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The Ultimate Guide to Becoming Your Best Self: Build your Daily Routine by Optimizing Your Mind, Body and Spirit

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle is credited with saying these 15 famous words. And for most of my life...I didn't believe him.

I fought against cultivating good habits and routines because I didn't want to feel like I had to live my life by other people's *rules*. I wanted to be my own person and do my own thing. Besides, keeping a routine was hard work.

Know what I discovered?

Having <u>no</u> routine or structure is so much more draining mentally, physically, and emotionally than any routine could ever be!

By *not* doing the things I knew would make me better — habits like exercising, meditating, and creating gratitude lists—I deprived my body and mind of the energy that these types of positive activities create. I felt tired...inside and out. And to make matters worse, my dreams and goals were just slipping away.

A few years ago I decided to take a different path...to listen to Aristotle and actually work on creating excellence in my life by establishing a positive daily routine.

Now that I've created and stuck to my own daily practice (I call it my '<u>Best Day Ever</u>'—find the full routine at the bottom of this post), not only do I get more accomplished than I've ever thought possible, but I also feel 100 times better while doing it!

I'd love to share with you all of the elements of my daily success routine and see if the pieces might help you create your own routine for greatness!

Want to go further? I put together a **special bonus area** for Buffer readers with an eBook version of this post, a daily habit builder worksheet and a guide with 40 powerful morning habits!

Jump to any section of this post anytime!

What You'll Find In This Post

Why Create a Routine?

But first, you may be looking for a bit more convincing about the benefits of creating a routine.

Establishing a positive daily routine is both a self-investment *and* a way to do your best for the rest of the world. It also provides additional benefits, such as giving you structure, building forward-moving habits, and creating momentum that will carry you on the days when you feel like you don't have the strength to carry yourself.

Following a daily routine can help you establish priorities, limit procrastination, keep track of goals, and even make you healthier. It lowers your reliance on willpower and motivation because, as Tynan, the author of _Superhuman by Habit_, says, habits are _"action[s] that you take on a repeated basis with little or no required effort or thought."_

Today, I have more drive, motivation, and passion, which makes reaching my goals easier...and more fulfilling. I have more physical and mental energy to make it through my days...even the really tough ones (which still show up). I feel happier and more satisfied with the quality and depth of my life.

I admit it though; it isn't always easy to create good habits. As Brian Tracy says, _"Good habits are hard to form but easy to live with. Bad habits are easy to form but hard to live with."_

Here's something really important to remember: _what works for someone else, might not work for you._ That's why it's important to pick the activities that resonate most with you, the ones that push you to become **the best you** that you are capable of being...and to keep doing those.

Don't be afraid to try new habits and see how they work for you. If they leave you feeling energized and inspired, keep doing them...if they don't, keep trying new ones until you find ones that do.

The key is to create regular and consistent daily patterns, that will take you where you want to go in life, helping you maximize yourself on every level possible.

Now, let's get into some of the things you can do in your daily routine to reach higher mental levels (i.e. more brain power and clarity!).

Part 1: Optimize Your Mind

A successful daily routine helps you achieve laser-like focus from the moment you wake up in the morning…to the time you close your eyes and drift off to dreamland at night. Here are some ways to get it:

Get positive: Start the day with a mantra

According to the Mayo Clinic, positive thinking helps manage stress and even improves your health.

"Today is going to be the best day ever!"

I start every single day saying that simple sentence (out loud) as soon as I get

out of bed. And yes, I even tell myself this on mornings that have followed nights that were too short or mornings that I wake up feeling like the weight of the world is on my shoulders. Why?

These nine words put me in the right mindset for the day ahead.

What makes a day good or bad isn't the events that occur, but rather your response to them. As Jim Rohn once said, *"Either you run the day or the day runs you."*

I want to put my mind in a GOOD state right away...because left unchecked it will try to tell me the things that are WRONG...but through positive thinking, I can overcome it.

Ben Franklin used to ask himself this question every morning:
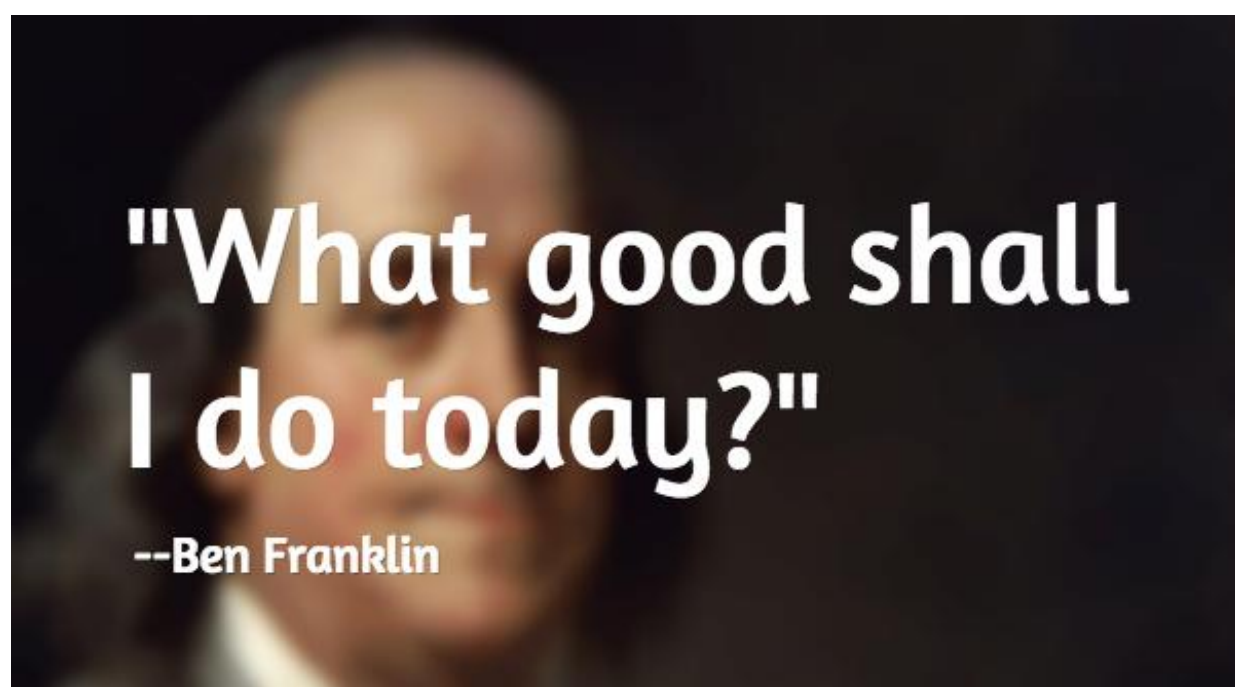
Pick a phrase or question that resonates with you. It could be as simple as smiling and saying *"Thank you"* out loud and acknowledging being gifted with another day.

Be proactive: Don't check your email first!

