

The Energy Equation

Is the drive to thrive creating the problem it's supposed to be solving?

By Bill Giebler

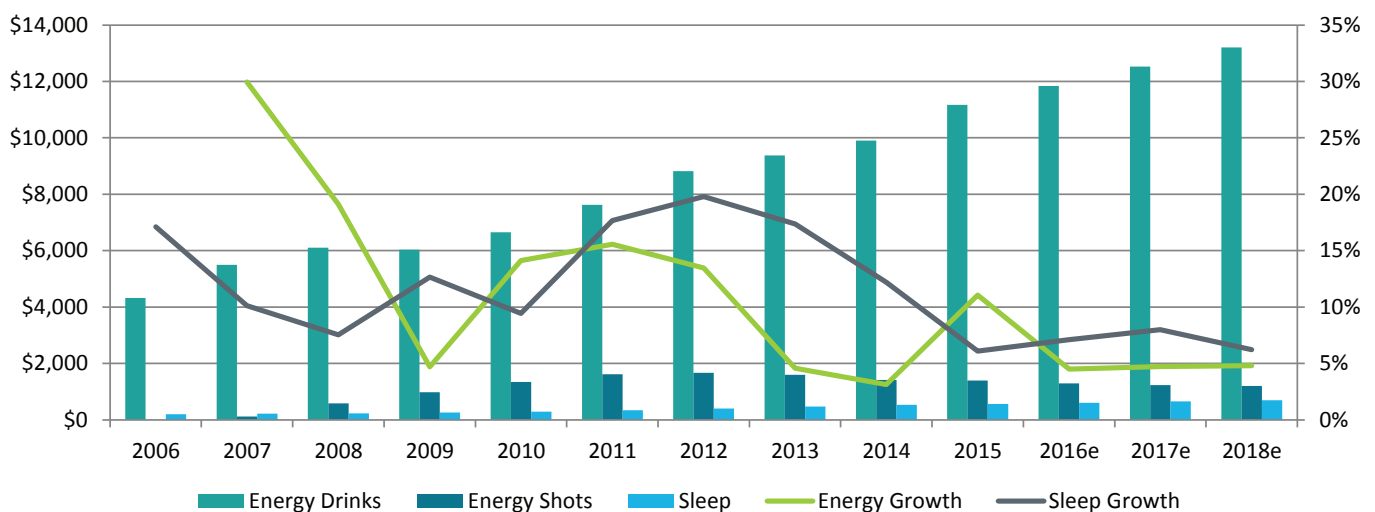
Fueling up with coffee and Red Bull by day and tucking in with Ambien each night is becoming an all-too-familiar formula. It's something you pick up in college, like a tattoo or embarrassing Facebook photo. When finals come, the Red Bull is often replaced—or supplemented—with Adderall. According to a 2014 survey conducted by The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, one in five college students report abusing prescription stimulants at least once in their lifetime. These habits don't stop when the finals are over. As these young people enter the demanding work world, short-term study habits become long-term work habits.

In the orbit of the natural products industry the recipe may be yerba mate and valerian, good news for the bodies of those consumers, but still emblematic of a population outsourcing its sleep and energy cycles. According to NBJ data and insights, insomnia products experienced double-digit growth seven of the last 10 years. Energy is on the rise, too, growing nearly 13 percent in 2015 (growth that peaked at 15.6 percent in 2012). There is clearly a connection between these two categories—two sides of the *I can't sleep, I can't wake up* coin—but the problem is a bit more than just a biochemical cage fight between uppers and downers.

NBJ Takeaways

- » Our hunger for vitality may be yet another symptom of the over-achieving culture that's fatiguing us.
- » Whether natural or synthetic, we are increasingly a population outsourcing our sleep and energy cycles.
- » Addressing nutrition and lifestyle can bring energy and sleep back into an individual's control.

ENERGY DRINKS, SHOTS AND SLEEP SUPPLEMENTS SALES AND GROWTH, 2006-2018E



Source: Nutrition Business Journal (\$mil., consumer sales)

“The average night’s sleep was nine hours a night till light bulbs were invented about 140 years ago in 1880,” writes Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!*, responding to NBJ by email. “Now we are down to 6 3/4 hours a night—a 30 percent sleep ‘pay cut,’ shown to worsen fatigue, pain, premature aging and even weight gain,” he says. “So sleep is a big market.”

Ironically, the lack of sleep comes from a lack of energy, Teitelbaum continues. “Insomnia is often caused by inadequate energy, resulting in the hypothalamic sleep center not working well.” Healthy energy will aid sleep, but not the

energy promoted by the sugar and caffeine loaded beverages that Teitelbaum calls “energy loan shark” drinks that “worsen fatigue and sleep.” There are better options. “For example,” he says, referencing two studies he published on the subject, “with a supplement called ribose, not only did energy increase an amazing average of 61 percent, but sleep also markedly improved.”

