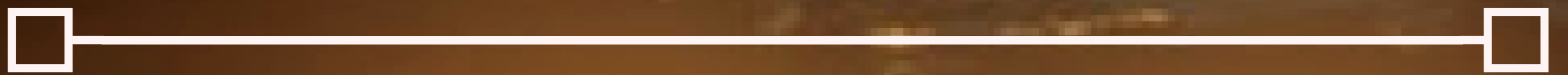


# PEAK-STATE CHECKLIST



BENJAMIN HARDY

# Morning Routine Checklist

Most people are in SURVIVAL MODE: which means they are living their lives reactively. They wake up and immediately check their smart phone. They also feel RUSHED and BUSY immediately upon waking up. Their whole day, and really their whole life reflects how they wake up. Consequently, their health and relationships extremely suffer. Moreover, their overall happiness and well-being are lacking, as they are not living according to their highest values and goals.

The purpose of the **MORNING ROUTINE** is to **GET YOU OUT OF SURVIVAL MODE**. You do that by giving yourself space in the morning to orient yourself with the person you intend to be. You also orient yourself toward your highest goals and priorities. If you have a consistent morning routine, your life will be very different in 3-6 months. No longer will you be RUSHED and REACTIVE. Rather, you'll be living with **INTENTION and PURPOSE**.

# Checklist Items

- Spend 5 minutes before you go to bed mapping your top 1-3 priorities for the next day
  
- Spend 10 minutes before bed thinking about your #1 goal or #1 problem you're trying to solve. This will prime your subconscious while you sleep. As Thomas Edison has said, *"Never go to sleep without a request to your subconscious."*
  
- Go to bed 7 hours before you intend to wake up
  
- Don't look at any electronic screens 30-60 minutes before going to bed
  
- Don't check email/social media within 60 minutes of going to bed (this is unplugged time to be present with family and to rest/recover from day)
  
- Have an alarm set across your room so you have to get out of bed to quiet the alarm
  
- Spend 2-10 minutes in prayer/meditation
  - a. Focus on gratitude, your goals, and where you are most needed today.

- i. This will set your day's trajectory on the things that really matter
- ii. It will also provide you with an abundance mindset where you expect good things to happen for you.

Pull out your journal and write by hand anything that comes to your mind related to your #1 goal or #1 problem you're trying to solve. This will arouse your subconscious breakthroughs you had while you were asleep. As Napoleon Hill has said, *"Your subconscious mind works continuously, while you are awake, and while you sleep."*

During your journal session, write your big picture vision/goals down in bullet point form and in present-tense (e.g., I'm a best-selling author, I'm making over \$250,000/year, I'm fully connected and present with my wife and kids, etc.).

Spend 15-45 minutes in intensive physical fitness

Consume 30 grams of protein (plant-based protein powder in water is great)

Spend 15-60 minutes in focused activity on a big picture goal or passion project (one of those things you've been procrastinating but want to do)

Take a cold shower. If this shower is immediately following physical fitness, just start with cold. If it is not, start warm and wash your body, then completely switch the temperature too cold for the last 30-60 seconds of shower. During shower, breathe heavily in and out through your mouth. This breathing technique comes from "Iceman" Wim Hof, who holds 7 world records for withstanding extreme cold has a simple method to withstand cold: breathe deeply yet relaxed for 30 seconds,

until you can feel what Hof calls the inner fire - A sense of euphoria that extends from cranium to toes.

- ❑ Don't check email or social media for at least 60 minutes after waking up
  
- ❑ After you've spent a few minutes purposefully preparing yourself for HOW YOU INTEND TO BE that day, lovingly interact with your loved ones.
  - If you live alone, send a few kind texts to important people in your life

❑ Listen to or read uplifting content (you can do this while you exercise if that's convenient). This will get you motivated and energized to tackle the day. A few recommendations:

*Letting Go* by David Hawkins

*Braving the Wilderness* by Brene Brown

*Essentialism* by Greg McKeown

*Daily Stoic* by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman

*As a Man Thinketh* by James Allen

*The Power of Starting Something Stupid* by Richie Norton

*The Power of Intention* by Wayne Dyer

- ❑ If you have kids, play with them for as much time as you can. Be sure to take a few minutes before interacting with them to orient yourself. Don't reactively wake up and then go be with them. You won't be on your A-Game.
  
