Podcast Transcript

EPISODE #219

Reclaiming the Rhythm: The Radical Circadian Lifestyle

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EPISODE SYNOPSIS

In this episode of My Weird Prompts, brothers Herman and Corn Poppleberry dive deep into the biological and technological frontiers of circadian health. Inspired by a prompt from their housemate Daniel, the duo explores what it means to "radically" embrace the natural cycle of the sun in a world dominated by artificial light. From the molecular mechanics of the Nobel Prize-winning "clock genes" to the latest research linking fragmented rhythms to dementia, this discussion highlights why timing is the most underrated component of health. The conversation moves beyond simple blue light filters, offering a practical roadmap for using smart home technology to automate a biological "reset." Herman and Corn detail how tools like Home Assistant can be used to create seamless lighting curves, thermal ramps, and morning light signals that mimic the environment our ancestors evolved in. Whether you are navigating the challenges of a new baby or seeking "biological excellence" through chrononutrition, this episode provides the insights needed to turn your home into a living, breathing extension of the natural world.

DANIEL'S PROMPT

Daniel

"I would like to discuss radically embracing a circadian lifestyle. Beyond just using blue light filters, how can one align their daily schedule with natural rhythms like sunrise and sunset? I'm particularly interested in using home automation for adaptive lighting to help facilitate this. What steps would you recommend to transition to a full circadian lifestyle?"

TRANSCRIPT

Corn

Hey everyone, welcome back to My Weird Prompts. I am Corn, and I am sitting here in our living room in Jerusalem with my brother. It is January twelfth, twenty-twenty-six, and it is a bit chilly outside today. The sun is actually going to set at exactly four fifty-five P.M. here in the holy city, which feels incredibly early, but it is the perfect backdrop for today's episode.

Herman

Herman Poppleberry, at your service. And you are right, Corn. Our housemate Daniel really hit on something that we have been grappling with ourselves, especially with these short winter days in Israel. He is asking about radically embracing a circadian lifestyle. Not just the surface-level stuff like putting a blue light filter on your phone, but actually re-orienting your entire existence around the natural cycle of the sun. It is about moving from being a passenger in your own biology to being the conductor.

Corn

It is a fascinating prompt because it touches on something so fundamental to being human that we have almost entirely forgotten in the last hundred and fifty years. We have spent millennia evolving under the cycle of the sun and the moon, and then suddenly, we invented the light bulb and decided we were masters of time. Daniel mentioned he is becoming less of a night owl, which is a huge shift, especially with a six-month-old baby in the house. He is looking for that next level of optimization.

Herman

It is a massive shift, and frankly, a necessary one if you look at the latest data. Just last week, on January fifth, a major study was published in the journal Neurology by researchers at U-T Southwestern. They found that weaker and more fragmented circadian rhythms are significantly linked to an increased risk of dementia in older adults. They also found that people whose activity levels peaked later in the day—those night owls Daniel is trying to move away from—had a higher risk profile. So, this is not just about feeling refreshed; it is about long-term neurological preservation.

Corn

That is a sobering start, Herman, but it underscores why this is radical. Most people think circadian rhythm just means when you feel sleepy, but you often say it is more like a master conductor for a massive orchestra.

Herman

Exactly. Every single cell in your body has a clock. When we talk about the circadian rhythm, we are usually talking about the suprachiasmatic nucleus, or S-C-N, in the brain. But there are also peripheral clocks in your liver, your gut, and even your skin. When these clocks are out of sync—when your brain thinks it is noon because of your bright screen, but your gut thinks it is midnight because you haven't eaten—that is when systemic inflammation and metabolic dysfunction start to creep in.

Corn

So, how does the body actually keep time at a cellular level? I know there was a Nobel Prize involved a few years back.

Herman

Yes, in twenty-seventeen, Jeffrey Hall, Michael Rosbash, and Michael Young won the Nobel Prize for discovering the molecular mechanisms. It is essentially a feedback loop. You have these genes called Period and Cryptochrome—or P-E-R and C-R-Y for short. During the night, the proteins from these genes build up in the cell. When they reach a certain level, they actually move back into the nucleus and shut off their own production. Then, during the day, those proteins degrade. It is a beautiful, self-sustaining twenty-four-hour loop happening in trillions of cells simultaneously.

Corn

So when Daniel asks about a radical embrace, he is really asking how to stop throwing a wrench into that cellular machinery. Let us start with the most powerful signal: light. Daniel mentioned adaptive lighting in his home automation setup. How does light actually talk to these genes?

Herman

This is where the physics meets the biology. We have these specific cells in our eyes called intrinsically photosensitive retinal ganglion cells, or I-P-R-G-Cs. These cells contain a photopigment called melanopsin. They do not care about the movie you are watching or the book you are reading; they only care about the presence of blue light, specifically around the four hundred and eighty nanometer wavelength. When they see that light, they send a direct signal to the S-C-N to suppress melatonin and ramp up cortisol.

Corn

And the problem is that our modern world is a blue light blizzard. Even at ten P.M., our L-E-D lights are screaming 'high noon' at our brains.