When you wake up in the morning, do you immediately check your email or social media accounts? If so, you're starting your day off in *reactive* mode instead of **proactive**.
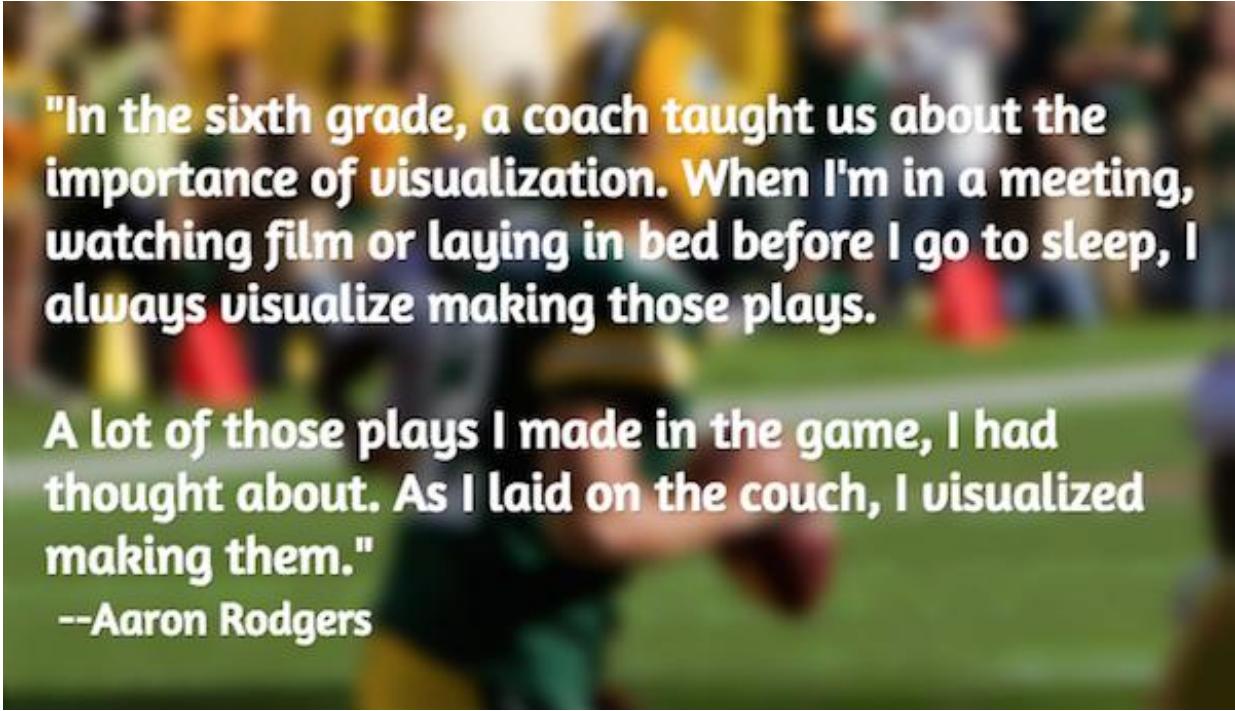
As Jocelyn K. Glei writes in *Manage Your Day-to-Day*, "*..the trouble with this approach is it means spending the best part of the day on other people's priorities*."

For instance, if you receive an email asking for work-related documents, you might be compelled to provide them immediately...even though you may have had plans to work on marketing your own side-business. Or if you open up Facebook and see one of your friends in a crisis, that becomes your focus, potentially keeping you from concentrating on your own issues or concerns.

Start your days focused on YOU and you will be in a much better state-of-mind to help others and get more accomplished all day.

Mentally prepare: Visualize your success

Some of the world's greatest athletes use visualization to help prepare themselves mentally to excel in their sport. Aaron Rodgers, considered by many to be the best quarterback in the NFL, talked about the power of visualization in a 2011 interview with USA Today:

"In the sixth grade, a coach taught us about the importance of visualization. When I'm in a meeting, watching film or laying in bed before I go to sleep, I always visualize making those plays.

A lot of those plays I made in the game, I had thought about. As I laid on the couch, I visualized making them."
--Aaron Rodgers

Jack Canfield, co-author of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, suggests that you practice visualization 10 minutes a day to *"harness the power of your subconscious mind."*

Simply close your eyes and imagine yourself excelling and being the best you. Put yourself in situations where you shine, visualizing the best possible outcome. Include as much detail in your visualizations as possible, using all of your senses and making your "training" even more powerful.

For people who have trouble closing their eyes and *"seeing anything"*, I recommend using a pen and paper and writing out how you want your day to unfold. Be as specific as possible...and be sure to keep it positive.

The purpose of all of this is to pass command from your conscious mind to your subconscious mind. Your subconscious mind wants to believe what you tell it (*good or bad*) and it will do whatever it takes to turn those commands into reality.

Read a book (Even if it's just a page)

Reading books offers many science-based benefits. Reading can boost your intelligence, increase your brainpower (for up to 5 days, according to research conducted by Emory University), and even strengthen your ability to empathize with other people. Reading has also been found to reduce your risk of Alzheimer's by more than double...all this while helping you feel more relaxed at the same time!

Joshua Becker, bestselling author of *Simplify*, has made it a goal to read a book a week because reading makes him a better leader, increases his worldview and knowledge base, and reinforces his self-discipline.

I don't know about you, but I find it hard to find the time to read an entire book. I mean, who has hours and hours a day or week to just sit and read?

That's why I commit to **reading just one chapter each day of a book** of my choice. I'm in the process of reading a couple different books right now, so I just pick up the one that speaks to me the most that day and I sit and read a chapter of it. If I want to read more, I do.

By breaking the big process (reading a whole book!) into something manageable (one chapter) I am able to read about 50 books each year.

Make yourself accountable: Enlist a partner or mentor

I have a mentor and I call him every day. Even if all I do is leave him a message, this one simple task holds me accountable. It also forces me to keep myself (and my mind) moving in a positive direction.

If you don't currently have a mentor, then think about how you could go about getting one. Or at least find someone you trust who can be your accountability partner, someone to hold you to your word. Eric *"The Hip-Hop*

Preacher" Thomas believes that accountability partners are crucial for success and his accountability partners changed his life:

"The day you find someone just as passionate about your goal to hold you accountable, will be the day you make your first permanent step towards success.

Making a COMMITMENT to your accountability partner about YOUR goal will make the milestone realistically attainable."

--Eric 'The Hip-Hop Preacher' Thomas

ET recommends making a list of three people that you trust and respect. Have a conversation with each of these people and discuss exactly what it is that you want to accomplish. After the conversation, decide which of these individuals will serve best as a accountability partner for the specific milestone you are trying to reach.

One quick suggestion, make sure it's a win-win situation for them as well. In the words of author Ryan Holiday, "Bring something to the table."

