

THE PERFORMANCE PRESCRIPTION

The Science of Sustainable Success



9 September 2026

Dr John Briffa



CONFLICTS OF INTEREST



“I don’t have any”

STRESS AND BURNOUT ARE COMMON

“ Mental Health UK’s third annual Burnout Report once again exposes a persistent and troubling trend: **burnout** and **extreme stress** continue to affect **nine in ten people** across the UK.

Many employees are still on the brink, with **growing numbers taking time off due to mental health pressures**, while stress remains too often **overlooked** and **under-supported**. ”

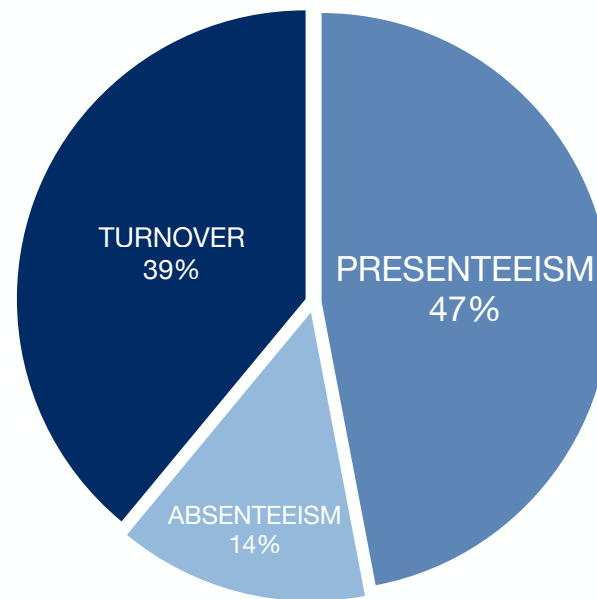


The Burnout Report - Mental Health UK - 2026



WELLBEING ISSUES HAVE MORE THAN A HUMAN COST

£51BN
PER ANNUM



Deloitte: Mental health and employers - The case for employers to invest in supporting working parents and a mentally healthy workplace - May 2024

PRESENTEEISM - THE TIME-PRODUCTIVITY GAP



PEOPLE PUTTING IN THE HOURS...



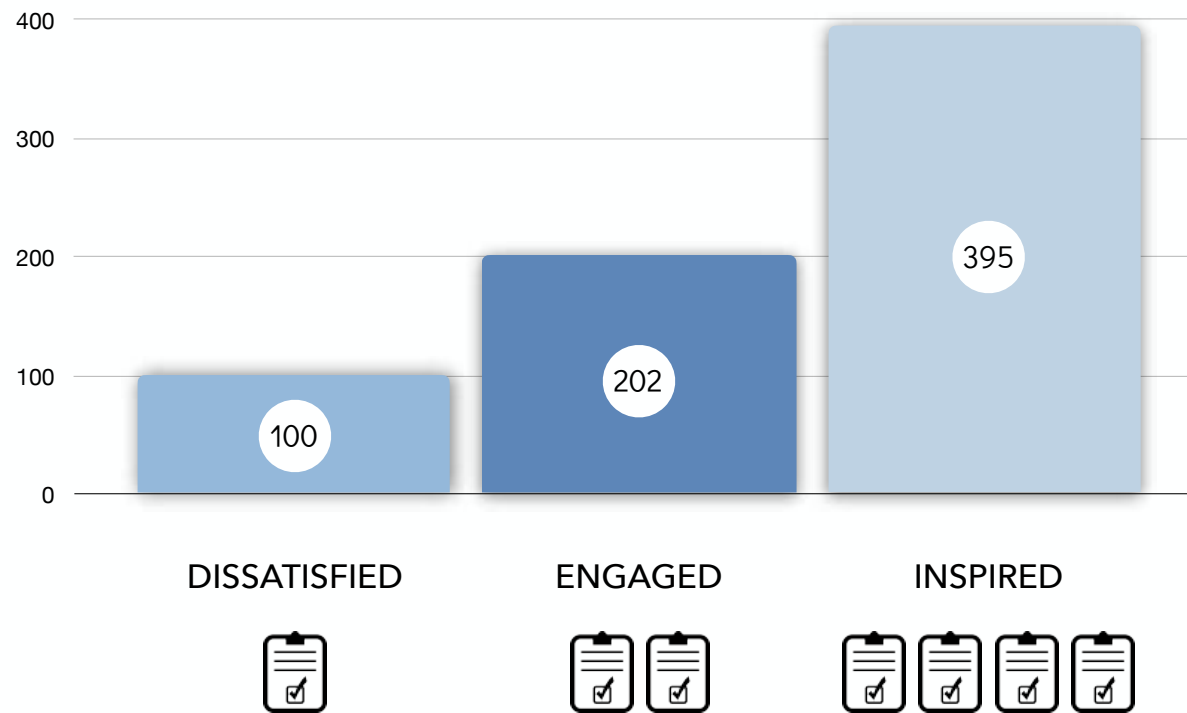
...WITHOUT THE PRODUCTIVITY TO MATCH

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT

- feeling **energised** at work
- **identifying** with an organisation and feeling **loyalty** to it
- feeling **satisfied** with their job

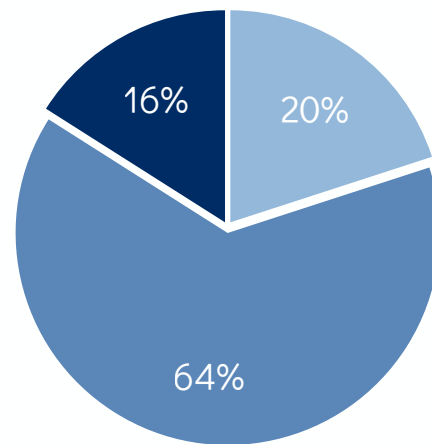


ENGAGEMENT AFFECTS PRODUCTIVITY (A LOT)

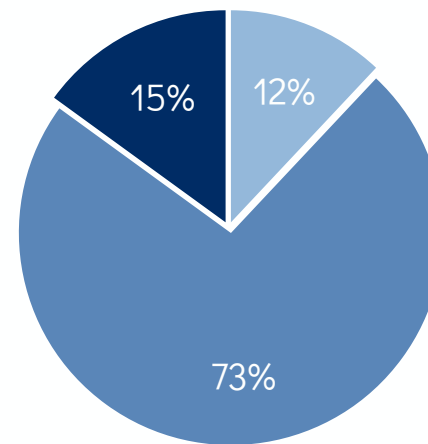


Time, Talent, Energy - Mankins M and Garton E - HBR Press 2017

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS LOW



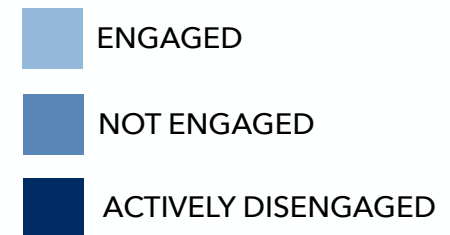
GLOBAL



EUROPE



Gallup - State of the Global Workplace - The Human Side of the AI Revolution - 2026 Report



IN OUR RUSH TO
OPTIMISE *THE WORK*



A man and a woman are sitting at a desk in a modern office, looking at a computer monitor displaying various data charts and graphs. The man is wearing glasses and a light-colored shirt, and the woman is wearing a blue top. They appear to be in a discussion. The background shows a bright, open-plan office with other people and colorful wall decorations.

