

Sleep

One thing I see all the time in the biohacking world is people coming up with all sort of clever hacks and ways of being more productive, gadgets to help them improve performance, focus, memory or stamina.

The truth is mother nature has given us the ultimate tool for all of this, it's just not very sexy to talk about it.

Sleep is possibly the most important piece of the whole performance puzzle. Want to perform at your very best it's actually really simple...ensure you are getting your full quota of sleep every single night.

Note I do not say 8 hours, everyone has a different amount of sleep they need each night and it changes with age and what you've been doing the day before. However one thing is certain...getting your quota every night is crucial for recovery, learning and performance.

As an ex insomniac I know this can be a painful problem for some and while curing insomnia is beyond the scope of this program, I can attest to the fact, both through myself and the 100's of people I've worked with that it can be done and it's often easier than you think.

If you do suffer from this and are interested in sorting it out once and for all, I'd be happy to talk to you about the advanced 1 on 1 coaching program I offer...just send an email to sam@tantrumx.com and I can give you all the details.

The fact is that although we still don't a huge amount about the purpose or mechanics of sleep we do know that it is the time when the body rebuilds (reread day 3 on HRV for why this is important) the brain cleans itself, and new neural connections are built.

That last part is crucial for us as kitesurfers. That means this is the time when we learn, or at least when we concrete the things we have learnt the day before.

Let me put this into context and hopefully you'll see how important this is for you in your kitesurfing.

Chris was an intern of ours.

A sporty, young guy he had played sports all his life and was in decent shape.

He'd never touched a kite before and part of our intern program is that we teach them to kite and in return they help us out at the beach.

Chris progressed at a normal speed until he hit the waterstart stage, this is one of the MAJOR stall points for pretty much every one (and is something we show you how to hack before you even get to your lessons in the specific "Knock days off your kitesurfing lessons" section). At this stage something weird happened.

He would make the usual mistakes that everyone makes at this stage, pulling the bar in, not flying the kite enough, trying to stand up etc. However what was interesting with Chris was that...

Each time we would correct him, he'd go out and get that bit right but get something that he was previously doing right, wrong.

Also as he did slowly improve over the course of a session he'd go home and come back the next day worse than he left the day before.

This went on for months.

One night in the pub we were talking and it came out that he was insomniac, getting maybe 2 - 4 hours sleep a night...suddenly it all clicked together.

You see sleep is where we put together all those neural connections, when Myelin is laid down and the circuits shored up and made faster and more accurate (its also when muscles are regrown and the body and brain cleaned and repaired). This simply does not happen if you don't sleep.

So to perform at your very best you **MUST** be sleeping. Both now, to allow your body to recover and rebuild from the training we're doing but also so you can give yourself the absolute best chance of consolidating the lessons gained that day on the water.

My Top Sleep Hacks

1. Set an alarm to go to bed

If you find yourself consistently wishing you had hit the hay earlier but staying on track with a calming bedtime routine is virtually impossible for you, consider setting yourself an alarm -- to go to bed.

2. Resist the urge to snooze

Sleep caught between soundings of that alarm is just not high-quality sleep. The snooze button often disturbs REM sleep, which can make us feel groggier than when we wake up during other stages of sleep. You don't have to launch out of bed in the morning, but setting the alarm for a slightly later time and skipping a snooze cycle or two could bring big benefits.

3. Go easy on the alcohol before bed

While that nightcap really can make it feel easier to fall asleep, when your buzz wears off later in the night, you're more likely to wake up frequently.

4. Slip on some socks

Some people have the unlucky lot in life of colder-than-comfortable extremities. But having warm hands and feet seems to predict how quickly you'll fall asleep, according to a 1999 study. Speed up the process by pulling on a pair of clean socks before climbing into bed.

5. Keep your bedroom dark

Even the most inconspicuous glow -- like that from a digital alarm clock -- can disrupt your shut-eye. If you can't seal up all the light sources in your room, consider using a comfy eye-mask.

6. Keep it cool

Temperature in the bedroom is a little bit of a Goldilocks situation: A room that's too hot and a room that's too cold can both mess with your sleep. Aim for somewhere around 16 - 18 degrees C.

