

THE GOLDEN MORNING ROUTINE

Start your day with a smile





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Second Edition: June 2019
ISBN: 978-3-9818450-5-1
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*Over
my 50 years
in business I have
learned that if I rise
early I can achieve so
much more in a day,
and therefore
in life.*

– RICHARD BRANSON –

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Your Morning Routine

... and why it is so immensely important

The way you start your morning sets the tone for the rest of the day. Exceptional results and happy lives are the result of consistent daily choices and nowhere is this more apparent than in your morning routine! As a result, what you do each morning is an indicator of how you will approach the entire day – and thus also your entire life. This is why we will take a closer look behind the scenes of morning routines in this eBook, which has been created exclusively for the users of the *6-Minute Diary*.

Do you know those days when you can't get your act together? You just sit around, watch a video here, read an "important" article there, tidy up a little, answer some emails, and before you know it, half of the day is gone. Now you don't get anything done because you are too busy being angry with yourself. Then you're becoming even more angry about being angry and so on... Once this negative feedback loop is initiated, it becomes increasingly difficult to stop it and get back on track that very same day. The most effective way to avoid that problem altogether is a fixed morning routine because it gives your day a structure right from the start. And this is where this eBook comes into play. It will provide you with ideas about how to construct the different components of **a routine that routinely helps you to make the best out of your mornings.**

The approach here will be similar to the one you've seen in the *6-Minute-Diary*, meaning that everything is underpinned with studies and brought to life with practical examples. Hence, the following eBook comprises five science-based key arguments for the implementation of a morning routine as well as 25 example routines of successful people. When you are looking to build your very own morning routine, the practical examples will be of great help providing you with an orientation and new impulses.

WOMEN IN JAPAN

You've already read quite a bit on morning routines in the *6-Minute-Diary*. Do you remember the part on "Women in Japan" from the chapter "The Morning Routine"? Here is a little hint to refresh your memory:

Reaching an average of 87 years, Japanese women have the highest life expectancy ever recorded.¹ Let's be optimistic and assume you, too will live until a similar age. Accordingly, depending on your current age, this is the number of mornings you've got left to make the most of the day:

20 years: 24,500
30 years: 20,800
40 years: 17,200
50 years: 13,500
60 years: 10,000

These numbers show how many opportunities you've got left to get up on the right side of bed and to fully seize the day. How many of those mornings have passed by unnoticed and how many of them have you taken full advantage of?

“

*Don't let the fear of the time
it will take to accomplish something
stand in the way of your doing it. The time
will pass anyway; we might just as well put
that passing time to the best possible use.*

– EARL NIGHTINGALE –

MORNING SCENARIOS

Scenario 1

Your alarm goes off in the morning, but your mind is still caught between the worlds – you're feeling sluggish and cloudy. You hit the snooze button, turn to the other side and try to "sleep" again. It goes like this for the next couple of minutes. You still feel too tired to get up. Cock-a-doodle-doo!!! Now you have exhausted the snooze function to its maximum and you have no choice but to get up – annoyed and stressed. Whilst in the shower, your body is still crying for sleep. And it takes you ages to decide what to wear afterwards. You are lucky if you've got a few spare minutes to take a quick shower or can have your breakfast on the way to work. Left at the mercy of events, you start your day off rushed. Your mood is anything but great and the morning has just passed by you unconsciously...

Scenario 2

No matter what challenges the day holds for you, your morning is characterised by ease, harmony and focus. You get up early, feel the floor underneath your feet and take a moment to fully stretch out your whole body with your hands above your head. While you hear your coffee brewing, you open the window, look outside and breathe in the fresh air of the new day. You inhale energy and exhale doubt. There's no need to rush because the first hour of your day is holy and belongs only to you. After having a big glass of water, you take some time for precious self-reflection and deep gratitude. You plan the day ahead and equip yourself mentally for upcoming challenges. Concentration and clarity define the atmosphere as you visualise a successful and productive day. You move your body to get your metabolism going and treat yourself to a healthy and balanced breakfast. If you are fasting, you can treat yourself to a hot drink instead :).

Which scenario would you prefer? The second one certainly sounds worth striving for, doesn't it? However, you probably don't have the time for that, right? Also, you've never been a morning person and you have to get up early enough anyway. Well, hopefully, you will see things in a different light after having read this eBook...

Several study findings as well as the morning routines** of successful people – who most probably, lead a busier life than you and I – will offer you a different perspective and food for thought on this topic.

**If you feel a bit intimidated by all the great morning routines, just check pages 31/32 every now and then. This will turn intimidation into motivation.

“

If you win the morning, you win the day.

– TIM FERRIS –

Mental Advantages

... how to start your day off with mental and emotional strength

Adhering to a daily regimented morning routine reduces measurable stress parameters for the rest of the day and at the same time serves as a long-term benefit for your well-being.² What definitely comes into play here is the time at which you perform your routine: whether it is at 7am or around lunchtime can actually make a big difference. It is not a coincidence that 90% of all executives get up before 6am.³ People tend to be more optimistic and cheerful in the morning hours than at any other time.

