

# DOPE LABS

## Transcript of Lab 045: Do Not Disturb Part 1

**Listener 1:** It's a new year. Happy New Year. My New Year's goals resolutions are to create, establish and support my boundaries at all costs. To prioritize myself over everything else. My need, my health, my mental health and the boundaries. I need to support those things.

**Listener 2:** Happy New Year! My New Year's resolution for 2020, too, is to master the art of simply not giving a \*\*\*\*. 2021 I spent a lot of time, particularly when it comes to work, giving a \*\*\*\* about things that caused me unwarranted stress. For 2022, I just choose simply to not give a \*\*\*\* spend time doing things that I enjoy while getting things done.

**Listener 3:** Hi, Dr. Whatley and Dr. Shodiya, this is Brittany Curry. You know, it feels like I went from, with the pandemic, early thirties to late thirties. I don't know what happened to my mid-thirties, but in 2022 getting the sense from your podcast that there's really no end in sight at the moment on COVID 19. I think my biggest New Year's resolution is to get grounded back in time and really be present. We spent a lot of the past couple of years just kind of waiting for the next moment, waiting for the next thing. Waiting for things to get better. But I think it's time to kind of reframe and think about how do we be present and take care of ourselves and invest in ourselves in the midst of what is our current normal. I hope that you all will continue to build and stretch and challenge the boundaries of the impact that you can have with Dope Labs podcast.

**Listener 4:** Hey Titi and Zakiya my name's Chandler and calling to tell you my New Year's resolution, which is to continue setting boundaries for myself with friends and family about different topics that I am, I am not willing to discuss. Over the past couple of years with COVID and the pandemic and everything else is going on. I recognize that there are some things that I don't need to talk about with certain people. And just saying I'm not willing to talk about that with you has been really helpful for my mental health. So I hope that is encouraging to you guys and maybe that will be encouraging to someone else. Thanks so much. Keep up the good work bye.

**Zakiya:** First of all, happy New Year.

**Titi:** Happy New Year, y'all.

**Zakiya:** Do you have New Year's traditions for what you eat?

**Titi:** I don't have any New Year's traditions about what I eat other than I want to be eating good. That's it. I know some folks, they do Black Eyed Peas for good luck. But me, I'm just like, Give me all the good flavors for good luck.

**Zakiya:** Good flavor is the strongest predictor for a successful year.

**Titi:** Yes. And a sweet fizzy drink.

**Zakiya:** Titi, you got it right. Good flavors and a sweet fizzy drink are the strongest predictors for a successful 2022.

**Titi:** Yes.

**Zakiya:** And I don't know about you, but the last few years to me have a been given where they were supposed to gave.

**Titi:** Yes, something happened. We need to put this whole world in rice control alt delete.

**Zakiya:** So I'm ready for a clean slate and a fresh start. OK

**Titi:** Me too. And so are y'all. We just heard from some of our Dope Labs listeners at the top sharing their 2022 resolutions, and we're sensing a theme. Y'all know how to set some healthy boundaries, and we love the one about not giving a..

**Zakiya:** A care at all.

**Titi:** Right. And that's why for the next few weeks, we're bringing you a series of labs all about the things we need to do in order to take good care of ourselves all year round. So whether you have a list of resolutions or resolutions aren't your thing. We hope that the next few weeks will help you frame self-care in a whole new way in 2022.

**Zakiya:** And you know, we're jumping off with my frenemy sleep.

**Titi:** My friend does not get enough sleep, I think, and sleep is my very best friend.

**Zakiya:** Yes. Y'all are tight

**Titi:** I am asleep right now. As I say these words.

**Zakiya:** You know, we've seen a lot going on around sleep. We've seen Arianna Huffington talking about sleep and wellness. We've seen Diddy on audible, talking us to sleep, all kinds of things. But what we know generally is people are complaining that they're not getting enough.

