

## Transcript: Sleep Junkies Podcast Episode 011

### Plants, herbs and natural sleep medicine - Dr Josh Corn

<https://sleepjunkies.com/natural-medicine-and-sleep/>

**Jeff Mann: 00:00:08** Welcome to the Sleep Junkies podcast. My name is Jeff Mann and I'm the founder and editor of sleepjunkies.com and what do we do on the podcast? Well, we cover the whole conversation on sleep and today we're going to be talking about natural medicine. We're going to talk about naturopathy, natural sleep remedies.

00:00:28 And before you switch off and think this is going to be a talk full of quackery, snake oil and pseudo science. Take a pause. Okay, so the problem with natural medicine and natural therapies, whether they're for sleep or any other health condition, is not to do with efficacy. It's not to do with research, it's to do with the fact that there are people out there pretending to be experts pretending to be medical advisors who aren't and they are quacks. They've maybe done an online certification course, they have no idea about what they're prescribing, they have no training to do with patients.

00:01:09 On the flip side, there are people like our guest today who have studied, who've been through degree programs, who've undertaken research in the lab. They've done clinical research, have published scientific papers in the field of natural medicine. And the problem is all of these people get lumped together and as a result, the whole field of natural medicine gets smeared and tarnished.

00:01:35 So today we're hoping to redress that balance a little bit and cut through some of the BS. Talk about these issues, talk about the stigmas, talk about the fake stuff out there, but also talk about the real science behind natural medicine.

00:01:51 We're going to talk about different herbs and supplements, drill down into some of the common ones and maybe some you haven't heard of before. We're going to talk about the different approach to health and wellbeing that natural medicine takes considering the holistic health of the individual. We're going to talk about how naturopathic medicine works alongside traditional health care providers.

00:02:15 So hopefully you'll get a real overview of this subject of naturopathy. And certainly, I've learned a lot on this podcast. So that's it for the introduction. If you're liking the podcast, don't forget to subscribe, leave us a review, check us out on social media, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and of course on the website, sleepjunkies.com. Hope you enjoy the episode, on with the show.

00:02:47 Okay. So I'm joined today with Dr Josh Corn and I think we're going to have a really interesting conversation today because we're talking about natural medicine and how that relates to sleep. So, Hi Josh. Thanks for joining us today.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:02:59** Hi. Glad to be here.

**Jeff Mann: 00:03:05** Okay. Can we get a little bit of a background to, to what you do, your training and how would you describe yourself? Would you describe yourself as a naturopath, a naturopathic doctor? What's your title? You would say if you met somebody at a dinner party and I say,

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:03:23** Sure. A good question. Yeah, I describe myself as a naturopathic doctor because I have a degree in naturopathic medicine in the United States and I think kind of throughout the world, nature off fee or naturopathic medicine doesn't have as many, standards and, and kind of educational requirements as it does in some places in this country.

So anyone who's into natural medicine or into, you know, traditional healing can kind of call themselves a naturopath. So I think that's an important distinction to make that I have had extra training and have gone to a degree program and actually seeing patients and all that kind of stuff.

**Jeff Mann: 00:04:03** Just to clarify. Are you saying there's less standards in the States or less than others in other countries compared to the states?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:04:09** I think different states and different countries have different standards for, you know, who can call themselves a naturopath, who can call themselves a naturopathic doctor.

For instance, in the state of Oregon in the US where I practice, anyone who calls themselves a naturopathic doctor has to have gone to a four year accredited program, you know, a clinical program and actually seeing patient and passed board exams and get licensed by the state. Whereas in there are other States in the country where there aren't licensing requirements.

**Jeff Mann: 00:04:38** Well, we've got to talk about this in a little bit, but I think people have a lot of preconceptions about what a, a naturopath is and this distinction between a naturopathic doctor and a naturopath has something, you know, I wasn't aware of it before this conversation. So can we talk a little bit about the training and also, you know, you've got a research background in this field as well.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:05:00** Yes, so I attended National University of Natural Medicine, excuse me, which is the oldest naturopathic school in North America. It's been around since 1956 as its own entity. Before that it was affiliated with another college, so it's been turning out students for the past 60 years.

My training was really focused on both kind of traditional primary care aspects of standards of care as far as diagnosis and ordering labs and imaging and all that kind of stuff. But really with a heavy emphasis on natural therapies that can treat disease.

00:05:37 So herbal medicine, uh, lifestyle as far as like stress management, sleep is a big thing. We talk about exercise and then diet and food as medicine is one of the really huge components of our program and naturopathic practice in general.

And with the research, I did an integrative medicine research master's degree while I was in school, worked on a few clinical trials and I've worked on some bench work and just kind of, you know, collaborating with lots of different doctors who were doing research in different areas.

**Jeff Mann: 00:06:11** So can you distill what is a naturopath, what is a naturopath doctor and where does this practice of naturopathic medicine fit into the whole scheme of health? Uh, let's keep it limited to the States, maybe to to your state of Oregon as well.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:06:31** Sure. And you know, in the state of Oregon, naturopathic doctors can function as primary care providers, which fills a really big gap in the current US healthcare system. There aren't enough primary care providers, um, for all the people that need them. So I think we fill a really important role in this state and a few other states where we're licensed as PCPs.

00:06:51 My practice is probably 70% primary care. I would say I'm probably about 30% complimentary care. Most of my patients are low income, uninsured or Medicaid. We work with some of the county organizations here to provide care to patients who have no other way to get healthcare than besides through the county.

So we partner with them. I also work in a drug and alcohol Rehab Center. So I work with patients who are, you know, in recovery for those things. And mostly there I do complimentary pair and I find that to be really rewarding because those are people that normally don't have access to, you know, anything but kind of standard of care, basic health care.

