



EPISODE 841

Unlock Better Sleep: The Surprising Role of Gut Health & Toxins in Insomnia | Dr. Pedram Shojai

With Guest Dr. Pedram Shojai

You are now listening to **The Model Health Show with Shawn Stevenson**. For more, visit themodelhealthshow.com.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's during sleep that we have radical changes to our brains and our bodies. There are dramatic changes in what's happening with our hormones, our immune system, and even our body's detoxification pathways. In fact, it's during sleep that our glial cells in our brain are effectively detoxifying our brain or removing a lot of metabolic waste products. Cleaning house and making room for new growth. Now, what happens when we don't have that down time for our brains to do that process? Because our brains are 10 times more active cleaning house with those glial cells during sleep than when we're awake. A lot of mess is going to tend to pile up and also the ability for our brain to thrive, to grow, to develop and have a clean environment to exist and operate in period is going to be stifled.

Now, why does this matter? Today we have epidemics of all manner of sleep dysfunction, including skyrocketing rates of insomnia. Data published in the peer reviewed journal sleep has found that in the United States, the annual prevalence of insomnia symptoms affect 35 to up to 50 percent of the population. And clinical insomnia disorders have been reported to be 10 to up to 22 percent of the US population. Rates of insomnia have been on the rise worldwide, not just in the United States, but other countries are still faring better. For example, the prevalence of insomnia symptoms in Korea was reported to be 17 to 23 percent of the population versus for us up to 50 percent. And insomnia diagnoses is about 5 percent of the population versus, again, up to 22 percent of our population. And on this powerful episode of the model health show, we're going to be looking at some of the very surprising foundational causes of insomnia of our epidemics of sleep disturbances.

And I'm telling you right now, this episode is incredibly impactful and it's coming from a true experience of dealing with insomnia with one of the most renowned experts in health today. Now, I've known our special guest for about a decade now, but our previous conversations and all the things we've done together, we've hung out before in person several times, but this is his first time here in the studio to record with me. So this was such a pleasure to have him in and truly is one of the most insightful people in the health and wellness space. And when he got here, of course, as we do with all of our guests, we hooked them up with the most incredible snacks and beverages. And of course we have the very best teas for them to enjoy as well.

And during this episode, he actually mentioned it, and so I thought I'd give a shout out that he had some of the incredible herbal teas that you have stocked out for folks. Again, I'm a huge fan of matcha green tea, for example, and there's tons of data affirming how incredible it is. But sometimes we're looking for something that is completely caffeine free.

There are such a variety of time tested, clinically validated, herbal teas that have incredible benefits as well. And so he had a cup of spearmint tea, which is remarkable for digestion, for soothing the vocal cords, and even supporting metabolic health. But one of my other favorite herbal teas is the renowned tea called rooibos.

So rooibos, or rooibos, if you're about that boss life. This is a caffeine free fermented tea that has been found to improve insulin sensitivity and even block the creation of new fat cells as detailed in a recent study published in the journal Phyto Medicine. And so that's one body slash metabolic health impact. What about for the brain? Some varieties of rooibos have been found to potentially be great for our brain and mental health. A 2022 study cited in the journal food and function demonstrates the potential for rooibos to reduce anxiety and provide neuroprotection against stress. The only teas that we serve our guests and of course enjoy ourselves are from the incredible folks at Pique Life.

Go to Piquelife.com/model, and you're going to get 10 to even up to 15 percent off of their incredible teas and tea bundles, free shipping and other cool bonuses as well. And they also have a remarkable 30 day money back. Guarantee, no questions asked. If you don't enjoy their phenomenal award winning teas, you can get a full refund again. That's Piquelife.com/model. That's PIQUELIFE.com/model. And all of their teas are toxin screened for the highest level of purity. And of course they have their patented tea extraction methods and they make their teas super easy to utilize hot or cold. And again, they've got a wide variety of over 20 award winning flavors, including herbal teas like rooibos, spearmint, and many others. And of course they're phenomenal sun goddess, matcha green tea. So again, head over there, check them out, Piquelife.com/model. And now let's get to the Apple podcast review of the week.

ITUNES REVIEW: Another five star review titled "the drive thru podcast" by K1 K2's mommy. You can get all of your physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health with a side of laughter. I'm grateful for the wealth of knowledge, wisdom, resources, and experience from Shawn. Cheers to you, sir. Thank you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: No, thank you. I love that so much. Thank you so much for leaving that review over on Apple Podcast. I truly do appreciate that. And listen, if you yet to do please pop over to Apple podcast and leave a review for the model health show. If you happen to be listening on another podcast, medium, Spotify, whatever the case might be, of course, if you can rate the show, leave a review, wherever you're listening, it really does mean a lot. And without further ado, let's get to our special guest and topic of the day.

