



**This Is Your Life Podcast**

Season 4, Episode 7

Published: June 17, 2015

Michael Hyatt

**Stu McLaren:** Welcome to *This Is Your Life* with Michael Hyatt, where we help you win at work and succeed at life. My name is Stu McLaren, and I'm filling in for Michele Cushatt, who is away because she is finishing her battle with cancer. She is kicking its butt, and she's going to be back here in the studio before we know it. In the meantime, I am here in the studio with Michael. Michael, good to have you.

**Michael Hyatt:** Thanks, Stu! It's good to see you.

**Stu:** Now I have a question right off the top: Are you well rested?

**Michael:** You know, I am pretty well rested. I had a good night's sleep last night. I had a great night's sleep before that, and I needed it because I had gone several nights without really good sleep.

**Stu:** Well, that is good because we are going to be discussing sleep, rest, how these will benefit everybody, and so much more in today's episode. Before we do that, I have a piece from a blog post you wrote that I want to share with everybody.

**Michael:** Okay.

**Stu:** Okay. You wrote, "Our society puts a high value on achievement but not much on rest. Experts say we need about eight hours a night, but the national average is about 6.8. We act like sleep is a luxury or an indulgence. As a result, sacrificing sleep in the name of productivity has become routine. But the opposite is true. Cheating our sleep is like maxing out our credit cards. There's a benefit now (at least it feels like it), but the bill always comes due in the form of decreased health and mental ability."

Now I love that metaphor about the credit card. I think people can totally relate to that, but I want to get your experience with this because you recently had an experience with your team and a product launch, and I want to discuss that with you and how this all came into play.

**Michael:** Yeah. We launched this software product about a year and a half ago. It was the Get Noticed! theme for WordPress. It was about a two-week-long period when we were burning the candle at both ends, as my mom used to say, and we just weren't getting much sleep at all because we were trying to do this product launch. But I noticed as we moved into this that our judgment got impaired.

We weren't making the best decisions. It seemed like things that would have been easy if we had been well rested took a lot of energy to try to make happen when we were tired. We got irritable with one another, and things took on a proportion they didn't need to. We just had less grace, less tolerance. We were just less productive.

**Stu:** It's funny because having young children, you see this whole concept play out. It's almost like a magnifying glass on the need for rest. You know, when they don't get rest, they get irritable. They get cranky, and they do not make great decisions either.

**Michael:** Well, you can see it at a very specific time late in the afternoon, usually as the parents are just getting home from work or one of the parents is getting home from work. The kids just come unglued, and it's nothing but the fact that they're tired. Being tired has a lot of negative implications for all of us. But let me say this too. Our culture does not value rest.

**Stu:** I would agree with this. I have an experience with this that really rattled me, actually. I was doing a mastermind. You were there. We were in New York City in the World Trade Center.

**Michael:** Oh, I remember that. Yeah.

**Stu:** We were at *INK Magazine*. I remember this experience because I had a conversation with somebody at that mastermind, and they were talking about the different types of businesses. One of the things they were sharing was the value they had in the entrepreneur who sacrificed everything, including their time with family and what we're talking about today (sleep and rest), because they were just all in for this business. That was the ideal portrayal of an entrepreneur. I thought to myself...

**Michael:** "That can't be right."

**Stu:** "That sucks," you know?

**Michael:** Yeah.

**Stu:** I thought, “There has to be a better way.” That’s what we’re really talking about here today. This isn’t something that’s nice to have; this is something you need to have if you really want to be the best you.

**Michael:** Absolutely. Well, the thing about it is that when you’re rested, you can accomplish more in an hour than you can in four hours when you’re tired. There’s kind of a false economy there. But just think of the different conversations people have. I can remember this well from corporate America.

“How are you doing?”

“Well, I’m crazy busy.”

“Well, how are you doing?”

“Well, I didn’t get much sleep last night.”

But it’s not said as a complaint.

**Stu:** It’s almost like...

**Michael:** It’s bragging.

**Stu:** Yeah, it’s like a badge of honor.

**Michael:** Yeah. It’s like, “I am so important that I’m really busy, I’m so important that I’m not getting much sleep, and I’m so committed to my work that I’m not taking time for myself.” Well, that’s just stupid. I’m sorry.