- ❑ If you have creative endeavors, spend 60-90 minutes in focused activity on a big project. Research has found that your willpower is highest when your first wake up,

and your brain is most attuned to creativity. Thus, if you make the time, the morning may be the time when you produce your best and most important work, as is the case for me! If you're doing creative "Deep Work" immediately upon waking up, try listening to instrumental/ambient songs on repeat. In her book, *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind*, psychologist Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis explains why listening to music on repeat improves focus. When you're listening to a song on repeat, you tend to dissolve into the song, which blocks out mind wandering (let your mind wander while you're away from work!).

## How This Checklist Works:

Obviously, you don't need to do all of these things. Think of this list as a buffet from which you can select the one's that work for you. Note: there are likely several things you may try that aren't on this list. Also, your morning routine will likely change over time depending on the various seasons of your life. For example, sometimes I'm highly focused on writing and thus my morning routine is directed toward focused work. In other seasons, I spend more time in the mornings with my kids, or running.

No matter which season of life I'm in, a few things remain constant:

- Prayer/meditation
- Journal writing
- Cold showers

If you only have a few minutes, try one or more of the following (if you have more time, experiment with different combinations of the above list):

- The cold shower/breathing exercise (3-5 minutes max)
- Prayer/meditation to orient yourself toward your highest intentions and gratitude (2-10 minutes max)

- Journal thought-dump and writing vision (10 minutes max)
- 5-15 minutes of intensive physical activity (e.g., burpees, air squats, push-ups, lunges, planks)



## Tips for Getting into A Peak State

I'm going to detail the nuts and bolts of specifically how I use my journal, on a daily basis, to achieve any goal I set.

To be clear: although journaling is something I believe should be done on a daily basis, there are particular **times and places** in which it is most effective.

1. When you're out of your regular routine (whether away for a weekend, having a "disconnected" day, or on vacation)
2. During your morning routine immediately upon waking up

Your journal is not only where you record your insights and inspiration, but it's where those insights become solidified and real. Your journal is where you begin *thinking* deeply about your insights and ideas, and where you strategize and plan the execution of those insights and ideas.

Your journal is the context for making your ideas into something much, much more tangible. You use your journal **for**:

1. Crystallizing and clarifying your ideas and insights
2. Affirming to yourself that you can make your ideas and goals real
3. Making strategic plans for making your ideas and goals real

4. Gratefully acknowledging the outside factors playing a role

### **You Need Some Space to Reset and Recover**

In fitness, you push yourself to your limits during a workout and then allow adequate time for rest and recovery.

It is **during** the rest and recovery that you actually experience the benefits of your exercise. If you don't allow for adequate rest and recovery, then your workout efforts are wasted. Not only are they wasted, but your future workouts won't be as good, because you won't be rested or getting stronger. You'll plateau.

Herein lies the difference between calculated and systematic productivity and being busy. Most people are always plugged-in, always going, and thus are busy. hilariously, they think being busy *is* being productive. It's not.

Similarly, your body needs rest and reset cycles from digesting food. This occurs in the form of fasting. When you fast for 18+ hours from digesting food, your body is given the space for recovery. If you never give your body space to recover and reset, then you miss out on countless benefits.

The same is true of your mind. The best ideas and insights occur away from your work. They happen while you're relaxing, or often while you're thinking about something completely unrelated.

When it comes to having clarity about your life and goals, you need to give yourself a reset, regularly. The most successful people in the world purposefully carve out time in their *regular* schedules for unplugging, recharging, and resetting.

Take the famous example of Bill Gates, who took “Think Weeks” where he would completely remove himself from work and all forms of communication. All he would do is think, learn, and rest. And he admits that his best ideas for Microsoft came during those rest and recovery weeks.