Dr. Pedram Shojai is a prominent physician in the functional medicine space and is known for his ability to bring people together around ideas that matter. He's a New York Times

bestselling author of multiple books, including *The Urban Monk* and *The Art of Stopping Time*. He's also an acclaimed filmmaker and producer of multiple movies, including *Vitality* and *Origins*. He's the host of the *Urban Monk* podcast and is a key influencer in the health and personal development space. Let's dive in this conversation with the amazing Dr. Pedram Shojai.

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: I don't know if there's ever a way out if you stay in the same alcohol and drugs. Like that's why like Betty Ford exists, right? Like it's, it's f**ked up because the way they do it is all messed up. And like the psychedelic guys, I think they are kind of, coming inside angle and getting some, right? Like it's about the perspective and the perception of who you are and the predictions of how the world's going to perform right? And it has to come in at a different angle because your worldview cannot be shaken up without serious drama, serious trauma, serious calamity, right? Or else you're, you can't change your set point is there. And it's prominent that we do. Right. Cody, you should eat right and exercise. Sure, I'm going to get up and change everything right now. Thank you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: Don't do it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, that's the world that we're living in right now. We are obsessed with, you know, basically compartmentalizing things that if you just do this everything is going to be okay. But even when you are well versed in all manner all pieces of health and wellness, there are blind spots that can exist. And there are lessons, there's trials. There's things that we go through and it's usually to come back with some value to share with other people. Because right now, obviously, sleep issues are a massive thing in our culture today. And you recently went through something that, you know, even me hearing about it, I was hit kind of hard and I just had to sit with it. I've already had a tough year, but I'm just like, man, my guy went through this suffering and now he has something to come back and to share with us about it. And so can you share a little bit about that experience?

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: Yeah, it started all happy and friendly, right? Like we took a summer in Europe, went to Portugal and you know, did the vacation thing and nothing was wrong. I, having been in this space, right? It's like, you know, their gluten is different. You know, their dairy isn't the same. They don't do this thing with their cows and so I went weapons free. I had a summer, drank wine with the wife, ate the pastas, and did the thing. I come back and I can't sleep.

And like, I'm trained in mind, body. I'm a meditator, right? I'm like, I know my mind. I know my body. And I'm just sitting there, you know, three in the morning, four in the morning, five in the morning going, man, this is different. What is this? And so I, instead of being like, shut up, go to bed, right? You know, narcotic this, that, you know, just the way we learn to anesthetize in our system here is I stopped and said, okay, the baby is crying. What does it need? What is my body trying to tell me? Cause my body doesn't speak English. It speaks subtle messaging. And so I started just kind of looking at the cues and the clues and then just got nerded out. Right?

It's like, if I'm going to be up at night, I'm not going to be up at night feeling sorry for myself. Like I got on PubMed and I just started looking at the downstream effects of endotoxemia and what that does to your sleep. And I was like, man, how could eating some bread and cheese mess with my sleep so bad and the smoking gun was right there in front of me. I was like, holy crap. So I did exactly what I knew to do as a functional medicine doctor, healed the gut lining, cleared the LPS. And we could talk about, you know, the nitty gritty of all this and resolve the inflammation at my gut lining. And then the sleep just came right back to where it needed to be.

And I was like, wow, that was fascinating. Cause I've been trying to get people to meditate through some crap for 20 some odd years in my career as a monk doctor guy, right? And this whole time, it's you know waving your finger at folks like you're not doing this right and all the while their body is like [sound effects]. And so I started looking at all of these correlates of anxiety, depression, insomnia. All of these mental health issues that have definitive triggers inside the body. And so the high level here is how can you, and so you've, you're one of the key voices on sleep, right? And so sleep is such a sacred thing, right? Like we're out by some campfire right now, right? In the middle of the wilderness. And it's like, man, long day. Yeah. All right. You know what? Get some sleep, Shawn.

I'm going to hold a sharp stick here. I'll make sure you're safe. And then we'll take turns, right? Why? Because you're going to trust, A. That you're safe, that this guy over here is going to protect you in some, like, you're just going to lay your body down and some animal isn't going to come eat you when the lights are out, right? It is the ultimate vulnerable state of just shutting down and trusting that you're safe. And obviously we think about like, did I lock the doors? Am I in a safe neighborhood? Is, you know, there's so many people in, you know, abusive relationships where the guy next to them might be the unsafe person, right? And so you take all of those external triggers and you take them out, and then you start to look at what the internal triggers of safety are. And so as I started digging into this, it's like, okay, so I have torn the gut lining and allowed the gram negative bacteria that push lipopolysaccharides that climb the castle wall and alert my immune system that it's not safe to find safe harbor inside my body.

So I have all of this internal signaling saying it's not safe. We're under attack. The enemy is inside the castle wall. And now my body, my immune system has to deal with it. My nervous system has arousal. All of my systems, including my mitochondria, we could geek out about all the things that happen around this are saying red alert. You can't sleep right now. There's something here that you need to pay attention to. And then you know, we could get into the clock, genes of the liver and the liver having to conjugate all this stuff out. And so I just fixed this in me and then started looking at saying, oh my God, all this stuff, you know, multiple clinics, health and wellness guy, so many years, people come to me to heal.

