

The New 3 Rs for Energy: Rest, Recovery & Restoration – Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith & Kate Northrup – #851

Dave Asprey:

Do you ever wonder if you're balancing out your hard charging stuff with rest and recovery? It could be bio hacks with extra cryotherapy or doing more squats than you should, or high intensity interval training or lifting heavy, or any of the other stuff you could do. Are you balancing it out with rest and recovery? You can manage your energy flows so that rest ranks as high as what you eat, movement, sleep human connection.

Dave Asprey:

This is why I put together a special episode for you, which is bringing up two Bulletproof radio experts who focus on rest. If you only rest, you only push, you're doing it wrong. You're going to learn about your rest deficit and several different types of rest that you probably haven't thought of. In fact, it was a really mind blowing set of knowledge for me. From Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith, she's going to tell you the seven kinds of rests that define how you're going to show up in the world.

Dave Asprey:

It did change some of my personal practices when I first got in touch with Saundra and learned about her work. Our other guest is Kate Northrup, who says a resounding, "No," to the addiction of busy-ness. She says straight up that, "Personal worth is not based on productivity." She [inaudible 00:01:18] it very scientifically. She'll tell you how to balance practical data and soul work, so you can manage your energy and your life.

Dave Asprey:

She'll tell you that doing less in a smart way gives you more of everything. What Kate's telling you is yes, value your time, but you don't have to value busy-ness, because busy-ness is wasting your time. If you value it, you don't want to waste it, so then you don't want to be busy and it's in the stillness that you can do things like meditate or even do nothing, including meditate. That's pretty cool. Enjoy this episode because there's a lot of wisdom in a very small amount of space. Well, you can have some rest when you're done.

Announcer:

Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. I found someone today to bring onto the show, to talk about ways you can figure out what rest you're not getting and better yet, because, well, we are bio hackers after all, it's a quantitative measurable way of doing it. Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith, who is a board certified internal medicine physician, work life integration, researcher, speaker, and now best-selling author. She's been on Dr. Oz, Fast Company, Psychology Today while credentialed and she's talking to us from Birmingham, Alabama, where she practices. Well, welcome to the show. I'm so excited to have someone who's going to talk about sacred rest, which is the title of your book.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

Yeah. Thanks for having me.

Dave Asprey:

All right. Sacred Rest, pretty interesting title. Why did you go with Sacred Rest? I love it by the way, but what does it mean?

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

Well, I think that's the thing. My approach to health and wellness, really comes from two aspects. I love bringing in the science and I love also bringing in the spiritual part of it. Seeing and how they work together. For me, when I started looking at this whole concept of rest, I wanted to make sure that I covered both aspects of that.

Dave Asprey:

Kate, welcome to the show.

Kate Northrup:

Hi. Thanks so much for having me.

Dave Asprey:

Why did you decide you were going to build a company as a mother of two young kids? Isn't that the worst time to build a company?

Kate Northrup:

Well, actually here's the good news. I started my company before I had kids. We were well underway by the time we started having kids.

Dave Asprey:

Okay.

Kate Northrup:

Though, I work with a lot of women who do decide and here's, what's really crazy. There is something that happens. It's very common. This is purely anecdotal, but I know so many women who get this crazy burst of creativity at the same time as having kids. It's not optimal timing, but at the same time, I really believe that creating a human stimulates your creativity on a lot of other levels as well.

Dave Asprey:

Like the best work I've ever seen out there, it usually comes from someone who had to deal with it. Why did you get into rest? Did you deal with burnout or what was your spark to get you going?

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

Yes, absolutely. That was the reason. I wish I could say I woke up one day and just really had a desire to research rest, but it wasn't that simple. I burned out about 10 years ago and I was at a point where really, I knew that I wasn't getting enough sleep. That was obvious. But then when I started trying to get

more sleep and it wasn't solving my fatigue, all the tests came back normal, there wasn't anything wrong with my thyroid or any part of my lab work.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

Then at that point, conventional medicine really wasn't giving me a lot more answers. I started looking at what is it that's really tired? Because fatigue isn't just about the physical.

Dave Asprey:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

I was trying to fix it with getting more physical sleep and that wasn't the solution that I really needed. For me, it was one of the other types of rest that I was deficient in and that just took me down a path of studying what types of rests out there.

