Q. What's the benefit of a morning routine?

A. If you wake up in the morning, grab your smartphone, and start scrolling through messages, you're not the only one. Maybe you get dressed, grab a cup of coffee, and dash out the door. Or maybe you feel stressed out, like every day is a battle to tick things off your to-do list.

That might be your morning routine. But it's not the kind of morning routine that helps you be healthy, happy, and productive.

Take a different approach to the first few minutes of your day. It can have a positive impact on your life in more ways than one.[1]

How? For one thing, people who meditate have lower anxiety and stress. That's what a group of researchers from the University of Massachusetts found.[2] Research also shows that being mindful can:[3]

- Lower blood pressure
- Improve mood
- Help you relax
- Improve sleep quality
- Reduce pain
- Promote creativity
- Control stress hormones

If you want to do more than just react to the events of the day, a well-planned morning routine can help. And it doesn't have to take long. With just 10 minutes a day, you can change the way you think and feel to be happier, healthier, and more productive. Here's how:

1. **Read.** Take a couple minutes to read about something that interests you. A book, article, or blog post, for example.

Kickstart Your Day With a Morning Routine

2. **Be active.** Go outside, weather permitting. Take a brisk walk. Bike around the block. Jump rope. Or stretch your muscles. This isn't your 30- to 60-workout time. Just be active for a couple of minutes.

3. **Meditate.** Sit in a quiet and comfortable place. Some people use this time to pray. Others simply focus on breathing for a few minutes.

4. **Be mindful.** Now focus on what you want to accomplish and habits you want to form. (Start with a small goal. Make sure it's **SMART:** Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Reasonable, and has a Timeline for completion. Small goals will help you accomplish bigger goals.) Think of statements like:

   - "I eat well and enjoy fruits, vegetables, and other whole foods."
   - "I enjoy exercise and being active."
   - "I manage stress in healthy ways."

5. **Visualize.** Now imagine yourself making these decisions through your day. For example, picture yourself eating a kale and apple salad, working out at the gym, and calmly handling a stressful situation at home or work.

6. **Write.** Wrap up your morning routine by writing. Create an action plan for things you will do. Write down lessons you have learned. Or keep a list of things you're grateful for.

What do you get out of a morning routine like this? You get a framework you can follow to improve your health. It will help you break bad habits and develop healthy lifestyle habits. That's the real benefit of a starting your day with a well-planned routine.

References

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