And I've realized that healing has a prerequisite. You have to feel safe. And so I could throw all of the expensive supplements in the world at you. If you are psychologically and physiologically unsafe for multiple reasons, your body will not allow you to heal because you're tensed up. And that, that tensed up positioning. This allows the healing that we've been seeking so hard, right? It's like, you have to feel safe first.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, man, we need this right now. And what you're saying, again, there's many paths to the goal that safety signal or whatever is going to really tip things in your favor. It could be a number of things. And so we were in a similar camp of like, you've just got a lot of inner chatter. You know and you could meditate your way out of this and for some people that is an issue. You know, they've got some psychological stuff and it can obviously be incredibly helpful. But their issue might be something else that's causing the alarm to go off, right, that safety the lack of safety. And I want to dig more into this because you said a couple of keywords that are super important. I think, I know that this is affecting a lot of people again.

They're trying all the things they're trying to, you know, medicate themselves into sleep. They're trying to, again you know, do some psychological ploys to get themselves to sleep, addressing nutrient deficiencies, all these things. But endotoxemia could be at the core and I feel it is at the core of a lot of people's sleep issues. Can you talk a little bit about what endotoxemia is and how did this affect you. How did this come about for you personally?

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: Yeah, so endo internal toxemia poisoning, internal poisoning. How does this happen? When you have things coming into your bloodstream that don't belong there, that, you know, that's a three bell alarm, that's sepsis, right? Like we have a very big issue. And what we've found in the last four or five years in the literature is that some people, up to 80 percent of chronic disease is now traced back to this thing called endotoxemia. It's like, wait, what? What is this thing? That's happening inside of most people's bodies. That's leading to this inflammatory cascade that makes the body feel unsafe.

That brings inflammation up across the board that then creates a scenario where the body is not able to move into rest, digest and discover and it goes into defensive mode saying, I'm under attack. So the most common form of this endotoxemia is just having the wrong kinds of bacteria that are in, we have so much going on in our microbiome like they're there all the time.

It's about balance. It's about the biofilm from the good guys and the bad guys and the, you know, the commensals and all the stuff that happens in our guts. That is an ecosystem based sit model that we have to look at now, right? It's like the wolves in Yellowstone. When you let the sugar loving candida, the sugar loving bacteria, when you let the bacteria that feed off the wrong processed foods say, hey, I'm going to feed you, And I'm going to do this lifestyle thing that allows for you to thrive here. What happens, what they do is they poop, right, they poop. The good guys poop the butyrates, the bad guys poop the lipopolysaccharides that happen to be toxic to us. So as you're feeding these bacteria and they start to proliferate and they start to put out these lipopolysaccharides, these things cross the tight junctions of our gut lining.

Our gut lining is compromised from the gluten, the dairy, you know, you name it the additives in our food. We have so many problems with how we are interfacing with the outside world in our guts that then these lipopolysaccharides cross over. The bloodstream is not prepared for foreign bacteria. So the immune system is like, Whoa. We're under attack now, all of a sudden throughout the body. It's like the TSA line fell apart and you got all sorts of rogue dudes running around the airport. That's not, you know, no flights on time that day, right? And so that's what's happening inside of our bodies.

And we're like, ah, it's just a cheese burrito. What's the big deal, bro. Right. Oh, I'm in Portugal, you know, or you're in Italy, you know, when in Rome. And so we take these little micro compromises until we get to a point where our bodies are like, yo uncle. I don't, I can't do this anymore. And so downstream there's diabetes, there's heart disease, there's all sorts of blood sugar management issues. There's obviously the insomnia. You start looking at endometriosis. You start looking at Alzheimer's and dementia. You start looking at what is downstream from endotoxemia. Any logical person in public health will say why don't we solve that, right? Because you know, the cynical answer is because there's not 300 drugs you could sell downstream from there, right? But solving endotoxemia has become a very big problem to solve in functional medicine.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, you said two of the big words that are being thrown around right now in health stress and inflammation right? And so these being kind of the underlying or the culprit behind so many of our Epidemics of chronic diseases, infectious diseases.

But going a little bit deeper endotoxemia being one of the triggers for those two things, right? And so again, it's just like, okay, stress, it seems so fluffy, like what it seems invisible, like it doesn't have a tangible thing. And then you add in endotoxemia. Now we have something more tangible that we can look at. And with this being said, you mentioned also how the immune system can just be thrown into a tizzy.

And a lot of folks don't realize, and myself included, you know, about 10 years ago, I, and I was not taught this in my university education, how much the immune system is involved in sleep, the immune system itself. And there are certain cytokines that play a role in certain parts of our sleep cycles, right? And we can just go, you know, line for line and looking at, Oh, this immune factor is happening during this part of sleep. This is helping our body to shift. This is helping with the sympathetic nervous system, parasympathetic. We act like these things are separate, right? Our immune system is existing in this same body that is trying to go through the process of sleep and it goes back to what is setting off our immune system.