Herman

Precisely. A radical circadian lifestyle starts with reclaiming that signal. In a smart home, like the one Daniel is building with Home Assistant, you can use the Adaptive Lighting integration. This is a powerful tool found in the Home Assistant Community Store, or H-A-C-S. It calculates the sun's exact position based on your latitude and longitude here in Jerusalem and adjusts your lights in real-time.

Corn

I have seen the dashboard for that in recent Home Assistant updates. It is much more intuitive now. It does not just turn lights on and off; it creates a seamless curve. At midday, the kitchen lights might be five thousand Kelvin—that crisp, cool white. But by four fifty-five P.M. today, when the sun goes down, those lights should already be transitioning toward twenty-seven hundred Kelvin.

Herman

And if you are going radical, twenty-seven hundred is still too high for the evening. By seven P.M., you want to be down at eighteen hundred Kelvin or even lower. We are talking candlelight levels. And intensity is just as important as color. Most people leave their lights at one hundred percent brightness. In a radical setup, the brightness should drop to maybe twenty or thirty percent as soon as the sun sets. You want to mimic the fading light of dusk to allow the natural build-up of adenosine and the release of melatonin.

Corn

You mentioned recent Home Assistant updates. What specifically helps with this kind of circadian automation?

Herman

There are several key features. First, the dashboard makes it much easier to see the state of your entire 'circadian' zone at a glance. But more importantly, you can trigger automations based on a light's brightness crossing a specific threshold. So, if a light is manually turned up too bright after sunset, Home Assistant can catch that and gently dim it back down over sixty seconds, nudging the user back into the rhythm.

Corn

That sounds like a polite way of the house telling you to calm down. But Herman, is it enough to just fix the lights? Daniel mentioned the idea of going to bed at eight P.M. Is that an overcorrection?

Herman

It is actually closer to how we lived for thousands of years. Before the light bulb, we had what historians call 'segmented sleep' or 'second sleep.' People would go to bed shortly after sunset, wake up for an hour or two in the middle of the night to reflect or pray, and then sleep again until dawn. While we do not necessarily need to go back to that, the goal of a radical lifestyle is to provide clear, unambiguous signals. One of the biggest mistakes is staying in a dimly lit office all day and then a brightly lit living room all night. Scientists call this a weak zeitgeber, or time-giver.

Corn

So the contrast is gone. Your body is living in a perpetual twilight.

Herman

Exactly. So the first radical step is actually what you do in the morning. You need to get outside within thirty minutes of waking up. Even on a cloudy day in Jerusalem, the lux levels outside are around ten thousand. Compare that to a well-lit office, which is only about five hundred lux. That massive spike of light in the morning sets a biological timer. It tells your brain, 'The day has started, start the fourteen-hour countdown to melatonin production.'

Corn

I love that. It is a push-pull system. Now, let us talk about the baby. Daniel has a six-month-old. How does this radical shift affect a developing child?

Herman

It is actually the best thing he could do for the baby. Infants are still developing their circadian entrainment. By providing a rock-solid light and dark cycle, he is helping the baby's S-C-N stabilize. For the nursery, I would recommend using pure red L-E-Ds for any middle-of-the-night changes. Red light has the longest wavelength and the least impact on melanopsin. If Daniel turns on even a dim 'warm white' light at three A.M., he is essentially hitting the reset button on his and the baby's internal clocks.

Corn

That is a great practical tip. Now, let us move to the other big pillar: food. We have talked about chrononutrition before, but how does it fit into a radical circadian lifestyle?

Herman

This is where it gets really interesting. Your insulin sensitivity is not a flat line; it follows a rhythmic curve. Research has shown that early time-restricted eating—where you consume all your calories in an eight-hour window that ends by mid-afternoon—can significantly improve metabolic health and sleep quality. Your body is simply better at processing carbohydrates in the morning than it is at night.

Corn

So, a radical approach would be eating a huge breakfast, a medium lunch, and almost nothing for dinner?

Herman

Precisely. If you eat a heavy meal at eight P.M., your core body temperature rises to handle digestion. But for deep sleep, your core temperature needs to drop by about two or three degrees Fahrenheit. By eating late, you are forcing your body to choose between digestion and deep sleep. It usually chooses a poor version of both.

Corn

I can see the social friction here. If you are in Jerusalem and someone invites you for a late dinner, and you say, 'Sorry, my insulin sensitivity is too low right now,' you are definitely going to be the weird one.

Herman

Oh, you will be the weirdest person in the neighborhood. But this brings up the concept of 'Social Jetlag.' This term was popularized to describe the mismatch between our biological clocks and our social obligations. Research has found that a significant portion of the population suffers from at least one hour of social jetlag every single day. By radically embracing the circadian rhythm, you are essentially opting out of that collective exhaustion. You are choosing biological excellence over social convenience.

Corn

It is a quiet rebellion. Now, let us get back to the tech for a second. If Daniel wants to go 'full radical' with Home Assistant, what are the advanced moves? We have talked about bulbs, but what about the rest of the house?