**Stu:** Yeah. That sucks.

**Michael:** Yeah. Let’s just say it for what it is. It’s stupid.

**Stu:** Yeah. It’s amazing, though, how those conversations drive our everyday actions.

**Michael:** They do. So people feel guilty for resting.

**Stu:** People feel guilty because everybody else has always shared how they have had a lack of sleep, and it’s almost like a way to connect with people.

**Michael:** It is.

**Stu:** You say, “Oh man, you look tired. Have you been working a lot?” or you ask, “Have you been up late with the kids?” or what have you. You never have the opposite, where it’s like, “Man, you look well rested,” because it’s almost like people don’t want to value that. That’s what you’re essentially saying.

**Michael:** That’s right. Well, think about when you go to the office or connect with friends who have just come off of a vacation. You just notice. There’s just something that’s different about them.

**Stu:** Right.

**Michael:** If they’ve really taken a vacation and they’ve really rested, they just look more energetic. They look healthier. They look more present than they do when they’re tired. You know, when you get tired, you get caught up in your own world, and it’s just not good.

**Stu:** Well, I want to talk more about this because you have *four specific ways sleep helps us achieve more*. I want to talk about those specific ways here. Let’s start with the first one.

**Michael:** Okay. Let me frame this by saying I’m all about achievement. I consider myself a high achiever. If you’ve ever taken the StrengthsFinder test... My number one strength is achievement. I love achieving stuff. I’m so committed to it that I’m willing to get the rest required to prepare myself to achieve more.

**Stu:** That’s important. This is not about sacrificing achievement to have more rest.

**Michael:** Nope.

**Stu:** This is about getting more rest so you can achieve more.

**Michael:** That’s right. This is no different from eating well and getting exercise. It just turns out that rest is one of the most important components in total health. If you want to perform at an optimal level, you have to be in the best health you can possibly be in, and sleep is a part of that. So the first way is that *sleep keeps us sharp*. You know, there have been a lot of studies on this very thing, but you just have to think about your own experience. When you’re tired, you’re not sharp. It’s harder to remember things.

It’s harder to stay focused. It’s harder to stay engaged. But sleep keeps us sharp. You know, you can be working on a task late at night, not making any progress (don’t ask me how I know this), and feel like you’re beating your head against the wall. You say, “You know what?” I’ve done this with increasing frequency as I’ve grown older. I’ve just said, “You know what? I’m

stopping now because this is going to be so much easier in the morning after I've had eight hours of sleep."

**Stu:** I had an experience with this late last night. I flew in.

**Michael:** From Toronto.

**Stu:** From Toronto. That's true. Listeners, you may notice that the way I say *shout, about*, and words like that is a little different from the way Michele says them. But I flew in, and I was discussing with your daughter, Megan, about some copy for a project we're working on. I was trying to bust out some bullets for this particular piece, and I realized, "I have zero creative juice right now." It's because it was late, I was tired, and I just wasn't sharp, like you were talking about. No matter how hard I tried to squeeze that creative juice out, it just was not flowing when I was tired and not well rested.

**Michael:** Well, it's almost like there's a certain store of creativity and focus, and when the fuel gets depleted as it does throughout the day, the only thing you can do is refuel. You can try to grind it out, but that's very unproductive. You get frustrated. You get irritable. You think you're stupid (and you are at that point). All you really need is a good night's rest.

**Stu:** So the first way sleep helps us achieve more is by helping keep us sharp. What's the second way?

**Michael:** *It actually improves our ability to remember, learn, and grow.* There have been a lot of scientific tests done on this, but the bottom line is that when you're rested, you can remember. I know a lot of people think (if you're listening to this podcast, maybe you think this) they're just going to lose their memory as they get older. That's not true. I work with almost all 30-year-olds, and when they're tired, their memory isn't any better than anybody else's.

So often this is a function of just not getting enough rest. So if you want to have better memory and more vivid memory, if you want the ability to grow and retain what you're learning, you have to get rest. Have you ever had this experience, Stu, where you're reading a book and you keep reading back over the same paragraph again and again?

**Stu:** And you can't remember a darn thing.

**Michael:** No. It's like, "I just read that sentence, and I still don't know what it meant, so I'm going to re-read it again." You keep doing that. That usually happens late at night when

you're tired. Read that same content in the morning when you're rested, and it will be a totally different experience.