And so I would love if you can articulate, because again, you just went on a vacation, you know, you went on a, you know, and it's again. It's one of those things you see this on social media a lot too, our friends and colleagues, they go, they're like, I'm eating all the things that I can't eat in America here, you know, in, in Paris or in, in Spain, you know. And it is true for some people, but for you, what happened?

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: So when you're on vacation, there is a very big gaping hole in part of this equation that you just alluded to, which is your cortisol levels are down. You're drinking the wine, you're hanging out, you're relaxing. You come back and the bolts are flying and all of a sudden your cortisol levels come up and you know, the kid's late for soccer and you got all your life's commitments. And that is a very different pot in your chemistry, right? And so now suddenly you're like, okay So I have this new colony of bacteria and this new issue that I brought home. My cortisol levels come up. Your secretory IGA, all of the kind of barcode scanning immune system functionality kind of comes back online and then all of a sudden you're like, Oh got it.

So, resilience is about the length of the fuse, right? And so if you're on vacation, you've lengthened your fuse. You're chilling, you're sleeping in, the alarm clock's not going off. I don't have two dogs to walk at five 30 in the morning on vacation. Like there's all sorts of things that give me a little bit of allowance in the mornings, right. And when you come back to your regular life. Then all of a sudden, as the pressures stack back on, then you start to see the areas where things are wobbly. And so my, look, there's a lot that happens at night during sleep and we could talk about it, but I don't even think that is the quintessential issue is this signaling is happening right now, but I'm busy talking to you.

It's like, Oh, I'm going to drink a coffee. I got a meeting after this. I got a call when the lights go out. And the night takes over and silence is the new, the new ecosystem that you're in. That's when all of this noise is like in front, like the windows start opening and you think that this is something that just opened up. You're like, no, this has been on my desktop. I just had all these other applications open. And so you start seeing all of this immunological signal and you start seeing all this information in front of you and you're like, Oh man, it's so loud. It's just trying to tell you something. And so we live in a culture that is so quick to say, Oh man, I got melatonin for that.

Oh, you know what? St. John's work. Oh no, you should meditate. You should tap. You should make it go away. But what if the answer wasn't to make it go away? What if the answer was something just scanned and there's some sort of weird signal coming from my immune system saying hey Look at this guy. Does he belong on the airplane or not? Am I supposed to ignore looking at this guy, or do I say does this guy belong in the airplane or not? Like is the tsa supposed to do its job or not? And so we're playing whack a mole with these symptoms instead of looking at the origin of why these kind of anxiolytic things are coming up and saying okay.

Wow. Something I ate, something I did, my childhood trauma. All these things are all there. The question is, can you get under that line of arousal and actually sleep and recover? Or is the arousal too high from all of these things that add up together to put you over the top and have you sit there, you know, trying to count sheep or do whatever you're doing at night.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I wonder where the sheep came from, by the way.

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: I think..

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, there's a story, probably Graham Hancock knows the story.

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: That guy would know it. That guy would know it. You know there's this, you know, you look at all the old cartoons, right? And they were all like farm animals and stuff, right? Cuz that's who we were just you know coming off the land and you go to three generations later. It's like Voltron and then you know.

SHAWN STEVENSON: My son was just watching Voltron like two days ago.

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: It was cool. I mean I grew up with that.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, there's a new iteration. You know, they keep remaking the really best stuff and then maybe they need to leave it alone. We've got a quick break coming up. We'll be right back.

As you know, mental health challenges have skyrocketed in recent decades without addressing the root causes shown in mountains of studies, including social isolation, sleep abnormalities, nutrient deficiencies, sedentary behavior, and many other factors. We'll continue to see rates rise and our communities struggling for solutions. It's so important for people to understand that no two cases of depression are alike. There are unique lifestyle and mental health work that each of us need in different situations. And right now in the United States, depression is the leading cause of disability.

It's the number one reason for people missing work and school. And so we've got to do something about this. Of course, medications can be helpful in some contexts. But most people are not educated about the science backed natural supplement that's shown to be just as effective as many medications. An analysis published in the Journal of Affective Disorders found that the renowned spice saffron was just as effective as conventional antidepressant drugs like Prozac, Tofranil, and Celexa.

Additionally, the researchers noted that fewer people experienced side effects from saffron than from those other treatments. This should go without saying people should know about this. Something that's been utilized for centuries, far safer and just as effective. As conventional antidepressant drugs. Now, are we talking about curing this condition? Absolutely not. We're talking about having another option to turn to something that can be supportive in an overall plan to support our mental health. There is no supplement. There is no drug that's going to fix everything. But again, people need to know about this.