**Titi:** It's a tale as old as time. Honestly, I feel like everybody talks about being tired. At least in our society, American culture, because I feel like everybody's always working everybody's always busy. I'm so tired. I'm so sleepy. I need more sleep. I need to lie down.

**Zakiya:** Well, guess what? Everything you want to know about sleep is coming up. Let's get into the recitation.

**Titi:** All right, so what do we know?

**Zakiya:** I know sleep eludes me, but I know that is important.

**Titi:** Yes, I love sleep sleeping, so I know that sleep is good because it is good to me. And I think we know that sleep has real effects on your day to day life, like it affects how your day is going to go.

**Zakiya:** And I think we also know that sleep isn't just this easy come easy go kind of thing. There are a lot of sleep related disorders that a lot of people are experiencing.

**Titi:** Yeah, and there's a whole industry built around it with sleep medication, all these different types of beds, millions of different types of pillows.

**Zakiya:** Yes, Bose makes little sleep pods that go in your ear and give you gentle noises to lull you right to sleep.

**Titi:** And to drown out your snoring partner.

**Zakiya:** Hmm. I didn't say it. So what do we want to do?

**Titi:** I think we already know that sleep is important. But how important is it for real? For real? What are the health benefits of getting good sleep?

**Zakiya:** And for some of us that aren't getting great sleep? What does that mean for our health.

**Titi:** And what is good sleep like for real? For real. People saying eight hours, but some people are only sleeping six and they look just fine to me. So I want to know how much sleep do we actually need? And what are the different stages of sleep?

**Zakiya:** And also, are there other factors that affect sleep so not just diet, but like social and environmental factors? And do we see any kind of trends in different populations or different areas of the world?

**Titi:** And because there's so much that we want to learn about sleep, we're making this a two part series. So next week, we'll be diving even deeper into sleep. Let's jump into the dissection.

**Zakiya:** Our guests for this special two part lab is Dr Girardin Jean-Louis.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** My name is Girardin Jean-Louis, a professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Miami at the Miller School of Medicine.

**Titi:** So we all know that sleep is important for our health, but how important is it for real?

**Zakiya:** Yeah, our parents were always saying go to bed so it can be big and tall and strong. Was that a trick or is there any evidence of that?

**Titi:** I still feel a little bit shorter than I should be.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** Sleep is extremely important. Supposedly, one third of our life is spent sleeping. That is somebody who actually sleeping eight hours, the recommended sleep time. If you're not getting enough sleep or good quality sleep. What we see is that physically you're not doing well, mentally, not doing well, and your quality of life is significantly impaired. Sleep is a biological necessity because almost everything we do in our daily existence is affected by sleep.

**Zakiya:** This is stressing me out.

**Titi:** All right. Dr. Jean-Louis is coming in hot. OK? He's not pulling any punches, y'all.

**Zakiya:** So everything that we do is affected by sleep.

**Titi:** Sleep is good for a whole host of things, so memory formation and storage, it's good for your immune system, it gives you a healthier heart because your blood pressure lowers while you're asleep, muscle repair, hormone regulation.

**Zakiya:** Wow, that's a lot of stuff. You know what happens when you don't have sleep? Dr. Jean-Louis said after three or four days without sleep, you'll start to hallucinate. It's basically no sleep is a drug

**Titi:** you high on.

**Zakiya:** Oh yeah. Like high on low on sleep.

**Titi:** High on Low on sleep. Yes.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** Some years ago, a college student wanted to know how long he could go without sleep. He did I think about 11 days because some folks felt that he might actually die so you can actually die because of lack of sleep. We've never done an experiment, ethically speaking, to try to deprive people of sleep. That was something he wanted to do for himself.

**Zakiya:** Listen, if it's not ethically sound for scientists, we shouldn't be doing it to ourselves. We shouldn't be torturing ourselves.

**Titi:** Right, Those all nighters we were pulling.

**Zakiya:** I don't know how we did it.

**Titi:** We should have been going to our professors and saying, Excuse me, do you want me to live? Right? Just give me an A I don't need to take this exam.