> *"Anything. Quid pro quo. Even if it's just energy. Even if it's just thanks. You cannot ask and ask and not expect to give anything in return. The bigger the payoff you can offer, the longer they'll take you under their wing. Figure out what you can offer and actually give it. Here's a freebie: Find articles and books that relate to their field and pass on a recommendation and then they won't have to waste their time searching."*

Write: Prime yourself for creativity

Spending time writing every day helps you become a better communicator, improves your ability to recall important information, and it also enhances your creativity. Write in a diary format and you also have the added benefit of greater self-understanding.

One of the first things I do every morning is write Morning Pages, a practice devised by Julia Cameron that clears my mind and helps to clarify what I want out of life. To do your own Morning Pages, simply sit down and write three pages. They can be about anything you want them to be. Just write each and every day.

I also write down 10 ideas, a concept I learned from James Altucher, author of *Choose Yourself*. The point of this exercise is to work your brain and get your creative juices flowing. They can be big ideas (*how to cure cancer*) or small ones (*ways get your cat to quit scratching the furniture*).

They say that everyone has at least one million-dollar idea in his or her lifetime. You may just find yours on this list!

Make a daily to-do list

One great way to be fully prepared for the day ahead is to make a to-do list, just like Barbara Corcoran from *Shark Tank*, Jim Koch, founder of Sam Adams, and Jim McCann, founder and CEO of 1-800-FLOWERS.

I plan up to six tasks that I want to complete during the day on mine and the reason this works is twofold.

First, it helps me plan my day in a way that allows me to get the most out of it

versus just performing random tasks and hoping that they move you forward. Second, creating a to-do list keeps me on task. I know exactly what you want to get done and when, which makes it more likely that you'll do it.

Keep your daily to-do list small so that it's manageable and not overwhelming. A great "hack" to make sure you keep your lists simple is using a Post-It Note. The dimensions of a Post-It Note are perfect (*typically 3″ X 3″*) because the size constraint will force you to only write down the most important things that you have to do each day.

You can't fit more than 6 items on a Post-It Note (*unless you cheat and write REALLY small…but you won't do this, right?*) and these tasks should be your MITs (**M**ost **I**mportant **T**asks).

Plus, when you're able to cross items off this list, it inspires you to keep going and accomplish even more!

Take regular breaks throughout the day

While all of these tips are meant to help you forage ahead, sometimes you just need to step back and give your mind a break.

Taking regular breaks keeps you from getting bored and losing focus, increasing your brain's function at the same time. It also forces you to reevaluate what you're working on, ensuring that you're going in the right direction.

I've found the Pomodoro Technique to be invaluable at helping me to keep my energy levels high and "forcing" me to take regular breaks. This revolutionary time management system is deceptively simple to learn, but life-changing when applied correctly. Here's a quick breakdown of how it works:

THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE

1) Choose a task (just ONE task at a time);

2) Set a timer for 25 minutes;

3) Work on your task until the timer rings, then put a checkmark on a tracker;

4) Take a five minute break (you just completed your first Pomodoro!); then

5) Repeat steps 1-4 three more times, followed by a 15 minute break.

By utilizing this technique, I am now able to get 40 hours of work done in just 16.7! All the while, keeping my energy levels more stable and eliminating burnout (for the most part).

Speaking of breaks...while you're decompressing and giving your mind a chance to switch gears, why not close your eyes and catch some zzz's?

According to The National Sleep Foundation a short nap of 20-30 minutes can help to improve your mood, alertness and even performance. Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, Thomas Edison and Salvador Dali were all regular *nappers*.

Break your day into chunks

Breaking your day into chunks helps you be the best you as too much time spent doing one thing can cause you to lose focus...and interest. And if you're working on something you don't really want to do, it makes it easier because

you only have to do it for a short while.

Tim Ferriss, author of *The 4-Hour Workweek*, is a master with this as he sets his daily schedule in a way that doesn't keep him on the same task for very long. Here's what a "typical" day looked like for Tim a few years back:

* 10 AM – breakfast
* 10:30 AM to 12 PM – radio interviews and idea generation
* 12 PM – workout
* 12:30 PM – lunch
* 1 PM to 5 PM – writing (but not for the whole time)
* 5:30 PM – dinner
* 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM – jiu jitsu training
* 9 PM – dinner
* 10 PM – ice bath and shower
* 11 PM to 2 AM – relax
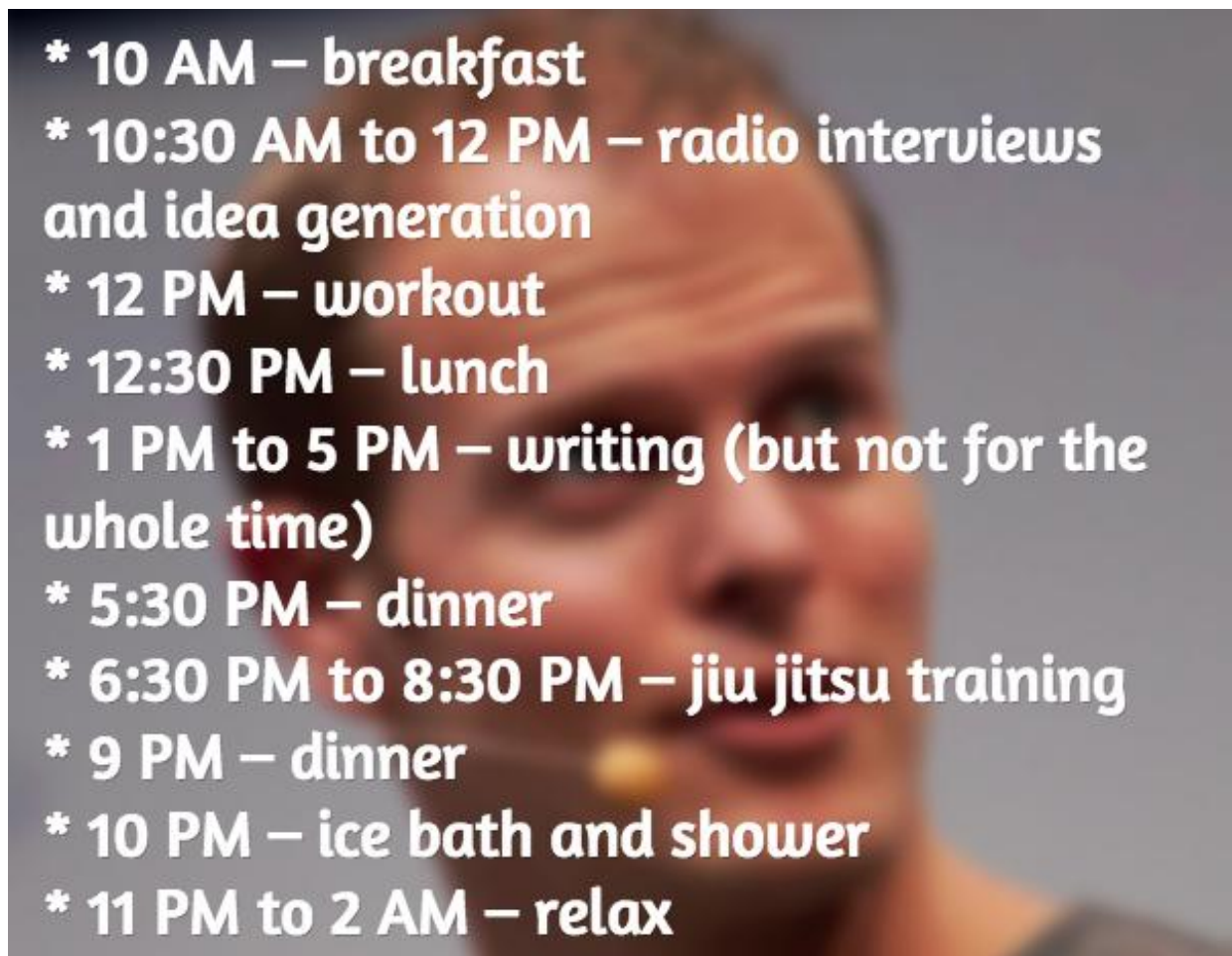
Some important takeaways from Tim:

