How to Get Motivated in the Morning (According to Experts)

By The Editors
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Do you find it hard to feel motivated in the morning? Don't worry; you're not alone.

Many people struggle to start their day right and be energized or inspired. Fortunately, there are strategies to help jumpstart your day and get yourself moving, no matter how you feel.

According to experts, here are ways to get motivated in the morning.

Change your sleep habits; get at least seven hours of relatively uninterrupted sleep

The first thing to think about is that the lack of motivation could be due to *poor* sleep. Many of us simply do *not* get enough sleep. We could be:

- going to bed too late

- having light in the bedroom at night

- or problems such as sleep apnea

There are remedies for each of these problems. If you are not getting at least seven hours of relatively uninterrupted sleep at night, try to *change* your sleep habits.

If your partner notices that you snore a great deal, have a sleep laboratory evaluation for possible sleep apnea (episodes of breathlessness that partially awakens you due to excessive relaxation of your soft palate blocking your inhalation of air during deep sleep).

Anxiety is certainly a possibility. If your first thoughts of the day are primarily about problems that seem *insurmountable* or *self-deprecating* thoughts, you may be suffering from some level of anxiety or depression. There are suitable treatments available—both various psychotherapies and medications.

Lack of focus can leave you feeling assailed by more problems than you can handle, leading to despair rather than productivity. Techniques such as *self-hypnosis* are available on a downloadable app I developed to help you find your focus.

The technique involves learning to *dissociate* your physical arousal from mental tension and then narrow your attention to one problem at a time, helping you to picture one or more solutions and then carry them out.

Finding your *focus* is a great tension-buster and can energize the start of your day.

Balance your emotional and cognitive brain components

As a psychiatrist, I can assure you that *good* mental health means *mastering* the interaction between our emotional and cognitive brain components.

Emotions emerge from deep in the limbic system and include:

- excitement,

- attraction,

- fear,

- and anger.

They can motivate or interfere with the higher-level cognitive portions of the brain, primarily the prefrontal cortex.

Emotion can overwhelm thinking, and thinking can control emotion. We do best when we *balance* the interaction of the two—we feel drawn to a task as an opportunity to accomplish something and then apply cognitive skills to plan how to do it.

Motivation is enhanced by focusing on what you are for, *not* what you are against. This leads to a plan with the promise of *accomplishment* rather than focusing on a [fear of failure](#).

Use your waking moments as an opportunity to reflect and plan

When you can *formulate* the steps that could lead to accomplishing something worthwhile, you will feel *better* prepared for a productive and happy day.

Physical exercise is an excellent way to arouse your body to full wakefulness and be sure that you have a period of activity in your day. This is *good* for both physical and mental health.

So if you can start your day with a run, walk, bike ride, or swim, do it. And give your body the nutrition it needs after a long period without nourishment. **Don't skip breakfast; instead, enjoy it.**

Develop and optimize your morning routine

Sometimes it can be hard to get yourself out of bed in the morning. Everyone has bad mornings. But with exercise, meditation, and other tools, you can turn every morning into your *best* morning yet.

There are many reasons why you might not feel like going to work, from personal dramas to unwanted guilt and so on. Before you even begin your day, you need to get motivated.

No matter what you're doing throughout the day, you should be *excited* to start your to-do list. However, it sounds a lot easier than it actually is. **The key to motivation is to look at it as a skill that can be learned.**

The first step to morning motivation is to develop a routine. A routine that will help you get started in the morning, whether it's a morning wake-up call or a cup of coffee, nothing gets the body and mind moving like starting your day with a *positive* attitude.

Optimizing your morning routine will set the tone for the rest of your day. You'll get *more* done and be more excited to start another day.

Planning and preparation are always your best bet when it comes to success and maintaining consistency. **The most important thing to remember as you get your day started is that you need to prioritize.**

The beginning of your day sets the tone for everything else. Jump-start your productivity with an action item in your to-do list or task app. For example, getting up at the start of your *peak* energy level will make you feel great.