A study which analysed all tweets posted on *Twitter* worldwide has shown that words like “awesome” and “super” are far more frequent in the time from 6am to 9am than at any other time.⁴ These tweets are from people who start pursuing small and big goals from early morning. Research findings support this assumption, for early risers reported higher levels of well-being and positivity than night owls in a related study.⁵ So it seems getting up early makes you happier, too. Besides, did you know that early risers also show a more stable personality⁶, tend to have less problematic relationships with their family, friends and colleagues⁷, and have a subjectively higher overall life satisfaction?⁸ It seems the early bird does really catch the worm – but first, let’s take a look on what science has to say about the two chronotypes:

“

*There is only one success - to be able
to spend your life in your own way.*

– CHRISTOPHER MORLEY –

Early Bird vs. Night Owl

Research has shown that whether you are an early bird or a night owl is not just a question of morning euphoria or sleep addiction, but rather genetically and socially influenced. Dr Tauber, a renowned professor in genetics, could identify almost 80 genes related to “morningness” and “eveningness” and found that the DNA sequences of either chronotype are entirely different. Accordingly, our genes largely influence our body clock.

With many jobs beginning between 8–9am, this can present a social challenge for late risers, though. They are facing a discrepancy between internal and external timing, as they don’t rise and function in accordance with society’s clock.⁹ This phenomenon is also known as “social jetlag”.¹⁰ Early birds, on that account, are privileged for their genes are more harmonious with the external timing presented by society. Psychologists Roberts and Kyllonen found that age is also a decisive factor when it comes to our sleeping patterns.¹¹ To that effect, younger people are more likely to be night owls while with increasing age, we transform to early birds. An article by *CBS news* puts the issue at hand in a nutshell: “it looks like night owls may have it tougher when it comes to their overall well-being and functioning in a predominantly 9-to-5 world.”¹² So, it turns out the early bird is much more likely to catch the worm. This, however, is due to the inherent characteristics of our modern society’s working time schedule, and not to due to the natural characteristics of early risers.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706–1790)

He is the man on the 100 Dollar bill, the inventor of the lightning rod and one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America. As a famous author, politician and scientist, Benjamin Franklin strictly adhered to his 2-hour morning routine. When asked about his opinion on getting up early, he would say: “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” Accordingly, he got up at 5am every day and asked himself “What good shall I do today?” Then, no matter the season, he would sit down naked on his floor for 30 to 60 minutes to either read or write a book. He used every single day to reflect on his weaknesses. This he did by focusing on a different weakness every four weeks in order to eradicate them systematically. It should be recalled that Franklin did all this at a time when the concept of personal development was hardly known. Before he dedicated himself to work, he devoted time to himself.

MELINDA GATES

The businesswoman runs the charity *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation* together with her husband Bill Gates. In 2013, the *Forbes Magazine* ranked her third among the most powerful women in the world. Three years later, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, one of the highest civilian awards of the United States. Melinda has been championing mediation for many years: “The first thing I do in the morning is meditate,” she said in an interview. “The last thing I do at night is try to get to bed before 10 o’clock so I can get up and meditate.” On days where she hasn’t managed to meditate, she admitted, “I have some days I want to wear a T-Shirt to work that says ‘Sorry I didn’t meditate today.’”

MARCUS AURELIUS (121–180)

The often-quoted philosopher and emperor sat on the throne of the Roman Empire for 20 years. He was a practitioner of *Stoicism*, which advocates to seek happiness from an internal source and to always focus on the present moment rather than on conditional happiness. His writings, referred to as *Meditations*, are considered one of the most outstanding works of philosophy. *Meditations* were taken from notes in his personal notebook where Aurelius laid out his most important principles such as gratefulness, humbleness and mindfulness for the little things in life. Despite being one of the – if not the most – powerful men in the world at the time, he found the time for daily meditation and gratitude: “When you arise in the morning, always remember what a precious treasure it is to be alive – to breathe, to think, to savour and to love.”

“

*The first hour of the morning
is the rudder of the day.*

– HENRY WARD BEECHER –

CHASE JARVIS

Every morning, straight after getting up, the award winning photographer, director, and co-founder of *Creative Live* drinks half a litre of water. This is followed by a 20-minute meditation session and consciously practised gratitude. After his gratitude exercise, he spends time on visualising his short- and long-term goals. A morning walk and a small breakfast (half an avocado, eggs and vegetables or a tablespoon of coconut oil with almonds) are also part of his morning routine. Here is what Jarvis says about his morning routine: "It has turned out my days are waaaaay more creative, joyful, and productive. In turn, this makes my personal, emotional, and professional life better as well."