And it's really cool to see natural things, work with those people and see those people kind of take charge of their health and, and start learning to take care of themselves in ways that they haven't done. So I, I love being a part of that as well

**Jeff Mann: 00:07:52** As a naturopathic doctor, you're kind of looking at the individual as a whole and is a, it's a slightly different approach to going to your regular doctor. Is it fair to say, naturopathy is considering the holistic health of the individual?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:08:10** Yeah, absolutely. That's, that's foundational to our medicine is, is that whole person, individual care, you know, really looking at every part of your health and every part of what you do and how you eat and how you sleep and how you exercise and how you interact with other people. Because all of those things play into our health.

00:08:28 There's, there's tons of research on kind of what's called the social determinants of health. So all those pieces of health that don't, you know, they don't fit in your body and your physical space. And then additionally, like all of the research, especially new research that's coming out about how powerful our mental health and our mind and our cognitive function, like how those really make an impact on our health.

00:08:51 So naturopathic doctors are really trained to, we, we really get into it, love spending a lot of time with our patients, talking about all those things, you know, talking about sleep, talking about stress level is talking about your mood, talking about your poop. We love to talk about digestion and kind of, you know, looking at everything and how it, how it's all interconnected. And Yeah, I do think sleep is a really excellent example because there's, there's a lot of different ways that I treat sleep issues. I don't have just a one size fits all approach.

**Jeff Mann: 00:09:21** Great. Yeah, we'll get into that in a little bit. What I want to do, I want to, I want to dispel a few myths and maybe some misperceptions and some stigmas about this because there's probably some people who may look at this podcast or even the title of the podcast and they see natural medicine or naturopathy and they think, right, okay, well I know exactly what that's going to be. Uh, you know, that's going to be some hippy dippy, uh, zero evidence-based talking about some nonsense basically.

00:09:53 So I went to the Wikipedia page for naturopathy and I'm just going to read it out for the readers here, because it's really interesting. So I'll just read out a couple of these passages. So he says, this is from Wikipedia. So if you type this into Wikipedia.

00:10:11 "Naturopathy or naturopathic medicine is a form of alternative medicine that employs an array of pseudo scientific practices. The ideology and methods of naturopathy are based on vitalism and folk medicine rather than evidence based medicine. "Naturopathic practitioners generally recommend against following modern medical practices including medical testing, drugs, vaccinations and surgery. Natural medicine is considered by the medical profession to be ineffective and possibly harmful raising ethical issues about this practice." There you go.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:10:56** Yes, I well, yeah, thank you for bringing that up [laughs]. I think it's a, it's shocking to this quite different. That is from how naturopathic doctors really practice.

**Jeff Mann: 00:11:02** I find that quite shocking because it's saying, uh, it's all based on vitalism and folk medicine rather than evidence based medicine. And then they say pseudo scientific. What's pseudoscientific? You recommend against drugs, vaccinations, and surgery. So if someone came to you with a broken leg, you know, you wouldn't recommend they go to a hospital to get it, get it fixed according to this Wikipedia, according to this. So the, there seems like, I'm not to use a strong word, this seems like a bit of propaganda here,

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:11:40** Certainly, and I, and I think that, you know, understanding your sources is really important and Wikipedia is a great source of information because everybody can edit it, but the problem is that everybody can edit it. So that means that it's not an unbiased source of information. You know, I, I think we could spend the whole time really unpacking this.

00:12:00 But I think the thing that's most, yeah, I guess I will say offensive to me is, is that middle part that says, uh, we generally recommend against following modern medical practices, including medical testing, drugs, vaccinations, and surgery. That could not be farther from the truth. We work in conjunction with medical doctors, osteopaths, you know, the, the conventional medical system all the time.

Additionally, we are trained and do use drugs in our practice. I use pharmaceuticals in my practice all the time because that's what's accessible to my patients and that's what they can do and what they can afford.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:12:41** And I think there's always a time and a place for everything. I'm not gonna recommend natural treatments to somebody if it's not what's going to keep them safe and if it's not going to be effective for them.

00:12:53 Additionally, we do, you know, lots of lab tests and imaging and all the standard kind of diagnostic procedures. We do definitely if somebody comes in for a broken arm, we are not going to try to fix that with an herb. We're going to send you to the hospital.

00:13:08 And vaccinations is, you know, I don't know how things are in the United Kingdom or elsewhere where, but very controversial subject in the United States right now. But I will say that our clinic, uh, at, at the university where I work, we provide vaccinations. We are in the vaccines for children program, which is a federally funded program to provide vaccinations to low income and uninsured children.

00:13:33 So, you know, I think that we are doing our part to make sure that public health is looked after with vaccinations as well. And I think that there are always people, you know, there are people on the fringe of every kind of medicine or every profession that are going to have views that aren't in line with the majority of the profession. And unfortunately those people are often the more vocal or the more, um, they get a lot of press because it's, you know, it's shock value.

**Jeff Mann: 00:14:01** Well, absolutely. And I think what we're witnessing here on Wikipedia is just lumping in a whole load of people who maybe have no ethics. They're a quack, let's say they have no qualifications, they have no training. We have these people across every field of health and medicine. You know, somebody who flunked their medical degree and, and, and what they've seem to have done here, and this Wikipedia definition is lumped all those people in alongside highly trained people as yourself.

00:14:33 There's obviously a bit of an agenda here from someone, some of these editors who, who don't like what you do. So I'm happy for to have you here and you know, defend the corner and say, no, this is not the case. What you're reading here in Wikipedia. So just going back to some of the things you mentioned. So for instance, uh, we probably think of natural supplements and, and herbs. I like the way Americans call them 'erbs. We call them herbs here in the UK. But as you said, you'll also prescribe pharmaceutical meds as well if necessary.