- No two days are ever really the same

- Spend as much time possible doing what you want by maximizing output in minimal time...**this is the goal each day.**

- How you use time and trade it for *experience*...is what really matters.

Now, look at your own day and figure out how you can break it into chunks... and determine what you need to do to spend your time doing what *you* want

to do (as much as possible).

Theme your week

Jack Dorsey, co-founder of both Twitter and Square, used to manage both of these companies at the same time without getting overwhelmed. He did this by setting aside different tasks for different days of the week. Here's what it looked like:

> * Monday: Management
> * Tuesday: Products
> * Wednesday: Marketing & Growth
> * Thursday: Developers & Partnerships
> * Friday: Company Culture & Recruiting
> * Saturday: Day Off
> * Sunday: Reflection & Strategy

Even if you can't set aside full days to deal with certain issues, you can probably block off certain hours of the day to handle them (going back to breaking your day into chunks). This can give you the time you need to make headway in those particular areas…without putting your brain on overload.

Part 2: Optimize Your Body

Being your best also requires that you take care of your body and are firing on all cylinders! Here are a few things you can add to your daily routine to do just that...

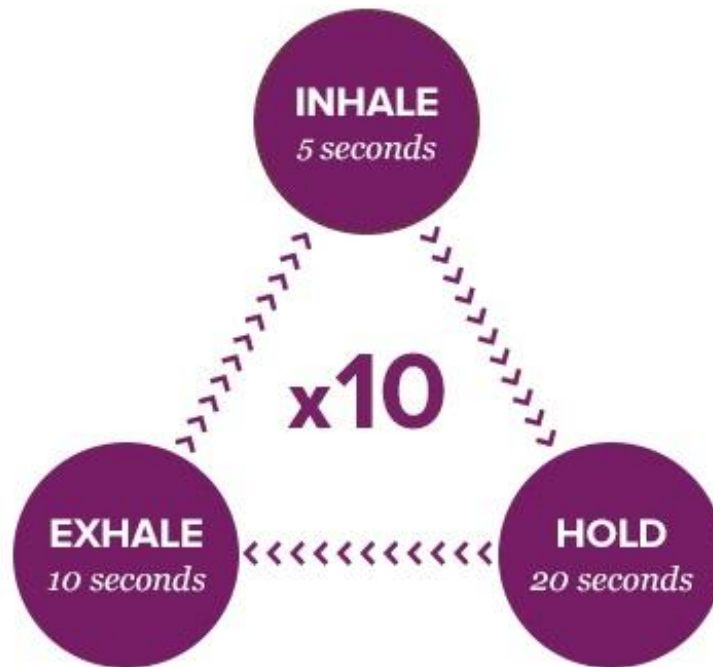## Breathe: Practice deep breathing

Of course, if you quit breathing you die...I'm talking about *really* breathing. 70% of your body's toxins are released through your lungs and exhalation making the act of "*full breathing*" a natural and powerful detoxifier.

Peak-performance expert Tony Robbins recommends deep breathing as part of his Ten-Day Challenge. Three times a day you take 10 "*power breaths*" using a ratio of *1-4-2*. For instance, if you inhale for 6 seconds, you will hold for 24 seconds, and exhale for 12 seconds.

This type of breathing brings energy to your body, making it healthier and less stressed in the process. You'll start to feel better almost instantly...try it now. I'll wait.

Eat "productive" foods

We've talked about a number of things you can do to make your days more productive, but did you know that the foods you eat *can* help with this too? That's right. The items you choose to consume each and every day can actually affect how well your brain functions, ultimately making it easier (or harder) for you to hit your goals.

Research has found that your brain operates optimally when you consume a very specific amount of glucose (*25 grams, to be exact*) in a form that is released

slowly over time. Foods that fall into this category and have positive effects on your body and mind include:

- Fish

- Nuts

- Seeds

- Avocado

- Blueberries

- Raw carrots, *and...most everyone's favorite:*

- Dark chocolate

A little bit of dark chocolate goes a long way. It contains antioxidants that slow down cognitive decline, but also boasts caffeine, a natural stimulant and concentration-booster.

DARK CHOCOLATE

NUTS, SEEDS, AND CHOCOLATE

Nuts and seeds are vitamin E powerhouses, with antioxidants that are known to slow down cognitive decline as you age.

FISH

Fish is the classic brain food: It is rich in oil and fortified with omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential in to brain function and development. Omega-3s also reduce the risk of stroke and dementia and enhance our memory as we age.

Eat foods like these and your body *and* your brain will thank you!

Drink more water: 9-13 cups a day

Nearly 75% of all Americans aren't drinking enough water on a daily basis. Do you fall into this group?