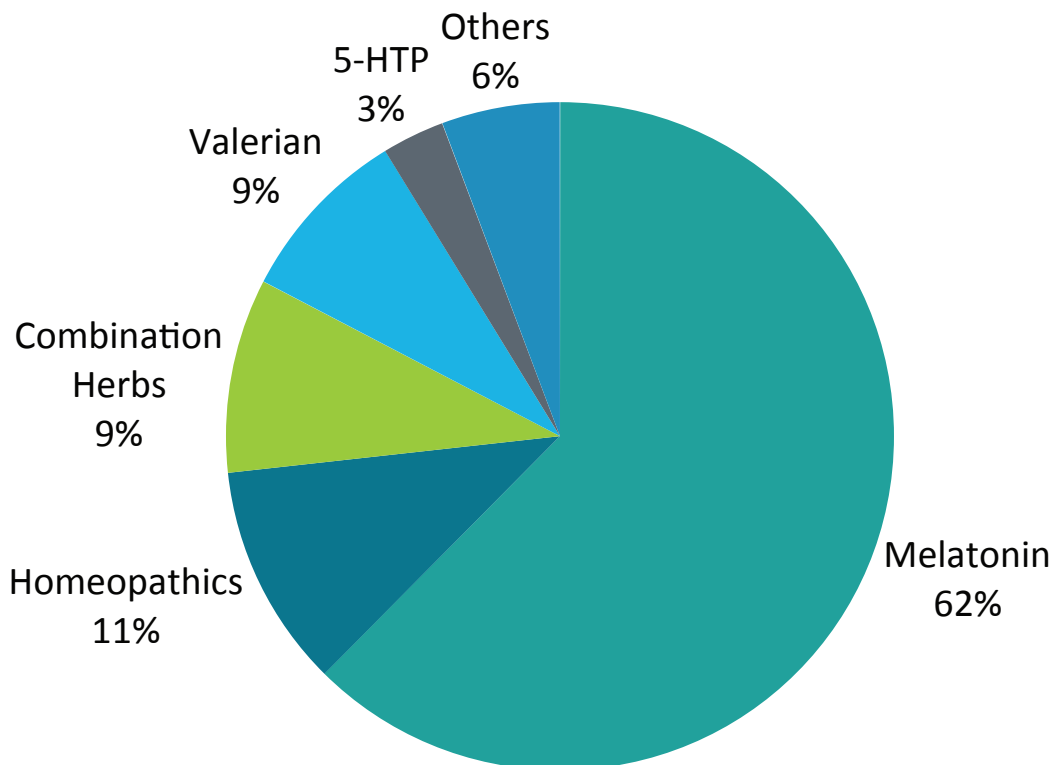
Thriving me crazy

Three decades after positive terms like “preventive care” and “wellness” entered insurance lexicon, even those concepts produce yawns in today’s marketplace. Today,

consumers want nothing short of vitality—or to, as the latest buzzword commands, thrive! In recent weeks, for instance, **ISO-Thrive** and the probiotic supplement **Just Thrive** have shown up in the NBJ office. Two different magazines (somehow) share the *Thrive* title, and two weeks ago Arianna Huffington took news of her latest endeavor public. Her **Thrive Global** will focus on education aimed at helping companies improve employee well-being.

And then there’s **Thrive Market**, the online membership-driven market that is equal parts **Costco**, **Amazon** and **Whole Foods**. We asked Thrive VP of Purchasing, Jeremiah McElwee about the name. Indeed,

\$569 MILLION SLEEP SUPPLEMENT SALES BY INGREDIENT, 2015



Source: Nutrition Business Journal (\$mil., consumer sales)

the company had a different name originally, he says, but then the word “thrive” resonated so deeply with the founders that it took over. “It’s a natural evolution to a place where you don’t just want to be well. You don’t want to be neutral. You want to be exceeding that. You want to be thriving. You want to be ahead of the curve. You want to be growing in strength and beating expectations.”

There’s an irony, though. The drive to thrive is, to a great extent, the same overachieving drive that is draining our reserves and making us sluggish. “We’re working harder. We’re expected to do more. We’re expected to over-deliver all of the time,” says McElwee. “There’s no excuse ... we have to keep surging ahead and therefore we’re burning the candle at both ends.” We’re exhausting ourselves in our thirst for vitality.

At the same time, McElwee continues, “I want to work out, I want to be healthy, I want more energy just to get through the day. It’s kind of this vicious cycle. You’re trying to do everything, and you’re trying to be more, but you have basic biological needs: eat, sleep, breathe. Getting any one of those things out of the right order and you’re going to have to compensate another way. People are doing that with energy products for sure.” And for many of them, energy is synonymous with caffeine.

The result may be the creation of over-achieving foods. “We also want our food to

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- Jeremiah McElwee, Thrive Market

do multiple things,” says McElwee, “I just saw that 5-hour energy just launched the protein energy shot and my thought was, ‘what took them so long?’ That seemed like a logical evolution for them a few years ago. ... Now it’s energy with protein, energy with other nutrients, energy with B vitamins. Add more value to what you’re selling me.” Thrive Market is trying to serve that cultural imperative with a more holistic view.

