

The Brain Health Workshop Week 5 Transcript

Hey, my friends, I'm Dr. Titus Chiu. And welcome back to the Brain Health Workshop. I'm so excited for this session today because I'm going to be teaching you some very core foundational lifestyle habits that can literally change your life. Over the past few weeks, we covered a lot of information, haven't we? In week number one, you learn about the root cause for virtually all brain health challenges—weakened neural networks. And in week number two, we dove deep into the world of brain training, how to trigger experience-dependent neuroplasticity to heal your brain and transform your life. And in week number three, I introduced you to one of the most powerfully destructive hidden forces when it comes to brain health—neuroinflammation. And I shared with you the top ten foods to eat and avoid to heal your brain and stop brain inflammation. In last week's session, I introduced you to the best supplements, botanicals, as well as nutrients for better brain health.

Wow. That was a lot of information that we covered over the past four weeks, wasn't it? And if you're feeling overwhelmed at this point, that's totally normal, totally natural experience because it's part of the learning process. There's a lot of information I'm sharing with you. But as long as you're watching the videos and you've downloaded, and you're filling out your brain health roadmap, you're exactly where you need to be.

So that was the information we covered over the past four weeks. In this week's session of the Brain Health Workshop, we're going to be diving into the three critical lifestyle habits to sustain your brain. Stress, sleep, and downtime. By the end of this workshop, you're going to learn the critical lifestyle habits needed to heal your brain now as well as sustain your brain health for the future. Specifically, I'm going to teach you how to bookend your days, a simple yet powerful way of getting a handle on your stress. In addition to that, you're going to learn the top three brain hacks for better sleep. And finally, you're going to dive deep, and we're going to explore the importance of downtime as it relates to healing your brain. And I'm going to be showing you how to give your brain a break.

As you know, I'm a brain health specialist, but I'm not your brain health specialist. Be sure to check with your doctor first before starting any new lifestyle program. That being said, as you know the drill, let's dive right into the three critical lifestyle habits to sustain your brain.

Over the years in practice, I've realized that many people just don't take lifestyle habits that seriously. And if that sounds like you, it's not your fault because most doctors don't. In fact, in my training as a functional neurologist—lifestyle habits and practices—we learned about them, but they're almost just like a side note, a footnote. Most of the emphasis in my training, the focus was on the latest and greatest supplements and botanicals as well as brain training exercises and advanced treatments and technologies. I love learning all that stuff, and that was a lot of the stuff that I actually applied to my own life that helped heal my brain. And doing that, I was able to, but even when I had everything dialed in, I was eating clean, I was taking supplements, I'd train my brain, even experimenting with advanced technologies, I was still struggling. Although I had recovered from my concussion, many times, I'd find myself exhausted at the end of the day or just feeling stressed. Or if something came up in my life that was really intense or stressful for me, my brain symptoms would come back.

Now, even though they did come back, they definitely weren't as bad as they were prior to me dialing in all those different things—diet, supplements, and brain training. But still, something felt like it was

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missing. And so, it wasn't until I began implementing these lifestyle habits and practices that I had actually learned in school into my life that my health, not only in the moment did I begin to feel better, but I began to expand and stretch my stress resilience. So, when things would come up, I wouldn't have as big a setback, or I wouldn't get flared up with my symptoms as bad.

And the thing is—don't get me wrong—I'm definitely far from perfect, and I don't have everything dialed into the T, and I'm still working on it. I'm building in healthier and healthier habits. But I notice when I do, and I really focus on stress management and sleep as well as downtime, my brain feels so much better. And as I continue to build on those habits over time, I'm seeing this deeper resilience in my brain health as well as my life. I was able to do it. I've taught thousands of my patients how to do it. And I'm going to teach you how to do it as well.

And the thing is that it's not just in my own experience healing my own brain and working with thousands of amazing patients. The science backs it up too. It's just this new field known as 'epigenetics,' which tells us that our experiences, our environmental signals can turn on or turn off genes leading to health or disease.

Here's an article that speaks to this—Epigenetic Influences on Brain Development and Plasticity. The author has concluded that the persistent effects on gene expression that can be achieved through epigenetic mechanisms provide a biological route through which environmental experiences can become embedded, leading to long-term changes in neurobiology and behavior. What's the translation? Your choices matter; your actions matter. The things that you do every single day, the lifestyle habits that you make will turn on or turn off genes leading to health or disease.

And that's so empowering, isn't it? Because you have the ability to take charge of your brain's destiny with the choices, the everyday choices that you make. And I already taught you some powerful ways of doing that—brain training, diet changes, as well as supplements. And again, in this week's session, I'm going to be teaching you the three critical lifestyle habits, these choices that you make, these behaviors and actions that you take day in, day out, how they can turn on the genes to health, wellness, and vitality. Specifically, we'll be going over how to bookend your days, the top three brain hacks for better sleep, and how to give your brain a break.

Stress. It's a killer. There's no doubt about it. It is the number one killer in modern society. And it's the second most destructive force when it comes to brain health right after neuroinflammation. The interesting thing is, just like inflammation, though, it's actually necessary. It's needed. If we didn't have stress, we wouldn't be motivated to get out of bed every day. So, there's a form of good stress that we call 'eustress,' E-U-S-T-R-E-S-S. And with that eustress, like I taught you in a previous session, when you're under stress, your brain, hypothalamus, pituitary, and adrenal release cortisol and epinephrine—the stress hormones. And those hormones help us step up to life's challenges. Without stress, we wouldn't be motivated to do much of anything.

But the problem, just like it is with inflammation, is when it gets stuck. When we get stuck in states of fight-or-flight, and we have too much stress hormones coursing through our blood and damaging our brain and nervous system. So, when it comes to stress, just like inflammation, it's all about balance and

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keeping it in check. When stress becomes overwhelming and chronic, and we have no reprieve from it, we don't have any buffer, that's when the destructive problems begin.

Now, my philosophy in life is this: Focus on what you can control and let go of the rest. Because as you probably know and have experienced in your life, things happen in life. Life happens, and we're always constantly bombarded by stressors, internal stressors by what's happening in the world situation today, as well as personal stressors from friends, family, or coworkers. So, in order for me to maintain sanity through it all, I've learned to focus just on the things that I can control and to let go of the rest. There's certain things that I've learned throughout the years, working on my own brain health—specific habits that I began building into my life that I had complete control over that I'll be sharing with you today to help create that buffer against stress and to stop the destructive sources of stress hormones on your brain and on your life.