If so, this can leave you feeling tired all of the time, result in more frequent headaches, and also lower your strength and stamina, making any routine at all difficult to create, let alone keep.
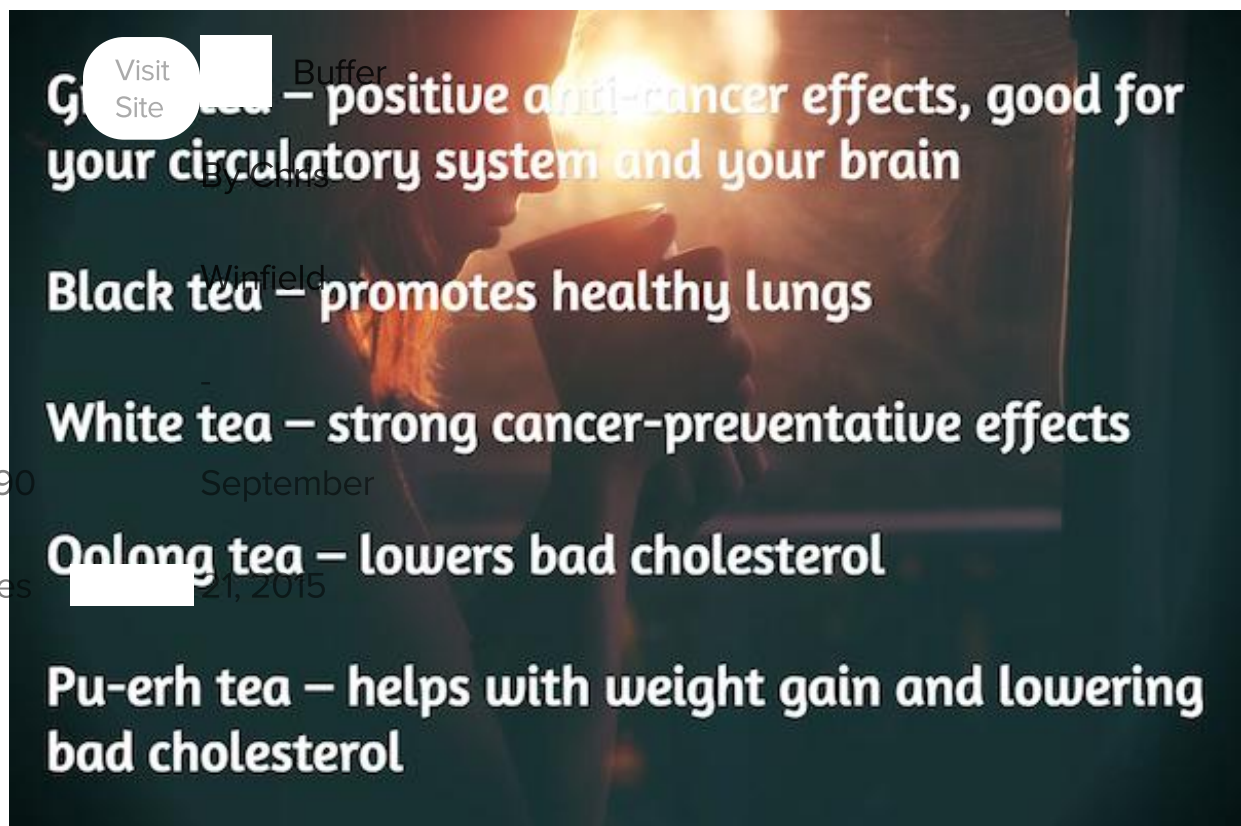
One way to overcome this all-too-common occurrence is to have water with you at all times. Drink a full glass first thing in the morning, have one following your morning exercise routine (which we'll talk about soon), and drink up at every meal.

Keep sipping the rest of the day too so you get your Mayo Clinic recommended intake of 9 cups daily for women and 13 cups for men.

Have some tea: Polyphenols benefit the body

When you're not drinking water, you may want to have tea in your cup. Harvard Medical School says that the polyphenols found in tea have been found to do many good things for your body. Specifically, they are anti-inflammatory and provide antioxidant-like benefits.

Here are some of the best teas to drink as well as the reasons why:

Green tea – positive anti-cancer effects, good for your circulatory system and your brain

Black tea – promotes healthy lungs

White tea – strong cancer-preventative effects

Oolong tea – lowers bad cholesterol

Pu-erh tea – helps with weight gain and lowering bad cholesterol

Sit back, enjoy a cup or two a day, and reap the benefits.

Get out of your chair...often

Spending your days sedentary, stuck behind a desk, can really wreak havoc on your body.

The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) cites some of the physical consequences of sitting a lot, which include: increased risk of colon and breast cancer, type 2 diabetes, strokes and heart attacks, as well as a greater mental decline and loss of muscle and bone.

In his article _The Healthiest Way to Work_, Buffer content crafter extraordinaire Kevan Lee provides a few tips to help you get out of your chair and move more often. Some to think about implementing in your own life are getting up every 20 minutes, using a standing desk, and sitting on a saddle or balance chair.

Exercise (MOVE!)

Exercise is the one part of a daily routine that most everyone loves to hate. And there are tons of excuses not to exercise:

> _"I don't like to exercise."_

> _"I couldn't get out of bed early enough, so I ran out of time. And I don't have time at night."_
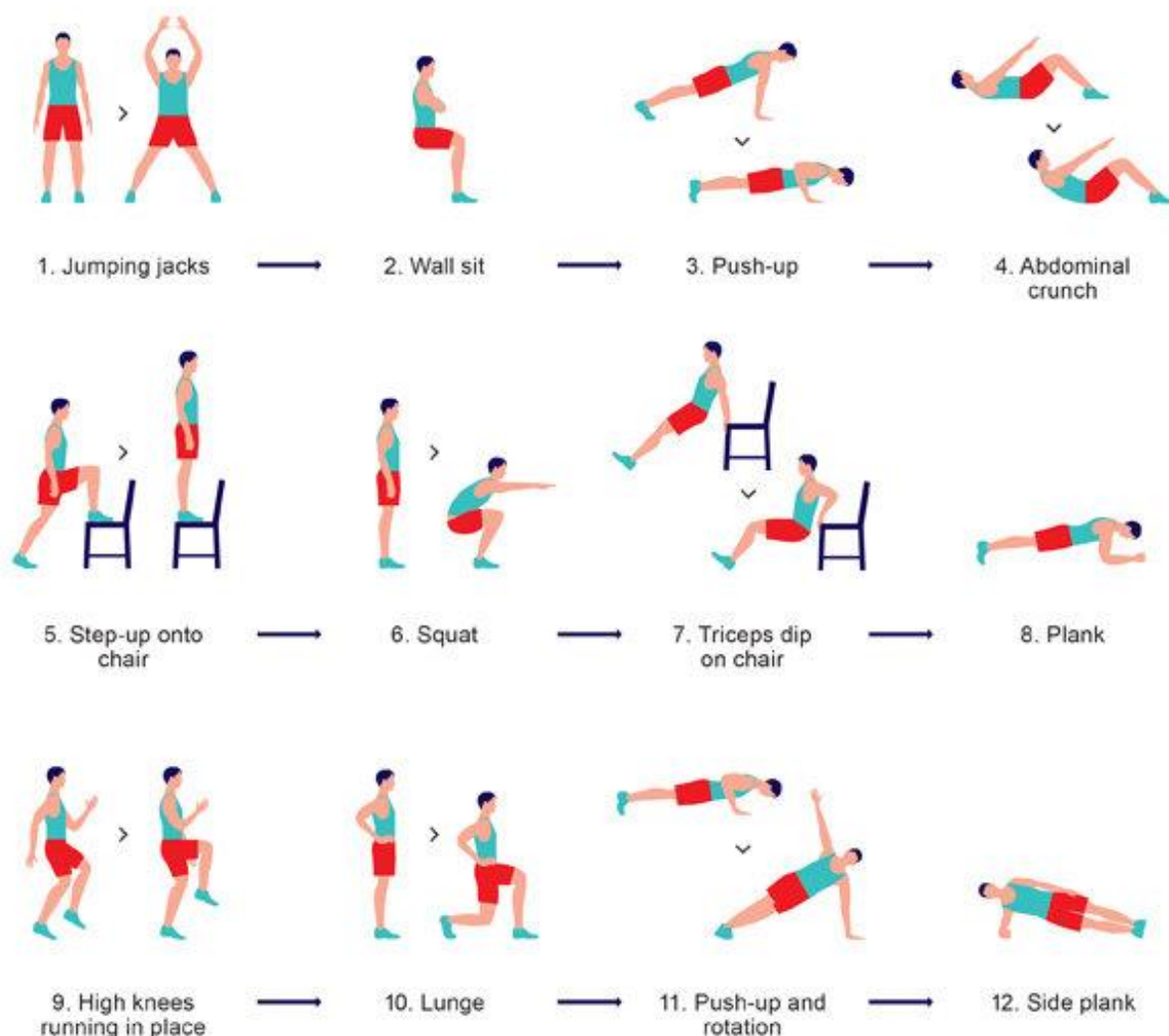
> _"I really don't like to sweat."_

