

## 18. Systems Activity: The Breakfast Club

In *Sex Sleep Eat Drink Dream: A Day in the Life of Your Body*, Jennifer Ackerman (2008) shares some research which suggests that for most people, the brain is at its sharpest in the first four hours after waking. Not straightaway – it needs time to get up to speed. But then it hits a sweet spot when it's really firing. Brain efficiency can vary, she says, but in the morning it can be up to 30% more active and sharp than it is at other times.

Here's something else to consider: the longer the day goes on, the more self-control problems you will have. If you're trying to give up chocolate, for example, you will rarely crack at 10 a.m. But by 4.30 p.m., when you're feeling tired, your self-control slips. It's the same with work. If you tell yourself you will start a big project at 3 p.m. or 6 p.m., the chances of that happening are low. If you set aside some 'breakfast club' time – sweet spot time in the morning – you're much more likely to clear the job.

And yet we often see students using a morning study period to ease themselves into the day. They waste their moments of high brain energy on social media and gaming, then turn their attention to work later on when they're not as productive.

### The Morning Routine

With all this in mind, look at your morning routine. Make some notes under the following headings:

» What time do you wake up?

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» What do you do with your first hour?

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» What are your habits and rituals, your repeated behaviours?

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» Are they positive? Do they set you up for a good day?

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» How long do they take? Are they worth it?

**Scheduling**

Now look at the work you have to do this week. Use the Energy Line to figure out what's coming up in terms of deadlines, then:

- » Take your highest priority tasks (or your hardest or trickiest tasks) and schedule them in morning slots for the whole week.
- » Commit to clearing them early in the day. Record your plans below:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
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**Final Thoughts**

What went well and what needs adjusting as a result of your experiment? Could you sequence certain tasks for the morning to get them out of the way? And could you use The Three R's of Habit (page 35) to help you establish a more positive morning routine?

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