How do we do that? By bookending your days. What do I mean by bookending your days? It's two simple rituals in your daily routine. Number one, what I call 'winning your mornings,' and number two, 'winding down your evenings.' By inserting these two simple rituals into your everyday life, you're going to be creating a buffer against stress and all the damaging effects of stress hormones on your brain and life. So, winning your morning is simply about creating a little ritual first thing in the morning, as soon as you wake up. Some examples of winning your morning rituals are planning your day. One of the first things I do after I wake up, is I sit down at my desk and I plan out my day, especially if my day's going to be super busy, I can have a sense of what is on my plate for that day so I can anticipate any problems that might arise. I can set specific goals for the day. I found for me that plan my day is a fantastic way of winning my morning.

In addition to that, some of you out there who are more creative-minded might find that journaling first thing in the morning is a fantastic way of winning your morning. Another thing I do even before I sit down at my desk and plan my day, I practice gratitude. One of the first things I do as soon as I wake up, I think of three things that I'm grateful for. These are just some examples of winning your morning rituals. In addition, listening to relaxing music or doing some light exercise, or even just getting up, having some water, or making a cup of tea for yourself. The key again is creating that buffer and that sacred space for yourself, so you're not just rushing into the stresses of your day and of modern life. And you have that sacred, slow time to give your brain an easy transition into your life.

Now, I know that sounds really simple. But trust me, after doing this for so many years and having it as one of my core rituals, I found that it is a game-changer. So, that is the winning your morning ritual as part of bookending your days.

What's the second part? Well, you can probably guess it. It's winding down your evenings. It's the same idea. And it's just about rather at the beginning of the day, it's at the end of the day before you wind down and get to bed. Some examples might be gentle stretching, or yoga, or perhaps journaling by candlelight. Many of you out there enjoy a nice bath, and maybe you haven't given yourself that luxury recently if you're able to. Something like a detox salt bath could be a fantastic way of unwinding from the stressors of the day.

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In addition, if you have a loved one or even a pet, try cuddling. That'd be a great way to just turn off your brain and just get present to your body and connecting with others. And another great way to wind down your evening as well is prayer and meditation.

So there you have it. Two simple lifestyle rituals to bookend your days. I guarantee, if you begin building these into your everyday life, you're going to notice a huge difference on your ability to handle the stresses of that day. Again, things will happen in your life. So, my philosophy is focus on the things that you can control, double down on those, and let go of the rest of. Bookending your days is a fantastic way for you to do that.

Now, some of you out there are probably thinking to yourself, *I just don't have the time, Dr. Chiu*. And you know what? Make the time. It can be something as simple as setting your alarm three minutes earlier, even five minutes earlier than normal, and giving yourself that easy transition into your day. I know, I know, life can get hectic, and you might have a lot of responsibilities and other people counting on you. But do yourself a favor and make the time. It doesn't have to be anything elaborate. It doesn't have to be thirty minutes or sixty minutes. Just start with even three minutes or five minutes, either at the beginning or at the end of your day or ideally both, and build from there. I guarantee you just by making that simple buffer—the key thing, it's all about creating that buffer. So, even a three-minute buffer to transition yourself into your everyday life of stress and juggling a million different things will be a game-changer for you, just like it was for me.

My question is, how will you bookend your days? Go ahead, grab your brain health roadmap right now and jot down a few ideas. What are some ways you'll bookend your days? Are you going to focus on the morning, perhaps some win your morning rituals? Go ahead, fill those in. If you think that building in some nighttime rituals would be better for you and you have trouble sleeping, then write those in as well. Or, if you want to challenge yourself, do both. Take a few moments right now, jot down on your brain health roadmap. How will you bookend your days? I'll give you a few moments right now.

Okay. Great work. And thanks for participating. And if you haven't had enough time to jot everything down, don't worry. You can always go back to this brain health roadmap after we finish our session today.

In addition to bookending your days, which I find to be one of the most powerful things that I've built into my stress management routines, there's also a bunch of other types of ways, daily and weekly habits, of transforming stress. Here's a list: Exercise. Exercise has been shown to be a powerful way of strengthening your hippocampus like I mentioned before. The hippocampus is a part of one of the key neural networks that controls your stress response. So, not only by exercising are you creating a stronger body, but in addition to that, you're helping to strengthen the area of your nervous system that helps you put a brake on the stress response.

Other things like yoga or slower yin forms, or more gentle forms of exercise like yoga or Tai chi, or even Qigong are fantastic ways of transforming stress. Hobbies, connecting with others, loved ones, as well as spending time in nature. All these are fantastic ideas just to get your imaginations going in terms of

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different lifestyle habits that you can begin incorporating into your daily as well as weekly routines to help you get a handle on your stress.

Now, the interesting thing about spending time in nature, for those of you who can't easily get out to a forest preserve or even a city park, research has shown that even if you listen to nature sounds, you get many of the same health benefits as if you were actually spending time in nature. In this study, a synthesis of health benefits of natural sounds and their distribution in national parks, the authors discovered that people who listen to natural sounds experience things like lower blood pressure or improvement in cognitive function as well as reducing pain, even if they're not spending time in nature and they're just listening to those sounds. In particular, they found that bird sounds were the best for lowering stress and annoyance, and flowing water sounds help boost our health outcomes and positive emotions. So, even if you can't get out into nature, go ahead and put on some nature sounds and let the healing wash all over you.

That being said, those are some easy, simple things that you can do to begin transforming your stress, as well as things you can do to bookend your day. My question to you: What are your favorite stress antidotes? Go ahead. Take your brain health roadmap right now in the note section and jot down a few ideas. What are your stress antidotes notes, your favorite ones? Perhaps it's exercising or spending time in nature, or maybe you like to connect with a good friend or loved one, or maybe even a pet. Now the thing is, there's no right or wrong answer here. It's just what's true for you and your brain. So, take a few moments right now, jot down in the note section for week number five of the brain health roadmap. I'll give you a few moments right now.

Okay. Great work. And if you weren't able to jot down all the ideas you have, don't worry. After our session today, you can go back and brainstorm some ideas and what your favorite stress antidotes are.

So, that concludes the first critical lifestyle habit. Stress. And I shared with you how to bookend your days as well as some simple lifestyle practices to transform your stress. In this next section, I'm going to be sharing with you top three brain hacks for better sleep.

