

Announcer: Bulletproof Radio: a state of high performance.

Dave: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that sleep is more important than food. Scientists did studies of sleep deprivation, and the world record is actually 11 days without sleep, but a lot of people die after 10 days without sleep. You can go a couple months without food, depending on how much fat you have, without dying.

Water seems to be more important than sleep, sleep is more important than food. If you're a regular listener, you've heard me share my list of top 10 bio-hacks. Let's talk about number nine: fun hacks for the Bulletproof mind. It may sound weird, but hanging upside down is a great way to hack your brain. Regularly inverting trains your brain capillaries, making them stronger and more capable, to bring oxygen to your brain. It's pretty straightforward. More oxygen in the brain means better performance.

I get my daily stretch and my dose of oxygen with my Teeter Inversion Table, which is so essential for optimum focus, concentration and mental energy. That full-body stretch elongates the spine and takes the pressure off the disks, so they can plump back up. Less pressure means less pain. If you have back pain, even if you've been lucky enough to avoid it so far, you really want a Teeter to invert every day to keep your back and joints feeling great.

For over 35 years, Teeter has set the standard for quality inversion equipment you can trust. My friends over at Teeter have decided to show some love to Bulletproof listeners. For a limited time, you can get the Teeter Inversion Table with bonus accessories and a free pair of gravity boots so you can invert at home, or take the boots with you to the gym.

To get this deal, which is a savings of over 138 bucks, go to [GetTeeter dot com, slash Bulletproof](http://GetTeeter.com/slash/Bulletproof). You'll also get free shipping and a 60-day money-back guarantee, and free returns. There's absolutely no risk for you to try it out. Remember, you can only get the Teeter with bonus accessories and a free pair of gravity boots by going to [GetTeeter dot com, slash Bulletproof](http://GetTeeter.com/slash/Bulletproof). G-E-T-T-E-E-T-E-R dot com, slash Bulletproof. Check it out.

Speaking of sleep, today's guest is none other than Arianna Huffington, who has come out in the last couple years with a lot of information about sleep, and actually has a whole new startup, Thrive Global, which is really focused on quality-of-life and a ton of info about sleep. This is a live interview at one of the locations for Arianna's new startup, Thrive Global. It's a new content platform, and I'm actually providing content for Arianna on that service, so you can learn about some of the Bulletproof perspective on sleep.

Welcome to the show.

Arianna: Thank you so much. Great to be with you.

Dave: We're at your pop-up store in New York, and we're serving Bulletproof Coffee here, about to do a book signing and just honored to be a part of it. You just started Thrive Global. Before we get into your specific sleep hacks and in your phone bed, which is a really cool thing, I wanted to just kind of ask you what made you go in this direction instead of talking about broader news things that I don't know if you're talking about. Why Thrive Global?

Arianna: Well, as you know Dave, the last time you and I did an interview, it was in the offices of the Huffington Post that I founded and run for 11 years. In August, I decided to step down, in order to follow this passion of helping people reduce the stress and burnout in their lives, and leave lives with more health, more productivity and more happiness. That's what Thrive Global is about. It's basically a company that has three pillars.

The first is a media platform that brings together the latest science on sleep and burnout and unplugging from technology, and the connection with performance. Because in the past, these things have been associated with relaxing and chilling under the mango tree. We are now shifting the priority to be "No, if you really want to perform at your best, which is really, so much what you and Bulletproof Coffee are about, then taking care of yourself, putting your own oxygen mask first. Sleeping, unplugging, recharging are essential elements of performance.

The second pillar is corporate. We go into corporations and we help them improve their culture.

Dave: Nice.

Arianna: Around stress and productivity with measurable results. Some of our big partners are Accenture, JP Morgan, Uber.

Dave: Wow.

Arianna: The third part is what you see here, commerce. Both an online platform at Thrive Global dot com, and pop-up stores we're going to be doing around the world that bring together the latest technology around wellness, as well as we have here, a bedroom which is a sleep sanctuary to demonstrate how you can create that environment in your life. Products like the phone bed that I'm going to give you in a minute that helps you unplug from technology.

This is sort of the three components of the company.

Dave: It's a big vision, there, and I love that you're reaching out to companies. I actively do everything I can to hack my own employees at Bulletproof, where we get them neurofeedback if they're at our headquarters, and they get a generous stipend to get Bulletproof Products every month at no cost so they can perform better. We talk about sleep and we have culture calls about stress and hurry availability training and all these things.

Because, as a CEO, and entrepreneur, I care a lot about my employees, but also, as a venture-backed company, people who are happier and less stressed actually get more work done and they're nicer to each other and they're nicer to their families and everyone else too, but it does cost more, but you get it back in productivity so much more.