It's easy to do a workout first thing or even take a walk around the block. You can also try to get your mind going with a motivational podcast or audiobook on your commute.

Consistent sleep is key to achieving peak performance

Starting your day on a positive note can be the difference between a productive day and one that feels tiresome. However, your days need to start with a good night's sleep. Eventually, you will have *enough* rest to get up each day *without* dreading the prospect of waking up and starting the day.

Nothing can be more effective for your productivity, mental health, or physical well-being than a good night's sleep.

Something else to note is that **waking up at the same time every day teaches your body to fall asleep naturally and consistently.** *Consistent* sleep is key to achieving *peak* performance.

And lastly, drinking water in the morning helps you feel:

- more alert,

- rehydrates your body,

- and kick-starts your metabolism,

all of which are *essential* for starting a healthy day.

I have never been a morning person. I always found it difficult to wake up feeling refreshed and motivated enough to do anything in the mornings. Completing minor tasks was even a struggle.

I admit, there was a time when I was providing advice to my clients and staff about how to get motivated in the mornings without actually listening to my own advice.

After constantly feeling unmotivated and exhausted, I realized I needed to make a change for myself. A few years ago, I took on a rescue pup, and now my mornings start before the sun comes up at 5 a.m.

Of course, it took some time to acclimate to earlier mornings and thus earlier bedtimes. But I was able to do this *effectively* with three main actions that mimic the change I encourage from my clients.

Establish a routine at night as well as in the morning

Sleep is essential. However, we probably all *struggle* to get enough rest each night. It is essential to establish a routine at night as well as in the morning to get a *full* eight hours of sleep,

I try to go to bed every night at the *same* time, regardless if I have to work the next day or not.

Limiting distractions can be helpful when trying to fall into a deep sleep. For my nightly routine, I limit evening TV and screen time. In addition, I turn off all electronics and leave them *outside* my bedroom.

Instead of using electronics, I often read or journal before it is time to sleep.

I also *complete* any needed tasks before bedtime, so my mind is *not* preoccupied with any distractions.

Lastly, I like to end my day by thinking about **three positive things** before sleep:

1. What I have done for someone

2. What someone has done for me

3. What I have done for myself

This gratitude list helps me prepare for *positive* sleep thoughts.

Develop a schedule encompassing all your morning responsibilities

I created a morning routine that includes time to *complete* tasks and *enjoy* some personal time. But this *didn't* happen overnight. It took some trial and error to develop a schedule encompassing all of my morning responsibilities.

For me, knowing I have enough time for everything that I need and want to do before I leave for work has been very *helpful*. I set my alarm to wake up at the same time each day, *regardless* if I am working or not.

I make it a point to do the same tasks daily, such as:
- feeding my dogs,
- making my bed,
- and washing any dishes.

Although these might be minor tasks, knowing I have accomplished something right at the start of the day is a great feeling.

I ensure I also **include some self-care or "*me*" time.** This might look like having a cup of coffee on my terrace or practicing a short meditation.

Completing small tasks and setting aside time for self-care in the morning makes me feel:
- motivated,
- worthy,
- and ready to tackle the day.

Set small and short-term goals

Every day I try to identify one very small goal that I may be able to accomplish that day. Whether performing an act of kindness for a client at work or something more personal, setting goals keeps me looking *ahead* toward the future.

As mentioned before, sometimes a goal can be something as *simple* as washing dishes or cleaning out a junk drawer. Having a purpose and meaning, especially in the morning, motivates me to get up and do what needs to be accomplished.

Exercise early in the morning and balance all other responsibilities

I haven't always been a morning exerciser but was sort of forced to become one to ensure that I can exercise every day and *balance* all of my other responsibilities.

I also know myself well enough to know that, despite my best intentions, I just won't go to the gym in the evening (or anytime after 10 am). Once my work day starts, I *rarely* make time to get to the gym.