00:15:11 Can you give us an example of where somebody might come in with a condition and you actually send them out, you know, to back to big pharma and that's not something someone would expect from a naturopath?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:15:26** Yeah. I mean, I do it, I do it every day, you know, I see. I see patients who are, you know, potentially uninsured. So I would love to be able to recommend them using herbs for their

high blood pressure. Herbs can work for that. Herbs can be really good for people who are able to access that. But you know, if they're really not able to afford that, I would rather them spend their money on eating more vegetables, eating more whole grains, you know, joining a gym, like those kinds of things that are going to have bigger impacts than just taking an herb.

00:16:01 So in that case in the United States, we have, and we have these \$4 medications that you can get at some pharmacies, I'm going to choose a \$4 medication that they can get, you know, \$4 for a month's worth of medication for their blood pressure.

And in addition to that, I'm going to talk to them about how to manage their stress. I'm going to talk to them about what foods they need to eat and how to exercise to also bring down blood pressure. So really kind of looking at the whole person and giving them a treatment plan that's not just the medication but kind of includes everything else as well.

**Jeff Mann: 00:16:30** Great. Josh, I just want to talk about this. Going back to this idea of the whole body, the whole organism, because there's a, there's an intersection here, isn't there between what you do and let's say for want of a better word, ancient medicine.

So I'm, I'm talking specifically about Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic practice and I believe some of those things are taught at the university where you studied, but how does what you do fit into these kind of practices and, and how do they also fit into, uh, sort of western notions of, of health and medicine as well? I know there's some massive, huge, yeah,

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:17:15** It is a huge question, but I think that it's, you know, it's a really important question. It's something that in, in this day and age, we're really starting to see that these kind of alternative complimentary forms of medicine are effective for treating tons of conditions. They don't necessarily neatly fit into the western conventional medical model of how to practice or how to study them.

00:17:39 So I think that going forward, that kind of the, the, uh, the next step and figuring things out is, is understanding how do we research these things? How do we apply them to clinical practice and how do we, you know, make sure that they're working all together? I did not study Chinese medicine or Ayurveda, but those, we do have programs and those at the university where I work now, and I think that they all, you know, obviously work really well together because they are whole systems.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:18:07** You know, Ayurveda and Chinese medicine obviously are going to have their own philosophies about health and disease and kind of their own diagnostic patterns. But students in the naturopathic program are able to study those systems as well.

And then I think it's really cool because they're able to kind of integrate western diagnostic knowledge and, and they have the knowledge of the conventional treatments and the western herbs and nutrition, but they also have this really great, you know, whole other medical system that kind of dovetails nicely so they can treat patients from, uh, a lot of different angles and perspectives.

**Jeff Mann: 00:18:41** How'd you deal with skepticism? It's very common, isn't it? To just reject these things out of hand and saying, not interested. Certainly there's a lot of people who don't have an open mind, but there's a lot of people as well that will completely reject and pour scorn on the kind of things that we're talking about - natural medicine, eastern medicines.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:19:02** Yeah, absolutely.

**Jeff Mann: 00:19:02** How would you defend that?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:19:04** Well, I think I would say that, I mean for me everything is patient centered. So it's up to you. It's up to what you want to do. If you don't want to try it, that's, that's totally up to you.

I would probably cite the growing body of evidence on acupuncture as being a very effective tool for headaches, chronic low back pain, insomnia, addiction, allergies. There's, there's a growing body of evidence on acupuncture as being very effective for those things.

00:19:30 So we are studying them. We do have an evidence base for these practices. You know, it's, it's not just a bunch of hogwash. It really does work and I think that oftentimes we see people that have kind of, they've, they've gone the conventional medical route. They've seen lots of doctors. They've seen lots of specialists and nothing has seemed to work for them.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:19:52** So it's kind of, okay, well there's nothing left to lose. I might as well try this stuff that I didn't think I was interested in. So we see those people. I think it's nice to, you know, to be able to show them that sometimes they're really foundational natural things do have a big impact.

Like adjusting your diet or sleeping better or managing your stress. Like all of these things that we can work on with food and herbs and acupuncture and all that kind of stuff. Like it does make a huge difference in how we feel.

**Jeff Mann: 00:20:29** Okay. So let's, let's dive in. Know you treat a whole range of different health issues at your practice, but we're, we want to talk about sleep today because that's, that's what we do. So pharmaceutical sleeping pills and herbs and supplements broadly, how would you contrast those two?

I know we've got lots of divisions within different types of pharmaceuticals and also different types of herbs, but what's the broad distinction between those two approaches?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:21:03** I think for me in my practice, kind of the biggest distinction is the how, how strong something might be. So like, you know, there are really strong sleep medications that are pretty much just going to knock out. Whereas I think a lot of herbs and nutrients are going to be a little bit more gentle.

I also like to choose herbs kind of based on the whole picture. So is there anxiety? Is there muscle tension? Is there, you know, an overwhelming amount of stress? All of us things can kind of give me an idea of what kind of herb I might pick that might help in that specific pathway.

**00:21:46** Whereas pharmaceuticals I think just kind of generally are broader and work a little bit harder. Lots of people, especially if they're coming to see me, are, are willing to try natural things first to see if they work. And if they do, then great. We don't have to go any further. And if they don't, then you know, I'm happy to keep working with the patient until they're, you know, they're satisfied and they're healthier.

00:22:13 I will say that in, you know, my, my work with people who are in recovery from drugs and alcohol, I often do prescribe medications to help people sleep. Um, because drugs mess with neurotransmitters and, and when that's been a pattern for a really long time, it can take a long time for people to kind of get back in that natural rhythm of things.

And so just getting them to sleep more than two or three hours a night to me is way more important than, you know, let's use something natural first. I want them actually sleeping and then we can work on all of those other foundational pieces later.

**Jeff Mann: 00:22:47** So when you go and see your regular doctor, why do none of them recommend herbs or supplements?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:22:54** Yeah, I uh, I think a lot of it comes down to training.