Arianna: Absolutely, it's a profit center.

Dave: It is.

Arianna: That's what people are realizing. What we tell the corporations that we are working with, that it's time to go upstream. Like a lot of HR programs operate after the disease-

Dave: Right.

Arianna: Has manifested itself. You know, whether it's the actual disease like diabetes or heart disease, or dealing with symptoms like smoking or drinking. All these are already demonstrations of some problems upstream, which have to do with stress. Stress is an inevitable part of life, but we have all these pathways and micro-steps and [inaudible 00:06:39] courses and trainings that help people realize that they can actually make sure that stress does not become cumulative.

Dave: Right.

Arianna: That you take pauses during the day, to walk, to breathe, to unplug from your technology, and that you get enough sleep. Now, this is a kind of non-negotiable. You know, we've convinced the world that exercise and nutrition are important. Whether people do it or not, they've heard enough about it, right?

Sleep is relatively new, as a third pillar of health.

Dave: It's such a big one. You said something else and I think it got my attention. You said breathing. There's breathing exercises, certainly, that help you go to sleep and all that, but I was just chatting with a colleague and Jeff Bezos at Amazon, when they built new skyscrapers, insisted that the windows had to open. They had to like redesign buildings.

That's also something that for the next Bulletproof Headquarters, that's on our list of requirements. If our employees, and I can't breathe clean, outside air, that recirculates, we're not going to perform, because we're not going to feel as well. Why would you choose to spend eight hours a day in, basically, an aquarium. That's what they're building. That's just not cool.

I want everyone listening to this to start thinking about-

Arianna: Opening windows.

Dave: Yeah, how do you get the air? Because you sleep better with good air, and everything's better when you can breathe.

Arianna: Absolutely, and it's interesting you mentioned Jeff Bezos, because one of the things our media platform does is to bring together new role models for this new way of living and performing at your best. The day we launched, which was November thirtieth, our media platform had a piece by Jeff Bezos which was entitled Why My Sleeping Eight Hours a Night Is Good For Amazon Shareholders.

Dave: Nice.

Arianna: We're trying to make the connection between a CEO, an entrepreneur, anybody, frankly, taking care of themselves, and the kind of decisions they make. Because that's really the value we bring to our businesses or to our jobs is our decision making. That's degraded when we are running on empty; when we are running on fumes.

Dave: Right. Now, one of the studies that caught my attention, and I've, admittedly, especially when I was young and fat and stressed all the time, I definitely didn't have good sleep hygiene. Probably because no one had invented the term. We didn't know that. I was like "I would rather read something interesting than sleep, so I'll just do that."

Arianna: Right.

Dave: Eventually, you never even remember what you read because you're so tired. What I've found is that by making my body work better, I just naturally want less sleep. Like, I don't need eight hours a night anymore.

Arianna: Well, you may be somebody who has a genetic mutation. You see, about one and a half percent of the population has a genetic mutation. You can test yourself for it, I have the test that you can do in my book. If you have a genetic mutation, then you can get four or five hours and feel great. If I get four or five hours I feel lousy.

It doesn't matter how much I exercise or-

Dave: That's [inaudible 00:09:50] very well-

Arianna: How well I eat.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: The science is completely unequivocal. If you have a genetic mutation, great. If you don't have a genetic mutation, you need somewhere between seven to nine hours. You may need seven, somebody else may need nine, but that's really the conclusion of all sleep science. Most people don't even know what it's like to operate at optimum level.

Dave: Oh, yeah, that's totally true.

Arianna: I know for myself, I collapse from exhaustion and burnout in 2007. If you would ask me that morning, "Arianna, how are you?" I would have said "Great."

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: Because I had forgotten what great was, you know? I was tired all the time. My friends would joke. Like, if you put me in a movie theater, in any darkened room, I would be asleep within three seconds.

Dave: I used to have that too, and I don't anymore. Exactly that thing. It's like you're not quite narcoleptic.

Arianna: Almost.

Dave: You're just ready to go to sleep. Now, I had a similar experience. You fell down, you passed out, you broke your jaw, right? I had one of those sleep burnout things where I'd flown from San Francisco to China, gave a keynote presentation, hopped on a plane to Florida, gave a keynote presentation. Then, woke up, and wanted to get some coffee and water, but didn't have time because of airline security stuff.

So I caught a five AM flight out of Florida, and on the airplane, I still had to go to the bathroom, and I woke up from the most blissful sleep, because I had passed out in the aisle. Just like went straight down. Fortunately, I didn't hit my head that time. It was, you know "Is there a doctor on the airplane?" Kind of thing. In that case, it was exhaustion, right? And lack of blood pressure because I was dehydrated because I couldn't get water at the airport. Because they make you throw it away before you fly, which makes no sense.

