

How to Become an Early Riser



Mind Over Mattress

By Robyn Sabes

Do you usually start your day by jumping out of bed, late as usual, and rushing to get to wherever you're going? If you walk into work looking ruffled and barely awake, or your nerves are shot by the time you sit at your desk, then it's time to ditch this bad habit.

We keep our bad habits because they serve some purpose in our life. Is this habit *really* serving you well?

We are selfish creatures by nature. We usually take action only when we can clearly see how we will benefit from doing so. Find a strong benefit for getting up early, and you'll be changing your routine in no time at all.

Benefits for Getting Up Early

- ✓ **Greet the day.** You have time to enjoy a morning ritual.
- ✓ **Quietude.** No kids yelling, no babies crying, no soccer balls, no cars, no television noise. The early morning hours are so peaceful, so quiet. Morning is a great time to think, read, and breathe!
- ✓ **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. Notice

how the day slowly gets brighter, the midnight blue turns to lighter blue, the brilliant colors start to seep into the sky, and nature paints incredible colors.

✓ **Breakfast.** Rise early and you actually have time for breakfast. Without breakfast, your body is running on fumes until you are so hungry at lunchtime that you eat whatever unhealthy thing you can find. Plus, eating breakfast while reading a book in the quiet of the morning is eminently more enjoyable than scarfing something down on the way to work or at your desk.

✓ **Exercise.** There are other times to exercise besides the early morning, of course, but morning exercise is virtually never canceled or interrupted by others.

✓ **Productivity.** Mornings are statistically the most productive time of day because there are less distractions. If you get all your work done early, then you can spend your evenings as you wish.

✓ **Goal time.** Got goals? There's no better time to review them and plan for tasks. You're clear headed and better able to plan. Every morning, you can decide what one thing you can do *today*

to move yourself further towards that goal – and actually have the time to do it!

✓ **Easier commute.** No one likes rush-hour traffic. Commute early, and the traffic is much lighter, and you get to work faster, thus saving even more time.

✓ **Appointments.** It's much easier to make those early appointments on time if you get up early. Showing up early will impress them. Plus, you get time to prepare.

✓ **Build self-esteem.** Every night you decide to get up early, and you do it, you make a little deposit in the self-esteem bank. Do it for 7 days consecutively and you'll be a happier; do it for 30 days successively and you'll be able to call yourself a morning person; because you will be. And, if you can change that, you can do and change anything.

Strategies to Become an Early Riser

✓ **Set the alarm at a regular time each day.** The body is a creature of habit, if we develop the routine of getting up at a certain time, then it becomes easier and more natural to wake up at our target time.

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

✓ **Go to sleep when you're tired.** 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 you'll crash and sleep late. Go to bed a little earlier and read while in bed. But most importantly, go to bed when you're tired. Trust your body. It will tell you when it needs sleep.

✓ **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.

✓ **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. 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 emails, 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!

✓ **Avoid evening caffeine/alcohol/sugar.** All these things can potentially affect your quality of sleep and make it incredibly hard to wake when your alarm goes off.

✓ **Visualize.** Just before falling asleep, visualize yourself waking at a particular time. It's amazing how effectively this works.

✓ **Chart yourself.** Stick a month calendar on the mirror in the bathroom or the fridge and note down your progress. To change, you have to measure; to improve, you have to keep a log.

✓ **Warrior mentality.** Adopt a warrior mentality. You are at war with your habit. And you'll win. On days you do win, reward yourself a little. On the days you slip up, don't be too harsh on yourself; remind yourself that it's a war and you'll do better tomorrow.

What to Expect

Expect a few rough days. Your body will need three/four days to catch up with the new sleep cycle system. The longer you keep the method, the easier it will get. You'll get a strong urge to "catch-up" with sleep over the weekend. Don't do it! Keep the same system for all days. Take weekend naps, but only after you've been up for 3 hours.

Tips and Tricks

✓ **Bedroom is for sleeping only.** Unless you live in a one-room/studio, use the bedroom only for sleeping. Make your bed in the morning and don't disturb it till you are going for a nap or sleep.

✓ **Control the internal conversation.** The alarm/radio starts playing and a


conversation starts in your head: "It's so nice and warm in here," "I stayed up very late," "Just a few minutes more," "After this song," "One more snooze length," etc. This internal conversation only happens when you are still in bed. It stops after you get up. So the night before, tell yourself you'll stop this conversation when it begins and get up.

✓ **Use CD/iPod music to get up.** Choose your own classical, instrumental music to wake up; the morning DJ and the commercials are unhealthy intrusions in the morning.

✓ **Pre-alarm.** Set a radio alarm in another room. This will act as your pre-alarm. When your alarm goes off, get up.

✓ **Set a reward.** Set a goal and a small reward. Seven days of waking up on time and you can buy yourself a treat.

✓ **Slow wakeup.** If you can afford it, get a slow sunrise lamp or similar device.

As good as it feels to be warm and snuggly under that blanket, you know you'll be more productive, and in turn, much happier if you were getting an extra hour (or two!) each day. Getting up early in the morning may be difficult at first, however if we persevere we will really appreciate the extra time it creates and the other benefits. See you at sunrise! 

About the Author

Robyn Sabes is a research writer and staff writer for Going Bonkers. Copyright Going Bonkers Magazine. All rights reserved.


BONKERISM

Mile by mile, life's a trial.
Yard by yard, it's not so hard.
Inch by inch, it's a cinch.