



ONE LIFE

ONE LIFE · PILLAR THREE

The Sleep Protocol

Five rules, nothing to buy. The sleep protocol I run with founders, exactly as they get it.

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01

Start with the room, not with yourself

Almost everything wrecking a founder's sleep is in the room rather than in the body. The room is also the only part you can fix tonight, for nothing, without needing a single good decision at eleven at night.

Three things. Do them once and they keep working while you forget about them.

1. Seventeen to nineteen degrees.

Colder than most people keep a bedroom, and it is the single biggest lever in here. Core temperature has to drop for deep sleep to happen. A warm room does not stop you falling asleep, it quietly removes the part of the night that actually repairs you.

2. Blackout dark.

Dark enough that you cannot see your own hand. Not dim. If you are renting or travelling, a cheap eye mask does the same job as a thousand-dollar blind.

3. Phone out of the room.

Not airplane mode. Out of the room. The problem is not the notification, it is that the thing is reachable. Buy a seven dollar alarm clock and the argument is over. This is the rule people resist hardest and the one that changes the most.

02

Fix the wake time. The bedtime follows.

Everyone tries to go to bed earlier. It almost never holds, because bedtime is the one end of the night you have the least control over.

Work the other end instead.

1. Same wake time every day, within thirty minutes.

Including Saturday. Including after a bad night. Especially after a bad night. The wake time is what anchors the whole rhythm, and sleeping in to recover is what breaks it for the next three days.

2. Seven hours in bed, minimum.

In bed, not asleep. Nobody sleeps every minute they are lying down, so seven hours in bed is roughly six and a bit asleep, which is the floor rather than the target.

3. Weekends do not pay it back.

Five bad nights and a long Sunday does not settle the debt. It just moves your body clock two time zones west and you start Monday jet-lagged in your own house.

03

Two inputs that quietly undo all of it

Both of these feel unrelated to sleep. Both decide what kind of night you get.

1. Caffeine before two in the afternoon.

Half of a coffee is still in you five to six hours later, and a quarter of it after ten. You will still fall asleep on an evening espresso. You will just get a worse night and have no idea why, because the thing that failed was hours earlier.

2. No alcohol in the last three hours.

A drink does put you under faster, which is exactly why this one fools people. It then takes the back half of the night apart. This is the single most common reason a founder sleeps eight hours, wakes up wrecked, and blames the job.

How to know it worked, in two weeks

A feeling is a measurement, and it is usually the most useful one in the room. But memory is generous about the past and vague about the present, so write it down rather than trusting it.

Before you change anything, score two numbers for five days:

Energy at 4pm

Out of ten. Score it that afternoon, because by Friday you will not remember Tuesday.

Minutes to fall asleep

Your honest guess is fine. Precision is not the point.

Then run the five rules for fourteen days and score the same two for five days again.

The gap is the only proof that counts, and it belongs to you rather than to me. If there is no gap, sleep was not your problem and you have saved yourself months of chasing the wrong pillar.

What to ignore

Everything below is sold hard and none of it belongs in the first fourteen days. Not because it is all useless, but because it is optimisation, and optimisation is a reward for having a floor rather than a way to build one.

Ignore

- | Melatonin and every other sleep supplement.
- | A wearable. You do not need a device to tell you that you slept badly.
- | Blue light glasses. Taking the phone out of the room does the job for seven dollars.
- | Anything that requires you to buy something before tonight.

You already knew most of this. Knowing has never been the problem. Pick the cold room and the phone, tonight, and let the other three follow.