**IN OUR RUSH TO
OPTIMISE *THE WORK***

**WHAT GOT LOST IN THE
MIX IS *THE WORKER***



THE PERFORMANCE PRESCRIPTION

The Science of Sustainable Success



EMOTIONAL
REGULATION



ENERGY



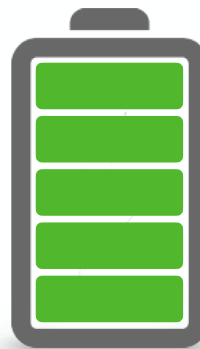
ENVIRONMENTAL
DESIGN



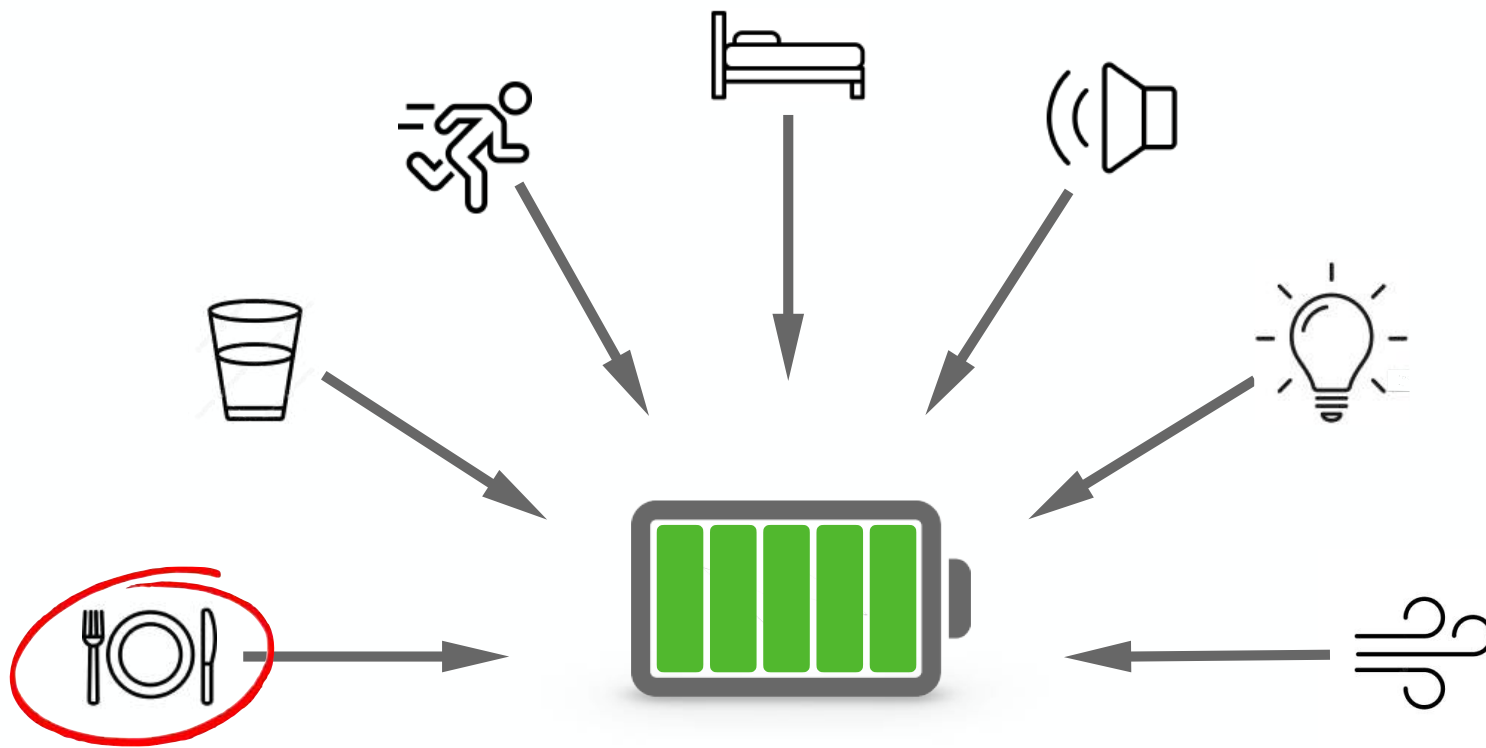
EXECUTION



PURPOSE
OPPORTUNITY
TALENT
EXPERIENCE
STRATEGY
TIME



ENGAGEMENT ↑
PERFORMANCE ↑
PRODUCTIVITY ↑
SUSTAINABILITY ↑



EATING FOR ENERGY



WHEN TO EAT



EAT BREAKFAST!

(IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT
MEAL OF THE DAY!)



1.5 %

20 % +
OF ENERGY



A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue polka-dot shirt and a blue headset, is sitting at a wooden desk. She is smiling and looking at a silver laptop. Her right hand is resting on a black pen over an open notebook. The background shows a modern office environment with shelves, books, and plants.

NO BREAKFAST ?!

NO PROBLEM !

INTERMITTENT FASTING



‘TIME-RESTRICTED EATING’

- promotes production of **ketones** (breakdown products of fat that are a **good source of fuel** for the body and brain)
- activation of ‘**orexin-A**’ (increases alertness)
- **increased** levels of ‘**brain-derived neurotrophic factor**’ (BDNF)
- **lower** levels of **inflammation**
- **activates protective** and ‘**anti-ageing**’ mechanisms
- consistently, individuals **feel better, function better** and very often have **lower needs for sleep**