The list goes on and on, but you get the point.

In _Choose Yourself_, Altucher defines excuses as _"easy lies we tell ourselves to cover up our failures."_ How do you get past those lies? Start seeing what positive things exercise has to offer you..._not_ what you don't like about it.

Entrepreneur Joshua Steimle exercises because, *"If exercise stops, then my health goes downhill."* This decreases his productivity, right along with his motivation, while increasing his depressive feelings at the same time.

Other benefits of regular exercise include having an easier time controlling your weight, reduced risk of type 2 diabetes and cancer, improved mood and more!

Exercise doesn't have to mean an hour long grueling workout session. Take a 10-20 minute walk. Do yoga, stretches, or dance around your living room. Get on the elliptical. Or do the Scientific 7-Minute Workout:

1. Jumping jacks → 2. Wall sit → 3. Push-up → 4. Abdominal crunch

5. Step-up onto chair → 6. Squat → 7. Triceps dip on chair → 8. Plank

9. High knees running in place → 10. Lunge → 11. Push-up and rotation → 12. Side plank

It doesn't matter what you do; just do something to get your body moving!

Get enough sleep: No less than 7 hours

Sleep is extremely important to your overall health for a multitude of reasons. In the short term, not sleeping enough can affect your judgment, mood, and even your ability to retain information. In the long term, chronic sleep deprivation can lead to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and even early death.

And beyond the physical and mental problems, it's pretty tough to stick to a full routine when you're so tired that all you can think about is crawling back into bed, pulling the covers over your head, and drifting back to sleep.

To get a good night's sleep, you can:

- Limit your caffeine to early in the day

- Choose late-day foods that bring on sleep, like bananas, oatmeal, and potatoes

- Using ear plugs or a white noise machine to cut out outside noise at night

- Darken your room

- Stay away from technology for a good hour before bedtime

Remember, consistency and routine are key when it comes to creating healthy sleep habits. According to Dr. Lawrence Epstein, co-author of *The Harvard Medical School Guide to a Good Night's Sleep*, "Our body craves routine and likes to know what's coming."

Epstein points to two simple tenets for healthy sleep: (1) getting enough (no less than 7 hours) and (2) getting it during the same time frame each day (as

much as possible).

Part 3: Optimize your Spirit

Just as mental and physical aspects of your daily routine can elevate you and push you forward, the same is true when you tend to yourself emotionally and spiritually. Here are a few options to consider:

Get quiet: Try meditation

Okay, this is technically called *meditation,* but if the idea of "meditating" is a turn-off, then just think about it as spending some daily quiet time alone. I was one of those people who didn't think I could ever meditate (boy, was I wrong!)

Engaging in this daily practice has a lot of positive benefits. Giovanni with the Live and Dare blog points out 76 of them, such as greater focus, better decision making and problem solving skills, improved memory, and an easier time

managing hyperactivity or attention deficit disorder. It does this by altering your brain's structure. (It actually grows!)

Meditation also reduces stress, anxiety, and depression according to Harvard University studies, which are even more reasons to give it a try if you haven't before.

There are so many awesome guided meditations available for free online and for many people this is a great way to get started (or to enhance your practice).

Here's a great infographic that gives an overview of the different kinds of meditation and some tips for fitting in meditation at work.

THE MEDITATIVE BRAIN

Meditation is a process of relaxing the mind that leads to a state of consciousness that brings clarity and serenity to one's life. Over 20 million U.S adults have meditated in the past year. Research on the effects of meditation has concluded that meditation has both physical and psychological benefits and may even be able to change the brain.

Brought to you by: Call of Sedona

1 Guided Meditation is a session conducted with verbal instruction from a teacher.

2 Moving Meditation is the act of quieting the mind and directing your complete attention to whatever you are doing at the moment.

FOUR MAIN TYPES OF MEDITATION

3 During Sensory Meditation the mind is focused on sights, sounds, tastes, scents and other physical stimuli.

4 In Mindfulness Meditation the key is to realize that we are not our thoughts, emotions or actions. The focus of the mind is the mind itself.

MEDITATION MAY HELP:

1. Your brain's ability to change, structurally and functionally, (called neuroplasticity), allowing you to better control your thoughts and reactions.

2. To decrease respiratory rates and blood pressure.

3. To create thicker cortical walls in the brain improving decision-making, attention and memory.

4. To decrease feelings of depression and irritability.

5. To slow the process of aging by protecting your "telomeres" (chromosome ends)

6. To decrease muscle tension, stress, and pain.

WAYS TO MEDITATE WHILE AT WORK

Leave early and spend 10 - 15 minutes meditating in your car

Find a quiet place, whether it's an empty room or a space outside, and turn your coffee break into a meditation break

Listen to meditation audios

If you can't leave your desk, focus on an object in front of you and take several deep breaths

www.callofsedona.com

App Store · Android Market

Find a well of inspiration

Inspiration and motivation can come from many places—books, music, podcasts, videos, emails, other people. All you have to do is find the one or ones that resonate most with you and commit to engaging with them. *Daily.*

Research has shown that inspiration can be activated, captured, and manipulated…and it has a major effect on important life outcomes.

I have a few apps on my phone that I read daily to inspire and motivate me. They keep me centered and grounded, giving me a more stable mental foundation.

Another way to get inspired involves repeating positive affirmations, which is why I do this both in the morning and at night. In fact, researchers at Stanford University have found that affirmations have been shown to improve education, health, and even relationships.

So find a word or phrase that is empowering and motivating to you and repeat it over and over again to yourself.

Practice gratitude: Write what you're thankful for

If you woke up tomorrow and only had the things you were thankful for today, what would you have?

By spending time each day expressing gratitude for all of the blessings in your life, you do two things. First, you recognize that even though things may not be exactly as you'd like, you are fortunate to have what you do. Second, the more blessings you are thankful for, the more you draw in or attract. It's like they multiply.