And there are great companies that are providing easy to use saffron supplements. Like the happy drops from Organifi, this includes a therapeutic amount of saffron, gotchukola, passion flower, and ginger. They are amazing. You really do notice a difference. And I highly encourage you to look at the reviews for this product. I'm just going to share a couple with you because they really do stand out. Nicholas said, "Happily surprised. He said that I was extremely skeptical of this product despite all the good reviews. However, after using it daily for the past two weeks, I can definitely say they work. I definitely have an easier time staying positive and rolling with the punches of daily life with the help of happy drops."

Hillary said, "happy drops will make you happy you ordered. I found out about these little drops of bliss on Instagram. I was skeptical as every product makes claims that aren't always backed. Upon trying these happy drops, I've noticed a mood improvement, energy that lasts

throughout the day. And improved sleep at night. I'm thrilled." Definitely check out Organifi's science backed gummies. Again, they're called happy drops, head over to Organifi.com/model. And you're going to get hooked up with 20 percent off. Go to ORGANIFI.com/model. Again, you're going to get 20 percent off store wide pop over there and check them out. And now back to the show.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So I want to ask you about this because for you, you are somebody who's lived and breathed this for decades. And your ability to have introspection is so remarkable. What about the people who don't, what is pulling people's, because again, their body knows far more about what's ailing them and the solution than we could ever know. The information is there within them. What is pulling away our ability to have this introspection? How can we be better at that?

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: Yeah. First of all, that's the trillion dollar question because the, I think that the problem we face is a problem of consciousness, right? Is how do I introspect? How do I turn my consciousness, fold it back inward and observe my experience of reality and then use that as a matrix to then make better decisions instead of saying, who can help me? What can help me? What's the herb? What's the outside solution that's going to fix me? It's a completely different operating system to say, what is my body trying to tell me? What is this that I'm feeling? And what can I start doing in a trial and error fashion? To maybe change this or shift this within the nexus of my own agency, my own control. And that is not a message that is popular because, you know, the trillion dollar healthcare industry is just do what you want, come to me. I'm the expert and I'll throw something at it to fix it. And everything we have, you know better than any, in sleep, is basically saying I know the baby's crying.

This will make it shut up instead of saying, what is it baby? Why are you crying? Right? And the, what is it, baby? Why are you crying? Is a very different kind of parenting. And so we are in this cycle of just playing whack a mole and saying, shut up and sleep. I got to work tomorrow. I got to, you know, it's just this humdrum march into oblivion instead of slowing down and stopping and saying why is this happening? What went into my body? Now that could be the scented candle, that could be the, you know, the stuff inside your house. There's so many toxins in the homes that, you know, eight out of your 24 hours, you're supposed to spend time sleeping in this place called your bedroom.

It's supposed to be the safest place in your entire universe. You would be shocked at the glues, the pastes, the things that are in the carpets and the rugs. I go into these people's homes and I'm like, Oh, I couldn't sleep in here, right? What is that? What is that odor? What is that buzzing? What is that beeping? And so you've got to make your bedroom safe and then you've got to make your temple safe. And as you do the body starts to relax. The body

starts to come down in these, so this NF kappa B pathway with all this mind body stuff, it's like we know it works, right? But I cannot, if you gave me some sort of cream souffle thing.

I don't do well with dairy and then say, okay, you know, yo dude, you know, you did all this meditation stuff, sit here and meditate it off. I would have a pretty damn hard time meditating off the amount of signal coming off of the really bad food choice that I knew better than to make. Right, so mind body. Yeah. A big part of it, but not making dumb decisions, critical, right? You cannot put poisons in your body and expect to meditate them off. You can't have a completely insane lifestyle and then think the yoga is going to fix it, right? You have to change things upstream. And that's where I think the messaging and the healthcare really comes in. Model is obviously off, but I think also a lot of our health and wellness folks do that, right? It's just like oh you don't need Prozac take this, you know, super supplement. It's still transactionally moving a product in instead of saying why is the baby crying?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Thank you for sharing/ that's Man, thank you. There's a capacity that we have for each of us, because again, even the introspection of an outside person about your body is not, it's not even remotely going to be the same. We can offer up suggestions and possibilities, but that internal information is there within you. And we have this capacity is called instinctive elaboration. And so you asking that question, what is my body trying to tell me? What is my body trying to tell me? And listen, that's the key as well. You know, so ask the question.

And be able to just still yourself and just listen. And you said it, my body doesn't talk in words, right? It's gonna give you feedback, oftentimes in feelings. And sometimes it can be words, it can be words in a way. You know, the right sentiment, the right idea, certain things will manifest. You might see You know, certain synchronicities happening in the world around you, or you might just literally just like, oh, it's that thing because you're asking and inquiring and your body knows the truth.