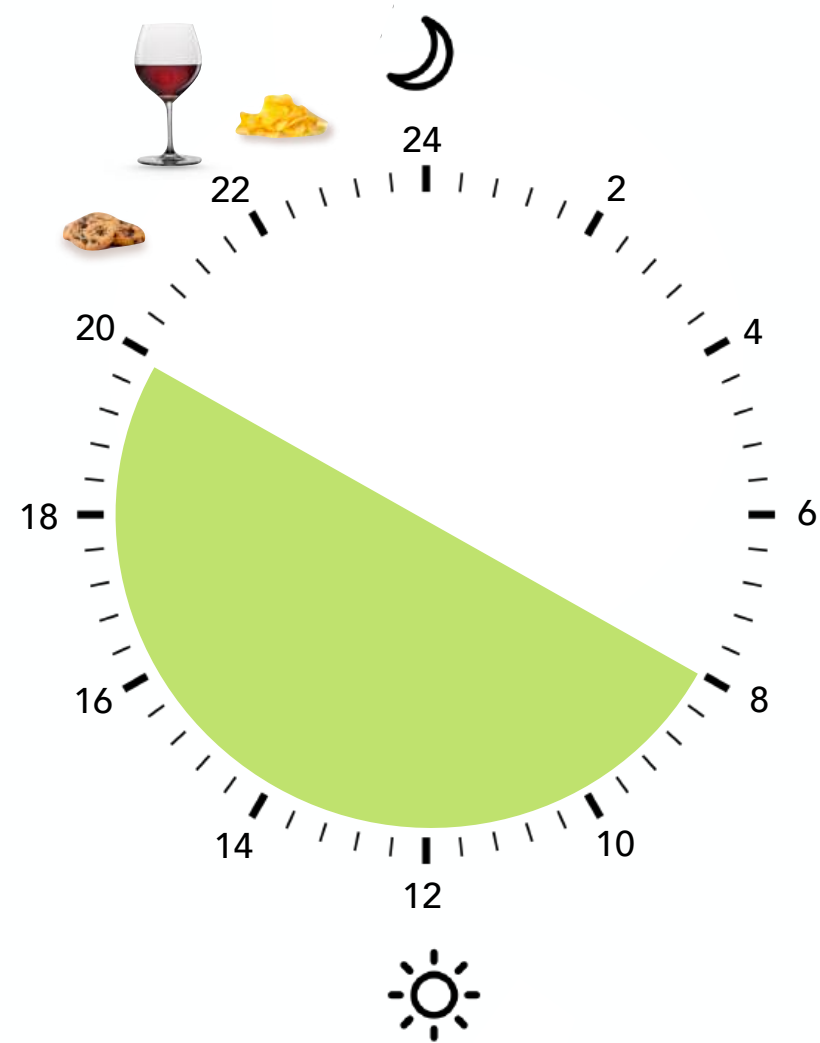


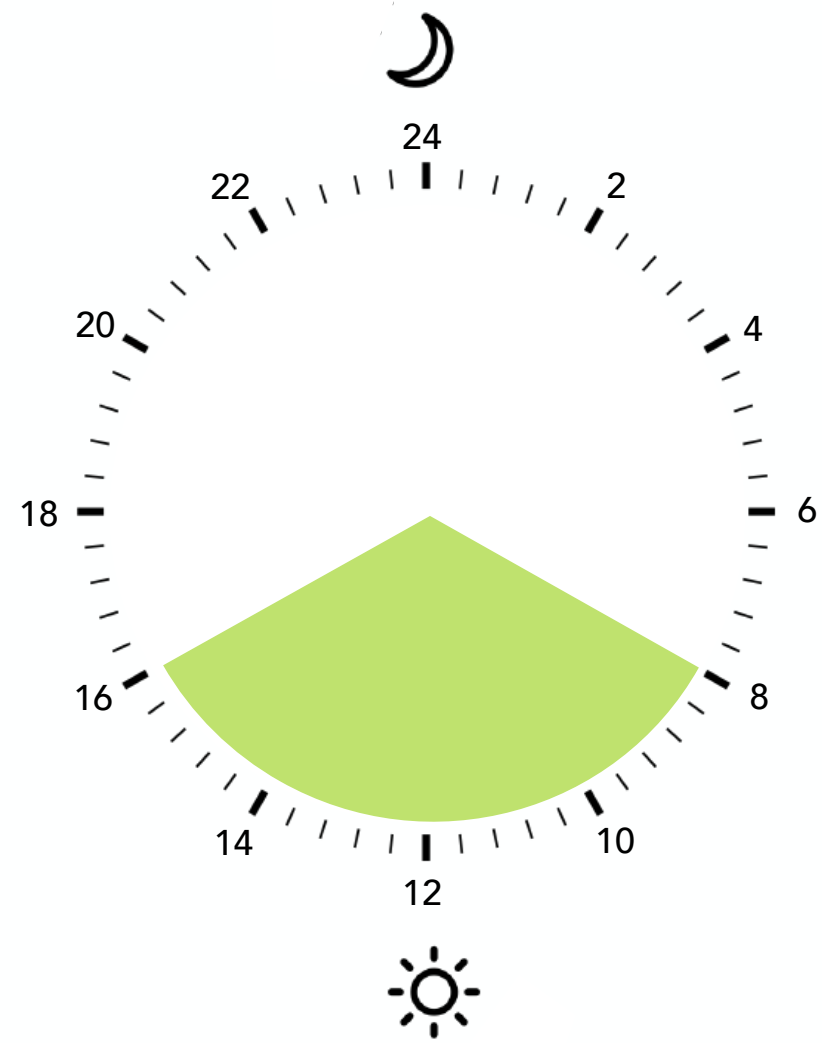
INTERMITTENT FASTING BRINGS BROAD BENEFITS FOR HEALTH

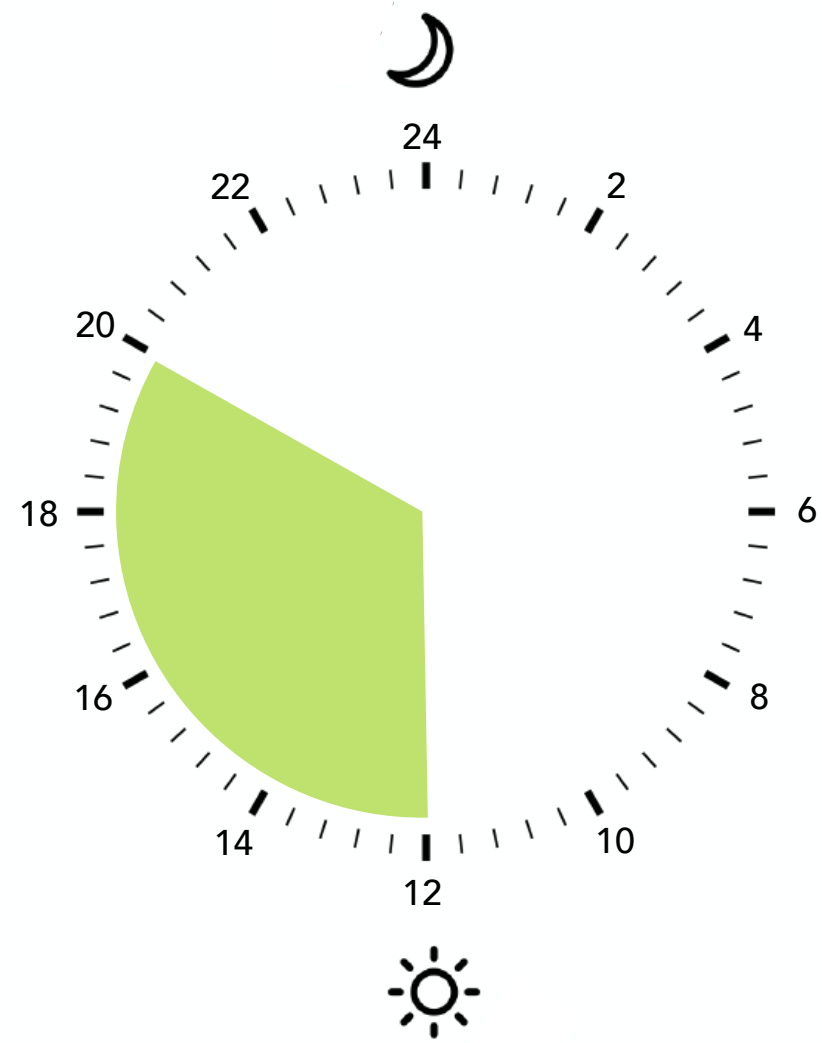
**TABLE 2 | All the results calculated using Stata.**

Characteristic	Trials	Participants	WMD	95% CI	Z	P	I ² (%)	P for heterogeneity
Body composition								
Weight (kg)	45	2,225	-1.78	(-2.21, -1.35)	8.11	0.000	0	0.960
WC (cm)	23	1,385	-1.19	(-1.80, -0.57)	3.77	0.000	23.8	0.148
FM (kg)	33	1,610	-1.26	(-1.57, -0.95)	7.87	0.000	22.9	0.121
BMI (kg/m ²)	26	1,590	-0.58	(-0.80, -0.37)	5.24	0.000	0	0.886
Glycemic control								
FBG (mmol/L)	34	1,863	-0.053	(-0.105, -0.001)	2.02	0.044	44.4	0.003
Fins (mIU/L)	26	1,161	-0.80	(-1.15, -0.44)	4.40	0.000	24.3	0.130
HbA1c (%)	9	544	-0.06	(-0.18, 0.05)	1.07	0.287	0	0.974
HOMA-IR	19	886	-0.21	(-0.36, -0.05)	2.66	0.008	38.4	0.046
Blood pressure								
SBP (mmHg)	29	1,393	-2.14	(-3.54, -0.73)	2.97	0.003	36.2	0.028
DBP (mmHg)	27	1,277	-1.38	(-2.35, -0.41)	2.79	0.005	0	0.588
Lipid panel								
TC (mmol/L)	33	1,768	-0.10	(-0.17, -0.02)	2.54	0.011	14.6	0.233
TG (mmol/L)	34	1,750	-0.09	(-0.13, -0.04)	3.78	0.000	5.5	0.377
LDL-C (mmol/L)	36	1,850	-0.056	(-0.114, 0.003)	1.85	0.064	0	0.967
HDL-C (mmol/L)	36	1,852	-0.01	(-0.04, 0.01)	1.15	0.250	0	0.858

WC, waist circumference; FM, fat mass; BMI, body mass index; SBP, systolic blood pressure; DBP, diastolic blood pressure; TC, total cholesterol; TG, triglyceride; HDL, high-density lipoprotein; LDL, low-density lipoprotein; FBG, fasting blood glucose; Fins, fasting insulin; HbA1c, glycosylated hemoglobin; HOMA-IR, insulin resistance.







BREAKFAST FOR ONE?



