



EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Your listening to the bipolar now podcast, episode 18
- Speaker 2: [00:05](#) welcome to bipolar now the weekly podcast for doing life on your terms, not the illness. And now here's the host of your show, Mike Lardi.
- Speaker 1: [00:18](#) Well, well, hell hey there. It's Mike. I'm stoked to be here with you and I'm stoked on today's episode cause today's not a typical episode. This show is so fun because I get to have my friends on and my lifers and, and even new listeners on the air with me. And yeah, I say it's fun because the things we talk about, you know, mental illness and disorders and addictions and stigmas. Yeah, all of these things. Those are anything but fun. But hopefully if you've been tuning in for a little bit, you can see that I'm not focused on all the disease and the negativity and the whatnot I'm really driving towards. I mean, what I'm really want for you is freedom, freedom from the burdens and freedom from the baggage of having bipolar. That's why I'm here. And as you can tell, I have a very open agenda on this show.
- Speaker 1: [01:14](#) We take every part of our lives. That's touched by this illness and we do business and we do that business one piece at a time. So I am proud of you for being patient with this process. You know as I stick to this weekly schedule, I'm proud of you even sticking with me and I love it. So there's some incredible shows coming up and they've been top requests from my tribe and those are the very special folks over on the bipolar now podcast group, which is on Facebook and if you've been checking out the show for awhile and you still haven't gotten in there with us, then make today the day, every weekend there is special and I'm constantly amazed at how we lift one another up. We've got these super tribes who they go in there and they raise the hard questions and it's awesome. Now this is a special group and there's nothing to be embarrassed about.
- Speaker 1: [02:09](#) We're all limping along in the same direction and we're all helping each other out. It is truly unlike any other group for mental illness support and it is, it's just different. So you know what you have to do. Get on over there and join the next time you're on Facebook. That's the bipolar now podcast group. All right. Today today's a special episode. I'm trying several formats for this show and I want to keep it fresh and I want to keep it helpful. And speaking of helpful, I've put together today's material as an informal training. You know that I love taking time out from the regular discussions so that I can just stop and focus on some very practical stuff for you. And this is important because we can, you know, we can't just talk about bipolar until we're blue in the, our lives are complex and they aren't going to stabilize themselves.

EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

- Speaker 1: [03:04](#) We actually have to do something and shows like today are the ones that I do every so often to give you the real life steps. So as you can tell from the title, this one is going to be all about becoming a sleepy time sleep pro. And those are the real life steps that you're going to get in this episode. And they're going to come in handy, which is why I put together a visual checklist for how to increase your quality of sleep so you can feel better during your waking hours. And the big bonus to all this is that your bipolar symptoms, they will decrease. And when you do get a flare up or you do feel an episode coming on, having your sleep habits locked in tight is what's going to save you from it. Getting out of control and hurting you and hurting your relationships.
- Speaker 1: [03:51](#) And we don't want that. So sleep is just so incredibly powerful and effective that you know, many people actually say it's the only thing that matters and the only thing worth mastering. Julie fast, who is an expert and an author on bipolar, she says that if there was only one thing she could teach us, it would be how to have a consistently great night's sleep. The kind of sleep that is super important to regulating our bio rhythms. And that's what bipolar loves to mess with. As you know. So not everyone knows this, but Julie is my hero. She's my personal hero in mental health. So in today's training, I'm going to try my best to do her proud by giving you a step by step guide for nailing that great night's sleep. And of course, like any habit, once you build up your personal sleep settings, you can just kind of set it and forget it that way.
- Speaker 1: [04:50](#) The distractions and the demands of life and then haggling bipolar moods, they can't easily derail you. So what do you say? Y'All ready for this? Okay. First let me tell you where I'm coming from. I've been protecting my bedtimes in my wake times from all the demands of life, and I've been doing this for years. But as you probably already know about me, I'm always eager to go a little farther and get a little bit better. So not all that long ago I came across the author of a book called sleep smarter and the author, and his name is Shawn Stevenson, he was on one of my favorite shows. And that show is the school of greatness with Lewis Howes. And these guys were getting deep. They were talking all about sleep, all about modern day life and how we're basically killing ourselves night by night and sabotaging our bodies and sabotaging our success simply with a lack of sleep.
- Speaker 1: [05:52](#) And Sean, he has this personal amazing story of how really turned his life around cause he was in a bad situation, his body was falling apart. You know, he had says he has like the bone density of an 80 year old man. He had some kind of a bone disorder and he's a young guy and all of this got fixed because he did his research and he got his habits changed and it was all

EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

thanks to sleep and I didn't have to be convinced that lifestyle, you know, affects sleep or that we live in an always on and, and never sleep kind of society. But until his story came along and until he got on that show, I really had no clue how much sleep literally affects everything in our lives and our health. So when Sean started sharing about that book, I was all ears and I ordered the book right after that show and spent a few weeks reading it and making changes and adjustments in my sleep habits, my environment.