STEPHEN COVEY (1932–2012)

Stephen Covey was an American author, university lecturer, businessman and keynote speaker. His bestselling work "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" – a fusion of the genres of self-help and business literature – was sold over 15 million times. Every morning, Covey made an effort to win what he called his "private victory". He started off by working out on a stationary bike whilst studying religious scriptures for about 30 minutes. Then he swam in his pool for 15 minutes and did yoga for another 15 minutes. Covey's "private victory" continued in his library where he did the following: "I go into my library and pray with a listening spirit, listening primarily to my conscience while I visualize the rest of my entire day, including important professional activities and key relationships with my loved ones, working associates and clients."

Physical Advantages

... how to take care of a healthy unity of mind and body in the morning

A healthy mind in a healthy body

– JUVENAL –

The morning is a wonderful time to lay the foundation for a harmonious balance of your body and your mind. However, in order to start your day off refreshed, there is one thing your body needs as much as the flowers need the sunshine: a restful sleep. So we need to wind back to the evening before in order to ensure a fresh start for the following day.

One of the biggest effects on our sleep is caused by natural light. That is because our ancestors were exposed to a natural dual day-night pattern: the sun during the day and the moon and the stars during the night. This pattern programmed our biological clock and told our bodies when it is time to sleep and when it is time to get up. Today, however, we are exposed to a modern world phenomenon that didn't exist back then: artificial lighting at night – the reason behind many sleep disorders. And one century of artificial lighting will certainly not change something that was evolutionarily programmed into our brains for the last three million years. Accordingly, it was found that exposure to room light or the light of electronic devices before

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*If it's your job to eat a frog,
it's best to do it First Thing in the Morning.*

– MARK TWAIN –

bedtime shortens melatonin duration, our sleep hormone, by about 90 minutes.¹³ The good news is that there are so many good ways to end your day without being bombarded with the sleep-depriving light of electronic devices – such as a nice book, a meditation session or your evening routine in the *6-Minute-Diary*. So why not challenge yourself and say goodnight to your TV, laptop, smartphone and Co. at least 30 minutes before you go to bed?

In the previous chapter you've learnt about the mental advantages of getting up early, however, rising early has also got numerous physical advantages. Studies have shown that early birds have a better quality of sleep and that rising early facilitates the process of falling asleep and getting up.¹⁴ As a result, getting up early in a 9–5 society is highly beneficial for your body and it has got numerous positive long-term effects on your health, too. In line with this, studies show that early risers are less vulnerable to depression¹⁵; they tend to consume less alcohol, caffeine and nicotine¹⁶ and generally have a comparatively better state of health.¹⁷ On average, they also consume less calories, eat less fast food and more fruit and vegetables, thereby showing a lower body fat percentage.¹⁸

So once you've nailed the getting up early part, you can actually do a lot with very little in the morning. Think Chase Jarvis: Even only drinking a good portion of water straight after getting up can make the difference between a good and a bad start into the day. When sleeping, we lose a high amount of water and thus wake up dehydrated. If you consider that 80% of your brain consists of water it is all the more important to hydrate yourself first thing in the morning. For example, you can put a big glass of water next to your bed or your toothbrush. Either way, water should be an essential part of your morning routine.

“

***Every morning you have two choices:
Continue to sleep within your dreams.
Or wake up and chase them.***

– CARMELO ANTHONY –

If you want to go the extra mile, you could add an element of exercise to your morning routine. Good examples would be a small walk in the morning, a little yoga session, swimming, running or a lightweight training. Physical fitness ensures optimal lung and heart capacities, thus supplying your brain with sufficient oxygen. Studies show that 20 minutes of exercise in the morning are enough to improve your memory and to enhance information processing for the rest of the day.¹⁹ In fact, neuroscientist Dr Wendy Suzuki revealed that working out in the morning (rather than in the evening) is most beneficial because “it increases our neurotransmitters and growth factors at a time right before we need to use our brain to learn and to remember.”²⁰ After all, most of us aren’t required to use our brains in the evening or at night.

Morning exercise also helps you sleep better. A recent study tested sleep quality with participants who exercised three days per week at 7am, 1pm, or 7pm... and guess which group showed the deepest and longest sleep? – It was the 7am group. Exercising in the morning “not only improves the length of sleep you will enjoy, but also your quality of sleep by promoting deeper sleep cycles.”²¹ On top of that, the morning group also showed the best blood pressure results!²² The beautiful thing is: If you exercise in the morning, you also have one thing less to care about for the rest of the day. In turn, the beautiful side effect is: You can create more time for spontaneous meetings with family and friends. You start early to finish early and as you know, physical advantages go hand in hand with mental advantages, so you kill two birds with one stone.

CAMERON DIAZ

The popular Hollywood actress who voiced the character of *Princess Fiona* in the *Shrek* series among other things, received four *Golden Globe Award Nominations* and won the *New York Film Critics Best Lead Actress Award*. Her morning routine takes about an hour and, in her own words, is a combination of “calm, nutrition and exercise”. So what does Cameron Diaz do straight after brushing her teeth? “Water, water, water!” was her answer in an interview with *Nutrition Stripped*. After drinking plenty of water, she incorporates 20 minutes of meditation and a high-protein breakfast in her daily routine. Then she dedicates her time to fitness.