**Jeff Mann: 00:22:57** It might be a really naive question from me.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:22:59** No, I don't think so at all. I think a lot of it comes down to training and, and not, you know, they're not, they don't learn about those things in school. So I think it's pretty natural to just say, not recommend things that you don't know if they work.

If you don't know the evidence behind them, if you don't know how they're used or how they're dosed or how they're going to interact with the drugs that someone might be taking. I mean, I wouldn't recommend them either, but I am fortunate that I have training in those areas, so I'm happy to talk about all those things with my patients.

**Jeff Mann: 00:23:27** Okay. Efficacy of these herbs and the supplements. Where does that come from? That's obviously through your training and you say there is research there, how do you test and monitor, and how does, how does that work? You know, trying to find out if something's going to work, if it's working, if you need to try something else.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:23:52** Yeah. Efficacy and I know we're going to talk more specifics later, but you know, it's, for me it's built on where the evidence is, what the research has, has shown for a lot of these things. The body of research is pretty small at this point, but that to me just means we need more studies, we need more people looking at these natural treatments and you know, proving that they are effective. The studies that, that I'm going to talk about later have shown positive effects.

So let's take that and build on it. As far as, you know, knowing how long to try something, I think that kind of depends on the patient. For me, if, if it's someone who's having a lot of difficulty with sleep and it's really affecting their kind of daily life, I might only do a one or two week trial of something before we move on to something stronger.

Whereas if it's just like, oh, I have occasional insomnia and it's kind of annoying, but it doesn't really affect my daily life, then you know, let's try this for a month or so and see how that works. I kind of base it on what's going on with the person and their sleep and their kind of overall symptoms. And I'll say that also a lot of, excuse me, especially with herbs, a lot of the knowledge that we have about how these plants are used, it's from historical use.

**00:25:10** We have thousands of years of evidence of these plants being used for, for sleep or for relaxing people or for anxiety or stress. You know, some of the herbs that, that we're going to talk about later have been used honestly for thousands of years for those things. So I think that that is a part of kind of part of the pyramid of evidence.

**00:25:31** It's not a placebo controlled trial, so it's maybe not a rigorous scientific trial, but it is evidence that people have used this for hundreds of years, thousands of years with success. And I think that that's, we take that and we build on it.

**Jeff Mann: 00:25:45** So I'm interested, how does a treatment for someone with a sleep condition who'd come to visit you, for instance, how does that fit into standard classifications of sleep disorders? So we have, uh, you know, we have the ICSD which is the, the standard diagnostic list of all the, the sleep disorders.

You'll diagnose a patient based on these criteria. Do you work at all within, within those or is it completely separate or do you use those things as guidelines alongside your, your treatment? How does that dovetail into the, the way that people do with sleep disorders through the, the more traditional routes, let's say?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:26:25** Well, I think in my practice and I think really in the state where I practice, we refer to specialists a lot. So if it's something, you know, if it's functional insomnia kind of, you know, happens a few times a week, that's something I'm totally comfortable treating.

When we start getting into more advanced sleep disorders. I think that that is a place for a specialist to come in and you know, do the diagnosis, do the workup, set the treatment, and then we will figure out ways to support people.

00:26:58 For instance, obstructive sleep apnea, you know, is a really common sleep disorder Using these sedative herbs or supplements or sleeping pills for that matter with obstructive sleep apnea is not a good idea because that can make the sleep apnea worse. So I think understanding the diagnosis and really understanding what's going on with the patient is very important. Before you know, I make any kind of recommendations

**Jeff Mann: 00:27:21** A couple more questions here and then we were going to sort of talk about some of the actual supplements and herbs themselves and drill down into them. Um, so over the kinds of supplements is things you can buy from the chemist, the pharmacist without a prescription.

And often these are blends of different, supplements often, you know, they're big brands that we've heard of. How does that fit into all of these topics that we're talking about today?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:27:50** Yeah, I think that's one of the things that can be most confusing for consumers is that how do you choose a good supplement? What is good? What is bad? In the United States, and, and I'm sorry, I don't know how it works in the UK, but dietary supplements are not regulated in the same way that medications are.

00:28:09 So the quality differences between supplements and the quality varies a lot. There was a, it was a scandal obviously a few years ago where a team of people from the state of New York looked at what was actually in over the counter supplements that people were buying it, you know, uh, at kind of the big box department stores or drug stores and found that most of the time they didn't have any active ingredient in them. Or if they did, it was not a therapeutic dose and it's, you know, it's being marketed and sold and there's not anything actually in it.

00:28:44 So I think talking to someone who knows what supplement brands or supplement companies have done third party independent research to make sure that their products are not contaminated and they have active ingredient in them. And you know, oftentimes these supplement companies, kind of the more professional brands that I use are also supporting research on their products so they have something to back it up. I think that that's really important. And talking to someone who knows about that.

00:29:13 So if that's a, you know, some integrative general practitioner or if it's, you know, naturopathic doctor, just kind of finding a source for understanding what is good, what is bad, and how to pick a good supplement I think is really important.

00:29:30 You're generally just going to be at the mercy of potentially snake oil, people marketing products, which as you say, some of them may not have any active ingredients at all. And so there's going to be loads and loads of products out there that maybe someone's heard about on social media. And they said, Oh, you know, I saw this advert and I tried it and it was great. And then people learn word of mouth. But that's not the best way of finding out really is it?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:29:56** It's not. And it's really, it's really challenging for me when I see patients, as I said, about 30% of my practice is complimentary care. So I do have patients who come in with three or four new supplements every time. They're like, oh, well I, I read on Facebook or I saw on TV or I read an advertisement, excuse me, about this product.

And I started taking it just based on the advertisements and it's, it's hard for me as their doctor to be like, well, you know, it's probably, if it's being advertised that much, it's probably not something you need to be taking because it's probably not been studied. It's not something that you should put

yourself on anyway. So I always recommend that people talk to someone before they just decide to start taking a supplement.