Arianna: Well, first of all, can you write about that, because here is one of the things we're doing on Thrive Global dot com, is both collecting new role model stories, but also collecting stories of burnout.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: Because we don't share these stories enough. Of course, you know, you and I were lucky, but there are many worse stories.

Dave: You have driving.

Arianna: Yeah. The CEO of United Airlines who collapsed on his treadmill and ended with a heart transplant. Or the head of M and A or JP Morgan who died on his treadmill. There are stories of collapse that are infinitely worse than yours or mine, but they're everywhere.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: They are global. We need to collect them, because they're kind of a warning signal, that people can make changes in their lives without having to have the painful wake-up call

that tens of thousands of people have had around the world. Most important for me is the recognition that you're going to be more effective at what you want to do, you know?

We think we are sacrificing our health for the sake of our job or our business, and that's just a complete delusion. I'm kind of fascinated by how come an entire culture believes something false. I've done kind of the study that throughout history, cultures have often believed false things. Like, there were centuries when we believed that the sun revolves around the earth. Remember? It was like the-

Dave: I think it still does.

Arianna: Some people may still. I hope they don't work for Bulletproof Coffee.

Dave: Good point.

Arianna: You know, the laws of navigation were based on this false foundation, which led to many shipwrecks. In the same way, the laws of working and living are based on this false assumption that in order to succeed, you have to burnout.

You know, you can go to television commercials from the '60s and see doctors in white coats advertising cigarettes, because we thought cigarettes were cool and glamorous.

Dave: Right.

Arianna: Even though the science was in that they actually kill us. We thought Brad and Angelina would last forever. That was another false thing we believed. It's time to stop believing that we need to burnout in order to succeed. That's kind of my passion, that's what I've committed the rest of my life to. If we can change the culture around that, we will eliminate so much unnecessary suffering.

Like, there's a lot of suffering in the world.

Dave: Oh, yeah.

Arianna: Refugees and people being killed by random violence in Chicago. You know? You can draw a long list that we can not right now immediately solve. We can solve a lot of suffering simply by convincing people to stop believing something which is scientifically false.

Dave: It's true on so many fronts. A lot of companies have played a role in that. You're talking about things like saturated fat. That's bad for you; diabetes and cancer are skyrocketing while you eat low fat diets and fake fat and all these things. There's all these things that are getting turned over because the media and social media in particular, we can talk about what works.

If the party line is smoking is good for you, and you need to eat bran muffins and nothing else. Well, what happens when everyone says "It doesn't work and I feel like crap when I do that." Eventually, that message gets heard.

Arianna: Right.

Dave: When people tell stories the way you did, you're really courageous to stand up to "This is what happened in your last, or book before this last book." That helps because people are saying "Well, the story is this, but the reality that I'm seeing is this. Why is there a mismatch" That's what woke me up as a bio-hacker, because I was working out six days a week, an hour and a half a day. No matter how little sleep I got, and I cut my calories and I cut my fat, because I'm like 300 pounds and I'm desperate to not be fat.

I never lost the weight. I got strong, and stayed fat. At one point, I'm like it's not that ... You know, I was burning out of course. It's not that I'm weak, or it's not that I'm not trying hard enough. Which is why I loved working out.

Arianna: Right.

Dave: Because of that internal message. It's because the stuff I'm doing just doesn't work. That same thing goes in business. Like, if you're beating yourself to death in a business, and you feel like you have to work 16-hour days and all this, maybe you need to change your strategy. You're not doing business very well, right?

Arianna: Absolutely, and especially now, that so many businesses separate in multiple time zones.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: If we don't learn to work in teams, our work is not sustainable. No human being can be up and available and on around multiple time zones. That's why one of the things we teach in our trainings and e-courses and we write a lot about is learning to disconnect from technology. You know, technology's amazing. The Huffington Post would not exist without it. A lot of what you're doing would not have been amplified without it.

Dave: Right.

Arianna: But we need to set boundaries. For me, the key and most necessary thing is to create a transition from our day life to our night life when we go to sleep. Where we really disconnect from our day, our problems. Most people sleep with their phone on, on their nightstand.

Dave: That's horrifying, yeah.

Arianna: Sometimes they sleep with them under their pillow.

Dave: Wow, if you want to get brain cancer, and cognitive dysfunction, breaking the mitochondria, that is an excellent strategy.

Arianna: Even without that, you're very likely to wake up in the middle of the night, not be able to fall immediately back asleep, and find yourself texting, e-mailing, all going down the rabbit hole of social media. We created our first product in our commerce department of Thrive Global, is the phone bed, that I'm giving you as a gift.