BILL GATES

Like his wife, the founder of *Microsoft* has also been actively committed to their charity *Gates Foundation*. The first hour of his day is spent on the treadmill while watching informative videos on topics such as geology, meteorology, oceanography and history. Then he catches up on current news reading various newspapers. Above all though, he thinks highly of the importance of sleep: "I can give a speech without much sleep, I can do parts of my job that way, but in thinking creatively, I'm not much good without seven hours [of sleep]," he told *The Seattle Times*.

LADY GAGA

With over 150 million sold singles and six *Grammy Awards*, Lady Gaga ranks amongst the best-selling music artists of all time. Her day starts off with an intense *Bikram Yoga* session as well as five minutes of self-directed love and gratitude. According to *Project Life Mastery*, she "does this every morning upon waking, and carries the feeling with her throughout the day to help her stand tall in challenging times." Last but not least, her morning routine also includes figuring out what sort of look she'd like to portray on that day.

TONY ROBBINS

The most successful performance and life coach of all time has worked on an individual basis with personalities such as Bill Clinton, Serena Williams, Ray Dalio and Paul Tudor, just to mention a few. Until today, Robbins sells millions of books and holds multiple seminars, which are without exception fully booked. To get into a peak state, he starts his morning with the "Hour of Power", which is why Tony's morning routine commences with a contrast bath – alternating hot and cold water. The bath is followed by a yoga session, which includes a set of 30 *Kapalabhati Pranayama breaths*, a meditative breathing exercise. He then takes a few minutes to think about three things that he is grateful for.

ROBIN SHARMA

At the age of 25, the Canadian author and leadership speaker gave up his career as a litigation lawyer to follow his "mission to help people own their inner hero". Today, he gives talks on personal development and consults businesses such as *Nike*, *PwC* and *Microsoft* on leadership. For over 10 years, he has been teaching his concept, the so-called "game-changing move", about which he says: "The game-changing move for exponential productivity, a world-class mindset, undefeatability in your marketplace and a rare air of life is really one thing: it's your morning routine!" His morning routine concept, laid out in *The 5am Club*, is made up of the 20-20-20-approach. The first twenty minutes, from 5 to 5.20am, is called the *movement pocket* and filled with intense exercise to get the body going. The following 20 minutes from 5.20 to 5.40am are referred to as the *reflection pocket*. This is where he takes some "Me-Time" to write into his gratitude journal, to meditate and to reflect on values "before walking out into the craziness of the world". Last but not least, the *learning pocket*, from 5.40 to 6.00am is all about reading and education. All in all, the author is convinced that "the way you begin your day determines the way you live your day, [for] once you nail your morning routine, the rest of your day is completely different".

Willpower

... and why you should use it wisely in the morning

*You've got to get up every morning with determination
if you're going to go to bed with satisfaction.*

– GEORGE LORIMER –

By establishing a fixed morning routine, you'll save willpower for the more important and difficult decisions of the day. Consequently, you'll minimise an unnecessary burden for your willpower, right from the start of the day. Looking at the picture below, does the scenario seem familiar to you? Do you also spend time in front of your wardrobe every morning because you can't decide what to wear? Did you know that this act costs you a lot of precious willpower?

Certainly you know those days when you had to make a lot of decisions and get back home exhausted in the evening. Is it on those days when you're struggling to keep your spontaneous impulses in check? You're less likely to adhere to your nutrition plan, you're procrastinating important tasks or you getting distracted quite easily? Suddenly you find great excuses for why the pot of *Ben and Jerry's*, the chocolate bar or the glass of wine is well deserved. Why does this phenomenon usually occur at the end of the day?

(If you have already read the chapter "Habits" in The Fundamentals part of the *6-Minute-Diary* then you can skip the following paragraph.)

The following experiment by Roy Baumeister, a renowned social psychologist, may help to shed some light on the question above: The participants were

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*The more good decisions you can make habitual,
the less taxes on your willpower tank
you'll experience throughout the day.*

– BRETT & KATE MCKAY –

split into two groups and told to fast before the start of the experiment. During the experiment, both groups had to spend some time in a room with freshly baked chocolate cookies and raw red radishes. Group 1 was allowed to eat whatever they wanted while group 2 was only allowed to eat the radishes. Immediately afterwards, both groups were told to try and solve a geometric puzzle which was, in fact, unsolvable. Group 1 gave up after 20 minutes while group 2 threw in the rag after only eight minutes on average – a significant difference. The radish eaters gave up so quickly because resisting the temptation of the cookies earlier depleted their willpower. So when they attempted to solve the puzzle, they could no longer find the willpower to fully engage in another torturous task. And that was not simply because some participants were hungrier than others. Further studies were able to prove that the daily repository for our willpower is a limited resource.²³ Our willpower isn't only depleted by resisting temptations but also by making decisions. That is why you should choose your outfit for the next day on the evening before. Since you dissipate your willpower in the course of the day, you end up with all of it sapped in the evening. Hence, you end up being far more prone to indulge yourself in whims, impulses and basic desires. Good habits help prevent this phenomenon from occurring and a good morning routine is nothing else but a good habit.