If there was one specific lifestyle habit that you were going to change, if there's just one thing to help improve your overall health and brain health, it would be to get a handle on your sleep. Not getting enough quality sleep, or deep sleep, or not sleeping enough can be one of the most damaging things for your brain and your overall quality of life.

Research, in fact, has shown that people who get bad sleep or get poor sleep increase their risk for serious things such as Alzheimer's or dementia. And the reason why is because sleep, when you get a good night's sleep, and you're able to sink into that and have deep, good, great quality sleep, you activate what's known as your 'glymphatic system.' Your glymphatic system is your nervous system's waste disposal system. And it gets activated when you go into a deep, uninterrupted sleep state so that it increases the disposal of your nervous system while you are sleeping. So, when you don't get enough sleep, toxins begin to build up in your brain. And research has shown these toxins are similar to the ones that are found in Alzheimer's or things like dementia. These plaques, these amyloid plaques, begin building up. When you don't get a good night's sleep, all the toxins that build up and metabolic

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byproducts that build up over the course of your day, they should be cleared out when you get a good night's sleep. Deep sleep, again, is really important for this. But when you don't, the toxins can continue to accumulate. You end up becoming more inflamed. You have more plaques. And again, increasing your risk for serious neurodegenerative diseases. That's why getting a good night's sleep is one of the most important, critical lifestyle habits that you need to heal your brain and sustain it for the long term.

That being said, there's a bunch of different reasons why you might not be getting a good night's sleep if that's the case for you, or you might not be getting the best night's sleep that you can. I'm going to be sharing with you the top three brain hacks for better sleep. These are the things that I found to address the most common root causes for why you might not be getting the best night's sleep. So, the number one brain hack for better sleep is to reset your rhythm.

All of us go through a twenty-four-hour cycle that's known as the 'circadian rhythm.' We all have a rhythm where in the morning, we should have a bunch of energy. And as our days go on, our energy levels should start dwindling. And at night, we are ready for sleep. And we have a long, restful sleep. When we wake up, again, we wake up with energy, and the cycle repeats itself. Does that sound like you? If not, then your rhythm needs a resetting.

Now the thing is, there's three main ways that sets this circadian rhythm for us. So, sleep actually is one of them. That's why it could become a vicious cycle. If you're not getting good sleep, then your rhythm will be thrown off. When your rhythm is thrown off, you're not going to get good sleep, and on and on.

The good news is that there are two other powerful ways, biological cues in addition to sleep, that our brains take as cues to set our rhythm. So, that's where we can focus our energy.

The first one is light/dark exposure. When you're exposed to light in the morning, it activates specific regions of your nervous system we call the hypothalamus. And when those regions become activated, that triggers the whole stress response that we talked about earlier. The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. But in a good way, you should have a boost of cortisol in the morning. The first thing when you wake up in the morning, you should have a boost in that. It's what we call the 'cortisol awakening response.' And if that's working and that's healthy, you should be ready for your day as soon as you open your eyes and jump out of bed. How many of you out there can relate to that? I wasn't the same way for many years until I began to reset my rhythms as well. So, don't feel bad. The majority of people out there do not bound out of bed as soon as they wake up in the morning. The first way to reset your rhythm is through changing your exposure to light and darkness.

One thing you can do to do that is first thing in the morning as soon as you wake up, when you open your eyes, do whatever you can to not press that snooze button, and get out of bed, and if possible, go outside and do some light exercise. Something as simple as that within the first ten minutes of waking up. If you can just get out of bed and ideally go outside and just even walk around, walk around your block. If you can't get outside, just get up out of bed and do some type of light exercise. It could be something as simple as walking to your kitchen and boiling some water for some tea. So, just get moving. That's the whole point. That's one way of starting to reset your rhythm.

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And then the flip side of that in terms of evening time—like when you're exposed to darkness because that's a powerful cue for your brain and nervous system again to release sleep hormones such as melatonin, which is crucial for deep sleep and quality sleep. But the problem is many of us living in a modern society are exposed to artificial forms of light. Some things you can do, simple things you can do to help reset the back end of your day, that last part of your day, the evening—what I like to do is I begin dimming the lights in our house about two hours before bedtime. I don't turn all the lights off, but I start intentionally going through the areas of our house, the different rooms turning the lights off, as well as dimming some of the lights or relying on lower types of light intensity. And that is a cue for our brains—for my brain, that it's time to wind down.

In addition to that, if you find yourself on screens a bunch, you might want to invest in some blue light blocking glasses. Because what blue light does research has shown, is that junk type of light that we're being constantly bombarded by through screens such as computers or smartphones, those completely throw off our circadian rhythms. So, if you find yourself spending a lot of time on screens, especially towards the end of the evening, maybe even late afternoon, early evening into the evening, start wearing those blue light blocking glasses for that later part of your day if you are on screens a lot.

Doing that can help reset your rhythms simply by shifting your morning routines, as well as your evening routines. You can even build that in as part of your bookending your days routine as well. That's the first way to reset your rhythm.

The second way our brains set our rhythms through biological cues is through our mealtimes. So, by keeping consistent meal times throughout the day—breakfast, lunch, and dinner, like eating at the same time, as close as possible to the same time as possible—is a very simple and powerful way to set your rhythms as well. Otherwise, if your mealtimes are all at different hours and just chaotic, your brain is constantly in this fight-or-flight mode. It's like in the back of your mind—you might not be thinking consciously—but in the back of your mind, your brain is wondering, *When am I going to eat next?* and that triggers a very powerful stress response. So, the second way to reset your rhythm is through consistent meal times.

And finally, number three, if we come back around to our discussion of sleep, sleeping itself is one of the most powerful ways of setting our circadian rhythms and resetting our rhythms. So, by working on the light/dark exposure, as well as mealtimes, you can also build in some simple sleep rituals as well. One of the best things to do is just going to sleep and waking up as close to the same time every day as possible. When you do that, you send signals to your hypothalamus, and your whole circadian rhythm begins to normalize. That's one of the most common things I see many of my patients make when they have sleep issues, they just have chaotic schedules, whether it's mealtime, whether it's their sleep schedules. And that's the thing, many people out there, perhaps even you, you have a lot to juggle in your life. Well, the good thing is you can choose any one of these ways of resetting your rhythm and start focusing on that. Again, focus on the things that you have control over and let go of the rest. And let the wisdom of your body take over from there.