Speaker 1: [06:48](#) I mean basically I was doing this sleep total makeover and I was tracking all the effects of this, all of my daily activities and my stress levels. I was using a phone app called sleep cycle and that gave me a morning review of my night in bed and I was clocking like 60 70 maybe 80% sometimes. But the very same night that I started to implement Sean's research, I saw upticks in the quality that the app was measuring and now I'm regularly scoring in the 90s and I don't even need to keep the phone by my bed. My sleep is regulated and my habits are performing solid work and I get up at nearly the exact same time early every morning, even without an alarm. And that to me is just stunning. I mean, maybe you've heard me share about this before, but I have pretty much always struggled with sleep and feeling good the next morning. And if you know that about me, then you wouldn't think it's farfetched for me to say that. The practices and the suggestions in this book are borderline miraculous. So what exactly did my sleep make overlook? Like, well, let's dive in.

Speaker 1: [08:14](#) First of all, first of all, if you have chronic pain, you know that getting good sleep is at the top of your wishlist. So while the suggestions I'm about to share are pretty much dynamite, it's dynamite for ordinary sufferers of this disorder. If you've got pain, you've got to explore these suggestions along with getting your pain sorted out. So I know this, maybe you've done everything you can, maybe you've done everything you can afford. Maybe you've tried everything you can think of and maybe it seems hopeless, but then again, maybe not. Do not give up on yourself. People with chronic pain, just like you, they found their solutions and they've gotten their miracles all because they were persistent. They did not give up. And you're not going to give up either. If one path didn't work out, then take another and another. So just know that as I run through these adjustments, they might assist with your chronic pain, but maybe only if it comes from inflammation because I'm no doctor, I am far from being a doctor.

Speaker 1: [09:28](#) So make sure you pursue one because sleep absolutely evaporates in the presence of pain and then all kinds of problems start to happen. But anyways, this is where we start.

EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

These next four adjustments are foundational and they will set you up for success because you're going to add onto them further down the road. And remember, if you don't want to take notes, I've got this whole thing diagrammed out in a visual checklist that you can use and I'm going to link you to it at the end of the show. Okay. The first and easiest thing to do is to get some morning sunshine in my eyes. This is a natural fix for morning time sleepiness, and that's what comes from being a night owl, which I'll just say most people like us with bipolar, we tend to be that way because of our reversed circadian rhythm and that's just what the illness does.

Speaker 1: [10:24](#)

Julie fast was the first person to tell me, wake up, get outside and get a walk going. When you get those intense light rays in your pupils, it signals certain body functions to kick in, which are all the feelgood functions. Now, outdoor light is nearly a hundred times brighter than indoors. Even on a cloudy day, a cloudy overcast day is going to be 10 times brighter than indoor light, so just sitting by a window isn't going to cut it because the glass blocks out most of the UVB rays that are coming in, and those are the rays that are responsible for triggering vitamin D production, which is responsible for triggering important body functions, including the absorption of calcium to help our bones grow and to keep them healthy. But if you do this, if you get outside, if you get an early walk early in the day, it's great. Not only for that, but for clearing the mind and setting your intentions or getting into prayer or what have you.

Speaker 1: [11:26](#)

All you have to do is throw some clothes on and head out the door and go to your favorite spot in the neighborhood. The best time biologically to do this is between six 30 and 8:30 AM so get that walk as we're getting started. You can do this having outdoor light in your eyes early in the day. That's going to signal to your brain later on to start shutting down. It's simple how this is all connected. Okay? Next up for the basics is the limiting of my caffeine intake. I drink caffeine about three days a week on average. Now, caffeine is not an automatic, no, no, for those of us with bipolar, but it can induce manic episodes. Not necessarily because of the active ingredient, but because if it's taken too late in the day, it will ruin your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. And that right there is almost 100% guaranteed to induce a manic episode.