I think it's a good standard practice. The other thing is a lot of these, for me, a lot of these blended products that have, you know, 12 different herbs in them to help you sleep. They don't have a therapeutic dose of any of the herbs. So they may or may not be effective, but I think, you know, from my practice I tend to go towards supplements or, or herbal products that are one or maybe two different herbs just so I know that there is actually a therapeutic dose of that plant.

And it, yeah, because if you're, if you're not getting enough, it's not going to work and then you're going to think that, you know, this herb never works. All supplements are bad. It's, it's really easy to kind of go down that that road of this didn't work. So nothing works. And I think that's unfortunately the experience that a lot of people have had with supplements and herbs.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:31:38** And I think it's also really important for people to, you know, if they're taking other medications to make sure that they're checking with someone before they take any kind of supplement. Because just because something is natural does not mean that it is inherently safe.

Natural products can do harm just as much as drugs can do harm and making sure that you're not going to have any, you know, scary interactions. That's, that's really important to keep yourself and, you know, for me to keep my patients safe.

**Jeff Mann: 00:32:05** Another good reason to talk to somebody knows what they're talking about rather than, you know, Facebook or, whatever. So, okay, this isn't really in your practice, but I want it to bring it out, two sort of popular topics and we can just talk about these briefly. I just wanted to get you your opinion. Melatonin and cannabis. Medicinal cannabis.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:32:27** Yes. melatonin. That's something I see a lot in my practice as far as people choosing something for sleep. That's natural. It's widely known. It's easily accessible. The issue that I have with melatonin is that people take really high doses of it. There's evidence that a third of a gram to a half gram of melatonin is just as effective as one gram, or I'm sorry, milligrams, one milligram or three milligrams, you know, half a milligram is as effective as three milligrams.

00:32:59 So I think that people are just taking way too much of it. I worry about suppressing endogenous melatonin production. I also think that in general, just because you're not sleeping, it doesn't mean that you don't have enough melatonin in your body. So we're giving the body extra melatonin without knowing that that's actually what's going on. And I don't think that that's a good way to treat.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:33:22** So I use melatonin pretty sparingly in my practice. I use it for some people. I think there's good evidence on it for sleep, you know, regulating sleep cycles in certain groups of people, people with Alzheimer's disease, people with Parkinson's disease. But in general, I don't recommend it as kind of a one size fits all approach to sleep.

**Jeff Mann: 00:33:41** Sorry Josh one more thing on, on melatonin. I know that if you're sourcing yourself, buying it online, then there's no real guarantee of the strength of the product. Yeah. So I guess some people may, there may be taking some and it's not doing anything and then just taking more.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:33:59** Exactly. And it may not be melatonin at all. It may just be, you know, fillers and, and, and the capsule. So that again, that kind of goes back to understanding where you're buying your supplements and what brands of supplements are for sure.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:34:12** Cannabis is legal in the state of Oregon, both for medicinal and recreational uses. It's legal and I, yeah, I don't know how many states, where medicinal use, but I think around half

of the states in the US and for recreational use and six or eight now, this is something that I see people using a lot in my practice. It's not in the scope of my practice in the state of Oregon to prescribe or recommend cannabis. So I don't know a lot about it and I obviously don't recommend it to my patients just because that's practicing outside my scope.

00:34:48 I think it's really interesting, you know, kind of in the past five years that it's been legal for recreational use here to see the explosion of CBD products. And you know, marijuana is just the, or cannabis is just kind of the cure all for everything.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:35:09** And I think that that's honestly really dangerous. It's a substance that, you know, I think does have a lot of medicinal value, but we haven't been able to study that in this country or in most countries because it's been illegal for so long.

So we don't know long term effects of using it, you know, on the, if you're smoking it on the lungs or the cardiovascular system and if you're eating it, we don't know the long term effects on the nervous system or the GI system. We just don't know these things. So I think that reaching for that as especially a long term solution as is potentially harmful.

**Jeff Mann: 00:35:47** Well it's a huge industry now isn't it, venture capital flooding into, you know, big billion dollar industries. I think you're right. I think there's a, because access is, is there now maybe seeing it as a, as a cure all.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:36:03** Agreed. People are people are using it, whether or not they're talking to their providers about it. But I think if you are using it, just talking to your doctors about it and making sure that it is safe for you based on the limited research that we have, I think that's just a smart thing to do.

00:36:20 And I think that this just goes back to natural does not necessarily equal safe. And that's one argument that, you know, I've always heard for cannabis as well. It's natural. It's not really a drug, it's a plant and have studied herbal medicine for years. And I know that just because something is a plant does not mean it's not going to hurt you and it does not mean that doesn't have long term side effects.

So I think really doing your research and you know, kind of taking a common sense approach to things is important as well as talking to your doctor about whatever supplements you're using, whether they're a traditional supplement or cannabis.

**Jeff Mann: 00:36:59**

Okay. So we're going to have a look at specifically different types of herbs and supplements that you recommend and you use in your practice. Josh. I said I'll read them off first. So you've got [Valerian](#), [passion flower](#), Ashwagandha. Did I say that right? [Chamomile](#), hops, [kava](#), magnesium, phosphatidyl serine. Okay. And 5-HTP. So why don't you go from the top of the list and most people probably heard of some of these.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:37:32** Sure. So I think Valerian is, you know, one of the most common ones that people are familiar with as being an herb for sleep. Valerian is from the, the root of the plant. So it can be used in a tincture, which is an ethanol and water based extraction. It can also be used in a tea.

I think that the taste is pretty strong in a tea because it's a root. So you're probably not going to find plain Valerian tea. You probably find it in a blend or something that's a little bit more palatable.