Kate Northrup:

When things swirl in our minds, they... It's like you add fertilizer to them. They explode. They become bigger than they actually are. But when you do a brain dump and you write down a list of the things that you think you have to do, or the things that you have on your plate and then I recommend asking the following three questions about the items on that list. One of them, the first one is, and I do this every single week at the beginning of the week, because most of us think that in order to be more successful, we need to add more to our plate. But the vast majority of us in order to be more successful in whatever way that means for you, we need to take things off of our plate. We need to do less. First question is, "Does this need to be done?"

Kate Northrup:

Does this actually need to be done? Often we get caught up in these idealized projections of what our lives are supposed to be or what motherhood is supposed to be, or marriage is supposed to be. A lot of them are based on unconscious inherited beliefs from our culture, from our families, from our religious upbringing. We might be doing things just because we're upholding some standard that if we really were to check in with our hearts and souls, they're not actually bringing us joy. I believe things need to either bring us results or bring us joy. If they don't bring this results or joy, then they have no business in our lives. Does this actually need to be done is the first question.

Dave Asprey:

I would like you to walk listeners through what these types of rests are. What's the science behind it?

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

Well, I'll name the seven at first, three of them are pretty well-known and pretty common to most people. There's the physical, the mental and the spiritual. Those three, most of us have heard of and have some idea that we need. The four that...

Dave Asprey:

What's a spiritual rest? I don't think I know that one. Physical, I get it, mental, I kind of get it, but spiritual rest? What is that?

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

It basically boils down to the rest that we receive when we understand that the world is a bigger place than just what we are experiencing. It has to do with a sense of belonging. It goes into that feeling of community, of really understanding that there's something bigger than just your small portion of existence. I think for many people it's helpful because what happens with that is you don't always feel so alone, even when maybe you don't have family with you, or you're not in a situation where you're in a relationship with someone else.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

You know that you belong to something bigger. I call it kind of the greater humanity experience that many of us need to feel. Because when we don't feel that we have this feeling that, "Well, my life doesn't matter. I don't really matter in this existence."

Kate Northrup:

The truth is largely if something needs to be done, a lot of the times it doesn't need to be done by you. Then the third question is, does it need to be done right now? And this one's incredibly helpful because if something doesn't need to be done today or this week, it really doesn't belong in your consciousness. It belongs either in your project management software or on your calendar at a future time, so you can take it out of the swirl.

Dave Asprey:

It sounds really, really good. By the way I agree with you, especially for entrepreneurs. If someone else can do it, why the heck are you doing it?

Kate Northrup:

Yeah.

Dave Asprey:

For moms, that means laundry.

Kate Northrup:

You need to divide up the tasks and stop expecting yourself to hold the whole thing, because somehow that's going to make you a better woman. Doing more laundry and cooking more meals is not going to make you a better woman. I really recommend, and Mike and I did this, we wrote down on pieces of paper, every area of our lives and every single thing that needed to happen in every area of our lives and we went through and he chose the thing that he loves to do. I chose the things that I love to do. Then we both marked off the things that we absolutely hate to do.

Kate Northrup:

We looked at, "Okay, what actually has to happen on this list? What doesn't need to happen, who's going to do what?" For many of you, meals don't need to be yours every single day. Especially as your children get older, you can pull them in as well. Because especially when they're in that like 7, 8, 9, 10, they're actually still really excited about helping and contributing. The earlier we get them as contributing factors in our families, the better for their wellbeing for the rest of their lives.

Dave Asprey:

Emotional rest versus spiritual rest. Give me the line between those two.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

Well, emotional rest has to do with your ability to be vulnerable and authentic with other people. I look at it like this, for many of us, we have these personas that we portray, these images that we give out to the world. There's a stress associated with performance that there's associated with just being professional. I mean, as a physician myself, I oftentimes think about the emotional unrest that I feel when I'm in an ICU or ER setting where maybe something traumatic is happening.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

Well, I'm a physician. I'm not going to burst out into tears. That's not professional and that doesn't benefit the patient, but there's a stress that comes with that and holding back what feels authentic, real, and vulnerable. I think it's important for people to realize that many of our lives live under that stress. Maybe not in the same sense as mine, as a physician, but if you are the head of a company and there's something stressful going on in the workplace, you can't just blow up and have a moment necessarily in front of your entire staff.

Dave Asprey:

Right.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

You're trying to maintain that level of professionalism and unfortunately, for many of us, we take that into our personal lives from our professional lives. There's never a time that some people are ever truly authentic and vulnerable and open to share those emotions. They never get that emotional rest of just telling the truth.

Dave Asprey:

If a three or four year old is going to help you do something in the kitchen, it takes you three times longer and it's twice the mess.