Why good habits are so incredibly valuable: They help us to save precious willpower

Why would you want to take careful decisions throughout the whole day over and over again? Isn't it much easier to establish the habit of taking a healthy decision once and being free from inner decision challenges thereafter? Of course it will cost you willpower to practice and implement a new habit but once it is established, you will live through your daily options much more effortlessly.

Not wasting your willpower and motivation for ultimately irrelevant decisions in the morning, will give you a clear advantage for the rest of the day. This is precisely why a moderate morning routine is better than no routine at all. For this reason Mark Zuckerberg wears the same T-Shirt and Barack Obama the same suit style every day. The same applies to Steve Jobs' turtlenecks and Karl Lagerfeld's black suits and white shirts. And the same applies to every element of your morning and your daily routines, however small the elements may be.

Ideally, the first hour of your day should vary as little as possible. The slicker your morning routine, the more available resources you will have for the rest of the day. Rituals and established automatisms make life easier because they prevent your brain from being burdened unnecessarily. Can you recall the comparison between willpower and biceps? After 1000 biceps curls you cannot expect your arm to reach peak performance later that day and as you know our brain works like a muscle, too. Accordingly, rituals equip you with vital ammunition to take care of the bunch of bad old habits, silly distractions and fatigue at the end of the day. The fewer the conscious decisions you have to take on a daily basis the more effective the important ones you take will be. This approach will leave enough time and brain capacity for the moments of your day when it matters most.

BARACK OBAMA

As a matter of principle, the former US president starts his morning ritual two hours before his first official appointment of the day. Until then, he does not allow for any media or news influence to enter his consciousness. After his morning shave, he does a 45-minute cardio or weight training session – six times a week. The training is followed by breakfast with his family. Here is what he says about his routine: “When I follow my morning routine the rest of my day is a lot more productive.” Obama also minimises the amount of decisions he has to take on banalities: “I don’t want to make decisions about what I’m eating or wearing. Because I have too many other decisions to make,” he says. “You need to focus your decision-making energy. You need to routinize yourself. You can’t be going through the day distracted by trivia.”

MARK ZUCKERBERG

Every single day, the founder of *Facebook* wears a grey T-shirt to start his day off with as few decisions as possible. He then goes running or does weight training. Mark has the habit of choosing a new goal every year. In 2014, his goal was to write a daily thank-you note to himself. Here is what he thinks about his thank-you note resolution: “This habit is particularly important for me, because I’m a really critical person. I always kind of see how I want things to be better, and I’m generally not happy with how things are, or the level of service that we’re providing for people, [...]. But if you look at this objectively, we’re doing so well on so many of these things. I think it’s important to have gratitude for that.”

GWYNETH PALTROW

The actress, singer and blogger wakes up at 4.30am and starts off with Asanas (a physical Yoga posture). After she has dressed the kids, fed them and dropped them off at school, Gwyneth takes an hour for responding to work emails before exercising two hours from 10am till noon. In her opinion, it "is pure determination. If I work out and eat healthy 6 times a week I feel much better."

OPRAH WINFREY

Having moderated one of the most successful US talk shows of all time, the director of *Harpo Productions* ranks as one of the most influential women in the world. Every single morning, for more than 20 years she's not only been practising meditation, but she's also been writing down five things she is grateful for. Here is what she commented in 2012 when asked about her decision to keep a gratitude diary: "No matter what is going on at this moment of your life, be thankful for what you have and you'll always end up having more. If you focus on what you don't have, you will never, ever, ever have enough." Gratitude is deeply ingrained in Oprah: "I awaken and the first thought is 'Thank You' and ... the next thought is I'm still here in this body." She has got a dedicated meditation space full of spiritual readings, candles, and a daily word: "Usually before the sun comes up, I offer myself... to something greater than myself."

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

The Austrian-American actor, businessman, politician and formerly world-famous bodybuilder has always strongly believed in his dreams. From the age of 15, he wanted to be a bodybuilder and after having reached this goal, he also fulfilled his dream of becoming an actor. Due to his political activities he even got elected as the Governor of California. What does the morning routine of Schwarzenegger look like? The now 70-year-old *Terminator* gets up at 5am every morning, reads the newspapers and replies to emails. This is followed by a 45-60-minute cardio and weight workout. His breakfast – porridge with bananas and berries – is accompanied by a cup of coffee before he takes a shower and sets off to work.

“

*Listen to
your own voice,
your own soul. Too
many people listen
to the noise of the
world, instead of
themselves.*

– LEON BROWN –

Time for You

... and why the morning is the ideal time

Either you run the day or the day runs you.