50%



50%

FLUID THINKING





60 kg



90 kg = + 50%



+50%









**DRINK ENOUGH FLUID
TO KEEP YOUR URINE
PALE YELLOW
THROUGHOUT THE
COURSE OF THE DAY**





FUNCTIONAL FITNESS



FITNESS AND LONGEVITY

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Original Investigation | Cardiology

October 19, 2018

Association of Cardiorespiratory Fitness With Long-term Mortality Among Adults Undergoing Exercise Treadmill Testing

Kyle Mandager, MD¹, Serge Hurlb, MD², Paul Crenen, MD³, et al

Author Affiliations | Article Information

JAMA Netw Open. 2018;1(6):e183605. doi:10.1001/janetworkopen.2018.3605

Editorial Comment

Key Points

Question

What is the association between cardiorespiratory fitness and long-term mortality?

Findings

In this cohort study of 122 007 consecutive patients undergoing exercise treadmill testing, cardiorespiratory fitness was inversely associated with all-cause mortality without an observed upper limit of benefit. Extreme cardiorespiratory fitness (≥2 SDs above the mean for age and sex) was associated with the lowest risk-adjusted all-cause mortality compared with all other performance groups.

Meaning

Cardiorespiratory fitness is a modifiable indicator of long-term mortality, and health care professionals should encourage patients to achieve and maintain high levels of fitness.

LOW	BELOW AVERAGE	ABOVE AVERAGE	HIGH	ELITE
-----	---------------	---------------	------	-------

RISK FACTOR	↑ RISK OF DEATH
BELOW AVERAGE -v- ABOVE AVERAGE FITNESS	41%
BELOW AVERAGE -v- HIGH FITNESS	100%
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE	21%
KNOWN HEART DISEASE	29%
DIABETES	40%
SMOKING	41%

Mandsager K, et al. Association of Cardiorespiratory Fitness With Long-term Mortality Among Adults Undergoing Exercise Treadmill Testing. JAMA Netw Open. 2018;1(6):e183605.

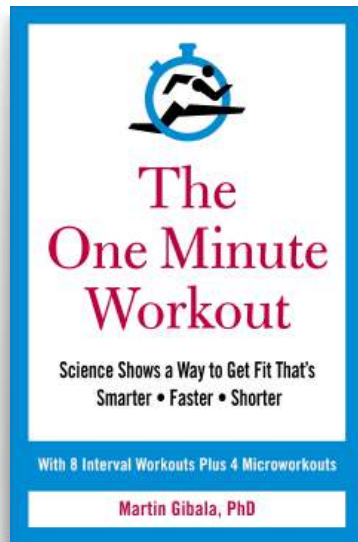




HIGH-INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (HIIT)



THE 'ONE-MINUTE' WORKOUT



2 MINS WARM-UP

20 s SPRINT

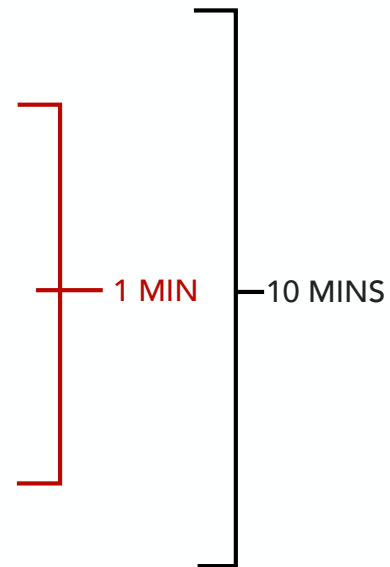
2 MINS 'EASY'

20 s SPRINT

2 MINS 'EASY'

20 s SPRINT

3 MINS COOL-DOWN



3 x PER WEEK
=
30 MINS PER WEEK

Gillen JB, et al. Twelve Weeks of Sprint Interval Training Improves Indices of Cardiometabolic Health Similar to Traditional Endurance Training despite a Five-Fold Lower Exercise Volume and Time Commitment. PLoS One. 2016;26;11(4)

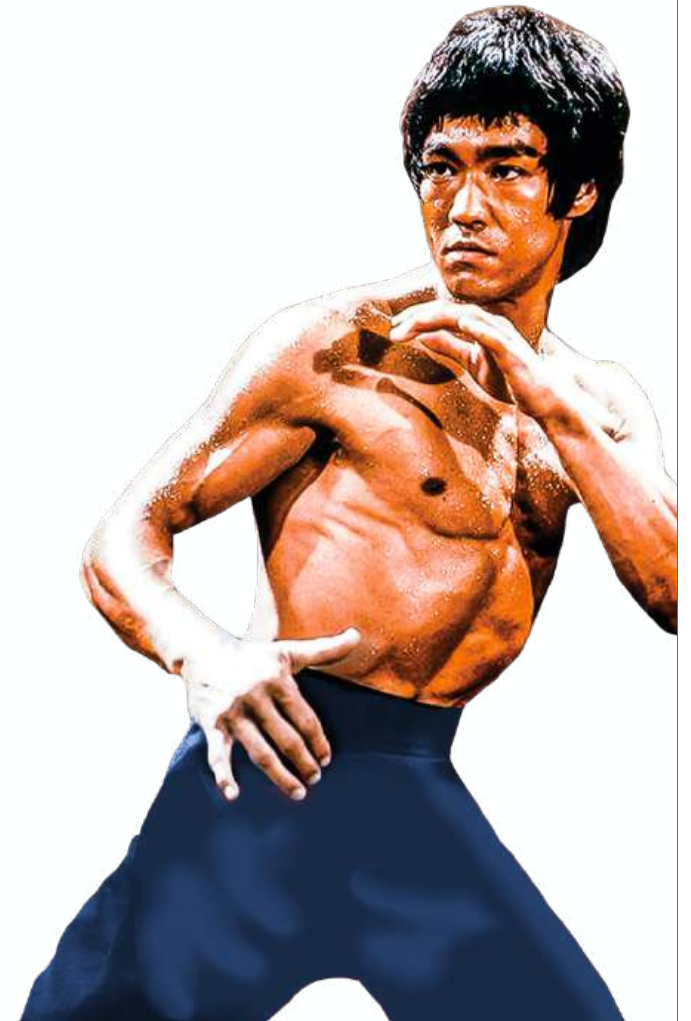
REMINDER



	HIIT	STEADY STATE
REGIME	One-Minute Workout'	2 min warm-up 45 mins at 70% MHR 3 min cool-down
FREQUENCY AND DURATION	3 X per week for 12 weeks	3 X per week for 12 weeks
INCREASE IN VO ₂ MAX	19%	19%
INCREASE IN CITRATE SYNTHASE (MITOCHONDRIAL ACTIVITY)	48%	27%
INCREASE IN INSULIN FUNCTIONING (METABOLIC HEALTH)	53%	34%
TOTAL EXERCISE TIME/WEEK	30 mins	150 mins
INTENSE EXERCISE TIME/WEEK	3 mins	135 mins

Gillen JB, et al. Twelve Weeks of Sprint Interval Training Improves Indices of Cardiometabolic Health Similar to Traditional Endurance Training despite a Five-Fold Lower Exercise Volume and Time Commitment. PLoS One. 2016;26;11(4)