So that's the first brain hack for better sleep is to reset your rhythm. The second brain hack for better sleep is to eat a fatty snack. One of the most common reasons outside of rhythm, circadian rhythm

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imbalances I see for poor sleep, is blood sugar imbalances. How many of you out there have trouble falling asleep, or maybe some of you have trouble staying asleep, or perhaps both? One of the most common reasons I see for that is blood sugar imbalances. Because when you go to bed at night, you are pretty much entering a fasting state.

You have to rely on your body's reserves for fuel to continue to sustain your brain and body function of healing at night. So, if you have blood sugar imbalances and you're not getting enough fuel that's being released throughout the evening, your blood sugar levels can drop too low, and from there, your brain sees that as an emergency situation. It triggers a stress response. And then you can have the release of cortisol and adrenaline. What does that do? That will then wake you up. So, either if you have trouble falling asleep at night, already you might be in a state of stress. And that's a very common cause for having poor sleep and not being able to sleep at night. But especially if you have trouble staying asleep and you find yourself waking up several times throughout the evening, it could be due to a blood sugar imbalance.

That being said, by having a fatty snack before bedtime could be a fantastic way of stabilizing your blood sugar. So, when you go to bed at night, and you enter that fasting state, you don't end up dropping your blood sugars too low and triggering that stress response. Here's some examples of some healthy fatty snacks that you can have before going to bed: Perhaps a slice of avocado or a tablespoon of some type of oil like coconut oil, or olive oil, or avocado oil even. And another idea is eating some nut butter. So, maybe a teaspoon or tablespoon of some nut butter, or even a slice of an apple with some nut butter, as an example.

In addition to that, if you have leftovers from dinner that have a good protein or fatty source, fatty acid source, having a bite of your dinner as well. And although this is not a fatty snack, another great way to stabilize your blood sugar before going to bed at night is raw honey. Raw honey, especially in its raw form—if you can get the honeycomb—has other fibers in there that help to slow. It's like a time-released capsule almost, but from nature, and slowly releases the glucose, the sugar into your bloodstream, so you don't get a spike and a big source of energy right before you go to bed. But the more consistent source of fuel as you're sleeping so you don't ever drop your blood sugar levels too low and trigger that stress response.

So, there you have it. A simple, easy way to hack your sleep. Sleep hack number two is to eat a fatty snack. And finally, the third brain hack for better sleep is maxing your melatonin—to max your melatonin.

Like I mentioned earlier, melatonin is a very powerful hormone that's necessary for quality sleep. And your brain actually produces melatonin based on different cues throughout your day. In particular, darkness. So, different ways of maxing your melatonin are everything we talked about earlier. Resetting your rhythm and your light/dark exposure—very, very important. But in addition to that, there's actually foods found in nature, natural foods that have been shown to have higher levels of melatonin. Here are some of them: Tart cherry juice, goji berries, eggs, oily fish, and pistachio, almonds, and walnuts. These foods have been shown to have high levels of melatonin. When you eat them, your digestive system will break it down to the different building blocks. And then from there, if you've had a good rhythm and

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you've reset your rhythm through light and dark exposure, then your brain will be able to produce that melatonin and give you a good night's sleep.

In addition to that—very important when it comes to melatonin—it actually has an inverse relationship with cortisol. What does that mean? It means that when cortisol is high, guess what? Melatonin goes down. So, by taking control of your health, specifically stress levels, through the different practices we already talked about—bookending your days or transforming your stress lifestyle habits—by taking care of that, you're already going to be helping your brain supporting its ability to make melatonin.

And then, finally, in addition to these brain hacks, one thing that you might want to consider is the natural supplement to help you get over the hump of poor sleep, and that specifically is melatonin. Melatonin can be a great bridge, a natural bridge, as you're addressing more of the deeper root causes for why you're not getting good sleep. Namely, blood sugar imbalances, or stress, or circadian rhythm issues as well. So, while you're working on that stuff, melatonin could be a good natural supplement for you. It's also been shown to be a very, very powerful antioxidant.

But my philosophy is this: While you're doing things like supplements and supplementing your brain and body with things that your brain and body actually already make, the best approach is to do that, look at it as a short-term solution, and it's a natural solution. And at the same time, work on the deeper root causes. So, you don't have to rely on any exogenous pill for your better sleep.

There we have it, the top three brain hacks for better sleep. Number one, reset your rhythm. Number two, eat a fatty snack. And finally, number three, max your melatonin. Before we move on to the next section here, don't forget the basics. So, when it comes to sleep, avoid drinks that are high in caffeine late at night, things like coffee or black tea, and choose herbal teas as well.

I actually drink coffee each morning, but I find that if I drink coffee past two PM, that completely throws off my rhythms. In addition to that, there was a certain period of time in my life where I was drinking way too much coffee because I got this new coffee container, and I was just pouring it. I didn't even realize how many cups of coffee it had. So, I'd be drinking that whole thing throughout the day. I'd still finish my last cup at two PM. But because my levels of caffeine were so high, I wasn't able to get to bed at night. And I had no idea why until I got a new mug for that, and I realized, oh my goodness, I was drinking so much caffeine. My point is don't forget the basics. So, avoid drinks that are high in caffeine, especially late at night, but also higher amounts of that even earlier in the day. And instead, choose herbal teas as well or water.

Also, like I mentioned earlier, as it relates to light-dark exposure, avoid electronics at least one hour before you go to bed. I know, I know. A lot of you guys out there, one of your ways of unwinding before going to bed is to watch TV. I strongly encourage you to find another activity. Because when you expose yourself to those electronics and the light late at night before going to bed, your brain thinks it's the middle of the day or in the morning, even. So, avoid electronics at least one hour before going to bed. And if you really are still going to use electronics, I encourage you again to then wear the blue light blocking glasses while you do. But the best practice would be to find something else that doesn't require electronics or screen time at least one hour before bed.

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In addition to that, make sure that you de-stress before going to bed. We talked about how to bookend your days, especially how to wind down your evening. There's some great examples of that for you. Gentle stretching, or journaling by candlelight, or spending time with a loved one or pet. Slow, relaxed time, so important. And it's very good and very crucial to avoid any mentally or emotionally stressful activities before bed. Things like watching or listening to the news, that probably is not the best way to wind down your evening. Or trying to pay all your bills right before you go to bed. Things that create mental, emotional stress, it's best to carve time out of your schedule to do that the next day. So again, it's all about creating that buffer when it comes to stress. We can't control and influence all the different things that happen in our life. Especially the external things. But what we can do and have complete control over are these simple lifestyle habits for better sleep.