A growing consensus of caution

“Energy products are the wrong place to look for energy,” says Dr. Charley Cropely, a naturopathic physician practicing in

Boulder, Colorado, since the early 1980s. “Having energy is our natural state and is produced by a natural means and affected by everything in our lives.” Instead of products, Cropely recommends looking to our own behavior, including anxiety, lack of sleep and lack of exercise—and that includes our reliance on stimulating products. The best way to produce energy, says Cropely, “is the way it’s been produced for millions of years: by following the cycles of nature which include eating natural foods and abundant exercise.” Each of these is shown to help both sleeping and energy.

Cropely echoes Teitelbaum when it comes to the relationship between energy and sleep. “If you don’t have enough energy

Thriving fitness community

- » As consumers strive to thrive, fitness habits are changing too, bringing increased specialization to gyms. “We are seeing a change in the fitness industry as far as the types of health clubs,” says Pam Kufahl, director of content and engagement for Club Industry (a property of NBJ’s parent company Penton). Kufahl identifies diversification of the types of clubs, “so you’re seeing a lot of niche clubs now, little boutique studios,” she says.
- » The shift may be a subtle move from look-good-naked fitness toward greater wellbeing—with an additional emphasis on training and skills development. “We’ve had pilates and yoga studios for some time, but now we’re seeing more climbing wall gyms, more boxing, kickboxing, cycling studios, and facilities that are focused on one type of workout.”
- » Trainer and fitness expert Glenn Hattem sees it partly as the building of community. He cites a recent study published by the journal *Heart* that indicates loneliness and isolation may increase risk of coronary artery disease and stroke by nearly a third. Niche studios create community, Hattem says. “Now you have your Crossfit, Core Power Yoga, dance troupes from Nia to free dance, your rock climbing communities.” That way, no matter where devotees go, he says, “you have your culture, you have your language.” This is important to people.

you're not going to sleep well, and sleeping is the greatest nourisher of energy that I know of." Yet, he adds, "Most energy products disrupt our normal cycles of energy and stimulate it and then can disrupt our cycles of sleep as well."

But energy is just a part of vitality. Cropley defines vitality as freedom. "One

to a dog or a monkey or a rat because it gets down to trying to alter physiologic processes which are much the same." As humans, "we are able to reflect on ourselves and on the performance of our behavior and be able to change our behavior," Cropley says.

"While there are many things that affect our health, many things beyond our control,"

cut health care costs."

Diet is at the top of the list. The American diet over recent generations has increased inflammation, muscle spasm and joint pain, adds Dr. Teitelbaum. This has left, "one third of Americans needlessly in pain, and more than 50,000 needlessly dead from arthritis medications. So think of vitality, and our increased focus on it, to be the antidote to our often fatal medical system." For Teitelbaum, supplements play a key role in this. "Over half the vitamins and minerals in our diets are lost in food processing, and life stresses are increasing the need for nutrients," he says. "So it has become nearly impossible for most people to get optimal levels of all nutrients without taking supplements."

Cropley does not use supplements. "I'm not in the least antagonistic to supplements, nor am I antagonistic to medicine. It just happens to be that my passion is teaching people what they can do for themselves"—which for Cropley is more likely to come from a garden or farmer's market than a vitamin aisle. "What's a major contributor to virtually all our chronic diseases is the way we eat, exercise and the stress that we face. This comes down to being the master of one's behavior."

In the end, while the drive to thrive can often produce the opposite effect, a holistic

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— Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum

is healthy if they have the freedom to carry out their life unobstructed, unimpeded," he says. "If they have the vitality to be the person that they want to be and live the life they want to live, that, to me, is health."

Cultivating vitality

"It's about a fullness," says fitness expert and author Glenn Hattem. "We're all looking for our true expression of our higher self." Hattem's **Get it Back University** aims to help clients indeed get *it* back. Hattem works with "former fitness enthusiasts or athletes that thought they knew this stuff," he says, "and then they'd gotten divorced or got busy with kids." His program assists in removing what he refers to as a "crusty layer" inhibiting access to one's true self.

But to get there, he says, you have to work. There is no magic pill for this one. "Everything in our media, everything in society tells you it's quick, it's easy, instant gratification. The movies all tell you this nerd's gonna get this hot girl and make all this money in the course of an hour and a half. We're not much of a society for cultivation."

But altering our health by altering our behavior is what it takes, Cropley agrees, and cultivating health is a uniquely human opportunity. "Most medicine you could apply

Cropley says, listing environmental poisons and medicines as examples, "the one thing that is under our control is our behavior. When we're looking for causes in health, the greatest cause is our self." Many people know the inhibitors—poor eating habits, excess drinking and stress, insufficient exercise and sleep—but fail to make necessary changes. "But I think the majority of it is that people don't even know that their illnesses are

caused primarily by their own actions."

Cropley sees making these connections—specifically teaching people to heal through the way they eat, breathe, the quality of their thoughts and their relationship skills—as an educational opportunity, through which, he says, "we will drastically

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— Dr. Charley Cropley

emphasis on health may simply allow for the conditions of thriving. And the most important behavior may be diet. "In a clinical practice I see nothing that produces results like food," Cropley asserts. "Changing the way people eat is the most powerful medicine I know of." 