Kate Northrup:

Yes. I love this question. This is such a good... Yes. Yes. Okay. But this is the same thing as hiring in your company. Yes. Is it easier for you to do it the first time? Of course it is. Is it annoying to train somebody? Yes. However, it is the best time you could possibly invest in the long-term because the hours it will free you up with for years to come are essentially infinite if you invest the time upfront.

Kate Northrup:

That's why I really like to think about spending time versus investing time. Spend time, you don't get it back. Invested time, you get a reward in some way. Now with our kids, I understand. If there are three and four, you do just get a bigger mess. Like when my four year old helps me fold laundry, it's not done the way I like it.

Kate Northrup:

It's really, I allow it to be my experiment in surrendering, healing my inner control freak, letting go and being present with her. Because when she's 16, I want her to still be folding laundry. Right? For me not to be doing it then and so I really, really, really recommend that A, when we decide we're going to have our kids help, that we decide that's like our activity, right? That's our time with our kids. Am I cooking with my kids to have a perfectly clean kitchen and for it to be the most efficient meal ever? No, no. I'm cooking with my kids to have fun and to be with them. Yes, down the line, then they'll know how to cook like in several years. That's an investment.

Dave Asprey:

You've had like hundreds of thousands of people look at restquiz.com. You have good data here. Is that sort of the worst lack of rest. We haven't gone through all seven, but what's the one that people are most lacking?

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

That's a huge one. Emotional rest, mental rest is a huge one. The one that I think that I get the most emails from, honestly, that people seem to me the most surprised about would be creative rest. The one that I think that I get the most emails from, honestly, that people seem to me the most surprised about would be creative rest. I think because most of us, when we hear that creative rest, we're automatically thinking of musicians and artists and writers, people who have a creative outlet as their way of life as being the only people who would need creative rest. Really, creative rest is an issue for anyone who's innovative, who's having to think outside of the box. I see it a lot in people who are entrepreneurs or in marketing or PR. They're constantly having to think of new ways of doing things.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

They're creative just within their career. For those people, what they start seeing is that they have a harder time coming up with new ideas. They lose their motivation and their inspiration. That's what creative rest does. It actually helps you to be able to be inspired, to be motivated again. I think probably the easiest example of creative rest for most people to identify with, is if you're someone who, when you're around bodies of water or maybe at the mountains or at the beach or in the woods, just outside in nature, and you get this experience where you feel better, you can't explain it.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

It's like you can't put a specific thing on it and say, "Well, this is what happened is why I felt better." But you know you feel better in these settings. That's an example of what creative rest looks like. It's the rest that comes when we allow ourselves to experience beauty, whether that's natural beauty, or it could be manmade beauty, like art or the symphony, or going to a museum or something. But you're letting that really awaken and create something inside of you. That helps with that inspiration we need to be able to do the other innovative things in our life.

Dave Asprey:

How do you recommend people break the addiction to business?

Kate Northrup:

I love this question. I think it's a lifelong kind of thing. It really has to do with getting in right relationship with our central nervous system. You spoke about anxiety and how prevalent it is. I used to be, I used to really struggle with this with panic attacks. I was on medication and I tend to be an anxious person as do

many people. That I had to tell myself, "Okay, if I calm my central nervous system," which I need to do just for thriving and I know that, but that wasn't enough information for me. That wasn't enough of a reason.

Kate Northrup:

I had to get into the data of, "Okay, if I calm my central nervous system and I can be operating from parasympathetic instead of sympathetic, then I'll get more blood flow to the appropriate areas of my brain and it'll make me more productive." I have... The great news is on the other side of that, now I care far less about how much I get done and I'm more calm. I really do recommend any amount of meditation. P.S., my amount of meditation is five minutes, four times a week. Sometimes it's with a child on my lap.

Kate Northrup:

I'm not setting the bar particularly high, but that amount has really worked for me, or going to dance class, going to dance class for me is the way that I get into right relationship with my central nervous system. There's no one size fits all. Something different is going to work for each person. But those are some of the things that I do. Then just breathing in and out through my nose instead of through my mouth helps me quite a lot.

Dave Asprey:

You also have sensory rest in here, which I absolutely love. What is sensory rest? How do you define it?