Speaker 1: [12:25](#)

So you have to know yourself. Some people drink coffee and it makes them nauseous and dizzy and well that's good cause I don't have to convince you to taper off of the Starbucks by early afternoon. So you're all good there if that's you. But if you do drink or if you ingest caffeine in any other way, make sure you have it no later than 2:00 PM why? Well, because caffeine has a half life of eight hours, eight hours. That means if you stop

EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

drinking that venti coffee at 2:00 PM you'll still have half of it in your system at bedtime. And you'll see in a minute why there's a very strong case for getting in bed and being asleep by 10:00 PM but even if you don't feel wired, it will be challenging to fall fast asleep if you keep pouring another cup or you have that monster energy drink with your dinner so you can stay awake.

Speaker 1: [13:20](#)

And by the way, chocolate, especially dark chocolate, that stuff contains caffeine. So be careful how much you have for dessert. Okay, so limiting caffeine to 2:00 PM good. Next up, this one has to do with screen time. And yes, your kids aren't the only ones who need it limited. I shut off my computer, I tossed the iPad, I stopped checking my phone anywhere from an hour to around 45 minutes before my bedtime. Most of our electronic devices and TVs, they emit what is known as blue light and blue light mimics the sun's wavelength. So when you're allowing this in your eyes in the evening, you're basically sending signals to your body that the sun is still up. And then of course your body won't release the hormones. It needs to induce sleepiness. That's why when you're checking your phone in bed, it can take so long to actually all asleep.

Speaker 1: [14:22](#)

So do yourself a favor and get in the habit of having a no screen window leading up to your bedtime. Give yourself at least 30 minutes for this if not more. And while we're on the subject of artificial light, evening is not the time to have every light in the house on. Let the light go down outside and then keep on only what's necessary. The how should grow more and more dim as bedtime approaches and keep your light as close to natural as possible. For instance, I don't turn on the light in my bathroom when I'm brushing my teeth at night cause it's fluorescent. That little nightlight on the wall is gonna be enough. It'll give me enough light to work with and I don't have to be under those fluorescent light will lay flings while I'm getting ready for bed. So Alrighty, here's a good one that anyone can do.

Speaker 1: [15:14](#)

I cool my bedroom to make it a sleep. Sanctuary research has shown that indoor temperatures between 60 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit produce the most favorable conditions for extended sleep, much higher and much lower temps are not ideal. And you felt this, especially if you've lived through a summer in southern California or Arizona, Texas, anywhere in the south and your ac goes out, you're basically sweating bullets and your bedtime is miserable. And think about this like the Times you've gone camping, waking up in that Chili Mountain air, it makes it difficult to fall back to sleep. So while we can't control the weather and we sometimes can't financially afford to get our room at the ideal temp, at least being aware of our bodies, ideal sleep climate is important. So that's going to do it for the basics. You're going to get some sunshine in your eyes, you're going to

EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

limit your caffeine, you're going to limit your screen time, and you're going to cool your bedroom to between 60 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit.

Speaker 1: [16:20](#)

Make one of these make over changes and make it like about every two weeks. You can start a new one and that'll help you build up these habits. You can check these items off as you go inside the Freebie download for this episode. So here we go. Let's take some next steps. And this stuff is every bit as doable by the way. So just get ready. Okay. One of the tragic mistakes I used to make was having my bedroom double as an office library reading zone in art studio and more. I didn't realize the need to simplify, but now that I've stripped it down to the basics, I love my sleep sanctuary. Minimizing bedroom activities and function tells the mind that we're only doing one thing in here. Well two actually, and here they are. The bedroom is for sleeping and sex and nothing more and nothing less.

Speaker 1: [17:20](#)

Pretty easy, right? Trust me, you're going to love it when it's this simple. Just have some joy, have some fun and fall asleep. That's the purpose of the bedroom. Now check this out. For those of you with significant others and spouses, I want you to hear this. No arguments get taken into the bedroom and I'm dead serious on this. You'll feel up tight and you'll feel offended and you probably won't sleep a wink. So don't let the sun go down on your anger, deal with it or else let it go. Don't wait until morning to launch into another argument because you've been thinking about it all night. Okay. That's pretty much all I'm gonna say about that. No arguments in the bedroom. So, okay, next up. Next up, you got to get your gut healthy. And this is something I never knew which happened to me quite a bit when I was reading through Sean's book, but he says that 95% of Serotonin is located in the gastrointestinal tract, and Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that's responsible for the feelings that we associate with happiness and wellbeing.