Dave: Oh, thank you.

Arianna: I hope you're going to use it. Here is the phone bed. It is basically a charging station.

Dave: Okay.

Arianna: That has 10 ports, but it's made to look like a bed.

Dave: Nice.

Arianna: Because human beings-

Dave: Here, I'll hold it up a little bit. Here, I'll just make the camera point at it here.

Arianna: That's okay, we'll put that back in, don't worry. Human beings learn through ritual. You put your phone here, you can put eight phones. You put your iPads here.

Dave: Right.

Arianna: You tuck them in, this is the little sheet that you tuck them in. You say goodnight to them. This lives outside your bedroom, outside your children's bedrooms if you have children. You educate your children that from the moment they get a phone, they know where to put it to sleep.

Dave: Wow.

Arianna: That's because, you know what happens.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: By the time your children are teenagers, it becomes a battle. Give me your phone.

Dave: It does, right.

Arianna: Don't sleep with your phone.

Dave: Right.

Arianna: If you can educate everybody in the family to separate themselves from the phones, the phones charge, you recharge, and you reconnect in the morning. We're going to pack this up for you.

Dave: Oh, thank you. Does it come with the phone?

Arianna: Comes with the phone. No, but it comes in two colors, light wood or dark wood, what do you prefer?

Dave: I think this looks great.

Arianna: Okay.

Dave: The light wood is beautiful.

Arianna: Great, you are getting the light wood.

Dave: Thank you. It sounds kind of ridiculous, but it's not at all, because a lot of the way we're wired is unconscious.

Arianna: Yes.

Dave: It's subconscious, so we don't necessarily know the messages that our nervous system gets. Just having a ritual that says "All right, I'm going to do this."

Arianna: And having it live outside your bedroom. Then what happens is that when you wake up in the morning, take just one minute to breathe, to set your intention for the day, before you immediately go to your phone. Because if you think of it, the phone is the portal to everything the world wants from you.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: Right?

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: I think it's very important to establish, what do you want from the world.

Dave: I think a minute is maybe a little conservative, there. I tell you, I wake up, my phone's in airplane mode. It is my alarm clock, because it senses my motion, but it's never turned on at night. It's always in airplane mode.

Arianna: That's unusual.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: Try to get Amazon Echo to wake you up.

Dave: I have to get that.

Arianna: Yeah, Alexa. You can tell Alexa "Wake me up at seven [inaudible 00:20:05] time." We programmed Alexa with meditations.

Dave: Oh, great. Oh, cool.

Arianna: You can say "Alexa, play me the Thrive Meditation to sleep."

Dave: Then it just works.

Arianna: If you wake up in the middle of the night, you can ask Alexa to play you the meditation to sleep, so that it can put you right back to sleep naturally, without stress.

Dave: Well, that's cool.

Arianna: It can wake you up, or have an old-fashioned alarm clock.

Dave: In the morning, though, I made a commitment. I wake up, I make my Bulletproof Coffee, I take my supplements, I make coffee for my kids, and yes, they drink like two ounces of Bulletproof because I want to get the Brain Octane in them because they're-

Arianna: How old are they now?

Dave: Seven and nine.

Arianna: They don't have phones yet.

Dave: No, they don't.

Arianna: By the time they have phones, you'll have the phone bed.

Dave: Absolutely.

Arianna: Then we know where to put their phones.

Dave: My phone stays in airplane mode all that time until I drop them off at school.

Arianna: That's amazing.

Dave: I don't get-

Arianna: That's incredibly-

Dave: Any messages. Like, it's off.

Arianna: You know, that's very rare, because most of us are addicted. Like, I couldn't do that. I'm not as strong as you are. I have to have my phone away, because there is that dopamine hit that you get.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: That makes most of us addicts. Like, if you're an addict, an alcohol addict, you know, you wouldn't have bottles of wine around.

Dave: Right, right, right.

Arianna: In the same way, since we are all addicted to our phones in some way or another, and most people don't have your willpower, we just need to separate ourselves.

Dave: That works well, ya.

Arianna: Do the ritual. Sherry [inaudible 00:21:34], you know the MIT professor who's written those great books about our relationship with technology says that if you're having dinner with a friend and your phone is on the table, even if it is off, it affects the conversation.

Dave: It does.

Arianna: It's a reminder of another reality that can interrupt your life at any moment.