00:38:01 You can also find Valerian caps pretty the capsules pretty easily. And that one, you know, historically Valerian obviously is used as a sedative and kind of a, relaxing herb but also has been used

for body pains and muscle pains and those kinds of things because it can also work as a, as an antispasmodic. So it kind of has more applications than just being used for sleep.

00:38:28 So I think that in kind of my practice, it's not one that I recommend very frequently, I just see people who have tried this because it's a pretty common one.

**Jeff Mann: 00:38:40** So why a lot of people taking Valerian and then is it more readily available?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:38:45** I think it is readily available and promoted for sleep. You know, there are, there are a number of research studies on Valerian and that have looked at the effects on sleep and so that has made it easier to market. And I think more people are familiar with that one than a lot of the other ones on this list, so it's kind of a, a goto if you're going to try an herbal supplement for sleep.

One of the issues with Valerian that I've seen in practice is that a small percentage of people can have a paradoxical reaction to it.

00:39:17 So instead of relaxing you and making you nice and sleepy, it actually revs you up and makes you a wide awake. So again, that's another reason that I don't use this one a ton in my own practice because that can't happen with some people.

**Jeff Mann: 00:39:29** Yeah, there's no way of telling?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:39:31** Yeah, there's no way of telling and you know, it's kind of the opposite, the fact that we're going for, but people don't like that.

**Jeff Mann: 00:39:36** It's useful to know about any of these side effects as well. You know, as you go through the list.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:39:43** Passion flower is one that I use really frequently in my own practice because I think it's a really great and just calming herb in general. Uh, it works on GABA receptors in the brain in a similar but different fashion to benzodiazepines. So [benzodiazepines](#) are sometimes used short term to promote, you know, sleep.

00:40:07 But this herb is working on the same receptors but just in a little bit different way. So I find that it works really well for anxiety, nervousness and for helping people sleep. There's animal research to support the use for sleep and general, but also there have been a couple of small trials on it to, to look at its effects on sleep quality in healthy adults and have shown that it's effective.

00:40:33 And I think this one is, is a good one for, again, just anxiety, nervousness, those kinds of things that can impact our sleep. So that's one I would choose for that. Okay.

00:40:43 Ashwagandha. Ashwagandha is a, I feel like it's becoming very popular because, uh, I don't know in the UK, but in the US I think adaptogens is a term that's getting thrown around a lot. Basically what an adaptogen is in herbalism when we think about it is it's a plant that helps your body adjust to stress.

00:41:01 So there are a number of different adaptogenic herbs that are going to kind of work on the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis and can help our bodies respond to stress better. Ashwagandha is a common one. It's a popular one. It's been used in Ayurvedic medicine for thousands of years. It comes from India.

00:41:21 It's kind of used as a general tonic in Ayurvedic medicine, but it's scientific name. The species name is somnifera. So it sleep as well. Probably because he know general tonic, uh, stress anxiety,

kind of helping us deal with all that sleep is a really big part of how our bodies and our minds respond to that.

And then also works on the GABA pathways in the brain. And you know, good results on stress, anxiety and small studies. Animal models have shown that it's good for sleep, but this is more a kind of traditional use when used for sleep and in general for we kind of healthy stress response and dealing with kind of adapting to our environment. So it's an, it's an adaptogen.

**Jeff Mann: 00:42:05** I'm just going to pause you there on this list, you know we've got a list of supplements here and herbs. What's the process of choosing one over the other?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:42:14** Yeah, let's see. Talking about the three that we've talked about, Valerian and passionflower. Ashwagandha. If I'm talking to a patient and I feel like, you know, they're telling me that they can't get to sleep at night because you know, their thoughts are racing and they can't stop thinking about what's going to happen tomorrow and what happened today and have that anxious picture.

00:42:33 That might be something that used passion flower for. Whereas if it's someone who, you know, they're really stressed at work and life is just kind of hard right now and they're not sleeping well and they just kind of felt overwhelmed, that might be more something that I choose Ashwagandha for because that's going to support that healthy adrenal stress response better than something like passion flower.

00:42:56 So I think that's where I really try to blend the science of what I know from the research and the art of picking something for an individual person. Uh, I'll let you carry on with the list. Chamomile that's a, that's a really popular one for sleep as well. I think that's, you know, that's when everybody has chamomile tea in their house. I know we always have that.

When I was growing up, it's very popular to use as a tea. It can be helpful for sleep and also anxiety, restlessness, nervous. And this, there's, there've been a number of studies on it. One specifically a couple, I looked at, one in elderly individuals, one in postpartum women for both mood and sleep support. You know, it, it shows improvement in sleep. It seems to work best kind of in the moment.

00:43:42 Like I had a really stressful day and I need something to kind of ease me into sleep. Chamomile tea might be a good choice for that because it, it's a, it's not something that you have to take long term to see the effects. Something you can have a cup of tea, relax a little bit and then get to sleep.

**Jeff Mann: 00:43:57** So with Chamomile. I mean, you can go to the supermarket and buy Chamomile tea. It's got to have a mild effect.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:44:03** Yeah, it's pretty, it's pretty mild. So again, this is not something that I'm using very commonly in my practice because it's usually something that people have tried or they're kind of beyond this mild, this mild of an intervention. I think that if you're, you know, choosing a chamomile tea organic is best because doesn't have pesticides in it. and trying to get a good quality is important.

00:44:28 So, you know, researching, I don't know what tea companies available in the UK, but I know the companies that I would recommend it in the United States because I think that they are, you know, high quality products that have had third party testing to ensure that what they're saying is in there is actually in there. Okay.

00:44:45 Next is hops, which I think is widely used as a, as an herbal extract in beer. You know, you can think of beer as a hops extract. Alcohol, hops extract.