**Zakiya:** What Dr. Jean-Louis mentioned with the college student is just anecdotal, but we also know that a lack of sleep is detrimental from mice studies to.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** What we know is if you deprive mice of sleep for a long period of time, they actually die. Since we share a lot with them we know, we too, if we're for a longer period of time, we would also die. So again, we can't say sleep has ever killed anybody. We don't have any evidence for that, but we know of that in fact, long periods of deprivation will lead to death.

**Titi:** OK, so now we know that sleep is a biological necessity. And Dr. Jean-Louis said ethically, they're not able to do studies to prove that you can die from lack of sleep. But there's pretty strong evidence that suggests that you can't live without it.

**Zakiya:** You know, this is one of those things that seems obvious, but also not really, because in today's society, when we're juggling all of these different responsibilities. Sleep is often the first thing out the window. Mm hmm. And we shouldn't be sacrificing sleep as if it's just nice to have. We need to think of it like oxygen.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends that we get about seven to eight hours of sleep as an adult,

**Zakiya:** so seven to eight hours is the optimal amount of sleep. What are the health risk if you're not typically getting that much sleep at night?

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** So they determine if you happen to be sleeping less than six hours or more than eight hours, sometimes more than nine hours. You are used for significant medical comorbidities, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer to some degree. And if you also sleep in more than nine hours, you are also at risk for both cardiovascular disease as well as psychiatric illness.

**Zakiya:** This is a slippery slope, so you just got a balance right at the top. Don't get too little sleep. Don't get too much

**Titi:** Right? I thought that. I mean, if I'm tired, I should just lay down. But Dr. Jean-Louis is telling me, Hey, girl,

**Zakiya:** get up out of your sleep.

**Titi:** Eight is enough stand up.

**Zakiya:** I think you sometimes get more than seven to eight.

**Titi:** Absolutely I'm getting 12 to 14.

**Zakiya:** You're getting 12 14?

**Titi:** Yes, especially on the weekends, girl, I am in that bed.

**Zakiya:** I know you say it, but I'm like, she's just, you know, up and then laying back down.

**Titi:** No, I'm like, I'll wake up. But then I will go back to sleep. But I'm ashamed to say that now, after hearing Dr. Jean-Louis had to say.

**Zakiya:** Well, maybe we should be a little worried. I'm feeling like I might be all right, though. Here's what he says about people that are getting less sleep.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** The fact that somebody may be a short sleeper. You may have a friend who sleeps about six hours or five hours. That doesn't mean the risk of cardiovascular disease are substantially higher. There could be a naturally born short stopper.

**Zakiya:** Hmm. Now, I don't know if that's necessarily the case for me, but I'm glad that that is an option.

**Titi:** All right. We're going to take a break, but when we get back, we're talking about the different stages of sleep.

**Zakiya:** Oh, OK, we're back, we're taking a deep dive on sleep in two parts. Next week, we're going to keep talking to our guest Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis about environmental factors that affect sleep, sleep disorders, and what we've all been waiting for tips on how to get better sleep. Now whether you're getting five hours of sleep or 12, what we know is that it's a complex physiological process. There are multiple different stages of sleep. You've probably heard of some of them, like REM or R.E.M.. All these different stages are classified by what's happening in the brain. There's neurons in your brain, and so you constantly have neural activity. Measuring that neural activity gives you what we call brainwaves. And so what Dr. Jean-Louis is characterizing is how those brainwaves look, the different patterns and structures they make when you observe them.

**Titi:** The first thing we have to understand is what's happening when we are awake.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** As we are awake, as we are having a conversation now. The brain is producing what we call beta waves. Beta really is fast frequency, low voltage. That allows us to be conscious, it allows us to respond to stimuli because this kind of activity in the brain that allows us to process information. So therefore, if I call your name, that's a stimulus, you're going to be able to respond to it.