"It is through gratitude for the present moment that the spiritual dimension of life opens up."
--Eckhart Tolle

Beyond just realizing your blessings, it also helps to actively appreciate them. For instance, I make sure I spend some time daily with my daughter and wife because I always want them to know how grateful I am to have them in my life.

I write a simple gratitude list every single day (even on the days I don't want to) and a result of creating over 1,000 of these lists, I have become a more positive, mindful and attentive person.

Come up with a list of all of the things that *you* are grateful for and go over it when you get up in the morning and again before you go to bed at night. You can also take it one step further and pick someone from your past that you're grateful for, get in touch with them, and let them know. Imagine the impact this could have on them...and you!

Learn something new (every day!)

According to a study by San Francisco State University, learning something new makes you happier long-term. While it may cause you a little stress in the short-term, at least until you reach some level of comfort, the end result is a

higher level of life satisfaction, making it more than worth the initial uneasiness.
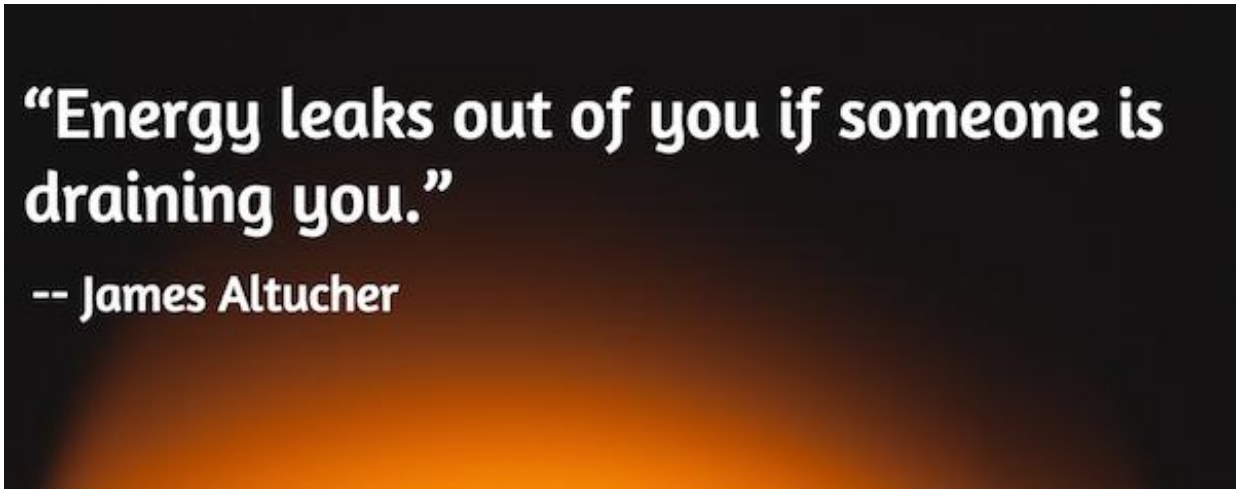
What are some things you could learn that you haven't already?

How about painting, drawing, or writing? Or maybe you'd prefer something a little more physical like rock climbing or learning a particular style of dance? Or you could even go all out and test your strength by trying out for <u>American Ninja Warrior</u>! Why not?

Spend less time with people who don't lift you up

Author James Altucher stresses the importance of cutting down interaction with those who drag you down.

Think about the people in your life...do they give you emotional energy or take it away? If it's the former, spend more time with them. If it's the latter, keep your distance and you'll be happier.

"Energy leaks out of you if someone is draining you."

-- James Altucher

Give to others

There is something extremely satisfying about helping those around you. It

doesn't have to be huge acts of service either. Something as simple as opening the door for someone or giving a stranger (or loved one) a genuine compliment has the ability to make a huge impact on their day...and yours.

Make it a goal to do something good for someone each day...and the smile on your face will be as big as the one on theirs.

If you have time, you might also want to volunteer at a local charity or non-profit organization. Websites like VolunteerMatch, GiveBack and AllForGood can help you find one that's right for you.

Evaluate. Track. Enhance.

Are you reading through this list and thinking something like this?

"Well, I've already tried a lot of these things and I'm still not where I want to be."

If so...it might be time to take an honest look at what you are currently doing with your day and figure out where your time is being spent. This is where technology can lend a helping hand.

There are several (*this is an understatement!*) productivity-based apps available that can help you recognize where you are spending a majority of your time.

For instance, Exist has an app that helps you track your day, giving you insights as to how much time you're distracted versus productive. It also tells you how much time you spend sleeping and engaged in physical activity. It even tracks your moods.

I also use the Way of Life app to help me keep track of my habits on a daily basis. Spend about a minute each day to track, identify and change your habits

...and as you collect more and more information you will be able to easily spot positive and negative trends in your lifestyle.

There are also websites that you can use to help you be the best you. One to consider is The Daily Practice. This site allows you to set your own repeating goals, helping you turn them into habits. Or you can check out theXeffect on reddit.

3 Questions to Ask Yourself

Question #1: *"Am I doing what I love?"*

Let's be honest, it's hard to be the best version of you if you're not happy with what you are doing with your life...

The late Steve Jobs touched on this concept in the commencement address he gave Stanford students when he said,

> *"...for the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: 'If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?' And whenever the answer has been 'No' for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something."*

So, are you doing things that you'd be happy about doing if it was your last day on this earth?

If not, then maybe you need to think about what you could be doing that would leave you feeling more fulfilled and full of life. Come up with a list of activities that will satisfy you and add them to your days so your answer to

this question is a resounding "YES!"

Question #2: *"What's the worst that could happen?"*

Ever wake up first thing in the morning worried about something that may happen later that day, week, month, or year? Or maybe you spend a lot of time throughout the day going over future events in your mind, feeling an overwhelming sense of dread as you ponder everything that could go wrong.

STOP!

This type of thinking can prevent you from becoming mentally ready to go to the next level, so one way to get over this obstacle is to ask yourself:

"What is really the worst thing that could happen if (insert potential future bad situation here) were to come true?"

Oliver Burkeman, author of *The Antidote,* says that thinking about a possible negative outcome can actually help you realize *"that your anxiety or your fears about those situations were exaggerated."*

In other words, by truly thinking through potential situations and their outcomes, you'll likely see that it isn't a life or death deal.

Or you can do "The Work" an amazingly simple process, created by author Byron Katie, that will help you identify and question your harmful thoughts. This tool gives you four simple questions to ask yourself and allows you to experience the happiness of undoing those thoughts.

"THE WORK"

1) Is it true? (Yes or no. If no, move to 3.)

2) Can you absolutely know that it's true? (Yes or no.)

3) How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?

4) Who would you be without the thought?