**Jeff Mann: 00:44:59** Well we're not talking about drinking. No we're not. We're not.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:44:59** Although, you know, tea drinking alcohol to get, you know, it does help you fall asleep. You don't have restful sleep. But the hops in beer actually again works on the GABA receptors in the brain. So it does potentiate sleep. And in animal studies it's been shown to improve and regulate the sleep wake cycle.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:45:16** And that hasn't been studied in humans for that. There have been a couple of small trials and using hops with Valerian, for example, that have shown improvements. But again, that's a combination product. So I think that this is more a traditional use has been for, you know, it's a relaxing kind of sedating herb in a gentle way.

But just because you're drinking beer before bed doesn't mean you're getting the medicinal benefits of the hops. I mean, I guess unless you're doing a really freshly hopped India Pale Ale, you know, which you can get in Portland, Oregon for sure. But I don't know how widely available that is elsewhere in the world

**Jeff Mann: 00:45:58** You make me want to go to the fridge now. So how, how would you take Hops as a herbal treatment for a sleep?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:46:06** It's, it's available in some teas, but also there are tinctures of it, which again is an alcohol extraction. The difference between a tincture of hops and hops and beer is that it's, it's actually the hops are put into alcohol and water for a number of months and all of the constituents are pulled out. So it's a really concentrated form of it. Whereas in beer, you know, there's, there's really, there's hops for flavor, but you're not getting a ton of medicinal value from it.

00:46:32 Kava Kava, I wanted to talk about that just because I see, again, this is when I see what patients here in the United States and I'm not sure what the legal status of Kava is in the UK. Are you familiar with that at all?

**Jeff Mann: 00:46:44** I've got a feeling that it's not legal. I'm not sure. 100%.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:46:49** Right. Yeah. And I know in Australia it's, it seems to be not legal to sell, but not illegal to use. So it's one of those, like if you have it, you may be able to use it. But I, I don't know the legal status of it, you know, in, in countries around the world. I think that it's used in the United States because it's not, you know, it's not regulated here. It has been studied for sleep disturbances, again, related to anxiety. It's primarily used in kind of, you know,

**Jeff Mann: 00:47:19** It's banned.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:47:20** It's banned. It's used here before anxiety, maybe sleep problems related to anxiety. And you know, small research trials may have shown effect, but this is not a go to the I have for managing either anxiety or sleep just because the legal status is questionable in so many places around the world. And even in the South Pacific where Kava originates, there are issues with, I'm using this as a, you know, a drug of abuse.

**Jeff Mann: 00:47:54** Can you explain what it is?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:47:55** It's a, it's a, it's a root from a plant that grows in the South Pacific and traditionally it's used in like a tea ceremony that is, you know, a very big part of the culture in the South Pacific and it's known for, it's kind of sedative hypnotic effects.

**Jeff Mann: 00:48:16** It's got a lot stronger effect than well chamomile for instance.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:48:21** Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think depending on how strong the, you know, the tea or the tincture that you get as it can have a really strong effect. You know, it can, it can give you tingly lips if you're drinking. The tea make you feel real, kind of chilled out and woozy if you're not

used to it. So it's, it's not one that I really did mess around with because it is one of the stronger ones on this list.

**Jeff Mann: 00:48:46** I think the reason it's banned is because the quite some serious side effects.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:48:51** Absolutely. Yeah, that's, that's what it was just going to say is that, you know, besides all of all of that, there have been a number of reports of liver damage from Kava. You know, some people are saying that maybe that's not from the Kava itself, it's from alcohol in addition to Kava used at the same time. But you know, did the Kava potentiate that affect? Did it make it worse? Was it, you know, the Kava on its own? I think that there's a lot of questions for me as a practitioner, so it's not something that I use in my practice.

**Jeff Mann: 00:49:24** Again, just one of these things that have been used for a long time.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:49:27** Right. And I think, you know, this comes into, you know, the conversation about, you know, we are taking traditional medicines and we are taking medicines from around the world and we're taking them out of context and we're taking them out of their traditional use and turning them into more of a, it's, it becomes more of a drug in that sense.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:49:47** Like it's not that different from a pharmaceutical. If we're turning this into a supplement and just recommending that people take it, you've totally taken out of the historical context. So I think that is really dangerous and it opens lots of conversations about, you know, uh, equity and sustainability and ethics and medicine. But, yeah, I think Kava has plenty of reasons to stay away from it.

00:50:17 People, people love magnesium right now and I think for good reason, there's, you know, there's not as much magnesium in our food supply, from depletion in the soil. And I think a lot of people don't eat foods where they would get magnesium. So it's, it's in really high levels and nuts and seeds, Avocados, leafy Greens, whole grains, and in the United States, kind of a standard American standard western diet.

00:50:44 Those are not things that are really prevalent in the diet. So we're not getting a ton of magnesium in our diet. So I think, you know, a lot of people are kind of looking to this as, as a way to supplement a way those dietary deficiencies. And I always think it's best to get your nutrients from food.

So if I'm going to recommend that someone takes magnesium, I'm also going to tell them how to get magnesium from their food because that's how we're supposed to get nutrients that we're not supposed to get them from supplements. Um, but I think that it can be really effective for treating insomnia. You know, in the short term. And I use it a lot in my practice because it is a really gentle, relaxing, kind of easy way for people to, to treat insomnia.

**Jeff Mann: 00:51:31** Why has it come to the fore recently as a sleep supplement in particular?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:51:37** I can't really speak to why it's come to the forefront as a sleep supplement. I think that all minerals and vitamins kind of go through these phases of being, you know, the, the new hot thing. We just had that with vitamin D for the past few years. I remember in the 90s it was vitamin C, like every body was taking vitamin C for everything.

00:51:57 So I think we get research about these vitamins or minerals and then, um, supplement companies and really latch onto that and start promoting it a lot. And it kind of becomes part of the, you know, the public mindset that, oh, magnesium is good for sleep. You know, personally, I think that magnesium is great for sleep, especially if you have anxiety or muscle tension or you know, you're trying to get to sleep after working out. I think it can be really effective for that.

