

CHANGE YOUR LIFE *before breakfast!*

Early mornings are the best time to think, plan and achieve. So, set your alarm clock an hour or two earlier – it'll open up a whole new world of achievement

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When the 18th-century US President Benjamin Franklin wrote, 'Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise', who knew his words would be trending nearly 300 years later? Yet in an age where daily life is increasingly demanding and stressful, and 'not having enough hours in the day' is a common complaint, more and more people are discovering that the secret to getting ahead, both personally and professionally, lies in rising early.

From clearing their inboxes, writing blogs or attending breakfast networking events, to doing crack-of-dawn workouts, meditation or even getting a hit of endorphins at an early morning 'fitness rave', the new breed of early risers is getting off to a flying start each day and ticking off their to-do lists while the rest of us are still hiding beneath our duvets and hitting the snooze button.

WAKE-UP CALL

Indeed, it seems the old adage of 'you snooze, you lose', now comes weighted with scientific evidence. Numerous studies conclude that early risers are more proactive and productive, can anticipate problems and minimise them more efficiently, and are better planners, using their morning quiet time for goal-setting and diary planning, all resulting in greater success at work and increased personal satisfaction.

HAPPY HOUR

'Early risers tend to get better grades in school, which gets them into better colleges which then leads to better job opportunities,' says biology professor Christopher Randler of the University of Education at Heidelberg, Germany. 'Morning people also anticipate problems and try to minimise them – they're proactive.' And a recent study published in the American Psychological Association journal, *Emotion*, indicates early risers are generally happier than night owls too, although researchers suggested that part of the reason could lie in the way our society has structured the workday in a way that's more conducive to a morning person's schedule. (Unless you work a night shift, of course.)

Little wonder, then, that so many of the world's most powerful and successful people, from President Obama and Apple CEO Tim Cook to US *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour and actress Gwyneth Paltrow, are generally up and out of bed by 4AM.

Anjhe Mules, founder of sportswear brand Lucas Hugh (lucashugh.com), is another early morning convert. 'I realised I was never going to get anything done if I slept in. I awake at

6am and go straight to the gym. It sets me up for whatever is lying ahead, and I don't feel guilty for the rest of the day, thinking I need to fit in exercise.' Despite retiring at 9.45pm every week night, Mules doesn't feel she's missing out. 'The key is to work out what your priorities are, and structure your day according to what you want to achieve.'

So it's great news all round for early

birds. But what does this mean for the 20 per cent of the population who are night owls, and the other 60 per cent who fall somewhere between morning lark and nocturnal? 'I don't think you can categorically say that

early risers are more successful,' says Professor Jim Horne of the Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University. 'Although morning types do tend to be more studious and organised, evening types are shown to be more creative, innovative, extrovert and flexible, which are also useful qualities for achieving success,' he points out.

Indeed, the secret of getting ahead in life has less to do with your 'sleeping personality', and everything to do with logistics, says Laura Vanderkam, author of new book *What The Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast* (Portfolio Penguin, £8.99). She believes that even committed night owls can benefit from rising early if

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'The new breed of early risers is getting off to a flying start every day'



they arrange their time to better complement their creative tendencies.

‘Early risers are not better people than late risers. It’s just that early risers structure their lives in order to get important things done,’ she explains. ‘If you wait until the end of the day to tackle your goals, having done meaningful but non-urgent things like exercise, prayer or reading, and only then and ponder how to advance your career, or truly give your family your best, you may be out of energy or time. You should always prioritise what’s vital and necessary.’

New research on willpower supports Vanderkam’s theory. In an experiment conducted by Roy F. Baumeister, psychology professor and author of *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength* (Kindle, £5.99) participants successfully resisted the temptation of sweet treats, but the effort left them with less energy to

tackle cognitive tasks. This led Baumeister and his colleagues to conclude ‘willpower, like a muscle, becomes fatigued from overuse.’

If this is correct, suggests Vanderkam, your levels of willpower will be used up throughout the day as you make decisions or face problems. Because your levels of willpower are at their highest first thing, it makes mornings the ideal time to tackle anything that requires discipline and focus.

DREAM LIFE

Business woman Kal di Paola, CEO and founder of BuyMyWardrobe (buymywardrobe.com) would surely agree. Before the birth of her son three years ago and the launch of her business, she preferred working at night ‘while the world slept’. These days, she still does lots of writing and business planning in the evenings ‘because it’s the time I feel most creative (some habits die hard)’. But she now wakes at 6am, using the first hour to go over the previous night’s work when her mind is at its freshest. ‘Plus, there are no distractions, so I get more done in that hour than I would in three hours at the office.’ After an hour of quality time with her son, she drops him at nursery and reaches the office at 8.45am; or

her husband does the nursery run and she fits in a 45-minute run. ‘Committing to a routine means I get things done and have the focus I need in order to achieve the goals I set myself. I can’t imagine a life waking up later now,’ she says.