You may not have a full week to rest and recover. Instead, you could begin to schedule in “disconnected days,” where you take a day off work and give yourself the full day to simply rest and recover. During that time, it would be helpful to leave your regular environment, and perhaps drive 30+ minutes away to get adequate space.

During these disconnected days, you could spend a good amount of time thinking, relaxing, learning, and then *writing in your journal*.

The reason you want to get out of your day-to-day routine and environment is so you can step out of the trees and see the forest. You need some fresh air. You need to breath and reset—just like fasting for your body—from the constant stress of going.

During these disconnected moments, it’s best to remain fully present and unplugged from your work and life. This is very hard for most people, as most people are addicted to their technology and work. Hence, psychological research is finding the importance for psychologically detaching from work on a daily basis. Only those who truly detach—mentally, emotionally, and physically—can re-attach when they start working again. In order to get absorbed and engaged in what you’re doing, you need to rest.

Rest is where you grow and recover, so that you’re empowered to get better and better at your work (or fitness) when you’re there.

So you want to get away. Completely outside of your busy life and allow some time to reset. A crucial component of this resetting is pulling out your journal and writing a lot.

But before even writing in your journal, you want to get your mind in the right place. That's why taking 30+ minutes to get out of your regular environment and preparing yourself mentally is key. While preparing yourself, you may read or listen to some inspiring content. You may do a workout. Or talk to a close friend or family member who always seems to put you in an amazing mood.

You want to put yourself into a peak-state before you start writing. Naturally, being out of your regular environment will trigger positive emotions, especially if you know you're going to spend the next few hours diving deep into learning, recovery, planning, and visualization.

Other specific strategies to enhance your journaling experience are meditation and prayer. There is a great deal of confusion regarding what meditation is and what it's for. The mainstream belief, which stops so many people from developing meditative habits, is that meditation is about stopping your mind from thinking.

This isn't what meditation is for. Meditation is for getting clear on what you want, and ultimately, about living a better life. Meditation can take on many forms. As can prayer. To me, both go hand-in-hand. And giving yourself some time to pray and meditate just before you write in your journal puts you in an elevated mental state to write from.

However, sometimes, that elevated state occurs after you start writing, especially while writing what you're grateful for. This whole process, the pre-journaling routine and the journaling process itself, is intended to take you deeper and higher into yourself, your dreams, and your ambitions.

Once you actually start writing, here are a few things that are helpful to focus your writing on:

1. Start with gratitude and appreciation for everything happening in your life. Take plenty of time to reflect on and write about all the details of your life and relationships. Write about all the people who matter to you. Write about how far you've come. Write specifics about what is happening, and what has happened, since the last time you had a recovery session. Recording your history is a crucial component of journal writing. It provides context to your ideas, goals, and plans.
2. Be radically honest with yourself about what's going on in your world in your journal. After you've just expressed gratitude and appreciation for the brilliance (and struggles) in your life, you need to be honest with yourself about where you're not showing up. While in a peak state, you need to commit to making specific changes. Write down the key changes you need to make to achieve your dreams and ideals. Write down everything that comes to mind. Journaling is a powerful therapeutic and healing tool. While writing about the things you need to change, openly write about the frustrations and difficulties that have led you to where you are. Write about why you've struggled to make these changes in the past. Be very honest and vulnerable with yourself. No one else is going to read what you're writing. The purpose of this writing is for you to get clarity, and to re-establish your priorities and focus. If you can't be honest in your own journal, how can you expect to be honest in the rest of your life?
3. Write about your big picture dreams. These could be framed as your life vision, your 3-5 year goals, or your goals for the next 3-12 months. It's good

to take some time and think about what you're trying to do from the big picture before you zero-in on the specifics right in front of you. A key component of writing big-picture is that it reconnects you with your "why." It's very easy to lose sight of your why during your daily routine and busyness. Additionally, there is a huge difference between "means" goals and "ends" goals. And your ends goals are the things that truly matter to you. They are the things you want in and of themselves, not because they will enable you to do what you really want. For example, getting a college degree so you can get a great job is a means goal. But what is the end? The end is what really matters, and you can save a lot of trouble by beginning and continuing with the end in mind. You can avoid pursuing goals that are societal expectations.

