

Unlocking the future of healthcare with biohacker Steve Stavs

The world of work is evolving and changing so quickly, with the intersection of technology and healthcare providing mindblowing ways to change the relationship we have with our minds, bodies and emotions, and putting us in the driver's seat when it comes to optimising our nutrition, our sleep, how we manage stress and our mental health.

 By [Katja Hamilton](#) 21 Jul 2023



Source: Supplied. Founder of Made To Thrive, Steve Stavs.

Steve Stavs, [biohacker extraordinaire](#) is a firm believer in knowing your health data, and incorporating medical monitoring devices to track vital signs and even detect potential health issues before they become serious. This biofeedback, he says provides valuable insights into our health.

He believes it can help clients manage chronic conditions more effectively.

"At the heart of biohacking is taking personal accountability for your health, to know your data, to know your numbers, and then making the necessary changes," he says.

"So at my corporate health optimisation consultancy, we often talk about what the data points are and what the markers are that you're going to use to ensure that you live healthy today, tomorrow and in the future.

"The latest generation in wearables tracks your quality of REM sleep, your vitals, heart rate variability, oxygen saturation, and the Apple Watch will eventually be able to give you a live glucose reading.

"Anyone who's doing any of these measurable objective tests is a biohacker as they're using their unique data, which give them a feedback tool they can use, to make changes. It's really the future of healthcare."

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What makes Steve's offering unique is that he not only guides you on the wearable technology you need, but as a coach he interprets the real-time data accurately and then offers clients healthcare advice, supplements and lifestyle recommendations.

that will boost their health and wellness.

With an undergraduate degree in Science, together with certifications in Functional Medicine and Chinese Medicine, Steve combines many disciplines of medicine to offer clients a bespoke master plan. This has led to thousands testifying to his transformative process over the last 24 years. His top clients include Absa and FNB.

Here he unpacks his passion for health, people and life...

🔴 ***How would consulting with one of your consultants be different to going to a GP? What is the point of differentiation?***

When you go to your doctor, you're prescribing to a sick care model. As brilliant as our doctors are, you go to them when you're not well. One of the reasons I went into Chinese medicine is that you used to pay the doctor to keep you healthy and well.

When you get sick, you stopped paying him. So the model and the motivation at Made to Thrive is to keep you well, and to optimise your health and performance. You won't necessarily come to me if you're sick, but rather to ensure that you've got your healthspan and lifespan.

In other words, healthspan is healthy living; not only longevity in the form of extending your life, but making sure that your life is healthy, and that it's filled with zest, energy and vitality.

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We're losing the war against chronic disease in the most significant way. Chronic disease is exponentially increasing, and the current traditional medical system is based on what we call Medicine 2.0. Basically if you're sick, or you're not well, you get tested, you look at the results, you take the drug, you take the intervention and that deals with it in a symptomatic way.

Medicine 3.0, on the other hand, comprises nine factors including REM sleep, your deep sleep; how many steps you took today; your calorie intake, what your cognoscopy is - your mental and brain function - and knowing what's happening with your colon. This is unique for each individual and this is done through wearable technologies.

At the intersection of human capital we've got a lot of health coaches and health consultants who can walk alongside you and keep you accountable; not only to help you when you're sick but to keep you staying well.

🔴 ***Could you tell me a bit about your target market?***

Business folk, corporate executives, and high achievers are our target market because they want to optimise their health to improve and sustain their performance, and to mainly deal with mental distress, mental burnout, fatigue and exhaustion.

🔴 ***It's interesting that you are attracting high achievers and Type A personalities. Do you find yourself challenging them to work less in order to be more productive?***

Absolutely. That's one of the dichotomies. There are a lot of people who need a lot more rest and recovery, but we're not doing so using subjective data or because someone looks tired. We use objective data. We start measuring their REM sleep, their recovery and their strain. When we show them the numbers and demonstrate how poor REM sleep is impacting their mental performance and their ability to lead a good executive meeting, for example, they start listening.

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We've got a product from America called Whoop, another product from Europe that tells you about strain: it gives you a stress score and your recovery score; it tells you about your sleep cycles. So there's a lot of science to these wearables, and the corporates in the business world, the high achievers, want to know their data so that they can improve their performance.