**Stu:** It's interesting too because not only are we able to get more done, but we become more well-rounded in the sense that we're able to do the things we want to do better, more easily, and faster just by having that rest.

**Michael:** Yeah. That's really true. By the way, one of the things I like to do (this is a little bit of a sleep hack) is... If there's something I need to remember for the next day, I'll oftentimes stuff my brain with it at night and sleep on it, because my mind is still active to some extent when I'm sleeping.

**Stu:** It's subconscious.

**Michael:** It's just like stuffing the subconscious. Particularly things I'm trying to memorize or things I'm going to have to give in a video... Maybe it's something that's going to be a creative process the next day. But if I can stuff my mind with the raw stuff the evening before, it's great when it can kind of incubate in the recesses of my mind.

**Stu:** It's like percolating.

**Michael:** That's right. It's the Crock Pot of my mind.

**Stu:** Okay. Today we're talking about the four specific ways sleep can help us achieve more. First, sleep keeps us sharp. Second, sleep improves our ability to remember, learn, and grow. We have two more specific ways sleep can help you achieve more, so stick with us. We'll be right back after this.

*If you're like most members of my audience, you're committed to winning at work and succeeding in life, but the truth is you struggle with finding enough time to do it all. That's exactly why I wrote my new e-book, *Shave 10 Hours Off Your Workweek: 4 Proven Strategies for Creating More Margin for the Things That Matter Most*. You can't buy *Shave 10 Hours Off Your Workweek*, but you can get it for free by subscribing to my free e-mail newsletter.*

*My e-mail newsletter notifies you whenever I've posted fresh content to my blog, so you don't always have to visit my blog to stay up-to-date. To get your free copy of the *Shave 10 Hours Off Your Workweek* e-book, visit [michaelhyatt.com](http://michaelhyatt.com) and enter your name and e-mail address into the form on the page. If you're tired of feeling like there's never enough time to get it all*

done, don't miss your chance to discover how to reclaim the margin you deserve. Sign up at [michaelhyatt.com](http://michaelhyatt.com).

**Stu:** Welcome back. Today we are talking about how to achieve more by sleeping more. So far we've discussed two specific ways sleep can help us achieve more. First, sleep keeps us sharp. Second, sleep improves our ability to remember, learn, and grow. We still have two more. I'm going to hand it over to you, Michael. What's the third one?

**Michael:** The third one is that *sleep refreshes our emotional state*. Now we talked about this in the context of kids and how irritable they get late in the day, but it happens to us as adults. We oftentimes have better control, but we still get discouraged at the end of the day. Even last night... You talked about your experience last night. We're in the middle of a launch right now, and I was confused by the results we were getting yesterday. I didn't know where we were.

Were we succeeding? Were we failing? Were we somewhere in between? So I said to Gail last night at probably about 9:00, when we usually start getting ready for bed, "I'm really discouraged tonight." By the way, this is not the first time we've had this conversation. She said to me (as she often does), "You're not discouraged. You're just tired."

**Stu:** Wow.

**Michael:** She said, "It's going to be all better tomorrow. You just need to get away from the computer. Put the computer down. Come to bed. It'll all be good."

**Stu:** We all need Gail, the voice of reason, you know?

**Michael:** The voice of reason!

**Stu:** Yeah. Every night before we go to bed, we just need to plug in a question and have Gail spit back the voice of reason to us.

**Michael:** But you know, we're talking about your mental energy. You have a certain amount of mental energy you can apply throughout the day, and when that gets exhausted, it gets exhausted. Then it's like trying to run an engine without adequate oil. It's just metal on metal. You grind, and you don't accomplish much. The same thing happens emotionally.

**Stu:** And I find that we go to the worst-case scenario much more quickly than we ever would if we were well rested and had our sense of being about us and rationale that was there. When we're emotionally drained and tired, we go to the worst-case scenario quickly.

**Michael:** Very quickly. Like even last night... I hate to admit this, but this is a true confession. Last night I was thinking about this launch, and I was thinking, "Oh my gosh. We're not going to achieve what we intended to achieve." In the back of my mind, I was like, "The whole business is in the dumper, and this is the end."

**Stu:** Oh my. "What am I going to do?" Yeah. Totally.

**Michael:** I wouldn't make a very good homeless person. It's like all of this impending doom. It's just there in the recesses of my mind, but those things are never there in the daytime when I'm rested.