Dave: It's a tough one, because I get all sorts of data and I like to measure what works. I just had a whole-body, high-resolution DEXA Scan done. DEXA looks at bone density, specifically. I, years ago, made a commitment, I'm not carrying my cell phone in my front pocket or my back pocket. Now, your front pocket is too close to the reproductive equipment, and your cell phones are shown to effect that, and I don't want it near my spinal cord. I keep it on my side. It's like a little ... My pants have a little-

Arianna: Oh, yeah, I can see.

Dave: Cargo pants kind of pocket. Well, guess what my DEXA Scan showed? It showed that because I carry my phone there, my right femur has 10% less bone density than my left one.

Arianna: Wow.

Dave: Even though this is my dominant leg, where it should be more bone density. So cell phones are bad for you, biologically, they just are. Having it turned on in your bedroom is so bad for you. The other thing that we do that's unusual, is I had the house rewired, so that I have a remote control for the kids' bedrooms and my bedroom, where I can press the remote control, and it physically disconnects the rooms from the power grid.

Arianna: Wow.

Dave: We sleep in a room that has no electricity going on.

Arianna: That's fantastic.

Dave: It's as close to cave as we can get. We're electrically grounded, we have blackout curtains, and you know what, my kids have slept through the night since they were one year old. They don't wake up in the middle of the night. They go right back to sleep. The sleep problems went way down in our house, because unfortunately, these devices, even though they're incredibly useful and valuable, if you're swimming in that all the time, maybe that's not so good for you, right?

Arianna: Well, that's it, it's really the fact that we are swimming in them and we are swimming in a culture that prizes being always on. That's the other cultural change that we are trying to affect through Thrive Global. We are trying to change the cultural norms so that it is actually prized to disconnect. We are creating this app that turns your smartphone into a dumb phone for specified periods of time.

Let's say you and I are having dinner, and your COO texts you, she will get a text back that says "David is powered down, he'll be back on at such and such a time." Not only isn't she able to get you, but she gets a message that tells her that you are actually deliberately powered down, which begins to change the culture.

Dave: That's cool.

Arianna: You know, from Dave is always on, he's amazing, which is what we say now, right?

Dave: Right.

Arianna: To Dave is important enough and values himself enough to go off the grid for dinner.

Dave: Yeah, distraction is a sign of [inaudible 00:24:34]-

Arianna: That becomes valued, then.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: Because it's like "Hey, you know, she can do that. If she can do that, maybe I can do that." That's how you change the culture.

Dave: It does, absolutely, change the culture, and I've in the last couple years had a chance to work with a very influential, wealthy set of business executives and celebrities just because of Bulletproof and some of the work I'm doing with Dallas. You've known many of the same people. There's been a shift. Where they're willing to go on vacation without cell phones.

Arianna: Yes.

Dave: They're actually building it into their lives, but it's an ultimate form of luxury. I don't think that mindset has percolated or not.

Arianna: Penetrated, no. Because you still have, most corporations ... Look at the language, you know? Dave is amazing, he works 24-seven, how often do you hear that? Which, if you look at the science.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: Working 24-seven is the cognitive equivalent of coming to work drunk.

Dave: Right.

Arianna: You would never say "You know, Dave is amazing, he just had five shots and came to work."

Dave: A lot of people do both. As far as I can tell you. You burn yourself out, the odds of coming to work drunk go up.

Arianna: Exactly.

Dave: People start [inaudible 00:25:39] medicated.

Arianna: Also coming to work after you've stuffed yourself with an enormous amount of carbs and sugar. Because our bodies crave carbs and sugar when we're sleep deprived.

Dave: That's very true.

Arianna: I mean, look at all the breakfast at these events that we go and speak at. It's like all carbs and sugar and you think "Why?" It's like "Have you read anything about the latest science or nutrition? Can we have some eggs"

Dave: I just bring the Bulletproof Team with me, just do coffee demos, then I can go in the back and drink my Bulletproof Coffee. Like, that's my breakfast. It makes [inaudible 00:26:13], because I also find that carbs and sugar effect sleep. If you're on a zero carb diet for long periods of time, especially women, it can ruin your sleep.

When I did three months of almost no carbs, like one serving of veggies a day, like very high ketosis, my sleep monitoring system said that I was waking up 10 to 12 times a night without knowing it. I didn't have sleep apnea.

Arianna: Right.

Dave: But my body was like "I need carbs to make neurotransmitters."

Arianna: And you didn't have any good fats.

Dave: I had lots of good fats.

Arianna: Now you do, yeah.

Dave: Even then, I did. This is when I was writing the research for the Bulletproof diet. I thought "Well, I'm going to try like an Eskimo diet." Like really hard ketosis, and what happened was that it ruined my sleep and I didn't have enough tears, because I didn't have the sugar that it takes to do that.

Arianna: You're now taking good carbs?

Dave: Oh, absolutely. It's part of the Bulletproof diet.