Okay. That being said, a few other things before we wrap up here. If you try these different sleep hacks and you try transforming your stress, you try resetting your rhythms and your exposure to light and darkness and mealtimes, but you're still having trouble with your sleep, then go to your doctor and find out if there's not a more serious condition contributing to your poor sleep. One of the most common ones I see in my practice is sleep apnea. If, after trying these foundational things, nothing seems to work for you, do be sure to check with your doctor to find out if you do have sleep apnea. There's different types of tests that you can do. Your doctor will be able to guide you through that whole process.

And last but not least, here's a pro-tip for you guys. Because like I mentioned earlier, sleep is one of the most critical lifestyle habits and practices that are essential for better brain health and to heal your brain. But I also know that many people struggle with sleep. And myself included, even after I've dialed in a lot of these different things, I still have nights where I don't have a good night's sleep. Here's a pro-tip for those of you out there who've tried these things and are working on it, but if in case you have a poor night's sleep, it's important to do this. To take a polyphenol supplement like the ones we discussed in our last session, specifically curcumin. Curcumin has been shown to break up the different types of plaques, the toxic plaques that build up in our brain when we don't get good sleep.

For example, if I have a bad night's sleep, what I'm going to do even in the middle of the night as I'm not getting good sleep, I'm going to go to my cabinet and pop a pill of curcumin. Or, for those of you out there who don't want to take supplements and just get some curry powder, prepare a little formulation. Curry powder with some oil and cook that up a little bit. The oil helps with the bioavailability. Just cook that up or have that prepared so you can easily warm that up on your stove and just have a teaspoon of that.

Because when you do that like I said, when you don't get good sleep at night, your brain starts to accumulate these plaques that are toxic for your nervous system. One thing you can do to help minimize the damage of a poor night's sleep is to increase your levels of curcumin. And like I said, I do that either the night of when I'm in the middle of my insomnia or the next day; as soon as I wake up, I'll take my supplements. I'll double up on curcumin. Or for those of you out there, again, who don't want to take a supplement, you could just eat more curry that day. Or create a little concoction with some oil, heat it up, and add some curcumin, and then have a teaspoon or tablespoon of that. That'll help minimize the damaging effects of a bad night's sleep.

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My question to you before we wrap up is which of these sleep hacks will you try out? So, take a few moments right now, grab your brain health roadmap, and write in a few ideas in terms of the sleep hacks that seem most relevant and most enjoyable to you as well, that you think would be your sleep antidote. Take a few moments right now. Write that in your brain health roadmap. I'll be here waiting for you and give you a few moments.

All right. Great work. Now I know if you still are writing, go ahead and put your pencil down, come back to me, because this next section is so very important, especially if you have issues with sleep and aren't getting good sleep at night. We just wrapped up the second critical lifestyle habit, and I taught you the top three brain hacks for better sleep, and you took a few moments right now. So, just wrap up what you're writing down. Which sleep hack will you try? Take a few more moments. Write that down. And finally, that brings us to the third critical lifestyle habit for a better brain, and that is downtime.

Downtime is so crucial, especially in our modern society, that's just non-stop. It seems like we always have things that we have to do or juggle or coordinate, right? Including, maybe, as it relates to your own healthcare. That's why downtime is one of the biggest missing pieces I've seen when it comes to brain health.

And it was actually my own experience as well. I was doing all these different things. I was training my brain. I was really working on my health. Focusing, putting a lot of energy in my diet, and planning things out, and winning my mornings, and doing things—winding down the evening. And that was great, but it was requiring so much energy. I was just figuring it all out and piecing it together, especially as I was building these lifestyle habits. Because those lifestyle habits take time. And with that learning curve, it requires a lot of energy. And even though I was doing these things, I was still feeling tired and burned out. I was feeling definitely better as I began to add more habits, lifestyle habits, but it wasn't until I realized that downtime was crucial and I learned about what's known as the 'default mode network.'

There's a part of our nervous system, a neural network we call the default mode network. And there's many different regions of our brain that make up the default mode network. What the default mode network does is it's all about insight, integration, and healing. So, when your default mode network is activated, that's when you experience things like creativity, and you experience things like insight as well as 'aha' moments as well as integration and healing.

The interesting thing is, though, the default mode network, when you're focusing your energy on—just like what I was describing earlier like training your brain, or you're putting a lot of mental energy and coordinating your brain health and trying to learn all these new habits and new pieces of information I'm teaching you—that requires a lot of focused energy. And guess what? When you're engaged mentally like that, your default mode network becomes silent; it becomes inactive. So, when you're putting in all this hard work and energy, if you're not seeing the payoff in terms of your health, one of the biggest missing pieces for you could be activation of your default mode network by way of downtime activities.

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I'm going to be sharing with you one of the easiest ways of activating your default mode network, giving your brain downtime, and allowing your brain to reap all the rewards of the hard work that you've put into your brain health up until this point, and that practice is giving your brain a break.

Earlier, I talked about the circadian rhythm. We all have this twenty-four-hour circadian rhythm where we should have a lot of energy in the morning, and it should taper down as we go throughout our day. So, by the time we get to bed at night, we're ready for a deep, restful, quality night's sleep. Yeah! Especially if you aren't getting a good night's sleep, giving your brain a break throughout the day is so very important. Because in addition to the circadian rhythm we all have, we also have what's known as an 'ultradian rhythm,' and that's more rather a twenty-four-hour cycle. That's more a sixty- to ninety-minute cycle where we go through high and low states of brain energy. We have these peaks and valleys. So, over the course of sixty to ninety minutes, our brains would go through this natural ultradian rhythm where we'll have high levels of brain energy and then, later on, low levels. And then it will repeat throughout the day.