7. Power down an hour before bed

Dim the lights and turn off all your devices -- smartphones, laptops, TVs, all of which belong outside the bedroom -- about 60 minutes before bedtime. Bright light is one of the biggest triggers to our brains that it's time to be awake and alert, so start sending the opposite signal early.

Install [F.Lux](#) on your computer, wear [blue light blocking glasses](#) for 2-3 hours before bed, install orange lights in the bathroom and any rooms you're in before bed and see this article for how to really turn your iPhone screen red: <https://www.blublox.com/blogs/news/how-to-turn-your-iphone-screen-red>

8. Cut caffeine by the afternoon

Your afternoon jolt stays in your system longer than you might think. Experts recommended laying off the caffeine by early afternoon to guarantee it won't keep you up in bed later.

9. Exercise regularly

In the National Sleep Foundation's 2013 Sleep In America survey, regular, vigorous exercisers reported getting the best sleep. The best news is that it doesn't take much: Adding even just a few minutes of physical activity to your day can make a difference in your rest.

10. Just try not to do it too close to bedtime

Most of us don't exercise intensely enough to really rev ourselves up so much that we override the sleep-promoting benefits of regular workouts. However, especially in people with trouble sleeping,

making sure your sweat sessions end at least a couple of hours before bedtime is generally a good idea.

11. Avoid heavy meals when it's late

Your body isn't meant to be digesting while you sleep, so a big meal too close to bedtime may keep you up at night. Protein is especially hard to digest, so if you have to eat late, opt for lighter fare.

12. Paint your bedroom a tranquil color

Maybe it's a relaxing blue or a warm yellow -- the exact shade doesn't matter so much as long as it calms you. But do go for a matte finish rather than a high-gloss one.

13. Reserve the bed for sleep and sex only

Reading in bed is a form of relaxation, right? Yes...and no. A page-turner, a mystery or any other book that demands your emotional and intellectual attention may be more distracting than relaxing. Opt for lighter reading before bed, and keep it to the couch or your favourite comfy chair.

14. Keep your bedroom quiet

Noises like whirring electronics or ticking watches can easily be left outside the bedroom. For snoring bed partners or blaring sirens outside your window that are slightly more difficult to avoid, try a handy pair of earplugs.

15. But not too quiet

When your sleep haven is so silent you could hear a pin drop, every occasional bump in the night becomes that much more evident and disruptive. You might want to consider a white noise machine if your bedroom verges on the too-quiet side of the spectrum.

16. Ban furry friends from bed

Every little purr or tail wag is likely to disrupt your sleep, no matter how much you two enjoy cuddling. Plus, the animal dander Fido and Fluffy bring with them into the bedroom can trigger reactions in people with allergies, further disrupting their slumber.

17. Make sure your mattress fits

Believe it or not, lots of tossing and turning may be less about you and more about what you're lying on. That's right: An uncomfortable mattress might be the source of your sleepless nights. Whether that's because it's lost its cushioning or because it's simply too small, it's important to recognise the signs that it's time to buy a new one.

18. Nap -- wisely

When done right, a little daytime snooze won't destroy your nighttime slumber, and can boost memory, alertness and job performance while you're at it. Just make sure you limit your nap to 30 minutes, max, and don't snooze too close to bedtime.

19. Try separate blankets in a shared bed

If your bed partner is constantly stealing all the covers or one of you sweats while the other shivers, it might be a good idea to try making the bed with separate sets of sheets.

20. Keep a consistent sleep/wake schedule, even on weekends

Sticking to your work-week sleep and wake schedule over the weekend sounds like torture to most of us, but it's actually a wise move where sleep is concerned. Staying up and sleeping in later than normal can shift your body's natural clock in the same way that cross-country travel does. This so-called social jet lag can make it extra difficult to fall asleep when Sunday night rolls around, making for even more unpleasant Monday mornings.

21. Work through your thoughts about the day before getting into bed

Anyone who finds his or her mind racing in bed may not have taken enough time to process the day first, take some time in the evening to work through the day, make lists to do tomorrow and clear your mental desktop of the stuff that you still have to think about. Then, get into bed.