Arianna: Yes.

Dave: Is to say "Look, you need to cycle in and out, and if you want to sleep well, you need to have a moderate amount of good carbs."

Arianna: Right.

Dave: Maybe not every day. It's okay to go a few days without carbs.

Arianna: Some vegetables and salad, yeah.

Dave: Right, yeah, but if you don't do that and you're super-keto, some people do okay, but a lot of people, their sleep, after a month or two.

Arianna: Right.

Dave: It's not right away. You feel amazing, you might sleep better. That idea of just like you mentioned, stress recovery. If you never have any stress, you won't grow. It's stress, recover, stress, recover.

Arianna: Right.

Dave: Exercise is stress, and then you recover, but if you exercise all the time and never recover, you get burnt out.

Arianna: Well, that's what athletes are demonstrating. We did a series for Thrive Global on athletes, we started with Andre Iguodala, who is also an investor in the company. He's an MVP, Golden State Warriors, et cetera. He tracked the impact on his performance, of getting enough sleep, and it's so dramatic. In fact, I was at CES, the Consumer Electronic Show in Las Vegas with Kevin Plank, the CEO of Under Armour, and I was part of the presentation about performance. You know, Under Armour is a performance-based company, but they've recognized the importance of sleep as a performance enhancer.

They've produced this new sleepwear that helps you sleep. I think it's an incredible competitive advantage for a company to own sleep as a performance enhancer.

Dave: It absolutely is. The Under Armour stuff is neat. My new book is called Headstrong. It's about mitochondrial function and how improving mitochondria improves your brain, improves your sleep, improves your hormones. It's like the underlying thing that controls your body that you would never guess. Do you have enough power right now, yes or no? These are little tiny bacteria that would [inaudible 00:28:43] into our cells.

Arianna: Right.

Dave: One of the parts of research I came across in this book is that infrared is something that your mitochondria make, and infrared changes the water in your body, so it helps your body work better. The Under Armour technology you're mentioning.

Arianna: Yes.

Dave: Reflects infrared light from your mitochondria back on themselves, so they have to do less work to change the water in them. You think "What, I'm just sleeping? Water, infrared?" Here's the thing, a small change in your sleep environment equals higher performance the next day. Make it darker, you sleep better, make it colder, you sleep better. Make it quieter, you sleep better. Reduce interruptions, you sleep better.

All of those might be a two percent or a five percent improvement.

Arianna: It adds up.

Dave: A 25% improvement from 10 of these things might really matter.

Arianna: Absolutely, and people are beginning to realize that it's really exciting to see this conversation be part of business magazines. I think it's really important to see how this has moved out of the yoga journal.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: And to business magazines, athletic magazines, so where people care about performance and productivity. They're also now looking at the latest science. I think it's really important since we claim to be data-driven. We can no longer ignore the data.

Dave: The data is really strong, especially when you look at the brain. I opened, earlier this year, the world's, probably, most highest-end neuroscience training facility, to make healthy brains super brains. We take CEO types through a five-day program, and they have to get enough sleep, because every day, we're doing neurofeedback, basically to the point where they can't do anymore to teach them to do what advanced Zen masters do within five days.

With longstanding changes in the brain. If they sabotage themselves by getting five hours of sleep.

Arianna: Yes.

Dave: They can't do the training that I've started. You can see a sleepy brain on an EEG machine. It actually has high levels of Theta. You're basically daydreaming, and your levels of Alpha, which is where you want to be able to be present, they're much lower. The height of the waves you want is lower, and the chaotic stormy, like, day-dreamy waves, the ones that made it so that you and I could both go to sleep in three seconds, any time it was dark. Those were always storming.

As a brain that gets enough sleep can be more orderly and more organized, and then you make good decisions. Those decisions, they might be decisions ... You know, I got an urge to yell at my kids, but I decided to suppress the urge.

Arianna: Right.

Dave: Instead of "I yelled at my kids and then I felt like I was a jerk." I feel like there's like tens of thousands of decisions we all make every day, and that we're wired to be kind to each other. If you're tired all the time, you're going to overexercise your middle finger in traffic. You know? You're just not going to be the kind of human you know you're capable of being.

Arianna: Absolutely.

Dave: That's why I wanted to interview about your new focus with Thrive Global, because you're hitting on one of the things that makes us better people. Not just higher performing people.

Arianna: Exactly, and you know, we find exactly what you said in our trainings with Uber, for example. We call one part of our training "Don't cross your red line. And here are the signs that you're getting close to your red line." The physical signs are obvious, you know? You are tired.

The mental signs are also obvious. You know, you are operating in a fog, as you described.

Dave: Right.