To make sure I get to the gym each morning, these are a few things I do:

Lay out my clothes the night before

A quick Google search tells me it was Benjamin Franklin who essentially said, **"failing to prepare is preparing to fail."**

One of the reasons I have become *committed* to working out in the very early morning is that I know very *few* things can pop up unexpectedly that would prevent me from working out.

There are some days when I am getting ready in the morning that just about any excuse would prevent me from actually going to the gym. Having to comb through my drawers to find the right clothes is definitely one of those things that could *quickly* become an excuse when one more hour of sleep sounds so enticing.

So, in my efforts to prepare and avoid *"failure,"* I remove the searching for clothes as an excuse. I lay out my gym clothes and shoes in the bathroom before I go to bed, so I have one less reason to skip my workout. At 4 am, anything helps!

Get out of bed as soon as the alarm goes off

I will admit this was a tough one but also a significant one. When you are setting your alarm for the morning, try creating a *when-then* statement for yourself.

Something as simple as **"when my alarm goes off in the morning, I will get out of bed right away"** will do the trick. It may even help to choose an alarm tone different from any other one you already use.

Why does this help? It's pretty simple, actually. These statements are called *"implementation intentions."* Implementation intentions help us turn our motivation into *specific* action.

Researchers have shown time and again that having a specific plan will greatly *increase* the chances that you will actually *do* the planned behavior.

Making a small change from "*I will wake up early to exercise*" to **"*I will wake up as soon as my alarm goes off*"** means your exercise is much *more* likely to happen.

Use my social connections to build in some accountability

When I first started working out at 5 am, I knew one woman (vaguely) from work. After a month or so, I knew most of the people who came in at 5 am.

When we moved two years later? I cried on my last day at the gym because it felt like I was leaving my family behind. These connections took time to develop, so don't expect to show up on the first day and already have a social network, but take steps to get to know the people there.

There were so many days when I would wake up and think, "*maybe I'll skip today.*" This thought was almost always followed by something like "*but if I don't go, I'll miss Ashley's birthday*" or "*I won't see Heidi for another few weeks if I'm not there today.*"

Whether they knew it or not, my social connections were often my last line of defense on days when I just didn't want to go to the gym. **Having a social support system that encourages exercise has been found to *increase* exercise behavior** in adults, regardless of race, sex, or work status.

Maybe you don't feel comfortable introducing yourself to everyone on your first day at the gym, but perhaps decide to say hello to someone who has been there almost every time you've been after a week or so.

Even if these relationships don't develop into close friendships, you'll be surprised at how *helpful* they are at getting you to the gym on the days you don't want to go.

I have found that after months of getting out of bed early, I *no* longer rely so heavily on these things, but they are so *ingrained* into my routine that I still do them—and they

certainly *don't* hurt my chances of being motivated in the morning. And I think it bears repeating that at 4 am; anything helps!

Identify dysfunctional thoughts and shift your attention to reasonable alternatives

Although it seems that our feelings and motivations result *directly* from the events and circumstances we encounter in life, they are instead reactions to our *self-talk*.

It's the internal monologue that streams *endlessly* through our waking consciousness, interpreting our every experience and creating our *perspective* on both ourselves and the world around us.

The thoughts that spontaneously "*pop*" into our self-talk—our *automatic thoughts*—are determined by our *early* life programming—a complex interaction between biology and experience, neither of which was under our control as children.

As a result, our automatic thoughts are often *dysfunctional*—causing distress without inspiring constructive action. And when dysfunctional thoughts are allowed to occupy the focus of our attention, they:

- *infus*e our self-talk,
- trigger a *negative* emotional reaction,
- inhibit our self-assertion,
- and disrupt our peace of mind.

To set ourselves up for the most productive possible day, the best available strategy is to *identify* dysfunctional thoughts and respond by collecting and shifting our attention to *balanced* and *reasonable* (*functional*) alternatives more likely to inspire hope and motivate self-assertion.