Herman

The next level is thermal and mechanical automation. First, smart shades. If you can automate your blinds to open at the exact moment of sunrise—six forty A.M. tomorrow—you are using the sun as a natural alarm clock. The light hitting your eyelids, even when closed, triggers a gradual transition out of R-E-M sleep. Second, the thermostat. You should program a 'circadian temperature ramp.' Start dropping the house temperature at sunset, aiming for sixty-five degrees Fahrenheit by nine P.M. Then, have it start rising an hour before you want to wake up. That rise in temperature is a key signal for the body to produce cortisol.

Corn

It sounds like the house becomes a living, breathing extension of the environment. But what about the 'screen' problem? Daniel is a tech enthusiast. How do you handle the urge to check Home Assistant on a bright O-L-E-D screen at nine P.M.?

Herman

That is the hardest part of the radical shift. I would suggest Daniel uses 'E-Ink' tablets or displays for his evening dashboards. E-Ink doesn't emit light directly into the eye; it reflects ambient light, much like a book. Or, better yet, use voice assistants or physical Zigbee buttons to control the house at night. In my setup, I have a dedicated 'Sleep Mode' button next to the bed. When pressed, it doesn't just turn off the lights; it sets a 'manual override' in the Adaptive Lighting integration so that if I do have to turn a light on in the night, it defaults to one percent brightness and pure red.

Corn

That 'manual control' feature is crucial. I have noticed that sometimes these automations can feel like they are fighting you if you actually need to see something.

Herman

Exactly. The Adaptive Lighting integration has a 'takeover control' feature. If you manually adjust a bulb, the automation pauses for that specific light until you turn it off again. This prevents the 'haunted house' effect where you try to brighten a light and the system dims it back down immediately. It is about harmony, not digital tyranny.

Corn

Let us zoom out for a moment. We have talked about the 'how,' but I want to touch on the 'why' again. We mentioned the dementia study, but what about the day-to-day psychological impact? Does this make you a more boring person, or a more present one?

Herman

I would argue it makes you infinitely more present. When you stop fighting the sun, you stop fighting yourself. There is a profound psychological peace that comes with 'seasonal living.' In the winter, you accept that you have less energy and need more sleep. In the summer, you lean into the long days. We have built a world that demands one hundred percent productivity three hundred and sixty-five days a year, regardless of the light outside. That is a recipe for burnout. Radically embracing the circadian rhythm is an act of self-preservation against a world that never sleeps.

Corn

It is like a biological anchor in a digital storm. I am thinking about the long-term implications for society. If we all lived this way, our healthcare systems would look completely different. We are seeing more and more links between circadian disruption and everything from breast cancer to Type Two diabetes.

Herman

Absolutely. The World Health Organization has even classified night shift work as a probable carcinogen. That should tell you everything you need to know. We are not designed to be twenty-four-hour creatures. Daniel's shift from a one A.M. bedtime to a ten P.M. bedtime is already a massive win. If he can push that to nine P.M. in the winter and align his meals with the sun, he is essentially giving himself a biological upgrade that no supplement or biohack can match.

Corn

So, let us give Daniel a final checklist for his 'Radical Circadian Roadmap.' What are the five steps?

Herman

Step one: Morning light. Get outside for fifteen minutes before seven A.M. Step two: Chrononutrition. Stop eating by four or five P.M., especially in the winter. Step three: Adaptive Lighting. Install the H-A-C-S integration and set your evening floor to eighteen hundred Kelvin and ten percent brightness. Step four: Thermal signaling. Drop the bedroom temperature to sixty-five degrees at night. And step five: The 'Digital Sunset.' No blue-light-emitting screens after eight P.M. Use E-Ink or physical books instead.

Corn

That last one is the real test of character. But I suppose if you are in bed by eight-thirty, you do not have much time to scroll anyway. It is funny, we think of this as a high-tech challenge, but the technology is just a bridge back to how we are supposed to live.

Herman

It is the ultimate irony. We are using thousands of dollars of smart home gear to replicate the experience of living in a tent. But in twenty-twenty-six, that is what it takes to be healthy. The environment we have built is so toxic to our biology that we have to build a digital 'biosphere' inside our homes just to survive it.

Corn

Well, I think we have given Daniel and our listeners plenty to chew on. This is an upcoming episode of My Weird Prompts, and it might be one of the most important ones we have done. It is not just a 'weird prompt'; it is a blueprint for a different kind of life.

Herman

I agree. And for anyone listening, do not feel like you have to do it all at once. Start with the morning sun. That is the anchor. Once that is in place, the rest of the pieces tend to fall into line much more easily.

Corn

Absolutely. And if you have tried any of these radical shifts, or if you have your own Home Assistant configurations for circadian living, we want to hear about them. You can reach us through the contact form at myweirdprompts.com.

Herman

Yes, please send us your Y-A-M-L code or your success stories. And if you enjoyed this deep dive, please leave us a review on Spotify or Apple Podcasts. It really helps the show grow and helps other people find these weird, but hopefully useful, discussions.

Corn

We will be back next week with another prompt from Daniel. Hopefully, it is something that allows me to stay up past nine P.M., but after this talk, I am not so sure I want to.

Herman

I think I am going to go check my lux levels right now. Until next time, stay curious.

Corn

And stay in rhythm. Goodbye for now.

Herman

Bye everyone.