Below are images from my own journals related specifically to my goals. Some are from more recently, and I threw an oldie in from early 2016. The purpose of showing you these images is ***not to focus on the content*** of my journaling or goals, but to focus on the ***continual process*** of using your journal to frame and achieve your goals.

### **Your Morning Journaling Ritual to Get Yourself into a Peak State, Daily**

Every big decision you make should be done while in a peak state. Decisions are things you're truly committed to. One of the most effective ways to get into a peak state is by leaving your routine and environment. You need some time to disconnect and reset.

During this recovery session, it's key to not browse the internet, social media or email. It's good to have your phone with you, but only to *act upon insights* you get

while writing in your journal, while listening/reading a book, or while pondering/reflecting.

Often, you'll get insights about key people in your life. You should immediately make communication of some sort with the people who come to mind— whether that means sending them an email or text, or giving them a phone call. Recently while writing in my journal, I got the insight to send flowers to some people who have recently helped me. I immediately pulled out my phone and ordered flowers to their address. Then I continued my journaling.

Most people start their day in a reactive way. The first thing they do is look at their smartphone and immediately get sucked into a digital world of other people's information and agendas. They've set themselves up to live the remainder of their day in a distracted and reactive manner.

Having a morning routine is important for a few key reasons:

- To reconnect deeply with yourself and your why
- To put yourself into a peak state, such that you can achieve the dreams and vision you're seeking in your life
- To frame yourself for what you really want to do *that day*
- To live proactively, not reactively, so that you avoid self-sabotage

A morning routine can entail many different things, such as fitness, meditation, prayer, working on a creative project, etc.

All of those things are incredible. However, there is one thing I believe to be the most essential in the morning: writing in your journal. Writing in your journal is

more powerful than simple meditation for the same reason that writing your goals down is more powerful than leaving them in your head.

Meditation and prayer are powerful ways to make your journaling session more effective. However, meditation, prayer, and visualization in and of themselves are not enough. You need to write down the insights, plans, and goals you have. And you need to write them down daily.

Meditation, visualization, prayer, and journaling are all powerful activities that go very well together. But the journaling portion is where you solidify, clarify, affirm, and strategize your insights, goals, and plans.

Journaling makes the other keystone activities 10X or 100X more powerful. If you're not using your journal daily, then your meditation, visualization, and prayer will be far, far less effective.

The key purpose of a morning routine is to put first things first. To focus on the important stuff in your life, rather than the urgent. The goal is to put yourself into a peak state so you can then operate from that state in all you do, every single day. This is how you get out of survival mode and get massive momentum in your life. Momentum leads to confidence, which then leads to bigger and bigger dreams, better service and value you can provide, and a more congruent life.

Thus, fitness and creative projects are great morning activities. However, *nothing should come before* priming yourself into the state of being you plan to operate from for that day. Here's where meditation and journaling come in.

Your conscious and subconscious mind, as well as your creative brain and energy levels, are in the optimal condition immediately following sleep.



Writing in your journal *first thing in the morning* is essential for training your subconscious mind to achieve your goals. As Napoleon Hill wrote in *Think and Grow Rich*, "The subconscious mind will translate into its physical equivalent, by the most direct and practical method available."

This morning journaling session only needs to be 5–15 minutes.

When you write your goals and dreams down first thing every morning, you deepen your own sense of belief and desire in your goals. If you don't believe you can achieve your goals, you won't. If you don't really want to achieve a certain goal, it probably won't happen.

So, every morning, you need to put yourself into a place where you're reminded of it, you believe it, and you want it badly. As a result, you'll work hard *that day*, and every day, to not be distracted nor derailed from what really matters to you.

It's also powerful to write your goals in an affirmative and definitive way. For example, if you want to make \$100,000 or run a marathon, write:

- I'll be making \$100,000 by [date]
- I'll run a marathon by [date]

Write your goals down daily. Then, in your morning mental state, you should write down *everything you need to do* to achieve your goal. This includes people you'll reach out to. It includes things you'll do *this week*, and even *this day* related to that thing.