This is the 4-step focused positivity strategy:
1. **Becoming *mindful* of our thoughts** by recording and examining the ideas that occupy our minds when we are distressed or inhibited,
2. **Identifying the *dysfunctional* thoughts** that have become the focus of our attention,
3. **Collecting more reasonable, balanced, and functional alternatives** that reassure, inspire hope, or motivate self-assertion, and
4. **Systematically refocusing our attention** away from the dysfunctional thoughts and toward the functional alternatives.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is one of the psychological treatment approaches that can be considered *"evidence-based."* CBT works because it is one of the most efficient methods of challenging our dysfunctional thoughts, and the most efficient form of CBT is focused positivity strategy.

Our best way to address a negative feeling or improve our motivation is to employ the closest thing we have to a **"superpower,"** *our* ability at any moment to *shift* the focus of our attention to a more *functional* thought.

When we hope to get motivated in the morning, therefore, **we are likely to benefit from reviewing functional ideas such as:**

- *"This new day provides me with another opportunity to learn, grow, and pursue greater well-being with respect to my health, relationships, spiritual/philosophical balance, work, and creative self-expression."*
- *"By acknowledging my gratitude for **[list all the reasons you can feel grateful]**, I have a good chance of brightening my mood and optimism for the entire day."*
- *"Everything I need to thrive is within me or my reach."*
- *"There are no failures, only discoveries."*
- *"I may not be able to control what comes my way, but I can do my best to respond constructively."*
- *"There's a limit to what any person can do in one day, and whatever I manage to accomplish today will be enough."*
- *"I can at least be wise enough to find the time for those things I know will be good for my state of mind tonight*
- *(e.g., exercise, playing with kids, buying or making something for my mom, community service, etc.)."*
- *"By challenging the dysfunctional thoughts that underlie my negative emotions with balanced and reasonable (functional) alternatives, I can improve my mood and motivation."*
- *"Given my inherited biology and life experience, everything I feel and do is perfectly understandable."*
- *"Like all humans, I have hidden strengths, untapped potential, and the ability to grow in profound ways."*

Practice gratitude; begin and end each day with three things you're grateful for

Here is what I hear over and over from my patients: "*I'm having trouble managing my work/home life, managing my daily to-dos. Because of this, I can't sleep/can't maintain my energy/can't show up fully at work or for my family/can't ____ (fill in the blank).*"

This is why I offer personalized one-on-one coaching for my clients, to help them re-establish *balance* in their lives, which brings me to the point of getting motivated in the morning.

As a career-driven woman and former competitive athlete, I inherently *overload* my plate. When I do this, it *drains* me of my motivation and energy, *decreasing* my productivity.

But now I know how to manage that and get myself back on track. This is how people get sick and become discontented with their quality of life.

Research shows that our minds are often more *creative* in the morning hours. Our morning hours are crucial because they set the tone for our entire day.

I use **two techniques** to motivate myself in the morning:

Gratitude. As a woman, I particularly understand the importance of embodiment and that we hold our energy (good or bad) in our female organs—primarily our ovaries.

So each morning, when I wake, **I place one hand over my heart and one hand over my ovarian area (lower abdomen) as I say five things for which I'm grateful.** This physically connects the energy between the gratitude in my heart and the energy I hold in these organs.

Why is this important? Because gratitude is *felt* in our heart but experienced in *all* parts of our body. This is an important and useful technique to practice gratitude and *release* bodily tension.

Gratitude produces positivity, which releases hormones that improve our mood, drive, and motivation. This sets the stage for a productive day.

Also, when we express gratitude:
- we treat others better,
- have a more positive outlook on life,
- and attract more abundance and success into our lives.

Another technique is to **begin and end each day with three things you're grateful for** (best to write them down).

"*Morning pages*" is a technique that increases motivation because it allows an *offload* before ever leaving the house in the morning. It is the idea that you take the *first 15 minutes* of your day in the morning just to write. Good or bad, write down anything that comes to mind.

This exercise aims to *offload* everything on paper that could get in the way of our productivity and intrinsic motivation for the day. **When we get in our own heads, it affects our mindset, our productivity, and our health.**