**Stu:** I just want to affirm for you that you would make a great homeless person. You're very resourceful. You would find a way.

**Michael:** I hope I never have the opportunity.

**Stu:** It's true, though. We do go to that worst-case scenario very quickly because our emotional state is depleted. I find it's very difficult to be rational when I don't have those emotional reserves.

**Michael:** It is. I think (especially for entrepreneurs and leaders) one of the things we struggle with a lot (I've talked to thousands of entrepreneurs and thousands of leaders about this) is fear. Very few will admit it, but when they get together and you give them a safe environment, that's what they say they struggle with.

**Stu:** Totally.

**Michael:** It's in the middle of the night. It's that fear that this project isn't going to work and it's going to cascade into the rest of their business. It gets irrational, like you said.

**Stu:** Their family is in jeopardy at that point.

**Michael:** That's right.

**Stu:** Yep.

**Michael:** I'm telling you that probably 70-80 percent of that just goes away when you get adequate sleep. You still have to contend with it a little bit, but you have the resources to manage it. I guess that's what I'm the most concerned about. When we live these kinds of sleep-deprived lives, not taking the time to get adequate rest, we don't have the resources we need to be able to handle just the normal challenges that come our way, let alone some of the bigger challenges we're going to face if we're really out to create a big impact on the world.

**Stu:** I also want to talk about the ripple effect of this. Acknowledging your own emotional state or even acknowledging it for a loved one or spouse in terms of where they're depleted like Gail did with you last night can be tremendously beneficial, because if you don't acknowledge the fact that you are lacking that sleep and you're emotionally drained, you can and will be short with people you love.

That can have a ripple effect. I think even with parenting... It can have an impact there. When you're not getting sleep, you're more irritable with your kids. That has a ripple effect on them because they react according to how you react, and it can cascade downward from there.

**Michael:** So true. Well, I think one of the greatest gifts you can give your spouse is to be alert to how rested they are. I have to confess I did not do a very good job of this as a young father. I was very much concerned about my career, and I was trying to support five kids. I had to be the breadwinner, and I needed my good night's sleep.

I didn't do a very good job of monitoring Gail's rest, and I was letting her be the one (I'm not proud of this) who got up with the kids when they got up. It was always somebody in the middle of the night. I think that if I had to do that over again, I would be more sensitive to her restfulness (or lack of it) and ensure that some nights she got a great night's rest and some nights I did. I would make sure we traded that off so we both got adequate rest.

**Stu:** Yeah. I'm in that season of life right now with two young kids, and I can totally relate to how important it is for both sides to be well rested, because it can be a challenge while raising young kids, because they are up during the night, and you do need to be there for them, but you still have to get your rest as we're talking about here today.

**Michael:** I think Gail and I figured out one time that we went more than 15 years without sleeping all the way through the night.

**Stu:** Wow! That's insane. Well, yeah. I don't know how you did that. I don't know how a lot of parents do it.

**Michael:** I don't know how they do it either.

**Stu:** It's amazing,

**Michael:** Yep.

**Stu:** So a high five goes to all of the parents out there. If you're one of them, we are acknowledging you right now. We're talking about sleep, its importance, and ways it's going to help us achieve more. First, we talked about how sleep keeps us sharp. Second, sleep improves our ability to remember, learn, and grow. Third, sleep refreshes our emotional state. What is the fourth one?

**Michael:** The fourth one is that *sleep revitalizes our bodies*. Physiologically, we just need to sleep. If you've ever done any kind of strength training or even endurance running, you know you have to have that recovery time when your body can repair itself. Sleep has been directly related to heart disease, heart attacks, deficits in our immune systems, and all kinds of diseases.

**Stu:** A lack of sleep is related to those.

**Michael:** It's a lack of sleep. Yep. A lack of sleep can produce all of that. One of the best things you can do (I learned this from my cardiologist) for your heart... You often hear, "Well, it's your diet." You often hear, "It's exercise." Those are important. There's no question about it. But the single most important thing you can do is get adequate rest, because there's a direct correlation between whether or not you're rested and whether or not you're going to experience some kind of coronary incident later in life.

**Stu:** Wow. That's a big lesson, again, for those of us who love our work or are consumed by our work. It's important to break from that and give your body the rest it needs so you can achieve more and accomplish more.

