



DAILYGOOD

News that Inspires

10 Benefits of Rising Early, and How to Do It

by Leo Babauta

□

□□

□□□ "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise" - Ben Franklin, famously

□

□

□□

□□□ "Put no trust in the benefits to accrue from early rising, as set forth by the infatuated Franklin ..." - Mark Twain

□

□

□□ Recently, reader Rob asked me about my habit of waking at 4:30 a.m. each day, and asked me to write about the health benefits of rising early, which I thought was an excellent question. Unfortunately, there are none, that I know of.

□

□□ However, there are a ton of other great benefits.

□

□□ Now, let me first say that if you are a night owl, and that works for you, I think that's great. There's no reason to change, especially if you're happy with it. But for me, switching from being a night owl to an early riser (and yes, it is possible) has been a godsend. It has helped me in so many ways that I'd never go back. Here are just a few:

□

□□ 1. Greet the day. I love being able to get up, and greet a wonderful new day. I suggest creating a morning ritual that includes saying thanks for your blessings. I'm inspired by the Dalai Lama, who said, " Everyday, think as you wake up, 'today I am fortunate to have woken up, I am alive, I have a precious human life, I am not going to waste it. I am going to use all my energies to develop myself, to expand my heart out to others, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, I am going to have kind thoughts towards others, I am not going to get angry or think badly about others, I am going to benefit others as much as I can.'

□

□□ 2. Amazing start. I used to start my day by jumping out of bed, late as usual, and rushing to get myself and the kids ready, and rushing to drop them to school and come in to work late. I would walk into work, looking rumpled and barely awake, grumpy and behind everyone else. Not a great start to your day. Now, I have a renewing morning ritual, I've gotten so much done before 8 a.m., my kids are early and so am I, and by the time everyone else gets in to work, I've already gotten a head start. There is no better way to start off your day than to wake early, in my experience.

□

□□ 3. Quietude. No kids yelling, no babies crying, no soccer balls, no cars, no television noise.

The early morning hours are so peaceful, so quiet. It's my favorite time of day. I truly enjoy that time of peace, that time to myself, when I can think, when I can read, when I can breathe.

□

□□4. Sunrise. People who wake late miss one of the greatest feats of nature, repeated in full stereovision each and every day — the rise of the sun. I love how the day slowly gets brighter, when the midnight blue turns to lighter blue, when the brilliant colors start to seep into the sky, when nature is painted in incredible colors. I like doing my early morning run during this time, and I look up at the sky as I run and say to the world, "What a glorious day!" Really. I really do that. Corny, I know.

□

□□5. Breakfast. Rise early and you actually have time for breakfast. I'm told it's one of the most important meals of the day. Without breakfast, your body is running on fumes until you are so hungry at lunchtime that you eat whatever unhealthy thing you can find. The fattier and sugarier, the better. But eat breakfast, and you are sated until later. Plus, eating breakfast while reading my book and drinking my coffee in the quiet of the morning is eminently more enjoyable than scarfing something down on the way to work, or at your desk.

□

□□6. Exercise. There are other times to exercise besides the early morning, of course, but I've found that while exercising right after work is also very enjoyable, it's also liable to be canceled because of other things that come up. Morning exercise is virtually never canceled.

□

□□7. Productivity. Mornings, for me at least, are the most productive time of day. I like to do some writing in the morning, when there are no distractions, before I check my email or blog stats. I get so much more done by starting on my work in the morning. Then, when evening rolls around, I have no work that I need to do, and I can spend it with family.

□

□□8. Goal time. Got goals? Well, you should. And there's no better time to review them and plan for them and do your goal tasks than first thing. You should have one goal that you want to accomplish this week. And every morning, you should decide what one thing you can do today to move yourself further towards that goal. And then, if possible, do that first thing in the morning.

□

□□9. Commute. No one likes rush-hour traffic, except for Big Oil. Commute early, and the traffic is much lighter, and you get to work faster, and thus save yourself more time. Or better yet, commute by bike. (Or even better yet, work from home.)

□

□□10. Appointments. It's much easier to make those early appointments on time if you get up early. Showing up late for those appointments is a bad signal to the person you're meeting. Showing up early will impress them. Plus, you get time to prepare.

□

□□How to Become an Early Riser

□

□□* Don't make drastic changes. Start slowly, by waking just 15-30 minutes earlier than usual. Get used to this for a few days. Then cut back another 15 minutes. Do this gradually until you get to your goal time.

□

□□* Allow yourself to sleep earlier. You might be used to staying up late, perhaps watching TV or surfing the Internet. But if you continue this habit, while trying to get up earlier, sooner or later one is going to give. And if it is the early rising that gives, then you will crash and sleep late and have to start over. I suggest going to bed earlier, even if you

don't think you'll sleep, and read while in bed. If you're really tired, you just might fall asleep much sooner than you think.

□

□□* Put your alarm clock far from your bed. If it's right next to your bed, you'll shut it off or hit snooze. Never hit snooze. If it's far from your bed, you have to get up out of bed to shut it off. By then, you're up. Now you just have to stay up.

□

□□* Go out of the bedroom as soon as you shut off the alarm. Don't allow yourself to rationalize going back to bed. Just force yourself to go out of the room. My habit is to stumble into the bathroom and go pee. By the time I've done that, and flushed the toilet and washed my hands and looked at my ugly mug in the mirror, I'm awake enough to face the day.

□

□□* Do not rationalize. If you allow your brain to talk you out of getting up early, you'll never do it. Don't make getting back in bed an option.

□

□□* Have a good reason. Set something to do early in the morning that's important. This reason will motivate you to get up. I like to write in the morning, so that's my reason. Also, when I'm done with that, I like to read all of your comments!

□

□□* Make waking up early a reward. Yes, it might seem at first that you're forcing yourself to do something hard, but if you make it pleasurable, soon you will look forward to waking up early. A good reward is to make a hot cup of coffee or tea and read a book. Other rewards might be a tasty treat for breakfast (smoothies! yum!) or watching the sunrise, or meditating. Find something that's pleasurable for you, and allow yourself to do it as part of your morning routine.

□

□□* Take advantage of all that extra time. Don't wake up an hour or two early just to read your blogs, unless that's a major goal of yours. Don't wake up early and waste that extra time. Get a jump start on your day! I like to use that time to get a head start on preparing my kids' lunches, on planning for the rest of the day (when I set my MITs), on exercising or meditating, and on reading. By the time 6:30 rolls around, I've done more than many people do the entire day.

□

□□