🔸 **Can you tell me a bit about the use of wearable technology in your business?**

I went with Oura because Oura's technology is incredible; it was one of the earliest wearables to track sleep. We sometimes coach people and consult via Garmin, or Apple Watch, but people often don't like wearing watches so we either use a Whoop, which is a band, or an Oura ring - those are the most popular ones.

There's a lot of research that shows that they are very precise. We can take someone who gets 20 minutes of REM sleep, which is rapid eye movement sleep, and link this to the quality of their memory function, memory consolidation and cognitive ability and then provide insight and hacks and see what happens to their REM sleep.

They'll start to see an improvement and they'll feel it subjectively, which is huge for them. Then it also allows them to say, "Well, what happens if I want to just have a different meal or drink at night, because we know that alcohol affects REM sleep?" Then I can measure it and I'll know the data.

🔸 **Is the technology real time, so if I'm wearing the ring, are you able to see what's going on real time in my body?**

The latest generation in wearables tracks oxygen saturation, which is really cool. Your brain needs to get at least between 96-98% oxygen saturation when you're sleeping. We see people dropping down to the 80s even the 70s at night while they sleep, and that's a real problem and is going to cause significant issues.

You might have sleep apnea, or be getting poor sleep due to mould in your bedroom; you might be getting the wrong light at night that's going to affect your sleep.

Sleep is important for your body's recovery processes called autophagy, which involves the cleaning out of old stagnant senescent cells.



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Sleep also contributes to the brain's glymphatic system's cleansing process that occurs every night. This is a recently discovered waste-clearance pathway in the brain. During sleep, the glymphatic system becomes more active, helping to clear out waste products and toxins accumulated during the day.

So recovery and sleep is fundamentally important, and we can measure and track these. We've got clients from all over the world, from the US to Europe to Australia. We can watch their data using their wearable technology; we can see what they're doing, and then we can actually have a consult or coaching session online and help them improve their data.

🔸 **In addition to ultimately improving people's sleep, exercise regimens and nutrition, what is the take-home message that you leave clients with?**

I want to leave people with hope and to leave people with the message that incremental small changes can have huge effects on their health. But more importantly is recognising that they add value to others' lives and have a purpose in this world. If you look at the Blue Zones, the five healthiest areas in the world, they are Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Icaria, Greece; and Loma Linda, California, United States.

They have the highest number of centenarians, people over the age of 100, and the lowest rates of dementia, as well as lowest rates of heart disease. So what are these people doing? Researchers looked at when they eat food, their nutrition, and they looked at their social relationships.

Their integration in their community was incredible. There is no hierarchy; people know their neighbours, they often frequent the town square. Everybody knows the children; they feel supported. They aren't lonely.

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On the contrary, one in three Americans feels lonely according to the latest stats; and loneliness is more detrimental to your health than smoking 15 cigarettes a day, it is more detrimental to your health, than being an alcoholic and more detrimental to your health than being obese.

So having good strong social ties is a very, very important aspect to health and wellness. This ties into community and purpose. I say if you have a significant purpose that you can articulate and live out, it's very, very powerful.

🔴 ***What's one way clients can rethink purpose and connection?***

We've got a little acronym called TGIF Thank God it's Monday as opposed to Thank God it's Friday. Thank God it's Friday says weekends are good, holidays are great, and the workweek is bad, terrible, and it's something I'm just getting through. Do you know there is a 20% increase of heart attacks on a Monday morning?

Why? This is because people get the Sunday night blues. They do not look forward to Mondays. They hate work and they are waiting for leisure holidays, waiting for their next dopamine hit. Now we're trying to change this by saying: life is a life of contentment and satisfaction, and if you can find your purpose and your calling in your work and add such value, you will often make the necessary lifestyle changes in order for you to carry on living out this purpose whether it's a Monday, whether it's a Friday, whether it's a Sunday or whether it's a Wednesday.

Do we want people to enjoy weekends? Absolutely. But we want them to enjoy Mondays and Tuesdays as much for sure. It's a change in this understanding that helps us thrive in this world.

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