Speaker 1: [18:30](#)

So yeah, it's kind of a big deal. The point of healing the gut by eating better foods is that high quality vitamins and minerals and other nutrients are what the gut uses to produce healthy bacteria that allow us to deflect stress and sleep well. Magnesium in particular is known as the anti-stress mineral. And you can get it in many forms, but the recommended form, the form you want to use is a topical spray. Since magnesium is most readily absorbed by the skin, and you can find magnesium spray on Amazon, you just use it on areas of your body that are sore or maybe cramped. But real quick, back to gut health. If you're having problems with your stomach or with inflammation, you'll want to get this checked out with your doctor. Look online for symptoms of poor gut health, like leaky

EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

gut, and this is a serious condition, but it can be reversed and usually just with the change in your foods.

Speaker 1: [19:32](#)

So anyways, all I'm saying is don't suffer needlessly. Do yourself a big favor and get your gut healthy. Okay, here's another one that's quick and relatively painless and that is you've got to toss your old nasty mattress seriously. How long have you been sleeping on that thing? If you've been hitting the hand on your mattress for more than seven years, it's time to invest. Mattresses lose their supportive resistance over time, which means your spine, your hips, they're going to fall out of alignment. Which means your body definitely won't. Thank you. Oh yeah. And if you use a mattress topper, replace that thing too. You can check online for recommendations, but they say that a three inch topper with a person who is not overweight can last 10 years. So when you're out shopping for a mattress, you've got to do your research and make sure that it is not manufactured with any chemicals or sprays.

Speaker 1: [20:33](#)

Studies have found that babies who sleep on these kinds of poisonous mattresses increase their risk for sudden infant death syndrome by a lot. So you can bet that it won't be good for your skin or lungs either. You gotta shop smart, the right mattress will blow your mind, but it's also gonna set your wallet back. So be prepared. My mattress is eight years old, so when I found this out, I said, well, better start saving. All right, rounding out the list of my sleep upgrades are a handful of practices. First I make sure that I'm in bed and I make sure I'm asleep by no later than 10:00 PM almost every night. It is rare that I have an event that I say yes to that's later than this cutoff will. The reason, well, research shows that uninterrupted sleep, the kind you get between 10:00 PM and 2:00 AM that's when your body goes through.

Speaker 1: [21:34](#)

It's most regenerative processes and that means it's writing experiences into your longterm memory and it's releasing numerous hormones for growth and health. It's purging toxins and waste. This window of time is basically the body's most magical. So don't skip out on it just because of TV. Okay. And now that I'm armed with a powerful bedtime, I can spend the moments leading up to that in a state of bringing my brainwaves down to lower levels. And I do this through what is essentially meditation. I sit in silence for 10 minutes under low light and I empty my thoughts and I focus on slow breathing and feeling the different parts of my body. And as I'm doing this, I'm lowering my brainwaves down to the kind of levels that are going to induce a light sleep. And that way I'm properly ready to hit the hay. So that's how I prepare for bed.

EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

- Speaker 1: [22:36](#) Identify my absolute latest time to be asleep by and I defended. Now before we wrap this up, I gotta make two health-related mentions because they absolutely impact your sleep. The first is losing weight. I know, I know Mike, Everyone is telling me to lose weight, but here's the thing. People at a healthy weight, they get healthy sleep. This is because obesity contributes to sleep problems and the other side of that equation is true as well. Poor sleep causes conditions that create obesity. That's because people who are sleep deprived have less feelings of being full when they eat and when you're losing sleep, your body's looking for random quick calories to keep it functioning. Hence eating more foods, particularly the kind of foods that deliver an instant gratification. All those extra calories coming in quick like chips and cookies. I mean, have you ever been a midnight eater?
- Speaker 1: [23:41](#) What do you go to? That's because your body is trying to figure out what you're doing. Having poor sleep means the brain goes into survival mode and that's why you want to eat, to store up for survival. Now on the flip side, being overweight can lead to poor sleep because of the increased risk for sleep apnea. That's when you stop breathing while you sleep and it's dangerous. Now if you're carrying extra pounds, particularly if you're carrying fat around the neck, this harms your ability to breathe and being quite overweight is incredibly taxing on your body's organs. So now I'm not able to dive into the mechanics of weight loss here in this show, but obesity is a real thing. And not just for the general population, but especially for those of us with bipolar. You've heard me say this before, but the game is rigged against us.
- Speaker 1: [24:40](#) That's because the disorder itself, it breaks down our self control and our willpower to make smart choices for our physical health. We sleep terribly because of the brains energy ramp that goes up and up and up into the evening and leaves us surfing the internet or rearranging the closet at three o'clock in the morning and then after that we get depressed, right? And we lose the fight to do plain old, ordinary good things for our brains and for our bodies and a healthy lifestyle that can take a back seat because it just requires a lot more effort than we think we can muster. And then of course we get isolated as a result and it's just not good to top it all off. Many of our common medications tricked the chemicals in our brain into thinking that we're hungry even though we just ate. So the pounds they just fly on and the misery that just goes up to, and it's a merry-go-round.
- Speaker 1: [25:39](#) This topic has all kinds of cause and effect going on and it is very near and dear to me so I won't leave you in the dark. We absolutely will do a whole entire show on how I regulate my weight and I'll teach this. In fact, I teach it step by step inside my

EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

course membership, which does come out pretty soon. But for now, just be patient with yourself and hang with me. I don't think any less of you. If your weight is an issue, you are going to find the answers. You just will. Okay. And then lastly, and again, I'm being brief here, but the other practice to being a great sleeper is to be sober when you go to bed. Drinking alcohol is one of those things that goes hand in hand with bipolar for so many people and myself included, when our symptoms flare, it drives us to drink.

Speaker 1: [26:36](#)

Now, I never used to have an alcohol problem until my mental health started falling apart, but after that, I mean I was keeping booze in the closet. The thing about drinking alcohol is that it interferes with our psych meds. So it feels terrible to get drunk when you're taking meds for bipolar. And I think this is the main reason that I'm able to keep my alcoholism at bay. It just sucks to drink, especially hard liquor. The other thing about drinking alcohol as it relates to sleep is that being drunk or even being buzzed at bedtime, that's going to prevent you from getting into a deep sleep. Now, yes, it does help you fall asleep faster, but the cost is that you'll get a poor night's sleep because your brain is prevented from dipping into the lower phases of rest and recovery and all the parts that are vital for you being able to function tomorrow. So if you drink and you take bipolar meds, be incredibly careful and keep it to a minimum if nothing less, don't do it at all. And definitely don't drink after dinner time. Allow yourself a good four hours and then go to bed. So are we good in that? Good.

Speaker 3: [27:53](#)

Yeah.

Speaker 1: [28:05](#)

So wow, those were the main adjustments that I completed while I took inventory of my many rituals or lack of rituals. Maybe it's a better way to put it, but the book that I used is called sleep smarter and it's got 21 ways to Max out the benefits of good, consistent sleep. And I put the title of this book as a reference in the checklist that you're getting. I am pumped on this. I'm loving my sleep and I have a few more additions to show you, but they're a little more advanced. So you can find those in the freebie download for this episode to get that Freebie, you're going to go to mikelardi.com/18, grab it, print it out. Use the visual checklist to improve your sleep because when you do that, you're going to set yourself up for improvements in literally every area of your life.

Speaker 1: [29:01](#)

And I'm talking about greater physical health. I'm talking about energy, energy to do what matters. I'm talking about you finishing the things that you used to ignore just by getting good sleep. It's good stuff. Hey, and let me just say this. I want you to remember one thing. When you get this download, don't try

EPISODE 18: BECOME A SLEEP PRO

and saddle up to all these different changes. Don't try to do them all at once. I suggest that you do one change per week, one new habit, one new practice, just one a week. And that's really, that's at the most, that's a pretty aggressive pace. Two weeks per change. Maybe that's more like it. You got to try it out. But I want you to persistently and patiently pursue a better sleep routine because if you rush this well, it's not going to stick and it'll probably feel overwhelming and then you'll never graduate from average or poor sleep to becoming a sleep pro.

Speaker 1: [30:01](#)

The point is not to rush. This isn't a race. Your sleep matters if for nothing less than to help you do better against your bipolar. So go to MikeLardi.com/18 and that's the number 18 and I look forward to having you also join us over in our tribe on the bipolar now podcast. We can't wait to meet you and encourage you so when you're on Facebook just pull us up, blow up the group and ask to join. Okay, deep breath. That was quite a little mini training. Goodness, goodness, goodness, goodness. All right, so here we are. Next week Daniel comes back to the show and he's my good bud. He's at Primo lifer and he's also a great window into how lifelong friends can see us and watch us as we manage a mental disability. So together he and I are going to tackle the subject of stigma, and that's where people either consciously or unconsciously think of us as being untrustworthy. They think of us as outsiders and they do this because of our mental illness. So yeah, it's not going to be a fluffy little discussion, but I think you're going to love it when I show you how to move through stigma and get beyond it. That's right. I'm going to show you how to get beyond the labels of this illness that's coming up on episode 19 and I can't wait. So take this brand new week to explore your sleep and I'll see you right back here. Same time, same place. Adios.

Speaker 3: [31:40](#)

[inaudible].

Speaker 2: [31:46](#)

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