**. That's also where the buffet comes in. Otherwise, you're doomed to return to the same old patterns.

It could be a number of things we talked about, like deep breathing or meditation. Or it could include other activities ranging from journaling and reading, to light yoga and sex. (The power of orgasm on sleep also likely deserves its own section, but an orgasm is one of the best sleeping drugs out there.)

When you add in what works for you slowly over time, eventually those last few hours might become some of your favorite hours of the day. They're the time set aside for those relaxing activities that we love. Almost as a bonus they'll help us get higher quality sleep.



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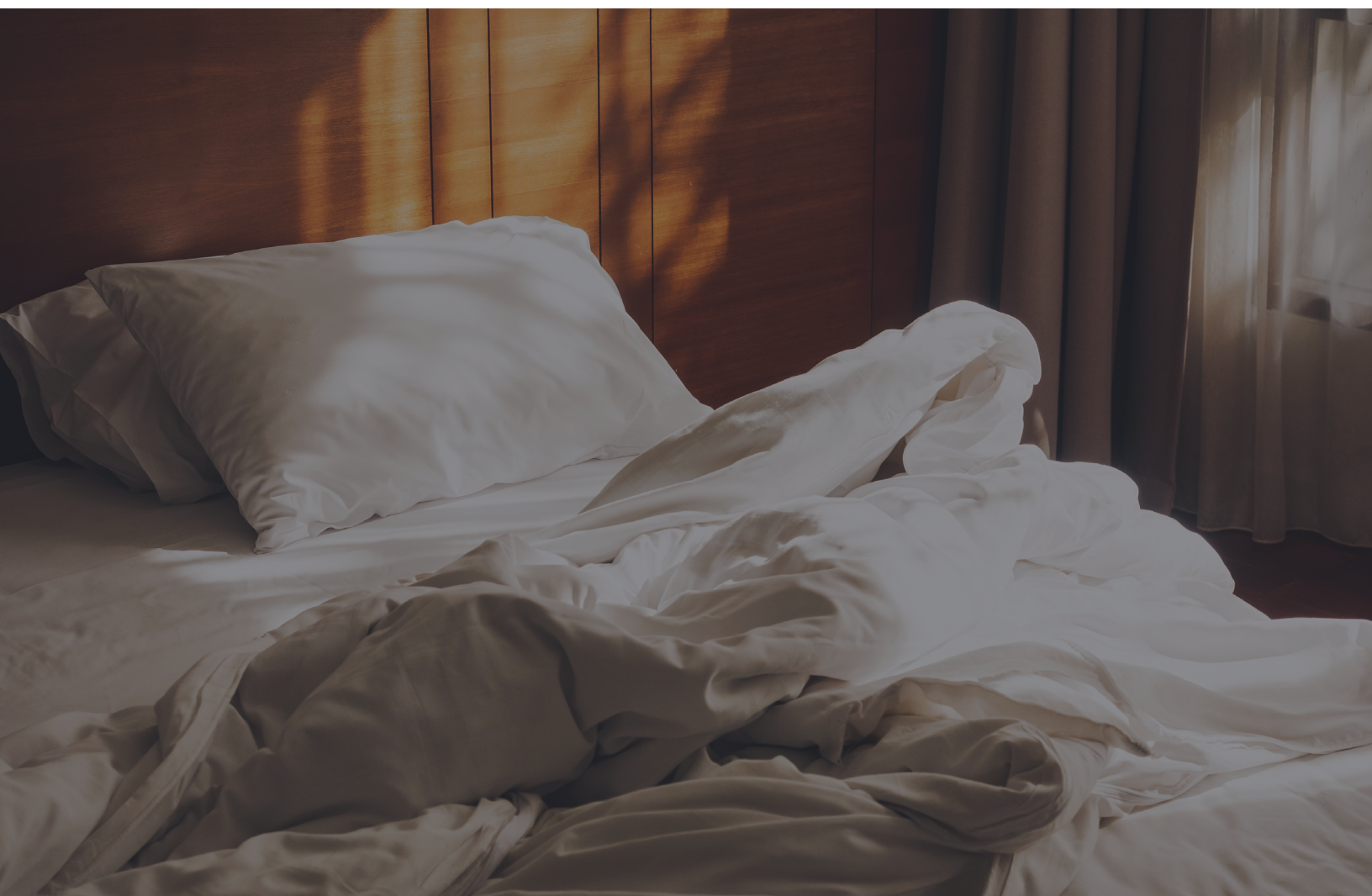
## Owning Your Life Often Starts with Sleep

Often, to make changes to our life, to develop better habits, something forms the foundation. Improving your sleep, is in our opinion, often the lifestyle shift with the most positive downstream effect for our clients.

Once you have your sleep routines down, you have more energy to work, to play, to compete. You'll have less stress. You'll have your life setup to enjoy yourself rather than just work. You can get more done in less time. Most importantly, you'll be happier and healthier.

That's why sleep is such a big part of what we do at OWN IT Coaching.

To learn more about what we do at OWN IT, check out our website, [ownitcoaching.com](https://ownitcoaching.com). There you will find all kinds of free resources on health, wellness, and more. And if you're looking to truly take your performance and health to the next level, then you can [learn more about our group and 1-on-1 coaching](#).







## Make Health a Habit

OWN IT is a health coaching company that aims to reclaim the health of the world by empowering highperformers to take ownership of their health so they can thrive in all areas of life. We serve our clients with luxury, convenience, safety, transformation, and longevity in mind.

At OWN IT, we offer personalized health programs designed to take our clients from everything that's average: the consequences of neglected health, the mediocre lifestyle habits, the limits on your potential, and the feelings of settling for good enough; instead, experience health abundance and boundless energy as you take ownership of your life.

***Design the life you want.***

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