And with that, another part of that question too, what is my body trying to tell me? That leads into the possibility of, because even if your body's telling you the thing, that doesn't mean you want to give it up. That doesn't mean that you want to even acknowledge that's the thing, right? And so it could be, how can I let that thing go? Or what do I need to do to adjust my life so that this thing isn't harming me? Anymore or whatever the case might be. So questions are the answer and I'm mad. That's why I freaking love you, man. Because you directed us right to, this is how you do it. Now, with that said, I think the challenging part can be in our world today where we're just inundated.

We have this culture where, again, you just said it, I have to get to sleep because I have to do this, right? That's the way that our world is structured today. We don't. We don't honor our natural rhythms. We're not doing things because it just feels right like the right thing to do. It's all just psychological and just being beaten over the head with this culture of busyness and so that part about listening when we ask the question, how can we better listen?

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: All right, so here's where I've been. This is why Pedram's back, because I was kind of off skiing and doing my films and all that. And I've found in the last year or two that we've been losing the battle to the attention economy in a way that is so pervasive and so dangerous. How the hell am I supposed to listen when I'm constantly in a feed being told? And so if your eyes in Chinese medicine, the eyes are the gateway to the spirit, the Shen. If I can't turn my eyes inward and say, what does my body tell me? What am I doing right now? What am I doing? This circuitry that's designed to introspect and wake up and become a conscious being and then emanate as a conscious being and make decisions based on that.

If I short circuit that and park my eyes in this algorithmic reality. That's designed to gain my attention and just keep my eyeballs and things that keep me distracted and attracted to things that trigger my dopamine and just keep me in like this reactive place. That is soul sucking. And that to me is the devil like that to me is where people are losing their consciousness to this electronic mega species, that is now pervasively drinking off of the one thing you have, which is time. Your God given time on planet earth, and you're beating your heartbeats into this alt reality that has nothing to do with time with your children, has nothing to do with stretching and touching your toes and listening to what your body's saying or any of it.

It's just numbing and so you have to pull it back. I've assembled my day and I do a lot, you know, obviously I'm a busy guy and listening to my audiobooks while walking the dogs in the park in the morning and I'm just like, hurry up and poop. And I'm like, what do you, even an audio book, right? I'm listening to something about behavioral neuroscience. I'm like, how about I listen to the birds waking up as the sun is rising over there. And just be here with the dogs. Right all of it. Yeah, you people have different level. I don't do tick tock. I do audible. It doesn't matter, it's about your attention not being in your body where you're at in that moment and becoming aware of this situation.

I got here was, what a two hour drive. Okay, not terrible. First thing I did is I asked myself, okay, what am I doing? What am I feeling? My body was a little cramped. I stretched. I was like, okay, you know, I'm going to have some hot tea. I don't, do I need caffeine? No, I definitely don't need caffeine. I'll have some mint tea. And I just checked in with what my body needed after a two hour drive, right? Pretty simple, but you'd be surprised how often people sidestep

just that basic practice and the translation of this into kind of just fundamental Zen is. If you want to understand Zen Buddhism. There's only one question to ask yourself.

What am I doing right now? And whatever that is, just stop doing it, and be. Right. And that becomes the operating system of just the self diagnostics of saying what there's so much energy I put into doing. And how much am I actually getting done and how much of this doing is fretting and wasteful and frivolous? When I came back from Portugal, I was putting way too much energy into trying to heal a gut lining because somehow cheese was back on the menu. I took out the cheese. I healed the gut lining. I got all that energy back. My kids are recipients of that energy now. My marriage is better now. Right? Like that energy goes back into my life.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yes. Yes. You've already shared so many incredible insights. Something I want to circle back to is you mentioned the clock genes and this is something that probably about the last five ish years I've been pretty obsessed with this. It's probably been one of my major focuses when it comes to health and human interaction with the environment is this, the circadian rhythms. And there's so much incredible science coming out about this, this is just circling back to it. How stuff already was and just is anyways, but our bodies every cell of our bodies is lined up with a 24 hour solar day like we're lined up with everything that's happening in our solar system.

Like it is that Powerful, but we again kind of isolate ourselves. We don't see ourselves as a part of this thing. Where this separate little thing walking around and, you know, driving our cars and all the things, but we are an incredible part of all of this. And the more that we pull ourselves away from the natural rhythms of things, the more stuff starts to go wrong. The safety signals, as you talked about, can start to go wrong. So can you talk a little bit more for people about our clock genes and how all this plays into getting a good night's sleep?

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: Yeah, thank you for asking that because at the end of the day, the real question is, okay, what do I do about it? Right? And the solution that I have, and for me I take the dogs up to the park over the ridge and I watch the, you know, not the sun rising over the hills over there. But I bookmark my days on sunrises and sunsets on good days. It can't happen every day, right. But setting the tone with light throughout the day. And I think blue light has really gotten a bad rap. I think you need blue light in the mornings. I think the biohacker bros have really, you know, like blue is evil. That's not true. You need blue light in the mornings and you need red shifted light in the evenings right like that's just part of the waxing and waning of the way we've adjusted right.