**Titi:** When you start to feel groggy and lay down after about 10 minutes, your brain starts producing alpha waves. This is stage one of sleep.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** Alpha waves are lower frequency and the voltage, or the amplitude begins to go a little bit higher. When you're producing alpha, which simply means I am in a transition phase between wakefulness and stage one. I am not asleep yet, because if I call your name, you can respond most of the time.

**Zakiya:** This is one of my favorite parts of going to sleep. I like to feel sleepy, like when I feel sleepy like that, I need to just lay flat right away. And then as you begin to fall asleep, the alpha waves your brain is producing, transition into a different shape to theta waves.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** Again, the frequency is dropping and the amplitude is going up and up and up. Stage one sleep, most people can still respond.

**Titi:** If your sleep isn't disrupted, then you may move from stage one to stage two, which is when we move into deeper sleep.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** Two things happen during stage two sleep. We produce what we call K complexes and sleep spindles.

**Zakiya:** Now, these are not physical things that we're producing, but they are characterizations of the way your brain activity looks when observed during sleep. And these both happen during nREM or non rapid eye movement sleep. Experts are still working on understanding the significance and purpose of sleep spindles and why their frequency and form can vary from person to person. And recently, there was a study trying to understand if sleep spindles could potentially be inherited. Parents giving you bad sleep

**Titi:** Imagine somebody says you look tired and you say, I got my dad sleeps spindles.

**Zakiya:** We try to blame everything on our parents, right?

**Titi:** Especially that dad.

**Zakiya:** Then for K complexes well, it's thought that K complexes might be able to suppress your brain's ability to respond to stimuli. So is saying like, hey, there is no danger and to keep doing what you're doing while you sleep.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** Again, if you are not disturbed in any way whatsoever, then you could get into the deepest stage of sleep, which we call Delta sleep.

**Titi:** Delta sleep is also called stage three sleep. My favorite part? I don't know where I am. What's up? What's down? Somebody wakes me up I'm terrified because I don't know where I am.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** When you have in delta sleep, the amplitude is really high and the frequency is very low. The deepest stage of sleep is what the doctors usually recommend you get if you happen to be injured. When the doctor says, I really want you to get bed rest what they are saying is they want you to get a lot of deep sleep or delta sleep.

**Zakiya:** So first you're awake and your brain's making beta waves. Then you go to stage one and that's alpha waves. Stage two is theta, and that's where you have those K complexes and sleep spindles. Stage three is Delta, Titi's favorite. And stage four is REM, which we haven't talked about yet, but that's rapid eye movement sleep.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** I love REM sleep because that's when we are all dreaming. Every person who has a good night's sleep should experience about four or five dream episodes, so essentially every 90 minutes or so we have one dream episode. And then as we get later in late into the night or in the early morning hours, we tend to have more dream episodes.

**Titi:** During REM sleep, our body might not be moving, but our brain is active baby. I don't know if I can recall when I wake up how many dreams that I've had. How do we know if we're having four or five dreams?

**Zakiya:** I don't know, but I feel like I'm counting my dreams like this. Sometimes I start out and we're all on a boat, and then I open it in a boat and we're all in a room and it's a party from my third grade classroom. That's a separate dream. Every time I move through a different portal, new dream.

**Titi:** Can you remember all the portals?

**Zakiya:** It's like different scenes, and sometimes they just morph and sometimes people don't have faces, but I know who they are.

**Titi:** That happens to me too. Or they'll have a completely different face. And I'm like, That is.

**Zakiya:** I know that's you, Titi.

**Titi:** Exactly. I know exactly who it is, and I'm calling them by that name, but they don't look like that person at all. I need to be journaling my dreams because I want to know what's in my subconscious.

**Zakiya:** Yes. My grandma used to say, Don't tell your dream before breakfast. Or It might happen.

**Titi:** Oh my God.

**Zakiya:** So if I have nightmares or anything bad, I don't tell people before I eat them. Have you ever solved a problem or like has something that was just heavy on your heart that you were dealing with in real life? And then you go into the dream world and you come back and you got an answer or a solution.



