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Designing Built Environment To Reignite The Wisdom Of Our Body And Mind

Achieving our peak physical, emotional, and cognitive performance, regardless of age, gender, or health status, is a shared human aspiration. Establishing harmony between our bodies and our surroundings is pivotal for optimal performance. Our bodies and minds follow daily or circadian rhythms, encompassing periods of rest, repair, rejuvenation, and peak performance. These rhythms are fundamental to attaining and sustaining overall well-being. Disruption of these circadian rhythms, whether temporary or chronic, can lead to discomfort and decreased performance. Long-term disruption elevates the risks of both mental and chronic ailments while impeding recovery from illnesses. Therefore, comprehending the principles of circadian rhythms and the factors influencing them holds immense potential to enhance human health, and performance, and prolong a healthy lifespan.

The paradox of circadian rhythms lies in their disruption, being the cradle of modern society and wealth creation, while also compromising health. Roughly 100,000 years ago, humans became distinct by mastering the controlled use of fire, extending our active hours beyond daylight and enabling survival in harsh conditions. In the post-industrial era, the advent of electrical lighting and mechanization further accelerated round-the-clock human activities. Modern society heavily relies on rhythm-disrupting practices like late-night work, shift schedules, and extensive travel for economic growth and productivity. Despite our longer lifespan and increased wealth compared to our ancestors, we aren't necessarily living healthier or at our optimum health due to neglecting the impact of circadian rhythms in our built environment. However, armed with our current understanding of circadian rhythms, we can now use this knowledge to reshape our environment in a way that sustains health without compromising prosperity.

In this presentation, I aim to introduce the concept of circadian rhythms and explore how various elements, such as light, temperature, noise, diet, and social interactions, influence our daily rhythms. Unlike our ancestors, who predominantly resided in a few consistent environments, our modern lifestyle involves moving through diverse structures for various activities. Therefore, redesigning our built environment to promote health necessitates considering rhythm-regulating factors in different settings, including homes, schools, workplaces, commercial spaces, healthcare facilities, retirement homes, and even space stations. I will delve into how the quality, quantity, and timing of these factors can be integrated into the design of buildings and communities to foster better health outcomes.