– JIM ROHN –

Rather than taking time for themselves, most people devote their precious morning time to others first thing in the morning: A study among smartphone users has shown that 78% of them check their phones within the first 15 minutes after waking up.²⁴ The first glance is usually taken at networks such as *Facebook* or *WhatsApp*, the email inbox or news feeds. To avoid tainting your thoughts with the lives of others, you should try and stave off such reactive actions. An article by *Business Insider* addresses this issue by saying: “when you look at the laundry list of notifications on your phone — it makes you think about the things you need to do that day, rather than fully enjoying the morning.”²⁵ As a matter of fact, only very few successful people start their day with reactive actions. Checking their phones and replying to emails usually aren’t the first things they do after getting up. They start proactively, not reactively.

The influential German philosopher Paul Tillich said, “Language has created the word ‘loneliness’ to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word ‘solitude’ to express the glory of being alone.” Solitude is proactive, it is a conscious choice. Loneliness isn’t. With technology innovations that are constantly facilitating connections between people anywhere and at anytime, we are part of a generation that tends to experience less and less real alone time – and tends to forget the true value of solitude. Taking some “Me-Time” helps you unwind, it gives you space for self-discovery, enhances your relationships, improves your concentration and your work-life balance.²⁶ So put yourself at the top of your priority list. Focus on yourself first in order to focus better on all the other things, which the day will hold for you. In so doing, you can reap what you have sown on that same day.

As soon as you leave the house your energy is mostly consumed in the service of others. It makes all the more sense to put yourself first. So don’t hijack your morning routine by letting stress get into your way. This way you

can recharge your batteries 100% rather than exhausting your energy reserve first thing in the morning. And this is all but a selfish act since you can give much more with a rich wealth of positive energy. By opening the *6-Minute-Diary* first thing in the morning, you enter the first-class terrain of a proactive life. The same applies to all forms of self-care and introspection: meditation, visualisation (e.g. autosuggestions, positive affirmations), keeping a diary and in general, writing away your morning thoughts (Morning Pages).

*The bad news is time flies.
The good news is you're the pilot.*

– MICHAEL ALTSHULER –

You don't have time for yourself very often? Don't worry, you're not the only one. Michelle Obama, the former First Lady of the United States had a similar problem – until she adjusted her morning routine to her day. Every day, she gets up at 4.30am to do sports for one hour before taking the time to look after her children. However, this hasn't always been the case. It took her time to realise how important it is to take care of herself and act on it: "Well, I just started thinking, if I had to get up and go to work, I'd get up and go to work. If I had to get up to take care of my kids, I'd get up and do that. But when it comes to yourself, then suddenly, 'Oh, I can't get up at 4:30.' So I had to change that", and she did.

If you look at the morning routines of other successful people, this story isn't very unusual. From Ludwig van Beethoven to Charles Darwin to Barack Obama. From Aristotle to the Buddha to the Dalai Lama. From William Shakespeare and Marie Curie to Coco Chanel and Jane Austen. All of these knew or know the importance of "Me Time". They all took time for themselves before they were available to the world outside. Morning routines performed mostly in solitude are by no means a phenomenon of modern age. They have been around for thousands of years and are an ancient recipe for success – no matter what success means to you personally. Even if you are not an Einstein or Goethe, you can still ask yourself: "How much time am I worth to myself?" Are you giving yourself 10 minutes or even one hour for a nice and extended morning routine? It's your call. Give yourself a raise and take responsibility for your own happiness, just like Michelle did.

JACK DORSEY

The CEO of both, *Twitter* and *Square*, is a workhorse. He works 16 hours a day, eight for *Square* and eight for *Twitter*. And yet, he manages to set aside time for his morning routine by getting up at 5.30am every day, meditating for 20 minutes and either running six miles or working out afterwards. Dorsey is convinced that his morning routine puts him into a state which “allows him to be effective when he has to deal with situations that get out of hand.”

GEORGIA O’KEEFFE (1887-1986)

Recognised as the “Mother of American Modernism”, the artist was best known for her paintings of enlarged flowers, New Mexico landscapes and New York skyscrapers. Her 1932 painting *Jimson Weed* was sold for over \$ 44,000 - a record for any woman artist at that time. O’Keeffe adored the solitude she got to enjoy in her home in the New Mexico desert. She would get up when the dawn came, make a fire and some tea, and just sit in bed to watch the sun come up. “The morning is the best time, there are no people around. My pleasant disposition likes the world with nobody in it.” Most days, she would take a morning walk and return for breakfast, which was served by her cook at 7am. She would then work in her studio for the rest of the day.

TIM ARMSTRONG

As the CEO of *AOL*, Tim gets up at 5am and spends the first hour of his day reading books. This is followed by a 1-hour weight training session, a shower and a shave. He doesn’t reply to any emails in the first two hours of his day and likes chatting with his middle daughter - also an early riser. His reactive mode is only switched on from 7.15am onwards – once he has arrived at his office.