Think of a situation, person, situation that's really bothering you whether that's something you're really worried about or really scared of or a resentment or whatever it is...then ask yourself these four questions. Be honest. You'll be amazed at what happens. This simple process can be applied to basically anything that you're struggling with.

Question #3: *"What good have I done today?"*

Benjamin Franklin's day always ended with asking and answering this question, *"What good have I done today?"*

The morning question, What good shall I do this day?	5	Rise, wash, and address *Powerful Goodness*; contrive day's business and take the resolution of the day; prosecute the present study; and breakfast.
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	Work.
	10	
	11	
	12	Read or overlook my accounts, and dine.
	1	
	2	
	3	Work.
	4	
	5	
	6	Put things in their places, supper, music, or diversion, or conversation; examination of the day.
	7	
	8	
	9	
Evening question, What good have I done today?	10	
	11	
	12	
	1	Sleep.
	2	
	3	
	4	

Asking and answering this simple question at the end of your day provides you with an opportunity to reflect and gives you perspective. It forces you to consider whether you're heading in the direction you want to go and take others into account. Did you help other people?

Don't forget, the more good you are doing...the more good will come to you. My friend Hiten Shah has this simple quote in his email signature

which encapsulates this perfectly (and which I see him live):

> *"You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help other people get what they want."*
> *- Zig Ziglar*

At the end of each day, I write in my journal (or using the Day One app on my phone) all of the positive things that happened during the course of that day. I also list the things I want to improve upon, which helps give me clarity and direction on what I can do to make the next day even better.

Putting it All Together: My Daily Routine

It's ironic that I spent most of my life fighting structure and routine...and now I help other people realize the power of it.

Having a healthy daily routine keeps functioning at the highest level possible on all three planes of existence – mind, body, and spirit. I need it to make myself a better person. I need it so I constantly see opportunity and view problems as 'situations.' In short, I need it so I can be free.

My Daily Success Routine

- **5am** – wake up (no snoozing!) and get right out of bed. Say *"This will be the best day ever"* and then I hit my knees and say a quick prayer. I read a few inspirational messages on apps while I drink a big glass of water.

- **5:15am** – read a chapter of a book *(I'm currently reading 'Shift Your Mind, Shift the World' by Steve Chandler & re-reading 'The Obstacle is the Way' by Ryan Holiday)*

- **5:45am** – Write my Morning Pages (while drinking a cup of coffee)

- **6:15am** – Meditate for 20 minutes (here are my 9 "hacks" for meditating)

- **6:35am** – Say positive affirmations out loud while listening to audio like this (~6 minutes), do some visualizations (~3-5 minutes), write a gratitude list (~3 minutes)

- **7am** – make breakfast for me, my daughter and puppy (we recently rescued this little cutie)

- **7:30am** – walk to Central Park with my dog and daughter and let both of them run around

- **8:15am** – finalize my daily action plan and to-do's and check in with my mentor

- **8:30am** – start working focused on my MIT (Most Important Task) of the day (which is usually writing)

- **9am –** check & return email, review website sales, stats, etc

- **9:30am to 4pm** – work (utilizing my *Dream. Dump. Map. Chunk.* Productivity system)

- **4pm** – workout (either at my club or going for a run in Central Park)

- **5:30pm** – meet up with someone for coffee or networking

- **7pm:** spend time with my family, come up with 10 ideas and learn something new.

- **9:30pm** – floss (this was actually my first *real* habit), review my day, say nighttime affirmations, give thanks again

- **10pm** – lights out...sleep.

Don't Be Afraid to Mess Up; Just Start!

It's important for me to let you know that this isn't what my daily routine looked like at the beginning...not even close. I was happy to just be doing one of these things on a daily basis! No, this has been a constant process of experimentation, optimization and change...it's not always easy but it's so worth it.

"I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world.

You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something."

-- Neil Gaiman

It's okay to "let yourself be sloppy" when it comes to creating new habits. In other words, be specific in what you want, but also keep the flexibility necessary to work within in your lifestyle and schedule so your habits actually stick.

Start small.The American Psychological Association suggests that "*to improve your success, [you need to] focus on one goal or change at a time.*"

One of my favorite examples of starting small to get big results comes from author John Grisham. Want to know what his goal was when he first started writing?

ONE PAGE PER DAY. That's it. Sometimes writing that one page would take 10 minutes...sometimes an hour. Many times he would write for two hours before he had to turn to his "day job" as a lawyer.

> *"The alarm clock would go off at 5, and I'd jump in the shower. My office was 5 minutes away. And I had to be at my desk, at my office, with the first cup of coffee, a legal pad and write the first word at 5:30, five days a week."*

It took Grisham three years to finish his first novel *("A Time to Kill")*...and since getting it published in 1988, he has gone on to write one book per year...selling more than 300 million copies worldwide and amassing a net worth of over $200 million! All of that started with *one page per day...*

Never discount the power of consistenly taking small, deliberate actions and the compound effect this can have on your life.

Even one positive habit done daily can be the basis for major change in your

life. **Just start.** In the words of the late Jim Rohn,

Over to You

What does your daily routine include? What do you do to be the best you mentally, physically, and spiritually?

Don't have a daily routine? That's okay too!

Let us know what you are going to start with...or where you need help. After looking through these ideas, which ones could you implement so you can become the best you?

I'm looking forward to hearing and learning from all of you in the comments below!

Want to go further? I put together a **special bonus area** for Buffer readers with an eBook version of this post, a daily habit builder worksheet and a guide with 40 powerful morning habits!

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This post originally appeared on open.buffer.com .

Recommendations from Pocket Users

Erdogan Cesmeli   Shared vor 4 Tagen

Many useful tips.

Reymarr Hijara   Shared January 9, 2016

> *Eat "productive" foods*
> *We've talked about a number of things you can do to make your days more productive, but did you know that the foods you eat can help with this too? That's right. The items you choose to consume each and every day can actually affect how well your brain functions, ultimately making it easier (or harder) for you to hit your goals.*
>
> *Research has found that your brain operates optimally when you consume a very specific amount of glucose (25 grams, to be exact) in a form that is released slowly over time. Foods that fall into this category and have positive effects on your body and mind include:*
>
> *Fish*
> *Nuts*
> *Seeds*
> *Avocado*
> *Blueberries*
> *Raw carrots, and...most everyone's favorite:*
> *Dark chocolate*
>
> *Eat foods like these and your body and your brain will thank you!*

puss Smith Shared December 9, 2015

good

Miroslav Valchev Shared March 14, 2016

Good one

Joshwin Greene Shared November 19, 2015

Great article

Anh Nông Thị Vân Shared March 21, 2016

> *"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."*

Anh Nông Thị Vân Shared March 21, 2016

> *habits are "action[s] that you take on a repeated basis with little or no required effort or thought."*

Anh Nông Thị Vân Shared March 21, 2016

> *Jim Rohn once said, "Either you run the day or the day runs you."*

Vũ Khiêm Phạm Shared December 16, 2016

saved

Chaturon Itthiprapakul

2016 goals