**Titi:** I don't think with like social things, but I think, yes, I feel like that happened to me a lot when I was still in school where I'd be like, I don't know how to answer this problem or whatever. And I would go to sleep and wake up and be like, I feel like I know what the answer is now because I was working on it in my dreams. But problems that I have with people now, they're still not resolved.

**Zakiya:** No not so much?

**Titi:** No.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** Because the brain is constantly looking for answers. All of this stuff we've been exposed to for all of our life is in the back of our minds. Some are, Sigmund Freud calls it, the subconscious mind. There we have all of the answers while we are awake producing beta waves, we can't get that. In deep sleep or REM sleep, we do have access to that.

**Zakiya:** Now the question is what are the trends? How are they emerging? is everybody getting deep sleep? Who's not getting good sleep? I want to know.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** We looked at data for about 40 years. Going back to 1976. We saw that between black and white there's a huge dichotomy in terms of how much sleep we are getting.

**Titi:** In a 2015 study, scientists found that Latino and Latina, or Latin X or Latine, as well as Black people, reported getting less than six hours of sleep on average per night.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** It looks like the gap between black and white is getting wider over time, which would be very alarming because short sleep is a predictor of cardiovascular disease. So sleep duration is very important.

**Zakiya:** And there are some major health implications when you consider that. And so not only is there a difference in total hours that John Lewis says there's a disparity when it comes to getting certain stages of sleep and that can have serious effects on your health.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** Having looked at the data? So on average, Black folks compare to white sleep about 30 to 45 minutes less, which means you're getting a lesser amount of slow wave sleep.

**Zakiya:** And that slow wave sleep is happening during stages two and three.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** During slow wave sleep your blood pressure is supposed to dip if it does not we call this nocturnal high blood pressure or nocturnal hypertension. A lot of African-American or Black folks have high levels of high blood pressure, high level of hypertension. Well, it is in part due to the fact that we're not getting enough delta sleep. Delta Sleep is extremely important for dementia. We are learning that the whole system, which you call the

glymphatic system, that's a system in the brain that washes out all the toxins we accumulate during the day.

**Zakiya:** That's amyloid proteins, those are the structures that they look for when they're scanning to see if you are developing Alzheimer's or dementia. And so you get protein buildup and there are these toxins and things and they can aggregate and you get this protein aggregation. You can imagine you're less likely to get aggregation if these things are cleared from your system. And that's what the glymphatic system does when you sleep is clearing those toxins it's connected to the spinal fluid. It's wild.

**Titi:** These bodies are amazing.

**Zakiya:** Amazing bruh.

**Titi:** Why can't I feel that happening? That washing over my brain?

**Zakiya:** Because you're in Delta Sleep Girl?

**Titi:** Oh, I'm a try and wake up quick one day and catch it.

**Zakiya:** And part of what the brain is watching out are these protein precursors that if they don't get removed, they can become toxic amyloid beta or A-beta and Tau.

**Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis:** There are two particular toxin which we call a-beta and tau those two proteins are the entities where we see them in the brain that somebody has a high likelihood of developing asthma dementia.

**Titi:** Studies have shown that people of color not only spend less time on average in deep sleep, they also take longer to fall asleep and they wake up more during the night. All of this leads to less time in that sweet spot the deep sleep zone, which is really crucial for all of the health reasons we discussed earlier.

**Zakiya:** So we've covered quite a bit of ground so far. We've talked about the importance of sleep and how it's connected to so many different systems. We've talked about how many hours of sleep we really should be getting.

**Titi:** Yes. We've also talked about the different stages of sleep and what their function is.

**Zakiya:** And how many dreams we should be having because I have a friend who says she doesn't dream. And I've got questions.

**Titi:** I've got a lot of questions about that.

**Zakiya:** But we also realize that there are sleep deficits in different communities, and so we have sleep disparities as well.