Arianna: Chaotic thoughts. The emotional signs are also obvious, because you are overreacting. Any time you overreact to bad things happening, which bad things will happen constantly, all day. Your child will do something you don't like, your boss will do something you don't like.

Dave: Right.

Arianna: Your employees will do something you don't like. Our capacity to manage our stress depends on how do you react to bad things happening? I mean, if we were waiting for a day when only good things happen, it's not going to come. I think learning these things and learning how to navigate our day differently is going to have a huge transformative influence on the way we live, the way we work, the way we run our businesses.

I'm really, really excited about the future.

Dave: It's looking better because when we step out of that "I have to be invulnerable" sort of thing where I can never show weakness, which is really the business culture in Silicon Valley where I kind of cut my teeth, but also on Wall Street, and a lot of business, in any sales oriented culture, it's the same way. Where even if you're about to collapse, you'd never show it.

Where people are just saying "Look, I need a break." Need is actually a word that they mean to say.

Arianna: Yeah.

Dave: Like, I need it because I'm not going to perform well if I don't do this.

Arianna: Exactly.

Dave: Another interesting study, I looked a lot at blood sugar regulation. I used to have ... I was pre-diabetic when I weighed 300 pounds, and I just got my results back. My insulin sensitivity is the most sensitive you can get. It's one. Anything above 60 is bad, anything above 120 is diabetic. It's as perfect as you can get. This is a big change.

It requires that you sleep, because one night of missed sleep equals a 40% reduction in your ability to regulate your blood sugar. You can be healthy, or at least moderately healthy, and then you miss sleep, or your jet lagged or whatever, and then, all the sudden, you have the blood sugar activity of a pre-diabetic, or even a type two diabetic just from missing sleep.

Then you get the cravings, then you eat the cravings, which then makes you go up and down and you don't sleep the next night because you have extra cortisol and you end up on this horrible treadmill. It's driven by biology. Like, our body listens, is it dark or is it not dark? Is it nighttime, is it not nighttime? Am I freaking out, or can I go to sleep, and I won't sleep.

It's not that hard when you look at it that way, but when you're like "What if someone knows that I need to sleep?" I was inspired by our last interview, when you were just willing to talk about "Hey, this is what happened to me."

Arianna: Right.

Dave: You're a pretty darned accomplished business person. Yet, okay, I'm going to stand up and talk about it. Since then, I've seen a substantial number of very well-respected executives just stand up, and they kind of follow your lead and say "Yeah, you know, I sleep." Or "You know, if I don't meditate, I'm not a very good person."

Arianna: Yes.

Dave: It seems like something shifted, just in the last three years.

Arianna: Something has shifted. Absolutely. It's exciting to see. It's almost like CEOs are coming out, not as being gay, but as meditating or sleeping or taking care of themselves and making the connect between that and being better at their jobs.

Dave: It is my experience, as a former Silicon Valley geek, and just as a CEO now, if I don't control that one variable in my environment, I'm just not as nice. I don't want to be mean to the people who support the Bulletproof vision. I'd feel bad about that. It's a business requirement, and my executive assistants know very well, don't schedule things that are going to disrupt my sleep.

Arianna: Right.

Dave: Unless we talk about it ahead of time, and if I need to do a call with Japan or somewhere, then I'll do it, I'll make time to do it, but then, I'm not going to schedule a seven AM call the next morning.

Arianna: Exactly.

Dave: Because it's too expensive to do that, right?

Arianna: Absolutely. It's great to look at that.

Dave: It's almost too expensive not to do it. It's a financial cost that comes from making a bad sleep decision.

Arianna: Yes, because I think we have so many executives now, who are willing to acknowledge that the biggest mistakes they made, they made when they were tired. I know we, for example, we launched a partnership with JP Morgan. It was a 28-day challenge to all the global employees. You know, 370,000 employees.

They were asked to participate in one of our challenges; sleep, unplugging and recharging, gratitude, and mindfulness. What was amazing is to see senior executives talking about their own challenge and what they were going to do. The impact it had on the company, and for me, it's just another great indication of the zeitgeist, and of how a major bank like JP Morgan is willing to acknowledge that they're going to have better employees. Kristin Lemkau, who is their chief marketing officer, wrote in a piece for us that she could categorically say that all the mistakes she made in business were when she was tired.

Dave: How about the late night e-mail, or before you go to bed, that you'll send to someone, and then the next morning you're like "I can't believe I sent that, oh no." I've had a few of those. You probably have too, right?

Arianna: That's right, that's why you have to pick a time, at least half an hour before you're going to go to sleep, when you turn off your phone, ideally, take them out of your bedroom or put them in your phone bed. Then, have a transition to sleep. You have children. You know when they were little, you don't just drop them in bed. You give them a bath, you put them in their PJs, you read them a story.