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

Well, sensory rest is when you undo some of the ongoing sensory input that we normally have within our days. That can look many different ways. I think for most of us, it starts with really understanding where your senses are being attacked within your day. If you're on the computer all day, if you're listening to a lot of different background noises, it could be the telephone from other people in the office, or it could be since we're working from home now, it could be your kids in the other room talking and laughing. It can be the bright lights from your computer screens or just from your office space. It could be the smells in the room. It could be your kid. If you're a parent of small kids, it could be from touch from them wanting to hug you and sit in your lap.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

There's so many ways that we have experienced sensory input and many times leading to sensory overload because we don't do things to downgrade our sensory, the amount of sensory input that we're receiving. This thought of rest, actually playing a role in who I am and how well I'm able to think new thoughts and come up with new ideas and dream bigger dreams and really do all the things that most of us want to do. We are constantly focusing on the work and the effort required for the work, but I'm one who I want to be able to do great work without being exhausted at the end of doing that great work.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

I want something left at the end of the day, so that I'm smiling, I'm happy, I have something to bring home to my husband and my kids, and I'm not bringing the exhausted version of me. I'm bringing still the version of me that's able to serve them to the best of my ability. That's what rest does.

Dave Asprey:

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Now, we've all heard that get rid of anything that doesn't bring you joy, from the secret art of tidying things up, or the magic art of tidying things up.

Kate Northrup:

Oh, yes.

Dave Asprey:

You know what brings me joy?

Kate Northrup:

What?

Dave Asprey:

Eating chocolate and watching, *Breaking Bad* just over and over and over. Maybe some good sake and sushi between the bouts of chocolate. Is that really the recipe for doing less in all this? I almost feel like it's oversimplified because as humans... Oh, I also like to have a lot of sex, that brings me joy.

Kate Northrup:

Yeah.

Dave Asprey:

None of that's productive for the world, for my mission and for my kids really. But I mean, it brings me joy.

Kate Northrup:

Yeah, well, I think there's an...

Dave Asprey:

How do we balance that out?

Kate Northrup:

There's an intersection, right? There's the things that just bring you joy and then there are the things that add value to the world. If you were to create a Venn diagram, you want to do work, ideally that is the intersection of the two, that little, if it were the vesica Pisces, which is a beautiful, sacred geometry sign. It's that little ellipse in the middle.

Dave Asprey:

Yeah.

Kate Northrup:

That is where we want to be in our work as much as possible. But P.S., there are things that don't bring me joy that I do in our business. Like, I don't love sitting down with my accountant and talking about taxes, but that's just kind of part of the deal. The way I recommend dealing with those things, because

they're inevitably things, oh my gosh, I signing paperwork and talking about legal structures and trademarks, I just, oh, my God, it's so hard for me.

Kate Northrup:

However, I do believe that how we do something is sometimes equally as important as what we do. In my first book *Money, a Love Story*, I talked about adding pleasure and fun to your financial practices to get yourself, to actually do them. What I had to do when I was in financial recovery is bring dark chocolate with me to do my bookkeeping or drink kombucha out of a wine glass, or put on a favorite song. I think that we can infuse the things that aren't so joyful with as much joy as possible so that we just do them.

Dave Asprey:

Here's the \$10,000 question. You just introduced seven kinds of rest for people before they probably thought they just needed sleep or maybe sleep in a yoga class. You just increased everyone's stress levels because now, oh my goodness, I'm not getting the right kind of rest. I must be a bad person.

Kate Northrup:

I know. Yeah.

Dave Asprey:

It's like, we have orthorexia for people like, "Oh my goodness, I'm not eating the right kind of foods." Now we have restorexia, which you've just invented on this show. How do people know? Okay, I should focus my rest investment. I'm going to focus today on one of these seven kinds. How would you go about knowing which is the one that you need the most?

Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith:

Well, honestly, that's where the quiz came from. My intention wasn't initially to do a quiz, but when I sat down with patients and sat down with clients, that was the number one question. People would say, "Okay, now I need all seven of these things." They would just add something else to their to do list. Seven extra things to their to do list. That is not the purpose.

Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith:

Really. It's a matter of looking at where are you pouring out the most in your day? Because for most of us, the area where we're pouring out the most is likely to be the place where we're going to become more deficient, especially if we're not doing any specific, intentional restorative activities to try to get back what we're pouring out, energy wise in that area. For those who that's kind of difficult because you do a lot of things in your day, that's where restquiz.com came from just to be able to give people a quick glimpse of, "Oh, this is the one or two that I need to focus on," and rather than just trying to get any kind of rest, they're getting the rest that they need in the area that they're having, the biggest deficit.

Dave Asprey:

Something else in your book that I appreciate, that you talk about is your experiment number six. Ask for help. Tell me about that experiment.