LONG-TERM CONSISTENCY
TRUMPS SHORT-TERM INTENSITY





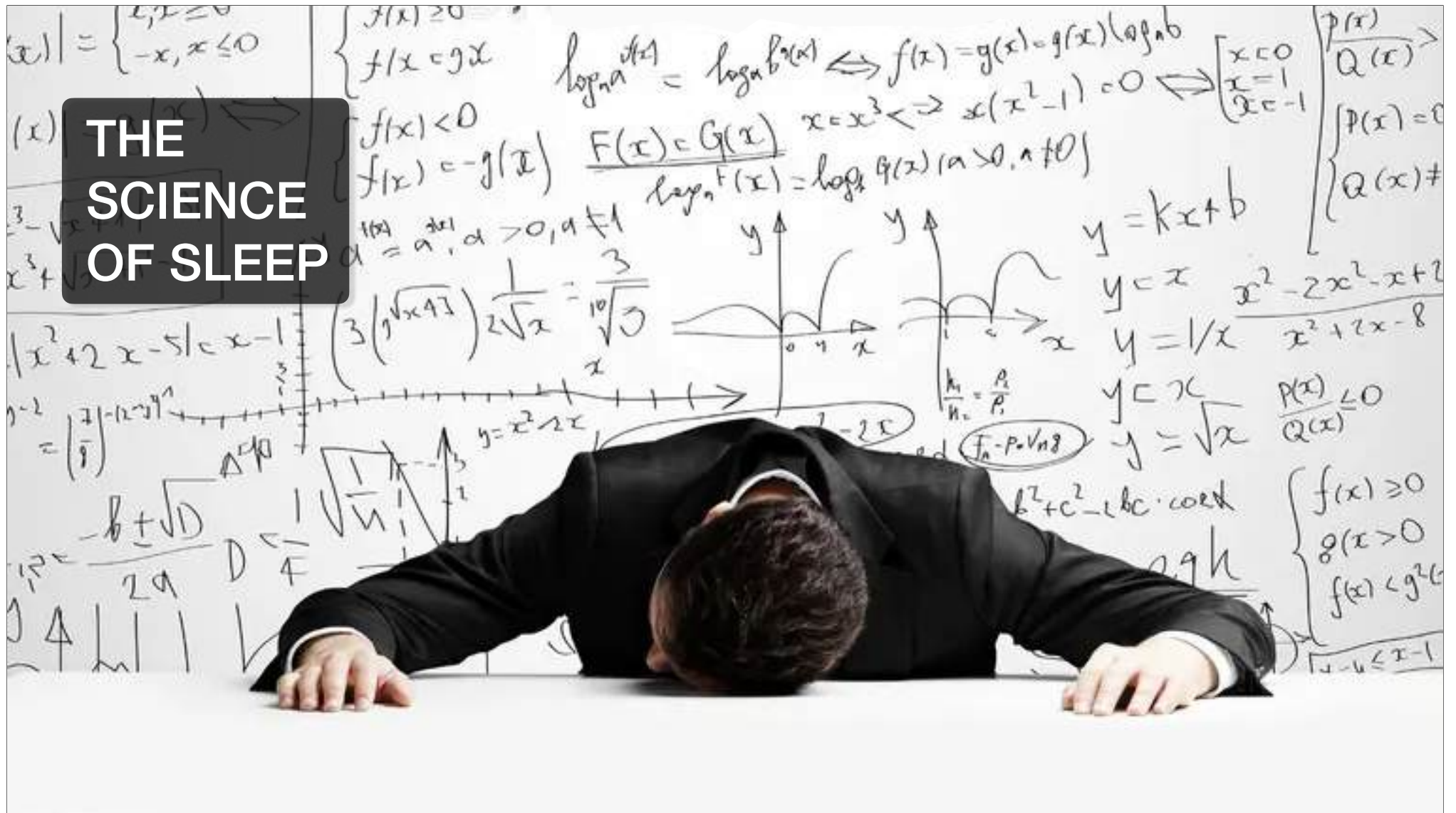
FOCUS LESS ON
WHAT YOU DID

AND MORE ON
WHAT WILL DO

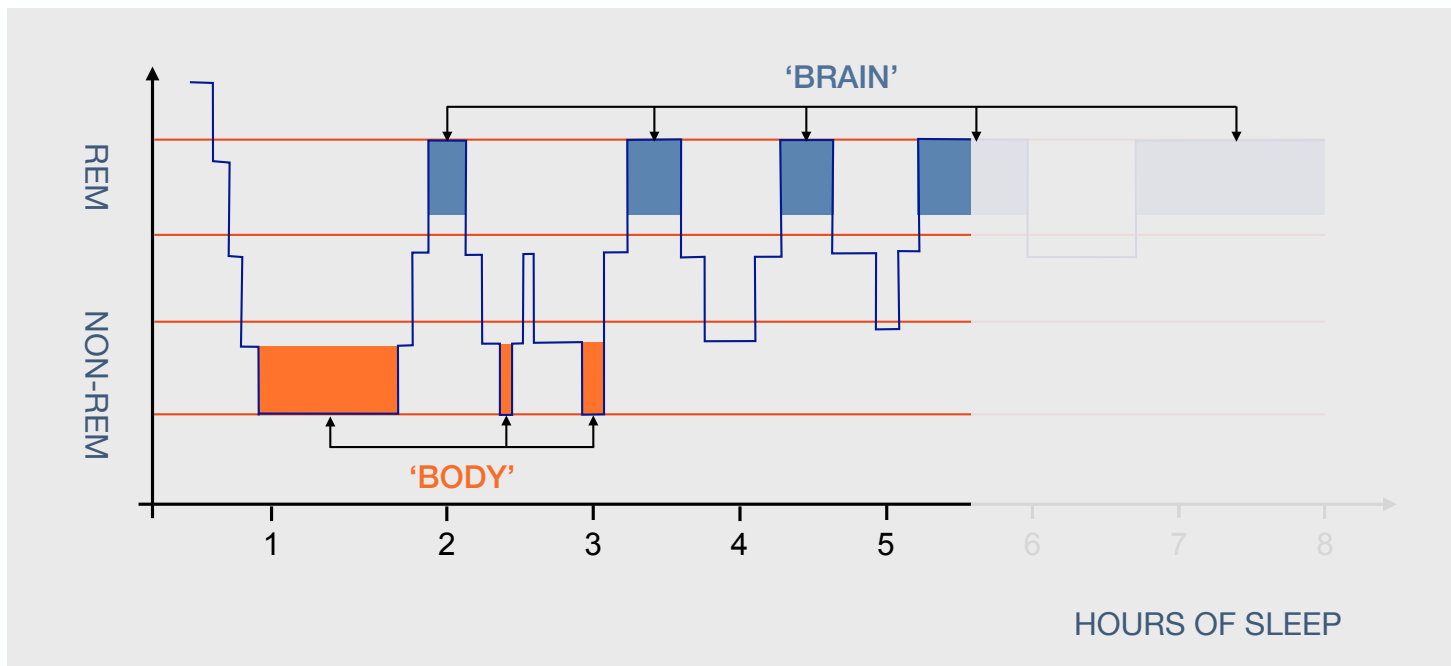
(AND IS DOABLE!)



THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP



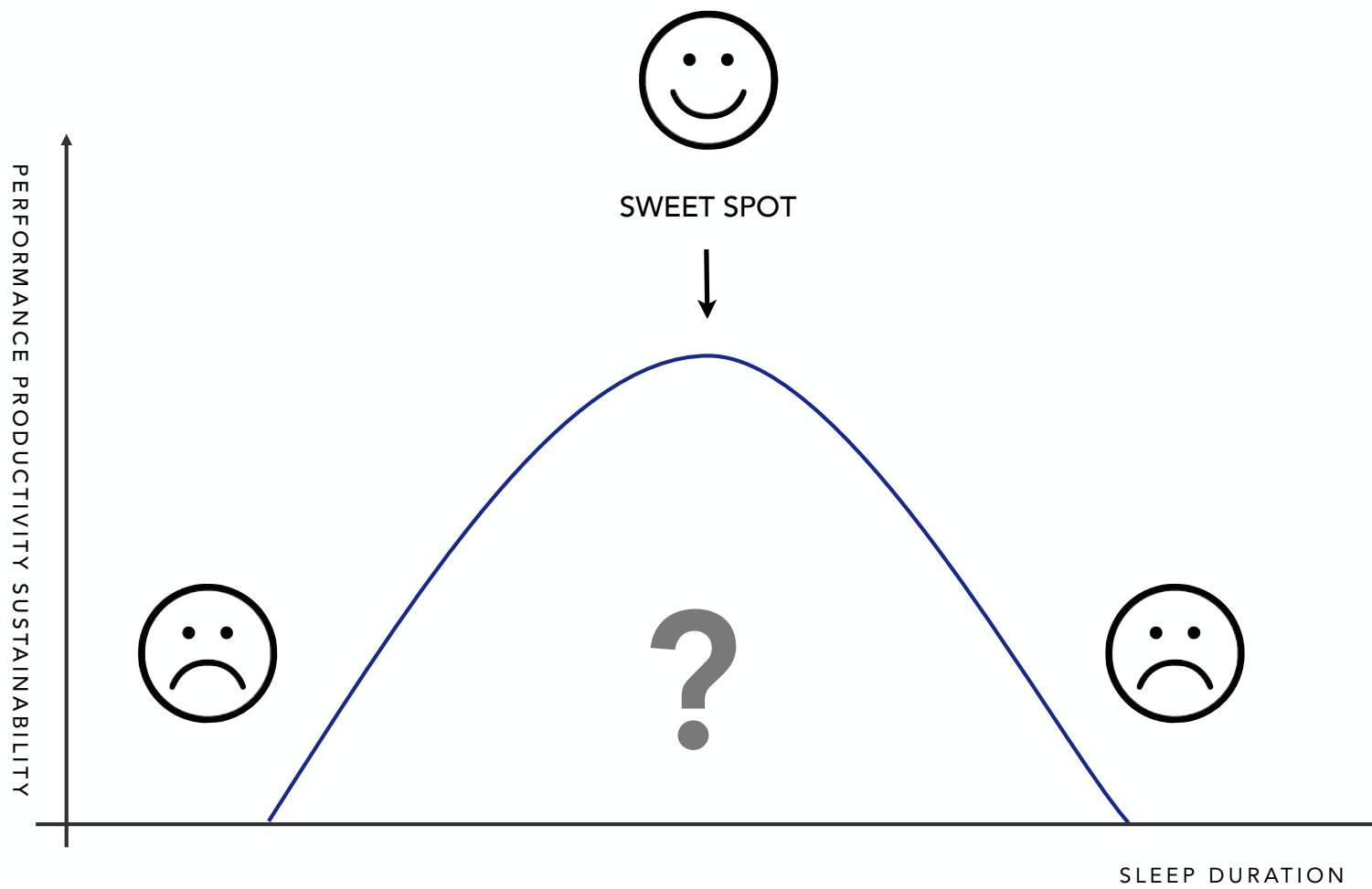
SLEEP STAGES



THE COST OF SLEEP DEBT

- slowed mental performance and increased errors
- impairment of short-term memory, decision-making and critical thinking
- **increased effort** required to complete a task
- mood issues
- reduced willpower
- compromised sustainability



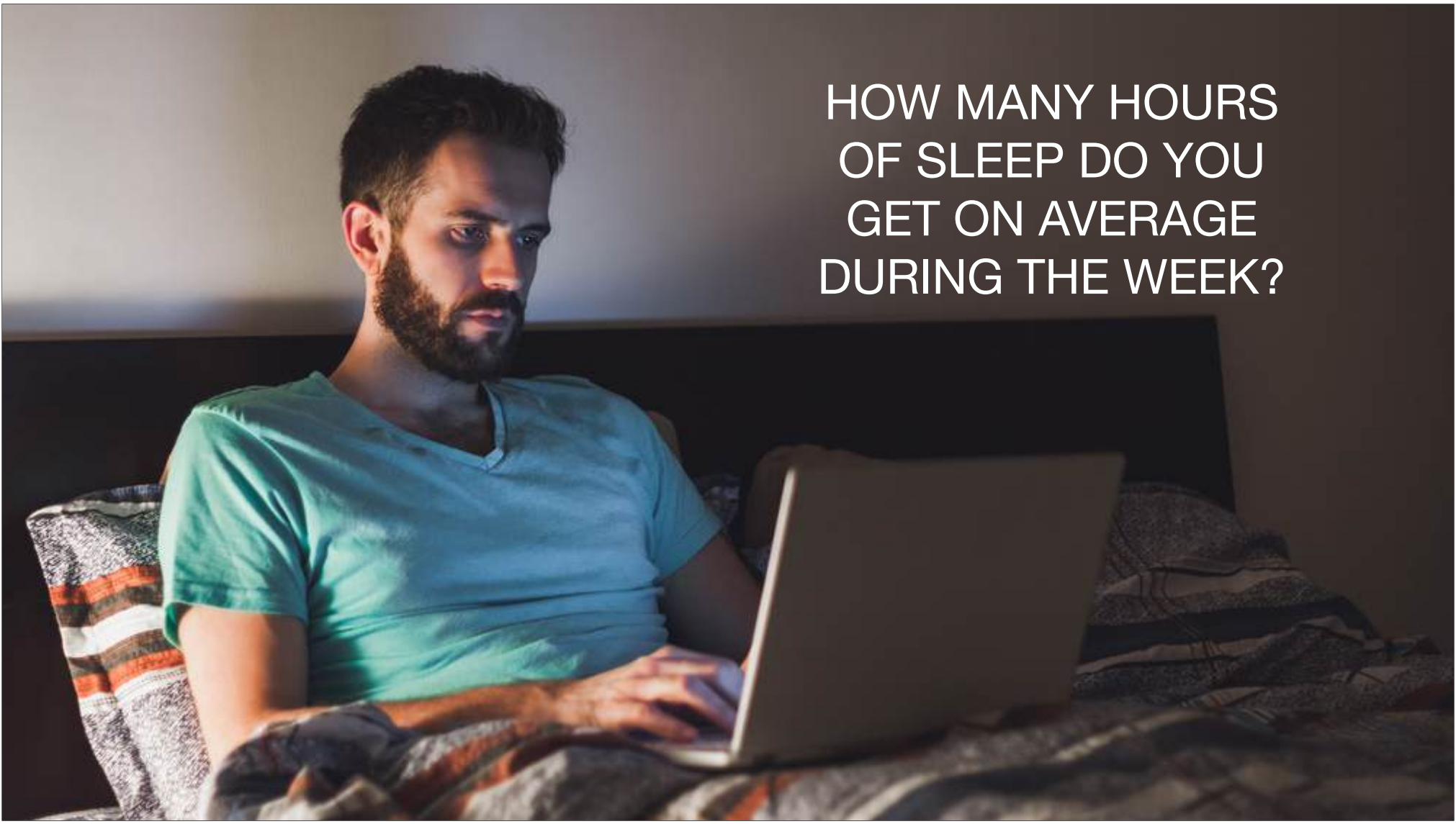


SLEEP - ARE YOU MEETING YOUR NEEDS?