I wrote a parody of Goodnight Moon, called Goodnight Smartphone that Audible is bringing out later in January. All of these things are available to us as tools to help us take care of ourselves and as a result, be better at our jobs.

Dave: Let's talk about something else in your work with JP Morgan, and you talked about gratitude. At the Bulletproof Senior Leadership Meetings, like every week, we have our executive call like most companies do. We open it where everyone goes through and talks about something that they're grateful for that week. Not to me, just about the business, but sometimes my kids graduated-

Arianna: [inaudible 00:38:26]. That's great, I love that.

Dave: You know, I got a good night's sleep or whatever, but it's a part of our culture and we're doing that since the start of the company. I'm wondering what did you ask JP Morgan to do that I can steal?

Arianna: Oh, well actually, all that we did is to ask them to recognize that prioritizing the wellbeing of their employees is going to improve the bottom line.

Dave: Okay.

Arianna: Once you accept that, everything else follows. You know, every company has different pain points. You know, a company may have a retention pain point, or a recruitment pain point, but whatever the pain points, the solution lies in recognizing there's a connection between wellbeing and performance.

Dave: All right, I absolutely love that answer, and it's accorded both of our belief systems. We're coming to on the end of the interview. When I interviewed you, this was about two and a half years ago. I asked you the Bulletproof question, and I think answers will probably have shifted now. I'm going to ask you the same question. I was going to say: tell me three things that will make us sleep better, but it's more interesting. If someone came to you today, and they said "Arianna, based on all you've learned the last few years, and even before that, I want to perform better at every single thing I do, what are the three most important pieces of knowledge I need?"

What would you offer today?

Arianna: I would say the first, most important thing is sort of philosophical. It's not to completely identify with your job.

Dave: Oh, amen.

Arianna: Because, no matter how magnificent your job is, who you are as a human being is more important, more sacred than your job. The minute you forget that, you're at the mercy of events.

Dave: Yeah.

Arianna: Because even the most successful career has problems, has challenges. If you think this is who you are, then you're going to be at the mercy of these events. Your stress levels and your happiness levels and your health are going to be at the mercy of the events.

The second thing is physical, and mental, and emotional. It's everything we've been talking about, which is recognizing that taking care of ourselves, putting our own oxygen mask first is going to make us better at everything. Our jobs, and our parenting, our relationships, everything.

The third thing is to remember what Colette said, the French writer, she said "Um, I had such a wonderful life, I just wish I had realized it sooner."

Dave: Kind of like gratitude.

Arianna: I think most of us focus on the things that are not working in our lives, rather than the things that are working. It's almost like an evolutionary fight-or-flight mode that we tend to go into. I think trying to focus on what is working is incredibly powerful, and remembering every day, especially before you go to sleep to do a short gratitude list, begins to change the quality of your life.

Dave: All right, it's such a powerful list. We talked about gratitude at the company meetings. For the past, I think, four or five years now, with my kids that are seven and nine, every night before bed, I say "Tell me three things you're grateful for."

Arianna: Fantastic.

Dave: That's part of our nightly ritual. Usually it's "I'm grateful for something kind of trivial, because they're little kids." Not so long ago, when Al was about five, he said "I'm grateful for the Big Bang, because without that, there wouldn't be anything."

Arianna: Oh, that's so great.

Dave: What a cool [inaudible 00:42:06].

Arianna: I love that.

Dave: [inaudible 00:42:07] You never know what's going to come out of [inaudible 00:42:12]

Arianna: Tell him to write for Thrive Global.

Dave: All right, I'll tell him.

Arianna: Sure.

Dave: The letters might be backwards.

Arianna: That's fine.

Dave: On that note, Arianna, people can find out about Thrive Global at Thrive Global dot com. Anything else you wanted [inaudible 00:42:25]-

Arianna: I want to invite anybody who is watching us to tell us their stories. To write them for your site, for Thrive Global dot com. We just want to collect as many stories as possible. It could be stories of burnout, wake-up calls, it could be stories of what you are doing to make your life better that others can learn from. The more we can share these stories, the faster we'll accelerate the culture shift.

Dave: Well, I appreciate the work that you're doing on making people aware of these things because people are actually better than they think they are, when they get enough sleep. I truly believe that we're meant to be nice to each other, we're meant to be kind. We're wired that way. It's just lifestyle crap that gets in the way of that. You're [inaudible 00:43:12] going, and thank you.

Arianna: Thank you for everything, including the Bulletproof Coffee I drink every morning.

Dave: You're so welcome.

How did we do?



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