Kate Northrup:

This one is huge for those who struggle with asking for help, which is most of us, my message is this. When you have decided that your worthiness as a human being is based on your ability to get more done by yourself, then you will struggle forever with this. But if you can reorganize yourself so that your worth feels inherent, and you're no longer trying to prove something by all the things you can do by yourself, and you know your worth is inherent.

Kate Northrup:

Your strength of self is that strong then asking for help becomes so much easier because it no longer is a hit against your value as a human. A lot of us struggle with this because we think it's a sign of weakness, but my invitation to you is a new belief, which is that asking for help or needing help is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of being human.

Kate Northrup:

None of us were meant to do all the things by ourselves. You're not getting into a special room in heaven because you did more alone. That's just a recipe for being tired and lonely. Literally you're not getting anything from that. I wrote a lot about asking for help because I think so many people struggle with it, so many of my dear friends struggle with it. I actually wrote that chapter. It was the longest chapter it's been edited, but the first version of it was 25,000 words, which was a full third of my word count guarantee with my publisher.

Kate Northrup:

I wrote it with this one dear friend of mine in mind, because she had struggled so much with it. I just wrote it as a love letter to her to please let go and let the support in. It's been really beautiful to witness her dismantle the armor she was wearing around her worthiness and her independence and how much that was her identity. As that's been shifting, she's so much happier because she's able to let in the support. What we really need as humans is more connection, not more independence. When we ask for help, we're much more able to then give help when it's needed, because we're not running on empty.

Dave Asprey:

I kind of asked earlier, but now I'm just going to go, "Okay. Stack rank based on the data set." Okay, and granted the people come to your website, so you go to restquiz.com and you're already self-selecting as someone who... It's not a random sampling of people, but you go there of the people who decided to go there, give me an order. Okay. Number one, number two, number three, number four, in terms of which kinds of rest people need the most. I want to know the secrets.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

Yes, number one has always consistently been mental rest. That is number one. It jumped up even higher after COVID. I had a large flux of people come in after COVID. It has consistently been the highest one. Following that has been emotional and then following that has been social. Those are the top three.

Dave Asprey:

Mental, emotional, social. What about the other ones?

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

As far as how they fall out?

Dave Asprey:

Yeah.

Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith:

The one that tends to be the lowest has always been physical. I think because we all know we need physical rest. We all know that we need sleep. I think that that tends to be the lowest as far as the one that people have a deficiency in. The ranking is usually it's mental, emotional, social and then following that, it's a tie normally between sensory and creative.

Kate Northrup:

Yoga Nidra, I discovered because of my postpartum insomnia. It's a deep meditation that gets your brain into a state of deep relaxation where you're not asleep, but you're also not really conscious. They say the people who have studied it, that 20 minutes of Yoga Nidra actually gets you the same restorative benefits of three hours of sleep. For people who are having sleep disruption, insomnia, or waking up a million times a night or whatever it is, they are able to get themselves able to sleep normally by doing Yoga Nidra.

Kate Northrup:

It's a guided meditation where you lie down and it's 15 or 20 minutes. Somebody walks you through it either in person or on an audio. It is a very profound experience of restoration and relaxation in an incredibly efficient way. For me, it's 10 million times more effective than taking a nap.

Dave Asprey:

You use a guided meditation and there's a bunch of them online that you can get to.

Kate Northrup:

Yeah. You just have to find somebody's voice that you like, that's the trickiest part.

Dave Asprey:

Knowing the changes in the type of rest you need, or even just having this map, which is something that I didn't have to count all of those things as rest, I think it's really meaningful. Thank you for doing the work and then doing the quiz to do enough research. Again, it's restquiz.com and we don't have any financial affiliate or any of that kind of stuff. I just think it's a cool idea.

Dave Asprey:

If you're listening, go check it out and you should also read *Sacred Rest*. If this makes sense to you, it is not about sleep. I love sleep hacking. It's something different. Kate, your book is a wealth of knowledge. I don't think it's just for moms in business, it's for anyone who wants to focus on doing less. But I think your perspective as a mom of relatively young kids and an entrepreneur serves as a crucible for the high demand times of life, which is what makes you able to write the book. Thank you for creating it and sharing it. Your website, where people can find more about your book and more about you is katenorthrup.com. [K-A-T-E N-O-R-T-H-R-U-P .com](http://K-A-T-E-N-O-R-T-H-R-U-P.com). Kate, thanks for being on Bulletproof Radio.

Kate Northrup:

Thank you so much for having me.