JESSICA ALBA

The actress, model, mother of two, and founder of *The Honest Company* strictly adheres to her almost 4-hour morning routine. On workdays, her phone (or one of her children) wakes her up at 5.30am. Despite not being a great fan of workouts, she considers them vital for jump-starting her day:

“Working out is not my favorite, but it’s stress relief and I get good ideas working up a sweat. I like to make a morning class before I get to work: Spinning or hot yoga sculpt.” After her exercise and a 5-minute beauty routine, she has breakfast consisting of a coffee with almond milk and either an avocado toast with gluten-free bread or a coconut water smoothie. Finally – before heading to the office at 9am – she takes time to cuddle with her two daughters Honor and Haven: “This does as much for me as it does for them; it clears my mind and opens my heart.”

TIM FERRISS

Among the masterpieces of the bestselling author, entrepreneur and public speaker are works such as *Tools of Titans* and *The 4-Hour Workweek*, of which the latter has been on the *New York Times Bestseller List* for more than four years. He also advises corporations like e.g. *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Alibaba* and *Uber*. More than two million people read his blog every month and his podcasts are among the most successful ones on *iTunes* (over 200 million downloads). Every day, Tim drinks a special tea blend to which he refers as “Titanium Tea”. It’s a blend of pu-erh tea, green tea and yellow ginger. His mornings start with a 10- to 20-minute meditation session, which helps him reduce stress by 30 to 50 % for the rest of the day. He then works out, writes down the things he is grateful for and plans the day ahead. Also, every other morning, he writes away three pages of whatever is on his mind (Morning Pages).

“

*Man has no time when he
doesn't take time to have time.*

– LADISLAUS BOROS –

Your Productivity

... and how you can boost it with your morning routine

Would you like to position yourself on the start line of a productive day first thing in the morning? Establishing a morning routine is extremely helpful to achieve this. A study conducted by the biologist Christopher Randler revealed that we are most productive and proactive in the morning time.²⁷ The same study revealed that people who get up at the same time on free days as they do on weekdays are even more productive than those who only rise early on weekdays. Proactivity was measured by analysing to what extent the participants could agree to the following two statements: "I consciously invest time to identify my long-term goals" and "I am the only one who is responsible for hustling things on in my life."

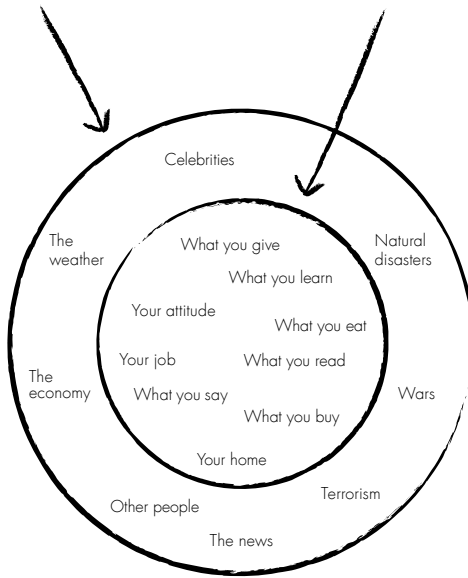
Generally speaking, early birds just get more things done than night owls. And this is not a question of intellect or superior talent, but rather a question of persistence and proactivity. A study shows that late risers are actually smarter than early birds,²⁸ however, success is not necessarily linked to intelligence. Since early birds are adjusting their work time to society's work time, they simply increase their chances of success: They work when most other people are working, which is also when most opportunities arise and can be seized.²⁹ Talking about the advantages of early birds' schedules, other studies could show that early risers often tend to be better at anticipating problems and thereby are more efficient at minimising them.³⁰ The reason why early risers tend to cope better with problems is that they use the quiet time in the morning to plan the day (the weeks, the months) ahead.

Isn't it highly motivating to have finished a large amount of work when others are just about to start? While the rest of the world hasn't even had breakfast yet, you're already approaching your next goal of the day. Proactivity, in that sense, is highlighted as one of the most essential factors of success in the multi-million selling bestseller "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People". In his book, Stephen Covey distinguishes between the *Circle of Control* and the *Circle of Influence*.

The bigger your *Circle of Control* (that is the more proactive you are), the more your time and energy will be directed towards those aspects of your

Circle of Influence

Circle of Control



life that you actually have control over. The *6-Minute-Diary* will help you to positively enhance your *Circle of Control*. On the other hand, the bigger your *Circle of Influence* (that is the more reactive you are), the more you will be prone to wasting energy for insignificant things, which you can't influence anyway.³¹

So what exactly does it mean to start your day proactively? It means to begin the day in a self-determined, formative and creative manner. To unleash the potential of the mind to conceive new thoughts, new ideas and new habits. Where the reactive person would say: "I have to", "I don't have time for" and "I can't do that"; the proactive person will say: "I want to", "I will take the time to" and "I will ask someone to find out how to".

As is the case with using the *6-Minute-Diary*, for the morning routine, each one has to find his very own and individual way, too. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Try and figure out for yourself what works best for you. Hence, the here presented morning routines are meant to serve as intellectual nourishment when you are putting together the mosaic of your very own routine.

