



Morning Makeover

7 Habits to Brighten Your Day

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How you start each morning can have a significant impact on your mindset, productivity, and happiness throughout the day. If you've ever had one of those days where you "got up on the wrong side of the bed," and things continued to go downhill from there... you already know how true this is.

The good news is you can change this! You have more control than you may realize, but you need to start with a plan. To help you get started, here are seven easy-to-adopt habits that can help you makeover your mornings for better, brighter days.

Habit #1: Embrace the Calm

Whenever possible, allow yourself to ease into each day slowly and calmly. Rather than waking up at the last minute and scrambling to get out the door, plan ahead to give yourself a few minutes of stillness and calm every morning. This will allow your mind to quietly embrace and contemplate each brand new day before jumping right into it.

For this habit, all you need is a few minutes of stillness when you first wake up. Give your mind a chance to gradually become more conscious of your surroundings as you navigate the transition from sleep to being awake. Avoid jumping out of bed in a frantic rush to meet the day head on. Instead, simply embrace the quiet of this moment as a positive way to start the day.

One great way to claim this time for yourself each morning is by placing your phone away from your bed while you sleep. For this to work, use a regular alarm clock or one that emulates the sunrise, instead of the one on your phone. You don't want to have to jump out of bed to turn off a blaring alarm across the room when you wake up.

If you want to use your phone as an alarm, keep it on "do not disturb" so you don't see notifications immediately when you look at it in the morning. Give yourself this time to wake up slowly before facing whatever notifications or messages you received throughout the night.

Habit #2: Journal Your Thoughts

This advice is not new and you've probably heard it before, but it is worth repeating here. When it comes to starting your day on a positive note, journaling is one of the best things you can do.

Why? Because your mind is often overwhelmed with a rush of thoughts, plans, goals, worries, and fears when you wake up each morning. Morning journaling, in the form of a brain dump or stream of consciousness, helps you get all of these conflicting thoughts out of your head in a way that helps you organize and make sense of them later.

How to Do a Brain Dump

All you need to do is write out anything that is running through your mind at the time. Your thoughts, feelings, worries, fears, and future plans are all fair game, so don't worry about editing or censoring yourself. What you choose to write about can be good, bad, anxiety-inducing, exciting, happy, or sad. Just get it all out of your head by writing it down.

If you are new to journaling, keep it short and simple by using a timer for 5-10 minutes or setting a goal to fill up 2-3 pages in your journal. With practice, this morning journaling routine will become second nature and you'll find it allows you to move on with your day with a sense of peace and calm.

Habit #3: Practice Relaxation Techniques

There are many relaxation techniques you can use to start your day. Morning meditation is a great example because it can calm your mind and body by allowing you to shift your focus from your thoughts to whatever you choose. Instead of random thoughts and worries dictating the direction of your day, meditation allows you to choose what to focus on instead.

Breathing exercises, such as 'box breathing,' can also be an effective way to experience a calm and tranquil morning. With box breathing, you inhale, hold, exhale, and pause, each for a count of four. This rhythmic pattern is said to reduce stress, improve focus, release muscle tension, regulate emotions, and calm your nervous system. Not convinced? Consider carving out 5-10 minutes each morning for a week or two to see if it works for you.

Mindful walking, where you stay present and in a mindful state during an early morning walk, is another great option. In addition to the physical benefits of walking, you can also develop a greater sense of self-awareness and peace with this practice. Although it may take some practice to quiet your mind and focus your thoughts while you explore these relaxation techniques, they offer a great way to get your day off to a good start.

Habit #4: Enjoy the Morning Sun & Fresh Air

This habit can have a huge impact on your overall mood and outlook each morning. Whenever possible, open your curtains and windows to allow the sunlight and fresh air into your home each morning. If you live in a colder climate, bundle up and step outside to enjoy the natural light and crisp air instead.

There is something almost magical about reveling in sunshine and fresh air first thing in the morning. As the sun hits your skin, your mood begins to lift and breathing in fresh air is a wonderful way to wake up your senses in a gradual, soothing way.

Habit #5: Utilize Self-Care

When it comes to self-care, there is no one-size-fits-all definition. You get to decide what self-care means to you. Start by considering small things you can do each morning to make your day better and brighter. For example, you could set aside 15 extra minutes each morning to practice your faith, read, stretch, make a healthy breakfast, meditate, or simply enjoy your coffee in peace.

There are no set rules when it comes to self-care, other than it should be something you do only for yourself. If your favorite part of the day is when you spend a few minutes outside in your garden, then add this to your regular morning routine!

Habit #6: Practice Gratitude

An easy way to instantly boost your mood in the morning is to give thanks for what you have. This allows you to focus on the abundant blessings in your life, rather than on what you wish you had or what you think is missing in your life.

To get started, pull out a dedicated notebook or journal each morning and write down a list of things you are grateful to have in your life. At times, you may feel like you are writing out the same things every morning. But before you know it, you'll find more and more things to give thanks for as you start each day. Life has a way of giving us more to be grateful for the more we acknowledge and give thanks for what we already have.

Habit #7: Use Positive Affirmations

Finally, consider using positive affirmations each morning as a way to start your day. You can choose to repeat one affirmation every day, select different affirmations each morning, or use a combination of several affirmations each day.

Here are a few examples of positive affirmations you can use to get started:

I am worthy
There are always new opportunities
I allow myself to learn and grow
I love myself unconditionally
Life is a blessing

Embracing affirmations such as these each morning can help you adopt a more positive and abundant mindset, as you believe with hope and faith that everything in your life will work out as it should.