When I was in Africa making one of my films it was remarkable how red the sunrise and the sunsets were, and I started talking to a couple of the neurologists that were part of this project I was on. And we talked about that red shifted light really shifting our ability to then push the serotonergic neurons and become self conscious through the parts of our brain the prefrontal cortex and beyond. It really is the part of our kind of evolutionary arc is tapping into these frequencies. What are we supposed to be doing at night? We're supposed to be Detoxifying our brains. We're supposed to be reconciling our days, the dramas and the traumas and we're supposed to be, you know, It's like a theme park. Everyone's gone tomorrow. There's a million people showing back up at disneyland. What do we got to do about this? Clean, go, right?

And so the clock genes are there to set the rhythms around this. Here's the thing about the liver is kind of the it's crazy how the Chinese medical guys knew this years ago, right? The liver controls the clock genes controls a couple of these circadian rhythms. It's kind of like the master clock. Now the liver is already burdened by the petrochemicals the glade plugins. All the crap that we're exposed to right? So just living in a detoxification lifestyle, I think is Incredibly relevant because the liver is already working too hard. But here's the thing about endotoxemia and these circadian rhythms. Is when you have lipopolysaccharides in your system, how does the body, after the immune system has to jump in and fight and do all the stuff to neutralize these enemies?

How does the body rid us of these lipopolysaccharides? There's a second pass that goes through the liver. So the liver is dealing with the external toxins and now the liver has to clear the internal toxins. So your poor liver that's in charge of saying, I got to keep the, you know, I'm the oil filter. I got to keep this system clean is working when it's supposed to come down and have a little bit of a pause and a break. So that your glymphatic system can work and all these things are kind of trade offs where for millions of years, you're out hunting you're doing your thing you go down and this is when the diagnostics and, you know, the maintenance protocols run. And we're screwing it up with the lights. We're screwing it up with the toxins. We're screwing it up with a lot of things.

But what's happening is if you can't get it at night, you're sure as hell not getting it in the day because Starbucks made sure that's not gonna happen. And so you're just going to keep stumbling forward. And at night you're going to start breaking. Then your growth hormone breaks down. Then your hormones start to go out. Then you go to these guys at the A4M and they're like, no, no problem. I'm going to give you all these hormones. Just keep going, bro. Right. And it becomes this perpetual March. And eventually you get really sick and eventually you wonder why everything's falling apart because you listen to your doctor's advice and eventually, you are desperate.

And then you start going to get stem cells and Colombia. You start doing all this stuff because you just, you spent 30 years not listening to your body. Now, if you're feeling like, man, I've been sitting for so long, there's no salvation for me. It starts with your next breath. It starts with asking you yourself right now, what does my body need? What is my body telling me? What am I doing right now? You'd be shocked at how quickly you come back to yourself when you start honoring that. It's really not that complicated, right? Now, like you might say, I don't know what this is and let me go enlist the help of some good doctors and all that. Fine. Everyone could use a coach. Everyone could use help, but the orientation has to be here.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And he, for people that didn't see him, he just went from head to heart. That coherence. It's a big thing. And, you know, if you could, we've already covered so much ground, but something you've mentioned a couple of times, I want to dig in a little bit deeper because this is something that again, a lot of this stuff is hiding in plain sight for us. And just to reiterate again, these functional clock chains that we have, these are. I remember being in college and hearing about circadian rhythms and it just, again, it sounded like a soft science, you know, just like what rhythms, you know, is this elder barge, like what is this. And shout out to a rhythm of the night, by the way, if you wouldn't get that. But these are functional genes and proteins themselves, that are really helping to regulate every single process of our body, is on these clocks.

It's just timed up with these things. Now we are, of course, light is the biggest cue. Food when we're eating, what we're eating has a huge impact on the resonance of these clock genes. But also the things in our environment right? Endotoxemia at being a result of certain things. But the toxins that we're exposed to can really throw off these clocks. And so you've mentioned safety and safety in our bedroom safety in our homes. And It just has me thinking. I don't think a lot of us realize a lot of the things that we're exposed to in our inner. Let's talk about creating a sanctuary in our bedroom. What are some of the things that we need to do or be aware of and possibly look at removing, swapping out, that can be potentially harming us throwing off all manner of functionality, the clock genes included. And let's talk about that. What is the ideal bedroom sanctuary look like?

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: Yeah, thank you for that. Because that to me It's like when you go back to leverage and you know, you have X amount of waking hours that you're probably not at home. But then when you are at home you get I don't know a couple hours around meals and you're in the bedroom. That's where you are either feeling safe and recovering or you're huffing paint and counting sheep, right? And that is where a lot of people falter. And again, what is it in that environment that would be triggering you to not feel safe? We know mold is obviously a big bad one. If you suspect mold, you got to get that checked out. Mold is the

cancer of the home. And Jill Carnahan was telling me about all these studies she was looking at where turns out WiFi signal triggers mold spores to proliferate.