**Michael:** Yeah. Even if you have to go through those periods when you're going to give up sleep because you have a launch, a big project, or something else, you have to get on the other side of that and compensate for that by getting more rest and catching back up. This can't be a constant lifestyle. I remember that when I was at Thomas Nelson, I published a book by a lady (this is hard to believe, but I think this was back in the 80s) who advocated getting by on four hours of sleep a night.

**Stu:** Wow.

**Michael:** She had discovered the magic cure to productivity, which was less sleep. She was just going to actually work more hours than everybody else. She had trained herself (I don't really believe it, but this is what she said) to exist on four hours of sleep a night.

**Stu:** It sounds great in theory.

**Michael:** It does. Maybe you can do that for a short period of time, but it's not sustainable. Something is going to break down. Sleep is vital to your overall health.

**Stu:** Yeah, it really is. I'm always amazed at people like police officers, fire fighters, paramedics, and so forth who work shifts that change. I don't know how they regulate themselves as far as sleep goes. I mean, it's crazy.

**Michael:** Well, there was this crazy statistic I had in one of my blog posts. Let me see if I can find this here. I can't remember what the number was, but it was the idea that people who get less sleep than they should over a consistent period of time (it might have been as little as six hours of sleep)... In one study, subjects went in on six hours of sleep a night for two weeks. Get this. They functioned at the same level of impairment as someone who was legally drunk.

**Stu:** Wow. That's insane. And that's only after two weeks.

**Michael:** That's only after two weeks of getting six hours a night. That study went on to say those who got eight hours had no impairment at all. The difference between six hours and eight hours may not seem like that much, but it's very significant in terms of your mental health, emotional health, and ability to be productive.

**Stu:** Wow. Well, this is creating a case for us to get more sleep and therefore achieve more.

**Michael:** We're giving you permission right here on this show to get more sleep. You go tell your spouse, "We have to work together. We have to get more sleep."

**Stu:** I do want to note that this is something you are very intentional about. I even know napping is a very intentional thing you do throughout the day. Talk to us quickly about that, because that's something you schedule.

**Michael:** Yeah. I think we've actually done a podcast on this. I can't remember when. We've done so many. But yeah, I am vigorous about taking a nap every day. I have been this way for a long, long time.

**Stu:** Not a long, long nap.

**Michael:** Yeah, that too. No, not really. I used to be able to sleep for a couple of hours, like on a Sunday afternoon. I can't sleep for more than 20 minutes at a time in the daytime now. At night I get great sleep, but during the day, I sleep for about 20 minutes. I typically eat lunch, and then I go take a nap. Even back when I was in college and I was working at a job during the daytime, I would go take my lunch break. I went to a part of the building where nobody would bother me. I would eat my lunch.

They gave me a full hour for my lunch break. Then I would go to sleep. I would sleep for 20 minutes or so, and I would wake up totally refreshed. Now this is my typical practice. I work downtown about three blocks from my house. I walk home for lunch. I eat lunch. I lie down for 15 or 20 minutes. I don't have to set a timer. Some people do. I don't have to set a timer, but sleeping for that length of time ensures that I don't get into that deep, dysfunctional sleep. You know what I'm talking about?

**Stu:** You wake up super groggy, and it takes you like an hour to get back into the swing of things.

**Michael:** You don't want to do that. That's why all of the experts agree that no more than 30 minutes for a nap is optimal if you really want to function later in the day. So I'll take 20 minutes, and then I'll get up and have a cup of coffee. It's like I get a total rebound. It's like I begin my second day fully energized.

**Stu:** Amazing. Let's recap the four ways sleep helps us achieve more. First, sleep keeps us sharp. Second, sleep improves our ability to remember, learn, and grow. Third, sleep refreshes our emotional state. Fourth, sleep revitalizes our bodies. As we wrap up this episode, can you share a few practical tips for us on how we can get more sleep?

**Michael:** Yeah. You know, I find that when I talk to people about sleep, a lot of people say they struggle with sleep. They have a hard time sleeping more. It's like they want to... Some people can't because they have a lot of other things going on in their lives, but there are a lot of people who would like to sleep more but just can't. This is kind of a checklist of things I do. We probably ought to do a podcast on my evening routine at some point. We've done on my morning routine. One simple one is to exercise every day. I promise you that if you exercise every day, you'll sleep better.