**Titi:** Mm-Hmm.

**Zakiya:** And so one of the things that we've talked about in some earlier episodes, which I think is important here, is understanding that when we say things like, oh, people of color get less sleep and they're more likely to wake up in the night, that is not just because the melanin in their skin makes them wake up. There are other things going on.

**Titi:** That is such a good point, and that's exactly what we're talking about next week in part two of this series. We're talking about the environmental and psychosocial factors that impact sleep.

**Zakiya:** My one thing is a New York Times article.

**Titi:** OK.

**Zakiya:** You know, a couple of weeks ago, I shared about my experience with a crustacean in my oysters.

**Titi:** Oh, if you're not following Zakiya on Instagram, you're really missing out. She's a great storyteller.

**Zakiya:** I don't post a lot to the grid, but I am in those stories.

**Titi:** And you need to be following her and setting those alerts so that you know when she's posting.

**Zakiya:** Melissa Clarke wrote in the New York Times about oysters and oyster flavor, and she says to eat oysters better, treat them like wine, and I couldn't agree more. You see how they say wine has a terrior like a flavor profile based on where it's grown. There's a similar term for seafood, and it's called a merrior for the marine environment. And they're talking about that for oysters and scallops. And it was really interesting to me. I really enjoyed it.

**Titi:** So my one thing, I love a good, funny gift, and I especially love good, funny gifts that involve my dog, Daisy. She's a thousand year old chihuahua, and I wonder where Jimmy is because this is actually one of his this is a gift to him, but I use this thing called pet creatives. I don't even know if I can say it they take me, take a picture of your dog or your pet. And then they have these different like templates that they can put them into sketch them. And I made Daisy into a classic lady.

**Zakiya:** Yes, she's beautiful. Classy.

**Titi:** I did this in the middle of the night, one night when I was trying to figure out what to get Jimmy for Christmas. Every time I think about it, I can't stop laughing. I can't wait for it to get here because it's just so funny. She has a little tiara on. She has a little pearl necklace on. And like a black gown.

**Zakiya:** That's how she should be dressed. That's how she presents at least she does present with that level of class. I would like to say.

**Titi:** She does, and I mean, that's she would like to believe. So that's petcreatives.com. It's a great gift. I don't even know what the outfits are, but there's lots of different templates you can use and they work very quickly. The customer service was great, and I can't look at that picture anymore because I'm going to start crying. It's very funny to me.

**Zakiya:** That's it for lab 045. Are you getting enough sleep? Is it good quality sleep? Call us at 202-567-7028 and tell us what you thought about this lab. Or you can give us an idea of where a lab we should do this semester. We want to hear from you. That's 202-567-7028.

**Titi:** And don't forget, there's so much more for you to dig into on our website. There'll be a cheat sheet for today's lab, additional links and resources in the show notes. Plus, you can sign up for our newsletter. Check it out at [dopelabspodcast.com](http://dopelabspodcast.com). Special thanks to our guest expert for today's episode, Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis.

**Zakiya:** You can find him on Twitter @gjeanlouis1

**Titi:** Our Credits this week are being read by one of our longtime listeners and now friend Emery Price.

**Emory Price:** Dope Labs is a Spotify original production from Mega Ohm Media Group. Producers are Jenny Radelet Mast and Lydia Smith of Wave Runner Studios. Editing and sound designed by Rob Smierciak. Mixing by Hannis Brown. Original music composed and produced by Taka Yasuzawa and Alex Sugiura. From Spotify our executive producer is Gina Delvac and creative producers are Barron Farmer and Candace Manriquez Wrenn. Special thanks to Shirley Ramos, Yasmeen Afifi, Kimu Elolia, Teal Kratky and Brian Marquis. Executive producers from MegaOhm media group are my internet besties, Titi Shodiya and Zakiya Whatley.

**Zakiya:** Your worries don't put you to sleep. Sometimes I have so many worries

**Titi:** It just knocks you out.

**Zakiya:** They just put me right back down. Then I'm like damn I didn't do none of this \*\*\*\*\*

**Titi:** tranquilizer dart.