Most of us, though, as we go through our days, we go through these ultradian peaks and valleys, but we just don't realize that. Meaning, there's times throughout the day that we start to get tired and that we start to get fatigued, or maybe symptomatic, or we develop headaches, or we just feel irritable, or just really in need of a nap, as an example. Those are clues from your brain that it's time for a mini-break, that you've gone through that cycle. What the majority of us do rather than listening to that, number one, the majority of us aren't even aware we have that ultradian rhythm, so what the majority of us do is we power through that. So, even if we're in that valley, in that low part of our brain energy cycle, we try to power through whatever work we're doing. Whether it's working, whether it's even engaging in a conversation, or doing some type of activity that requires mental or emotional energy, we just power through that.

And the thing is, we can do it, we can power through. But the way we do that is by triggering the stress response. So, we increase, again, levels of cortisol and adrenaline. And over time, that leads up to the buildup of toxins and the damaging effect of stress hormones like we talked about before. That's why it's so very important to give your brain a break. The best way to do that, I found, that's easy to build into your everyday life, is what I call the 'brain mini-break.'

So, every sixty to ninety minutes, what you're going to do, you're going to give yourself a break. If you're engaged in any type of mentally effortful activity or emotionally charged activity, you're going to give yourself a mini-break. As an example, you might be reading a book, or you might be doing some work on your computer. Every sixty to ninety minutes, I encourage you to stop and give yourself a little mini-break.

The key is, though, you, like I said earlier, you have to become aware of when your brain needs that break. One of the first steps is becoming aware as to when you're in that valley of low brain energy. So, here's some clues, like I mentioned earlier: You might begin to yawn, or you feel a bit spaced out. Or, maybe the opposite, you're feeling a bit restless and need to move. Or, you're starting to experience some brain fog or brain fatigue, or any other symptom that you might experience in your normal

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experiences might start to intensify. So, all these—yawning, feeling spaced out, restless, brain foggy, or fatigued, or any other symptom are clues that you need a brain break.

Like I said, that's typically sixty to ninety minutes for the majority of people. But I know for people who have suffered things like a concussion or already have brain fog and brain fatigue, you might find for you that it's not sixty to ninety minutes. And maybe for you, it's twenty-five minutes or fifty minutes. For me, throughout my whole journey, I've identified for me it's fifty minutes; fifty-five minutes is a sweet spot. The point is within that timeframe, you have to become aware. So, that's the first step is becoming aware of when you need that mini-break. Step one is becoming aware. And then when you start to notice yourself yawning, or feel spaced out or restless, or any of these other things, you have to then honor that. And what do you do? You take a break.

Here's some examples of mini-break ideas: Just stop whatever you're doing. If you're writing something, finish that sentence, and try doing some breathing exercises. Or, I taught how to do the palming exercise, which is fantastic, especially if you find yourself on screens a lot. Another idea of a mini-break is to stretch, to get into your body and move a little bit, or doing something physical. So, many times when I'm focused on my work throughout the day, and my alarm goes off, and it's time for my mini-break, I'll go outside, and I'll water the plants. I'll water our garden. That's a wonderful way of breaking that focus and then activating your default mode network. So, to prevent the buildup of toxins.

In addition to that, if you have the luxury, the great thing you can do is also have a power nap. Simply by having a power nap could be a fantastic way of resetting your brain and activating your default mode network. So, the key is with the power nap, it has to be under twenty minutes. You definitely want to keep it under forty-five minutes. Because if you go over that, especially like sixty-minute naps, you're going to end up throwing off your sleep cycle for that evening. What I like to do is if I feel like I really need to just lie down and take a power nap, I'll set my alarm for twenty minutes, and I'll lie down. I'll close my eyes sometimes, I'll turn off the lights, or put on an eye pillow so I'm not getting light in, and I'll take a power nap. And that's the thing, I might not even fall asleep during that, but that's okay. I know a lot of you out there like, *Dr. Chiu, but I tried taking naps. I'm never able to fall asleep.* But guess what? Just by simply taking that break, closing your eyes, lying down, helps to shift from the energy-burning states of your brain to those of healing and restoration.

Again, the key with the power naps, keep them under twenty minutes. Definitely under forty-five minutes. Set an alarm. And then when the alarm goes off, even if you have fallen asleep, it's really important to get up so that you don't throw off your sleep rhythm and have trouble sleeping at night.

So, there you have it. Those are some great examples of mini-breaks, and there's a bunch of different ways to approach it. Take a few moments right now in your notes. What I want you to do in your brain health roadmap—go ahead, jot down what are some mini-break ideas that you want to try out? Breathing exercises? Or, perhaps you've tried the palming exercise that we talked about Week Two already, and it felt really good? What I want you to do is become really intentional now with your mini-breaks. So, go ahead, take a few moments. Write down your mini-break ideas.

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Some other examples, like I've mentioned, doing something physical—maybe getting up, or spending time petting your pet, petting your dog, or finding your cat, wherever it's gone, and petting it, and just slowing that down. I'll give you a few more moments here, and then we'll move on.

Okay. Great work. Here's a few things as it relates to mini-breaks. The key is it must not require any mental or emotional effort. No mental or emotional effort is involved in these mini-breaks. So, that's why I was saying, just doing something which doesn't take much thought process at all. Sometimes I'll go and I'll just wash the dishes, or I'll go outside and water the plants, or I'll sit down and pet our dogs. Spend time with our pets. So, really no mental, emotional effort. One thing not to do, definitely not to do, is scroll on your smartphone or on your computer. Especially things that are mentally or emotionally taxing, even if they're positive. The whole point of these mini-breaks is to activate your default mode network, so you're allowing your brain to integrate all the things that you've done in your day, all the hard work you've put into your health to this point. So, no mental or emotional effort involved. That's one of the key points of a mini-break.

And also, make it a habit. Make these mini-breaks a habit. Take this concept and apply it to your everyday life. So, it can be extended to any situation. As an example, when I'm out engaging socially with people, what I make sure is even when I start to feel that fatigue coming on, I'll just excuse myself, and maybe I'll go to the bathroom or just go for a walk, take a few moments just to reset. So, make it a habit, build it into your everyday routines. Because that's the thing, it's like, life will happen. But as long as you start creating the habits and you do it consistently over time and become aware of when you need a mini-break, you're going to avoid those big crashes and burnouts that are so part of our modern culture. So, make it a habit, build this in. Not only into your everyday routines at home but if you're out and about, like engaging in conversations, even if they're enjoyable. Or, if you're at work, as long as you start feeling those clues. You feel a bit your eyes glazing over, or you're yawning, or you feel restless—listen to that, honor it, and then act on it. Make it a habit in your everyday life.