22. Strike a pose, say a prayer

Yoga, meditation, even prayer are all helpful tactics to coax your mind to wind down. These quiet activities may help you slow your breathing and heart rate and drift off sooner.

23. Take deep breaths

If the quiet reflection above isn't your style, some simple breathing exercises may do the trick. Breathing deeply mimics how your body feels when it's already relaxed, so after inhaling and exhaling for a few rounds, you just might find yourself feeling calmer. That's because deep breathing stimulates the body's naturally-calming parasympathetic system.

24. Try aromatherapy

The scent of lavender has noted benefits for sleep. A small 2005 study found that a sniff before bed led to more deep sleep.

25. Take a hot bath

A cozy soak raises your body temperature slightly. Then, when you hop out, you'll cool down quickly, which mimics the natural drop in body temperature caused by the brain as it readies the body for sleep. A warm bath before bed seems to help people fall asleep more quickly, but also get better quality sleep. Experiment with progressive muscle relaxation

This relaxation exercise involves tensing then relaxing the muscles throughout the body, directing your attention to each as you go. It can improve sleep quality and reduce fatigue.

27. Visualize

It might feel a little silly the first time you try it, but go ahead and imagine yourself somewhere calm, relaxing and sleep-inducing. This deep relaxation method can slow brain wave activity, coaxing you toward sleep.

28. Write down what's bugging you

If other relaxation tricks won't cut it, get literal with those racing thoughts and put them on paper in a worry journal you keep by your bedside. Clearing your mind of this mental clutter can help you drift off more smoothly.

29. Get out of bed if you really can't sleep

If all else fails, get out of bed. Continuing to lie there only stresses you out more, making it even more difficult to nod off. Get out of bed to do something else -- as long it's relaxing and doesn't involve bright light. Then, climb back into bed when you're really tired.

30. Get some sunlight first thing in the morning

There's nothing quite like bright light to trigger your brain to stay awake and alert. Getting some natural light -- you'll want to aim for about 15 minutes, without sunglasses and preferably some exposed skin -- first thing in the morning can help night owls reset their biological clocks and ease into sleep a little earlier.

31. Combat snoring

About 37 million American adults snore regularly. It certainly disturbs a bed partner's sleep, but "sawing logs" can disrupt the snorer's sleep, too, leading to more daytime sleepiness, according to the National Sleep Foundation. Some simple tips may help you keep it under control, like sleeping on your side instead of your back, avoiding alcohol before bed and even losing weight. Many experts recommend sewing a tennis ball into the front pocket of an old t-shirt, and then wearing it backwards to make sleeping on your back uncomfortable enough to help you stay on your side.

32. Get checked for sleep apnea

It's possible that your snoring could be a sign of sleep apnea, a potentially-harmful sleep condition in which people stop breathing for brief periods, sometimes as many as hundreds of times a night. Lifestyle changes like losing weight and avoiding alcohol may help people with sleep apnea too, but often, to get the best rest, additional treatment -- typically with a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine -- is required from a doctor.

33. Try a new pillow

Dust mites might just love your pillows even more than you do. In some people, the build up of these critters can trigger allergic reactions that make it harder to sleep.

You'll also want to make sure you're sleeping with the right pillow. Stomach sleepers, for example, need very thin, flat pillows, and side sleepers need something a little firmer to fill the distance between their ear and shoulder.

34. Don't stress about sleep

We're certainly not saying to shrug off your shuteye like it doesn't matter, but don't stress yourself out about getting adequate time in bed, either. The more anxious you get about getting enough sleep, the more difficult it will be to actually get any. Remember 8 hours is just a guide, if you're waking feeling refreshed and ready to go after 6 1/2 then get up and go.

35. Avoid drinking too many liquids too close to bedtime

Don't go dehydrating yourself, but consider cutting off your water supply a couple of hours before bed to save yourself middle-of-the-night trips to the loo.

36. Quit smoking

Nicotine, like caffeine, is a stimulant, and consequently could keep you up at night. Smokers are four times more likely to say they feel tired when they wake up than nonsmokers. As if you really needed another reason to kick the habit.