**Jeff Mann: 00:52:26** Okay. The next one I've not heard of before you suggested this, and I'll let you pronounce it again.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:52:33** Yeah. It's uh, yeah, it's a supplement called phosphatidyl serine. So this is, this is one that I use in my practice and one that I see people taking. Sometimes it's, it's often in kind of a sleep blends that are blends of herbs and nutrients. It's a serine is an amino acid and it's been studied mostly for its effect on cognitive function, memory support, those kinds of things. But also, a little bit studied and sleep.

00:53:02 So I, I see this taking more for kind of improving the quality of sleep throughout the night, not getting to sleep but kind of staying asleep. One study actually looked at it with omega three fatty acids. So you know, getting those often times from fish oil looked at the combination and saw that also that, it could improve cortisol regulation.

So the stress response, again, this is one of those kind of adaptogenic things that we think about in our, you know, naturopathic medicine, this might go really well with Ashwagandha as being a supportive of the stress response and kind of the, you know, that picture.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:53:44** This one is a capsule. These are, this one's always encapsulated cause it's an amino acid. You know, amino acids. They're going to come from the proteins in our foods. So making sure that you're getting plenty of high quality protein protein from different sources, plant proteins, animal proteins is a little bit different, the composition, but I think just in general, understanding that protein is an important piece of the diet and making sure that you're getting enough of it, you know, is helpful.

Oftentimes people, who might have issues kind of waking up in the middle of the night, I will suggest that they do a small high protein snack before bed just because I think that can be helpful for some people with blood sugar regulation during the night. But also if it's protein it may have higher amounts of certain, uh, you know, serine and tryptophan, and those amino acids that are going to be more supportive of sleep.

**Jeff Mann: 00:54:41** Okay. Last one on the list. 5-HTP.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:54:45** Sure. Yeah, so it's a, so 5-HTP is five hydroxy tryptophan, which again is an amino acid. 5-HTP feeds into the serotonin and melatonin pathway. 5-HTP after a couple of steps has turned into serotonin by the body, which is then after a couple of more steps turned into melatonin. So kind of the theory behind taking this supplement for sleep is that you're giving your body the building blocks for making more melatonin.

00:55:12 So instead of giving it melatonin directly, you're going back a few steps and you know, giving it the pieces that it needs to work with and then the body will make melatonin. I think that's great in theory and I think an animal animal model research, you know, we've seen that it may be beneficial for sleep, but there hasn't really been very much as far as human resource, human research for this specific supplement.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:55:36** I know a lot of people use it for mood support and for sleep kind of as a, you know, in conjunction with mood support. But again, this is not one that I use super frequently in my own practice.

**Jeff Mann: 00:55:48** That's a great round of Josh. We really appreciate that. Now, I don't want you to give any prescriptive, answers here, but just generally as guidelines, some, one of the things that people talk about a lot is, you know, how much should I take? You know, what's the dosage? And obviously I'm not going to ask you to go in and say we take this amount of that, but are there any sort of general ways to look at this or any resources that people can use to maybe not make big mistakes in either taking too much or too little?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:56:19** Sure. I think that, you know, following the recommendation of the manufacturer as long as you're getting a high quality supplement is important because they're going to base that, they're going to be more likely to base that on the research and it's going to be more likely to actually have enough of the active ingredient in it to get the desired effect.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:56:37** There are websites that are available that I think are good resources. One called Examine.com is one that I have seen patients use and use myself, to kind of check dosages on different supplements. Because in research there is often a really wide range of dosages studied. I would also say that, you know, with sleep starting, starting low, starting very gentle is probably the best kind of course of action.

00:57:06 You don't want to hit things too hard because even though these are natural supplements or herbs, they can, you know, you can feel groggy or kind of have that sleep hangover feeling when you wake up if you take too much of it.

Um, and additionally, I think it's really, really important if you are taking anything else to talk to someone about potential interactions because all of these sedative calming herbs, They Work Great. But if you're already taking medications that are working on the central nervous system or our sedatives that can have additive effects, that can end up being really dangerous.

00:57:41 So you don't want to do or take anything without medical advice if you're already on prescription medications.

**Jeff Mann: 00:57:48** Fantastic. Well thanks so much Josh. Is there anything we've skipped or anything that you want to tag on to this discussion?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:57:57** I would say, you know, kind of back to our earlier conversation about naturopathic medicine in general, if people are in the United States or Canada, checking out the website is [naturopathic.org](http://naturopathic.org) that's run by the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians.

So that can give you an idea of exactly what our training is and what we do in the different states and how we're licensed. And in the United States especially because we do have regulated trained naturopathic doctors, making sure that you are seeking them out instead of just, you know, listening to anyone who says they're an expert in natural medicine and understanding who, who your people are and where they come from and how they were trained I think is really important.

**Jeff Mann: 00:58:37** What about people from outside of the States?

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:58:40** There's a world naturopathic federation, I'm not very familiar with how that, how that works. I do know that there are, naturopathic doctors who were trained in the United States who practice outside the United States and not as doctors obviously, but just kind of as, as health coaches and wellness advocates and consultants. So, not in a diagnosing or treating capacity, but just in an educational capacity. So it may be possible and in other countries to find that as well.

**Dr Josh Corn: 00:59:08** And the website is [www.drjoshcorn.com](http://www.drjoshcorn.com), and then I also, I'm pretty active on Instagram and can post a lot of information there and studies. And My Instagram is @dr.Josh corn at Instagram. So yeah, I welcome people following me, emailing me with questions, happy to talk to people

**Jeff Mann: 00:59:30** There you go, if you want to know about any of this stuff go and follow Josh on Instagram. Awesome. Does really interesting. I learned a lot

**Dr Josh Corn 00:59:39** Thank you so much for having me.