And so the mold's like, I don't feel safe because I don't know what this Wi Fi is. So it starts chucking out all these spores and then boom, here we go having histamine reactions. And so a lot of people have issues with mold. A lot of people have issues with pet dander, dust mites, all this kind of stuff, on the organic side right? On the inorganic side, oh my goodness, right? What did they make your mattress out of those sheets? Oh polyester? That's interesting that is an oil based product and anything that has petroleum based products in it by mandate have to have these other chemicals that our fire retardant chemicals sprayed on them because God forbid your mattress combusts at night.

And this all happened in the seventies when hippies would be falling asleep with lit cigarettes on their couches. And so they made all these laws about having to put these super toxic harmful fire retardant chemicals on our furniture on anything. And so now fast forward several years, Oh, your kid's pajamas that you got from target. If it has any polyester, it also has flame retardant chemicals. So now you are outgassing both of those and it's going in through your skin. Whoops. So you got to start looking at the materials that your sheets are made out of. You got to start looking. I just got one of these fancy pillows. I'm not, and it was like, Oh, this is such a great pillow.

And I was like, it smells like cancer. Like what is what did you use in here though? Oh we recommend leaving it out for a couple days before you sleep on it. I Recommend not sleeping on it, right? Like if it if I'm huffing paint this close right for those you're listening it is in your face. My nostril is dug into this thing, and it is a toxic chemical. How does my body respond if it doesn't speak English? Hey dummy wake up. Yeah Right? You're not safe. And so that's an easy one, right? The scented candles do not take anything that has artificial odors in it. The volatile organic compounds, the scents that are synthesized in these labs are just the devil. There's this amazingly well put together industry that is out there pushing this crap and pushing misinformation on this crap, because, you know, if you stop buying it, then they lose their lobbyists.

So stop buying it. So there are a lot of folks selling stuff that are not in your best interest because it's in their best interest to keep taking your money. Just stop buying stuff. That has chemicals you can't pronounce. Stop breathing it, stop putting it on your skin. You start going into someone's, you know, bathroom and you start looking at the products that they put on their face and their skin, and it's just a bunch of chemicals, right? And so there are plenty of companies that are doing the right stuff. Now you could just get natural soaps. You could, you know, even some of the essential oils can be bad for you, right?

It's very like, just because nature made it, you know, nature makes all kinds of poisons. So you just got to be careful. What you're putting into your body. If your body responds and says, Oh, hemlock, right? Socrates didn't make it through that, right? There are plants that are not good for you just cause it came, comes from planet earth. Doesn't mean it's good for you. Lead comes from planet earth. Don't drink it. And so just looking around your immediate environment you know, we talked about the mold, we talked about the chemicals. I also think that noise pollution and light pollution are a big deal. Your body needs to feel safe. So if there's something that's a buzzing sound. In your body your ear is hearing it and your brain is trying to process it.

That could send signals to your brain saying, Hey, what is that? Yo, what is that? Right, is that a lion? Is that a bear? That's how we evolved, right? And so just bringing it to silence or at least to noises that make your body feel safe, not like an electric buzzing sound, you know, some people do really well with dolphin music, right. And so you got, again, just because this guy told you something doesn't mean you run out and just do everything I said. Ask yourself, how does this make me feel? Test it in your own life, right? Like, that's the problem. I think a lot of people have given up their own agency and their authority to make decisions for their own body. That's dangerous.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Awesome. Awesome. Man, I'm just, I'm happy to see you. Happy that you know, made the trip up here to hang out. And can you let everybody know where they can connect more with you. Find out about some of your films and just get more into your world.

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: Thank you. Thank you. Always good to see you. Yeah. Theurbanmonk.Com. Everything's there. Signed posts to all my films, my books, the stuff that I do. Recently opened it up and said, you know what? Everything I've ever made, I'm just going to make free to the public. So there's you know, you just get it on my website because I've just gotten to the point in my career where I'm like, people need to know.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

DR. PEDRAM SHOJAI: And they need to know sooner than later.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah. My guy, man. Thank you so much for sharing your brilliance with us, man. Really. Dr. Pedram Shojai, everybody. Thank you so much for tuning into this episode today. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. If you know someone who's struggling with their sleep, please share this episode with them. And of course, if this has been helpful for you, it would be amazing. If you pop over to Instagram and tag Pedram, of

course you could tag me. I'm @Shawnmodel on Instagram and just share your voice. Let them know that, what he shared today was helpful and insightful. It really does mean a lot. And listen, we've got some epic masterclasses.

World class guests coming your way very soon. So make sure to stay tuned, take care, have an amazing day. And I'll talk with you soon. And for more after the show, make sure to head over to themodelhealthshow.com. That's where you can find all of the show notes. You can find transcriptions videos for each episode. And if you've got a comment, you can leave me a comment there as well. And please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome. And I appreciate that so much. And take care. I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.