BOB IGER

You might be at home, in the office or out and about, but no matter where you are and what you do, one thing is for sure: the CEO of *The Walt Disney Company* gets up at 4.30am seven times a week. This he does to read and to clear his mind. According to him, the morning time is his most proactive period as he can think free of any distractions. Iger also works out in the mornings and thinks highly of morning exercise: "I believe that morning exercise relieves stress and contributes to an improvement in stamina, which in a job like this you absolutely need."

JANE AUSTEN (1775-1817)

Austen's novels enjoy the same popularity as those by William Shakespeare in British contemporary culture. Throughout all of her career, she would get up at 6am to play the piano. Afterwards, she would settle down to write in the living room, where her mother, her sister, a close friend, and three servants spent most of their time as well. It is therefore not surprising that she faced a couple of distractions from a steady stream of visitors. However, despite having little privacy and independence during those writing hours in the living room, she described that time as the most productive period in her life. At the time, she would write on scraps of paper that could be hidden easily in case guests turned up unannounced which – according to her nephew – happened quite often. Against all odds and maybe precisely because of these unusual writing habits, Jane Austen is inseparably linked to being amongst the most remarkable British writers.

IMMANUEL KANT (1724-1804)

The German philosopher is regarded as a model of modern philosophy and the pioneer of the *Age of Enlightenment*. Kant's life was one of "ordered regularity", which is why he adhered to his morning routine without exception for the last 40 years of his life. Under no circumstance would his long-time servant, a retired soldier, let his master oversleep. So, Kant was woken up by him at 5am every day. After a few cups of tea, the philosopher would reflect on life for an hour while smoking on his pipe. The time during which he smoked his pipe served as his period of meditation. After that, he prepared his classes and did some writing for his essays before starting his first lecture at 7am.

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

Due to her significant influence, the editor-in-chief and co-founder of *The Huff Post* (formerly: *Huffington Post*) is also known as the "Blogging Queen". Her day starts with breathing exercises, 30 minutes of meditation and consciously practised gratitude. During her morning coffee, she sets her goals for the day. Because she is so convinced of the positive effects of meditation, she offers weekly meditation classes for her employees free of charge. Avoiding to check her smartphone for as long as possible is also an integral part of her morning routine.

RICHARD BRANSON

The probably craziest billionaire and businessman in the world is a famous adventurer who among other things crossed the Atlantic in a hot-air balloon (in which he also tried to fly around the world several times). Branson is the founder of the *Virgin Group*, a British multinational corporation with over 400 subsidiaries. He is fortunate to carry out his morning routine on his very own 30-hectare island. Straight after getting up, he goes kite surfing, biking, running or takes a walk on the island and then meditates. Even though he doesn't work on his private island, he gets up at 5am every day. Branson shares why getting up early makes all the difference: "The reason I like to wake up early, is so that I can work through my emails before most of the world logs on. [...] Over my 50 years in business I have learned that if I rise early I can achieve so much more in a day, and therefore in life."

Start small **TODAY**

– not big tomorrow !

With the *6-Minute-Diary*, you have already laid the foundation for your morning routine. Why not prepare the next cornerstone tomorrow? And we're not talking about some ready-made advice such as "Go and exercise an hour every morning, then do meditation for half an hour and then go and read for 40 minutes." Fortunately, it is the small things – such as the *3 Minute Morning Routine* in the *Diary* – that make all the difference in terms of life quality. For example, you can try to get up a bit earlier than usual, you can prepare your clothes for the next day on the evening before or you can try a 5-minute meditation exercise for a couple of days. *The Headspace app*, for example, offers short-guided meditation sessions for beginners. Maybe you want to try doing three sets of 15 squats every morning or spend five minutes writing *Morning Pages* (writing away your morning thoughts) or experiment with a breathing exercise. Each one of us is able to find these few extra minutes for his own well-being. As every master of habit implementation would recommend, drastic changes won't bring you far because they usually result in the famous yo-yo effect. Start with small, incremental changes and work your way up to gradually reach your particular morning routine goals.³²

*Invest the first hour of the day,
the "Golden Hour" in yourself.*

– BRIAN TRACY –

It cannot be said often enough: Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs. What counts is that your morning routine is motivating, beneficial and feasible for You. No matter what approach you choose, one thing is for sure: The time you invest in yourself in the morning will bring a higher return on investment than any other share in the world.

“

*Let the
first hour set the
theme of success and
positive action that is
certain to echo through
your entire day. Today
will never happen
again.*

– OG MANDINO –

THANK YOU

In this day and age, it's almost crazy to found a small publishing house. However, we made the bold move with our vision to develop unique books that spread more gratitude, mindfulness and self-love. So far, no regrets :)

To avoid being eaten up by the big sharks, we highly depend on recent reviews. They allow us to appear in search results and to practice what we preach.

Therefore, we would be deeply grateful if you could take a little moment to leave us a review on Amazon. Even if it's just one sentence, this little favor would be of immense value to us!

In any case, we want to thank you for your time and wish you all the best on your happiness journey with *The 6-Minute Diary Pure*.

Your *UrBestSelf*-Team

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See Source 3.

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