I.A.M. WORTH IT

Janey Holliday knows the benefits of productive mornings better than most. The personal trainer, wellbeing and motivational coach, and single mother to four-year-old twins, runs two businesses: outdoor bootcamp company Fit For A Princess (fitforaprincess.co.uk) and the international online coaching hub for women, Making Things Easy (makingthingseasy.com). She rises at 4am and works until 6.30 when her twins wake up, gets them ready, then

Your willpower is strongest first thing in the morning

heads off for her own workout once the nanny has arrived.

‘Regardless of the fact I’m an early bird, what I’ve found through my work is that once people get into

the habit of getting up early, it completely changes their lives,’ she says. ‘The only thing you miss out on when you rise early is sleep, but you can always gain that back later. And it’s worth noting that sleep experts say an hour of sleep before midnight is worth the equivalent of two hours after midnight. So the more sleep you

MAKE MORE OF YOUR MORNINGS!

These tips from Laura Vanderkam will make your early hours the best of the day

TRACK YOUR TIME

‘To spend your time better, you need to know how you’re spending it now. Track your week in detail, because the solution to morning dilemmas often lies in other times of the day. Ask yourself: “what absolutely has to happen in the morning and what doesn’t?” You might think many things are necessary, but understand that many of them are choices and not something you “have” to do.’

PICTURE THE PERFECT MORNING

‘Once you know how you’re spending your time, assign your priorities. Ask yourself what a great morning would look like for you. It might include a work out, a morning run, having sex as the sun rises or a hearty homemade family breakfast. Or it could be the time when you formulate and plan your personal, defining project. Dream big.’

THINK THROUGH THE LOGISTICS

‘Ask how this vision can mesh with the life you have. Map out a morning schedule and establish how much time you’d need to make it work. What time would you have to get up and (most importantly) go to bed to get enough sleep? Do you need to trade off child-care duties with your partner? Come up with a plan and assemble what you need, but whatever you do, don’t label this vision as impossible. Explore all your options.’

THINK THROUGH THE LOGISTICS

‘Turning a desire into a reality requires lots of willpower and takes time. So start slowly. Choose one new habit at a time to introduce, and put all your energy into making that activity a habit before trying something else. Chart your progress. Habits take several weeks to establish, so track how you’re doing for at least a month. Choose things you actually enjoy doing, so you want to get out of bed.’

get in before midnight, the more refreshed you'll feel when you wake.'

Getting things done early on also means once you've finished work, you can do what you want and enjoy more relaxed evenings. Still, if the thought of waking at 5am or 6am still fills you with dread, Holliday says fear not; with time and training, anyone can get to bed earlier and change their sleep patterns over time.

DON'T SNOOZE

Holliday suggests having three alarm clocks set to go off within a few minutes of each other, with the final one on the other side of your bedroom to get you moving about. (And this is stipulated in all her trainers' contracts!) 'Snoozing is the worst thing you can do, because you go into a deep sleep state that makes it even harder to get up,' she explains. 'Set different songs to play that you find inspiring or motivating. Also, make a mini vision board and keep it by your bed. Make it really personal to you, filling it with statements or images that relate to the goals you want to achieve – visual tools can really help to remind you why you're getting up early and stop you going back to bed.'

WEEKEND MAGIC

Holliday also suggests you gradually go to bed and get up five to 10 minutes earlier over time. This will help you to reset your body clock gradually, rather than shocking your body into early starts. She also suggests going to bed an hour or two earlier at the weekend if you're tired, rather than sleeping in late. Research from the University of Texas says that, contrary to popular belief, sleeping in doesn't help you catch up on lost sleep from the week, but rather plays havoc with your body clock, making you feel sleepier come Monday morning.

'It's all about your priorities,' says Holliday. 'To effect change, you have to change your behaviour. You can't change your lifestyle, have more energy, fit in more exercise and do better at your work without making the most of the hours of your day. Mornings can become the most magical part of your day, but you have to train yourself to be able to enjoy them.' ■

'My morning regime'

These early risers all revel in their super-productive early starts. So why not design your own daybreak dream activity? Just think how much you'll achieve



FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA, 49, rises at 4.30am to work out. 'If I had to get up to 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 to do that. But when it comes to yourself, then it's suddenly, 'Oh, I can't get up at 4.30am.' So I had to change that. If I don't exercise, I won't feel good,' she says.



ACTRESS RACHEL MCADAMS, 34, rises early every morning to practise yoga, even when she's on a film set. 'It clears your head and opens up your imagination,' she says. 4.30am starts are not unusual.



DESSI BELL, 28, founder of activewear brand, Zaggora, swears by her early mornings. 'I rise at 6am and do 30 minutes of meditation, then have my morning shake – a mix of fruit, protein, fibre and super greens – followed by an hour's yoga. Having the extra time makes all the difference.'



As a former president of Starbucks, **MICHELLE GASS, 43,** relies on more than just coffee to keep her buzzing. She wakes at 4.30am to go running every morning, believing it boosts her happiness and business success. 'When I'm at my best, it's because I'm taking care of myself,' she says.



High-profile personal trainer, **STUART AMORY, 39,** is up at 4.45am every morning for 6am sessions with clients who've included Emily Blunt and Zoe Salmon. 'It's the best time – you beat the traffic, get to train in empty, beautiful parks, and you can get in a few hours' work before most people have started,' he says.