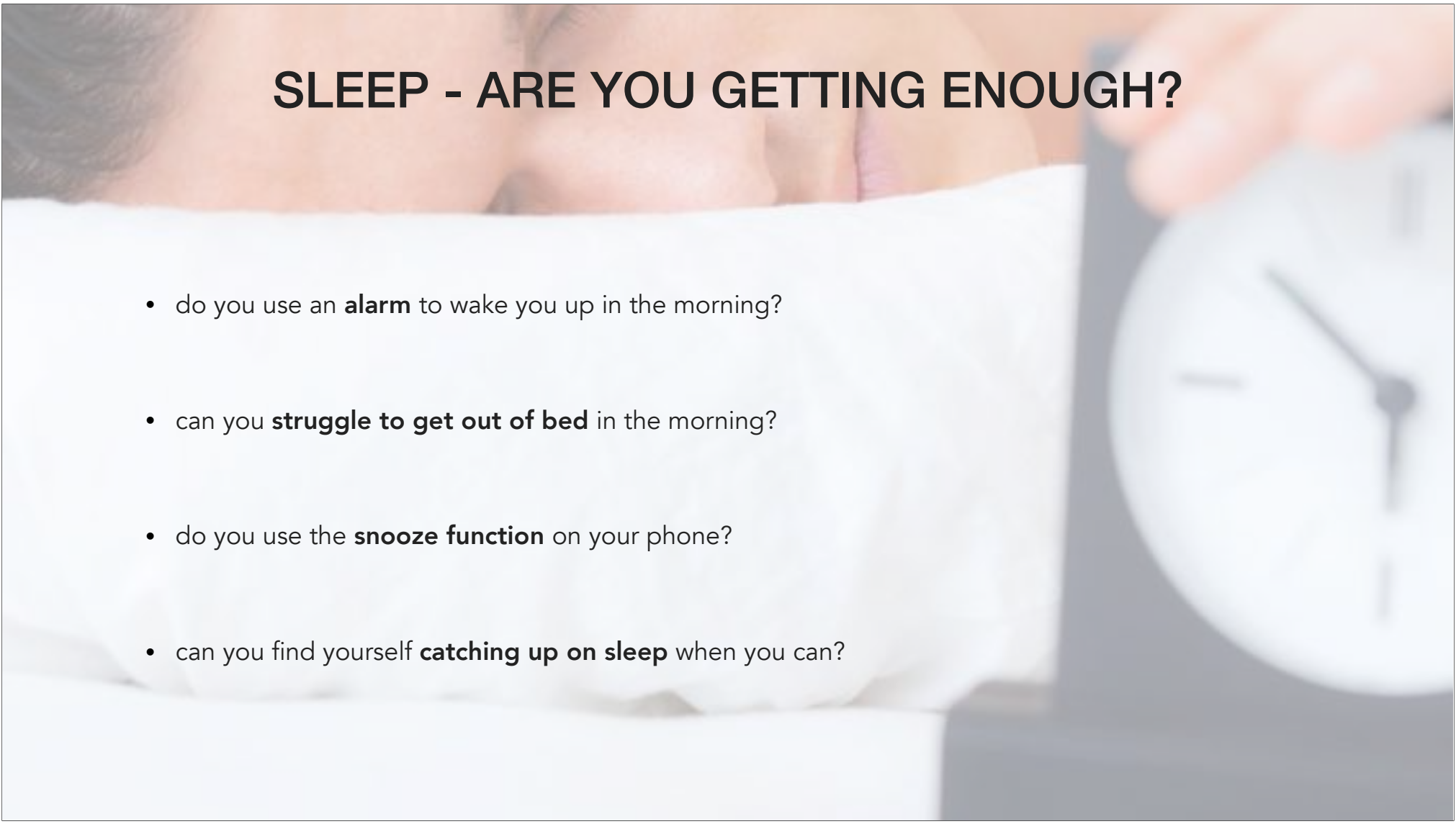


HOW MANY HOURS
DO YOU NEED TO
SLEEP TO FEEL
YOUR BEST?





HOW MANY HOURS
OF SLEEP DO YOU
GET ON AVERAGE
DURING THE WEEK?

A close-up photograph of a person's face, partially covered by a white pillow, appearing to be asleep. In the background, a round analog clock is visible, showing a time around 10:10. The overall scene is dimly lit, suggesting a bedroom at night or in the early morning.

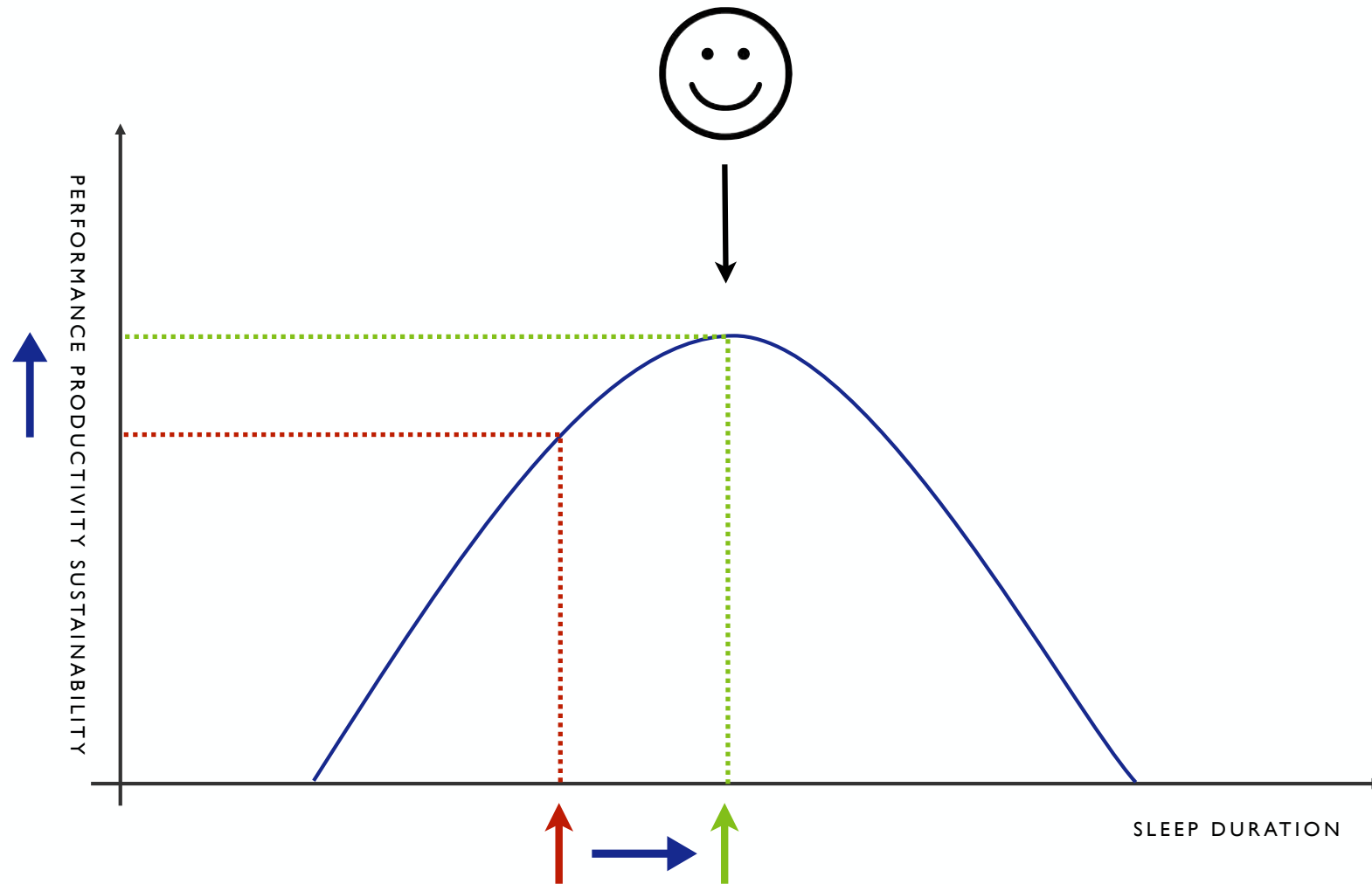
SLEEP - ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH?

- do you use an **alarm** to wake you up in the morning?
- can you **struggle to get out of bed** in the morning?
- do you use the **snooze function** on your phone?
- can you find yourself **catching up on sleep** when you can?

MORE
SLEEP
NEEDED!







STOP WASTING TIME...
...**START SLEEPING MORE**



TIME FOR
BED?



DOES IT MAKE SENSE
TO SCHEDULE SLEEP?

YES

SHOULD WE DO IT?





DOES IT MAKE SENSE
TO SCHEDULE SLEEP?

YES

SHOULD WE DO IT?

PROBABLY NOT





GO TO
BED
EARLY

A photograph of a man with a beard and dark hair sleeping peacefully on a white pillow. He is wearing a grey t-shirt and has his arms crossed over his chest. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. Two thought bubbles are superimposed on the image. The first bubble, on the left, contains the text 'Getting more sleep is not a weakness...'. The second bubble, on the right, contains the text '...it's a strength!'. A series of small white circles connects the two bubbles, following the path of the man's head and arms.