**Stu:** When you're exercising, are you doing strength training every day? What does exercising every day mean to you?

**Michael:** Well, for me it means having strength training three days a week and cardio three days a week. I do it for an hour because I have an hour to do it. I realize not everybody in

every season of life can devote an hour a day to it, but if you can get to at least 30 minutes a day (that's kind of the minimum effective dose) three or four days a week, I think you'll be good. It'll improve the quality of your sleep. So exercise. Just get yourself worn out. Again, think back to kids. When the kids play outside all day and they've been active and running around, they come in and conk out.

**Stu:** Well, one of my dear friends has a son who is just a ball of energy. This little guy just has so much energy that they didn't know how to contain him. What they ended up doing was... They would take him to gymnastics an hour before he would go to bed. That little guy would wear himself out, and by that time he would be all ready to go to sleep. That was how they were able to get him to sleep. They would just wear him out with exercise in the form of gymnastics, and it worked.

**Michael:** Yeah. There are a lot of these physical things that will help us sleep better if we'll just do them. Don't drink coffee too late in the afternoon. Don't eat chocolate too late in the afternoon. Just kind of prepare your body for sleep. It's common sense, but one simple thing is to exercise every day.

**Stu:** Okay. Any other tips?

**Michael:** Yeah. The other one is to unplug an hour before bed. This constant focus on the screens in our lives... The screens are everywhere. As we're recording this, we're almost on the eve of the Apple Watch being released. I'm not saying that's bad. I'll probably end up buying one, although I haven't ordered one yet.

But the constant intrusion of all of these screens in our lives and just the blue light that comes from them can keep us awake. I use an application on my Mac that's called f.lux. Over time at night, with the sunset (it pegs itself to the sunset), it begins to dial down the blue emissions from my screen.

**Stu:** Wow.

**Michael:** You're not familiar with this?

**Stu:** No, I'm not.

**Michael:** Oh, it's very cool. My daughter, Madeline, got me on this. It makes sure that doesn't keep you awake. Even better yet is to just remove yourself from the screens. If you're going to use a screen, use something like a Kindle that's not a backlit screen, because that type of screen will keep you awake and disrupt your sleep.

**Stu:** You know, another thing along with that is that I've found... I used to read on my iPad before I went to bed, and that would disrupt my sleep because it's that blue, backlit screen again. I just couldn't do it. Now I have to go read a book. I have stacks of books beside my bed now because the screen was preventing me from being able to fall asleep easily.

**Michael:** Yeah, I do the same thing on a Kindle. It doesn't bother me like the iPad does, but I won't use the iPad for that reason. Another tip I would just give is to start with the big priorities in the beginning of the day so you're not rushing right up until the end of the day, trying to finish your work. You just need to gradually wind down so what you're doing late in the evening is taking less energy, less mental focus, and fewer emotional resources.

**Stu:** Very, very cool. Today we have been talking about the importance of sleep and how it can help you achieve more. Michael gave some great tips at the end there. Exercise every day, unplug an hour before bed, and start with the big priorities so you can stop on time. If you've enjoyed today's episode, you can get the full show notes and transcript at [michaelhyatt.com](http://michaelhyatt.com).

If you prefer to watch rather than listen, you can do that too over at [michaelhyatt.com](http://michaelhyatt.com). The full video has been posted there. Can you do us a favor? Go over to iTunes and rate the podcast. Doing so is just going to help us get in front of more people. We really want to help people succeed at both work and life, so if you can rate the podcast, that will be greatly helpful. Michael, as we wind up today, do you have any final thoughts?

**Michael:** Well, I would just say again that sleep is more important than you think. Just test me on this. Just try it.

**Stu:** Take pride in getting sleep.

**Michael:** Yeah. Do it, and don't be one of these people who brag about how busy they are and how little sleep they're getting. I think it's important to begin to have this conversation with your friends so you can create kind of a culture around you that values sleep and be supportive of your spouse in getting more sleep. It'll make a difference in your productivity. It'll make a difference in what you're trying to accomplish in the world.

**Stu:** Well, I have to wrap up this episode. I'm feeling kind of sleepy myself. I want to thank you for joining us today.

Until next time, remember: Your life, your one and only life, is a gift. Now go make it count.