And definitely apply it to brain training. In week number two, I taught you a whole bunch of different BrainTRAIN exercises. And those things, although they might seem small and perhaps trivial, they require a lot of brain energy. So, if you're doing brain training at any point like I mentioned in week number two, you feel tired, or you feel fatigued or symptomatic, then give yourself a mini-break as well.

And one thing, as you're learning this habit, go ahead and set a timer. You can start by setting a timer for sixty minutes and find out if that's the time for you. For me, like I said, it was a process of awareness and paying attention to that. For me, it was about fifty minutes. And before, as I was healing my brain, it was shorter. It was about fifteen minutes. I would need to take a break. Then it continued to expand.

And that's the great thing. When you set a timer, and then you figure out what your ultradian rhythm is, whether it's twenty-five, fifty, or ninety minutes, you can use that as a benchmark. Because I can guarantee you when you begin building in these critical lifestyle habits into your everyday rituals and your routines, and you begin to apply the other concepts that I talked to you about—diet, and brain training, and supplements—that ultradian rhythm, if you find yourself in the twenty-five-minute or even fifteen-minute rhythm cycle, it's going to begin to expand. And what that means is as that expands, that tells us that your brain is healing, and that tells us that your resilience to stress is increasing as well.

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That's the beautiful thing. When you do these things, when you give your brain those breaks, and you allow the integration and the downtime, you will notice changes in your health that you might not have noticed up until this point despite all the different things that you've been putting a ton of energy into. You can do it. I was able to do it. I taught many of my patients how to do it as well. And I know the same is possible for you. Healing is possible.

So, there you have it. The three critical lifestyle habits to sustain and heal your brain. Stress practices, sleep, as well as downtime. I shared with you some specific actions you can begin doing, how to bookend your days. We also went into the top three brain hacks for better sleep. And finally, we just wrapped up the importance of downtime and how to give your brain a break.

Here's a few things to watch out for and pay attention to as you go through this process. Take it one step at a time. I know that was a lot of information, and that might create a bit of an overwhelm for you. But the thing is, when it comes to lifestyle habits, it's all about taking it one step at a time. If you're feeling overwhelmed and you're like, *Oh my goodness, I need to completely overhaul my life right now to heal my brain.* That's okay. It's, again, part of the natural learning process. So, just take it one step at a time. Build on these habits one simple habit at a time, and you will be setting yourself up for success.

And be sure to keep it simple. Don't over-complicate things. For example, if you want to start exercising as a way to help de-stress, don't sign up for a brand-new class like a rock-climbing class or a salsa dancing class if you've never done it before and you have no gear to climb rocks or salsa dance. You can, right? You can do those things, especially if the fun factor of it is motivating you enough and you're able to follow through. But the point is, the key is to keep it simple so you can begin taking action immediately. Be taking action right now. And the best way to set yourself up for doing that successfully is to keep it simple. It could be something as simple as if you want to start exercising, again, go for a walk around your neighborhood. Or, if you're already doing things like that, try building on it. Maybe if you're doing cardio and you're walking around your neighborhood already, maybe bring in some strength training. There's all different ways of customizing it to you based on where you're at and what you're most interested in, and also what your brain needs.

And again, I know, and I acknowledge that this is a lot of information, and making changes to your lifestyle is not an easy task. It's about this whole process of one step at a time. As you go through this, don't get discouraged. If you start an exercise routine or you start doing your win the morning rituals as an example, and you're doing that for a few days and then all of a sudden you fall off, and you forget about it, don't get discouraged. Just reset and continue building. If you forget about doing it and you realize, *Oh my goodness, I haven't exercised today. I haven't done my win my routine ritual, my morning ritual this week,* then just reset and start the next week. Just remember you're building, and you're learning.

So, as long as you're learning through that whole process, then the next time around, you can do it better and set yourself up for success. Doing things, for example, if you forget to exercise that week, what is one thing that you can do to help set yourself up for success, so you don't forget? Maybe writing it in your calendar or putting your workout shoes by the door or by your bed, so you see it first thing in

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the morning. My point is, as you're going and you're building these things, if you fall off, don't get discouraged. Just get up, wipe yourself off, wipe the dust off, and reset, and continue building from there.

These things take time. Lifestyle changes, they do take time. And that was the case for me. And like I mentioned earlier, no way am I perfect. There's things that I'm still working on, new habits that I'm building in. But I can guarantee you as you continue that building process and you build in these lifestyle habits, these critical lifestyle habits, one simple step at a time, you will notice a difference, and you'll be building a strong foundation to help heal your brain. Not only now, but to sustain it for many, many years to come. And remember this: It's about progress, not perfection.

Before I wrap up here, I want to share with you Kristen's experience. Kristen was an online private client that I was working with who was suffering from migraines, brain fatigue, and poor sleep for many, many years. And she actually saw another practitioner who had helped her dial in her supplements, as well as her diet, eating very clean based on her brain and body's unique needs. But the thing was, she was still experiencing symptoms and flare-ups. So, she reached out to me because she was not healing. And when we dove into it, we uncovered that she was under a ton of unmanaged stress. And she wasn't sleeping well at night. And even though she was exhausted, she was powering through her days. Not only was she trying to care for her family, but she was also working part-time. She was juggling a lot and feeling really, really exhausted and tired. But because she had so much on her plate, she would just power through her day. And by the time she went to bed at night, she would just be dead tired, but she wouldn't be able to sleep well. And this vicious cycle would repeat itself. She was literally running on empty when she came to work with me.

So, from there, we decided for her, her healing journey was not adding more supplements or any more diet changes, but it was more about focusing on these critical lifestyle habits. And the thing was, she was trying some of the basic sleep antidotes, but they weren't working. So, we decided to focus on stress management and downtime. Specifically, I had her begin the win your morning rituals. She began doing the win your morning ritual. The first thing she woke up in the morning, she would get out of bed and just do some gentle exercise, some yoga. And that was really hard for her at first because she was always snoozing the sleep button because her rhythm would be thrown off from the night before of not getting a good night's rest. She'd want to sleep in. But it was hard, and at first, it was really difficult for her not to do that. But slowly but surely, she was able to avoid hitting the snooze button and just get out of bed and begin doing some light exercise, some yoga.