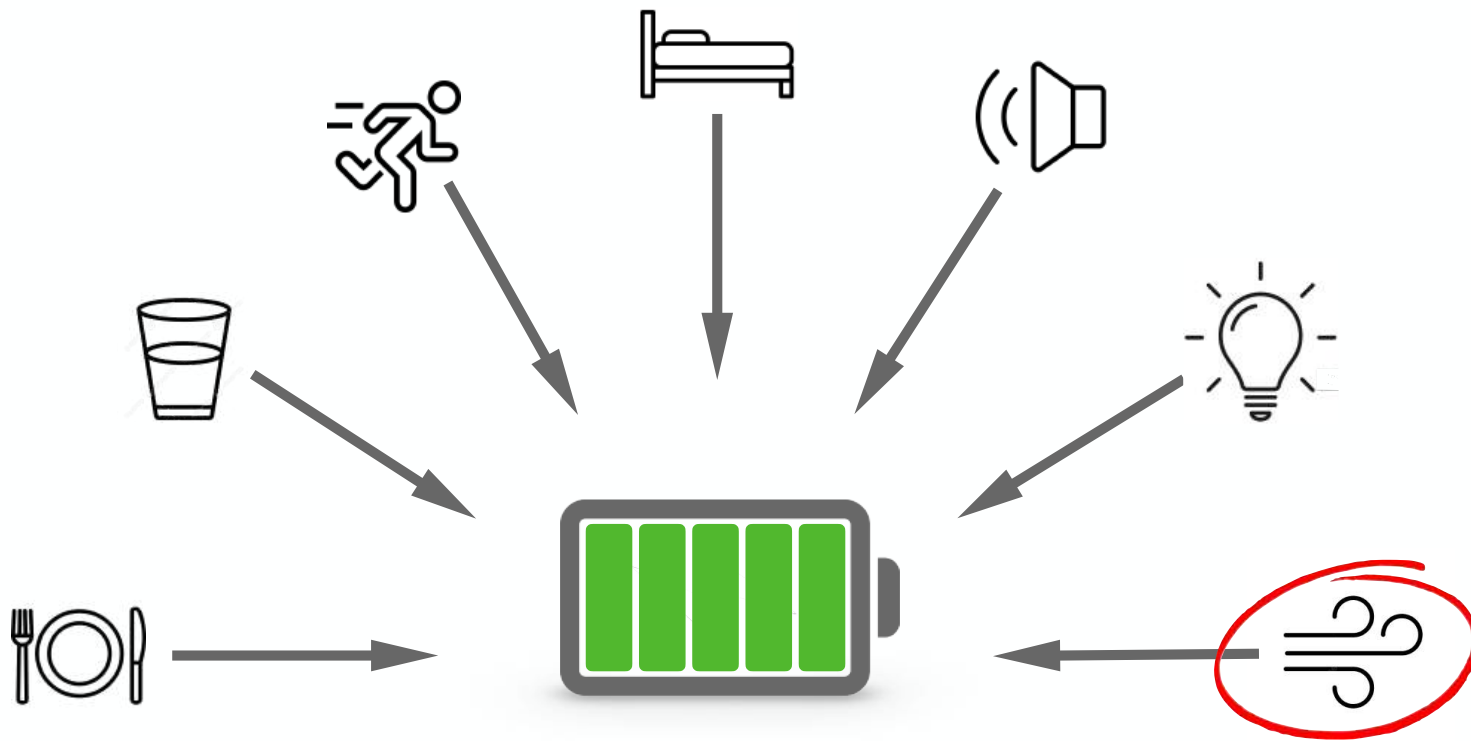
Getting more
sleep is not a
weakness...

*...it's a
strength!*



A person's hands are visible holding a white rectangular sign against a plain white background. The sign features the text 'QUALITY NOT just QUANTITY' in a bold, sans-serif font. The words 'QUALITY' and 'QUANTITY' are in red, while 'NOT' is in black. The word 'just' is written in a black, cursive script font, positioned between 'NOT' and 'QUANTITY'. The sign is held at the corners by two hands, with the fingers gripping the edges. The lighting is even, and the overall composition is simple and direct.

QUALITY
NOT *just*
QUANTITY

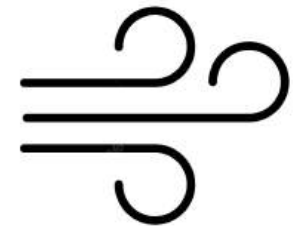


CARBON DIOXIDE AFFECTS SLEEP

- **Air quality - including CO₂ levels** - has been shown to affect **sleep** and **performance**
- In one study, **660 -v- 2585 ppm of CO₂** was associated with objectively measured **sleep quality**, as well as **ability to concentrate** and tests of **logical thinking** the next day



Strøm-Tejsen P, et al. The effects of bedroom air quality on sleep and next-day performance. Indoor Air. 2016;26(5):679-86





CLEAR THE AIR WHEN WFH

- **A build-up of CO₂** can cause a room to feel airless and stuffy and affect mental functioning and general wellbeing.
- In one study, compared with **CO₂ levels of 600 ppm** in the air, concentrations of **1,400 ppm** caused overall cognitive function to **halve**.
- **CO₂ concentration** should ideally be **below 800 ppm**



Allen JG, et al. Associations of Cognitive Function Scores with Carbon Dioxide, Ventilation, and Volatile Organic Compound Exposures in Office Workers: A Controlled Exposure Study of Green and Conventional Office Environments. Environ Health Perspect. 2016;124(6):805-12





NETATMO INDOOR MONITOR



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EMOTIONAL
REGULATION



ENVIRONMENTAL
DESIGN



EXECUTION

4 NOVEMBER

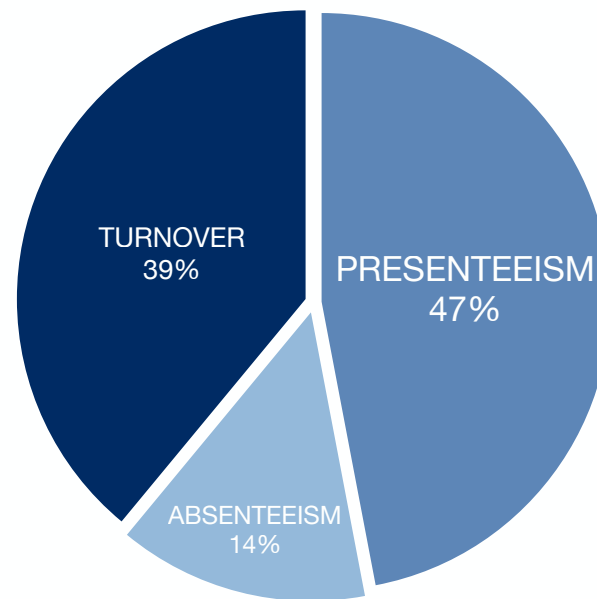


B Dr. John Briffa

REMINDER

WELLBEING ISSUES HAVE MORE THAN A HUMAN COST

£51BN
PER ANNUM



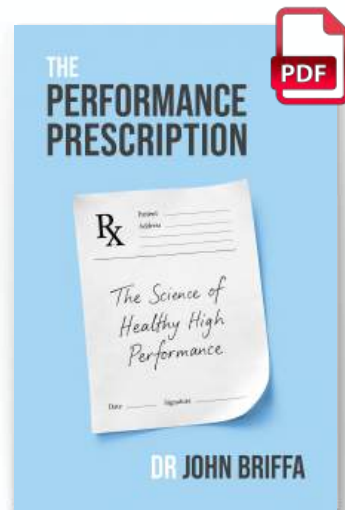
Deloitte: Mental health and employers - The case for employers to invest in supporting working parents and a mentally healthy workplace - May 2024

WELLBEING INTERVENTIONS HAVE SIGNIFICANT ROI



Deloitte: Mental health and employers - The case for employers to invest in supporting working parents and a mentally healthy workplace 2024

 www.drjohnbriffa.com



drjohnbriffa.com/theperformanceprescriptionmbc

About Dr John Briffa



Dr John Briffa BSc MB BS (Lond) is a medical doctor, speaker, facilitator, coach and author with 30 years experience in supporting wellbeing and performance with organisations globally. Clients include Deloitte, PwC, Barclays, HSBC, Bank of America, A&O Shearman, Clifford Chance, IBM, Mastercard and Schroders.

Dr Briffa graduated with honours from University College London School of Medicine, where he also earned an intercalated BSc degree in Biomedical Science. In addition to his corporate work, he has more than three decades of experience as a practising doctor, specialising in lifestyle-oriented and functional medicine.

Dr Briffa is a widely-published journalist and former columnist for *Men's Health*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Observer*. He has contributed more than 800 articles and columns to mainstream newspapers and magazines and is a recipient of the UK's Health Journalist of the Year award.

He is the author *The Performance Prescription: The Science of Healthy High Performance* (Pinnacle Press, 2026), and nine other books



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