In addition to that, I had her begin taking mini-breaks throughout the day, becoming aware of when her brain was in that low brain energy, the valley of the ultradian rhythm. From there for her, she figured out it was sixty minutes. So, she began setting her alarm for sixty minutes throughout the day. So, every sixty minutes, if she was focusing on some mental activity or she was doing some work, she would stop whatever she was doing and take a mini-break. She would just get up. And for her, she really liked the palming exercise. She'd stand up with the palming exercise, take a few deep breaths, and it helped her reset.

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And in addition to that, the win your morning ritual she'd do as well as the mini-breaks, then she just started a more consistent gentle exercise routine. She would literally just go for walks three times a week for thirty to sixty minutes, depending on how much time she had. But she'd always make it a habit to build in these walks because she felt great when she went for walks. And on the weekends, she'd go with her family to the park, and they'd go for hikes. So, she began to build this really simple, gentle exercise routine. All she did was focus on stress management and downtime practices with the win your morning ritual, taking mini-breaks, and a gentle exercise routine. And from there, she began to experience no migraines. She was sleeping through the night and had a ton more energy throughout her day.

It didn't happen overnight. Don't get me wrong. She began doing these things, and after a few weeks, she began to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Because after practicing the stress management and giving herself some downtime, she then noticed her sleep started to improve. And once her sleep started to improve, she'd get more downtime and get restorative time. Then the junk in her brain would get cleared up. It would decrease inflammation, and then she'd wake up with more energy, feeling refreshed, and have energy throughout the day. So, it began to build on itself in this beautiful feed-forward cycle, and she was finally breaking that vicious cycle of unmanaged stress and poor sleep. But by focusing on the three simple things: the win your morning ritual, the mini-breaks, and the gentle exercise routine, and after several weeks of doing this, she noticed her migraines began to disappear, and she was sleeping through the night, she had better sleep, and she had more energy.

So, from there, she continued to build on those simple rituals. Not only did she do the win your morning ritual, but then she began to incorporate the wind down your evening ritual as well. For her, it was just one step at a time. Specifically, it was three simple steps. And then, from there, she noticed improvements. She continued to build on these simple, powerful habits she already had set in place. And after a few months of doing this, no migraines, she was sleeping through the night and had a ton more energy throughout her day.

She didn't change anything in terms of the supplements or diet and the different things that the other practitioner had put together for her. They did a great job of creating that plan for her. The key thing for Kristen, though, was the downtime, making sure that building in these three critical lifestyle habits of improving her stress management as well as her sleep and having more downtime in her life. That's what made the shifts for her.

And most importantly, outside of the improvements in her symptoms—the migraines, her sleep, and her energy—most importantly for her was that she was more present with her kids and her husband. She was much more engaged with them. That meant the world to her.

She was able to do it. I was able to do that by making simple yet critical lifestyle habit changes one step at a time, and I know that you can too. You can do it. I am rooting for you one-hundred and ten percent.

So, before we wrap up for the week, here is just a quick review of everything you learned today. The three critical lifestyle habits to heal your brain and sustain it for the long run, how to bookend your days

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to get a handle on your stress, the top three brain hacks for better sleep, and finally, you learned the importance of downtime and how to give your brain a break.

I know that was a lot of information, and I also acknowledge that making lifestyle changes, it's a lot, right? I'm not asking you to completely overhaul your life, at least in this moment right now. And here are what I found to make it less overwhelming for you. Here are the best practices over fourteen years working with patients and private clients and twenty years healing my own brain. Here's the best practices and the best way to approach lifestyle change: Number one, identify which lifestyle habit is your worst trigger. Is it when you don't get sleep that you just fall apart? If that's the case, identify what your worst trigger is and take note of that. Number two, also identify which lifestyle habit is your best antidote. If you spend quality time with loved ones, do you just feel charged? Or, if you spend time in nature, do you just feel amazing, or your symptoms at the very least diminish a bit, and you feel better? So, identify which lifestyle habit is your best antidote, and take note of that as well. And finally, number three, pick one action from each of those categories and do it.

As an example, if you find that your best antidote is sleep—so the information I share with you, the top three brain hacks for better sleep, pick one action there and begin working on your sleep. Or, if you realize that, *Wow, yeah, sleep is a big trigger for me, but I notice that when I'm stressed, then I'm not able to get good sleep.* Then guess what? Stress is your category. Pick one action from there, everything that I taught you. Maybe it's winning your morning or bookending your days in terms of your evenings, like winding down your evenings. Pick one action from that category and do it.

So again, this is how you can implement all this information I share with you in a way, so you can start building those necessary lifestyle habits. The critical, critical lifestyle habits needed to sustain your brain for the long term.

Before we wrap up, here is your homework assignment from now until next week: Number one, identify your worst lifestyle trigger, just like we mentioned. Number two, identify what your best lifestyle antidote is. And finally, number three, put it to the test. Do one action for each. So, if you find that your worst trigger is sleep, do one action in that category to help your sleep. If you find that your best antidote is downtime and rest and relaxation, then do one action in that category for your downtime. I guarantee you, when you begin implementing these things, these simple yet powerful and critical lifestyle habits into your everyday life, it can transform your brain health and set you up for success not only now but way into the future. That is my hope for you. Better brain health now, and for many, many, many more years to come.

And finally, the challenge for those of you out there: Give your brain a break! Oh, my goodness. It is week number five. You guys, I really want to acknowledge you for your engagement and your participant patience in all of these weeks and for following along. So, for that reason, you deserve a break. So, make sure you carve some time out. And that's why I know for some of you out there, it might be a big challenge in doing so—but carve some time out, especially for you, some sacred time where you can unwind and maybe focus on some of the things that you've been missing in your life that you want to start doing more of. Being more creative, or painting, or drawing, or reading a novel. Whatever it is for you. Playing a musical instrument or just listening to music. Whatever it is for you, I challenge

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you to carve some special time out in your week from now until next week and give your brain a break. Your brain, your default mode network, will thank you for it.

And I thank you for your participation and engagement. Be sure to do the homework and engage in our online community. We love to hear from you. We want to hear about your breakthroughs, and your wins, and any questions you have. Be sure to post them in our online community. We will get to as many of them as possible.

My name is Dr. Titus Chiu. You guys are fantastic. I can't wait to see you in next week's session. We're going to dive deep into the world of mindset. I'm going to teach you how to unlock the power of your mind to heal your brain. Can't wait to see you guys then. Have a wonderful week. Bye for now.