

How To Wake Up Before You Have To



By Benjamin Marlin

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To Denise, whose 6 a.m. encouragement is the one technique I'm not sharing with anybody.

Introduction

Everyone can wake up when they have to. When the alternative is getting fired or being late to our own wedding, waking up early is something we can and most likely will do.



Utter catastrophe averted, for one more day.

We cut it pretty close, though. Even if we **HAVE** to get out of bed at 7 am, we're not missing a minute of sleep before that.

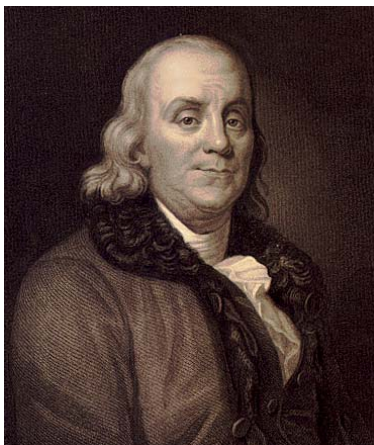
Sure, we might have a vague idea that waking up early would be good for us. Our parents talked to us about it. Benjamin Franklin said, "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Benjamin Franklin knew what was up.



"When I say early rising made me wealthy, I mean it gave me MY OWN MONEY."

In fact, if you're reading this book, waking up early probably makes sense to you. Chances are that it will continue to make sense to you, all through today, and into the night and wee hours of the morning.

Then your alarm goes off. Suddenly, Ben Franklin is less of an authority. What did he say again? "Early to.....something.....makes a man.....I forget. Man, it feels good in here."



Eh, the man was never even President.

In a moment, waking up early goes from a great idea to something vague and distant and having very little to do with your current physical reality.

Stealthily, your brain takes over. It coos: "Don't you feel good in bed right now? Why would you ever want to stop feeling like this?"

The PowerPoint

Next, your tired brain gives you a very brief PowerPoint presentation, with just two slides, which I will describe here:

Slide 1: You, lying in bed, sleeping and smiling, with a rainbow overhead and cute little critters quietly dancing around your room. This slide is titled "Staying In Bed".



Statistics show that you can't say no to a cute little beaver.

Slide 2: You slogging your way through a dark, cold morning, dragging, falling over, and utterly miserable. This slide is titled "Waking Up".



"I choose THIS option!"

It is damned hard to resist this sales pitch. The message is, "You have a choice, and the answer is pretty obvious. Stay the heck in bed."

In the moment, it *is* obvious. Most of us choose Slide 1, with the happiness and rainbows and critters, and we go back to sleep for another hour or two. Only after we wake up does our brain get around to Slide 3.

Wait, there's a Slide 3? What's on it?



“She wasn’t supposed to know about Slide 3.”

Here’s what’s on Slide 3: you happily getting out of bed before you have to. You exercising when there’s barely anyone else at the gym. You catching up on your emails. You taking a peaceful walk around your neighborhood.

In Slide 3, the rainbows and cute critters are there too, and this time, you’re actually awake to appreciate them.

What’s missing from Slide 3? You rushing and fumbling your way through your morning routine because you slept past your alarm again. That rushed hour of joyless insanity between waking up and arriving at work. You having to jam all your pleasures and responsibilities in at night because there’s no time in the morning.

Slide 3 sounds awesome. It shows you waking up early, getting a lot done, and enjoying the whole thing. Why doesn’t your brain show it to you?

Tired Brain vs. Noble Brain

Here’s where I theorize that your brain is locked in an epic struggle between what’s best for you and what feels good in the moment. For our purposes, I will call one side your "tired brain" and the other side your "noble brain". The scary part is that in this struggle, your tired brain has more guns, more supplies, and a comfy position on top of a hill.



Your tired brain, laughing at you.

You know your tired brain. It's closely related to your hungry brain, your sex-crazed brain, and your money-spending brain. It is not concerned with what is best for you. It knows nothing of missed appointments or dreams deferred. It has no use for the future. Your tired brain is only concerned with what feels good, right now. And at 6 am, what feels good right now is going back to sleep.

Now, along comes your noble brain, steadfast and pure-hearted. It wants you to wake up, accomplish your goals, and be happy in the long term. Unfortunately, your noble brain is only armed with a tiny slingshot and good intentions. Who's usually going to win this one?



Similar odds.

It probably won't shock you to hear that I am on the side of your noble brain. Your tired brain isn't all bad; it wants you to be safe and comfortable, which is fine in the right context. But I believe that only by listening to your noble brain - by doing what might not be safe and comfortable, but what is best for you in the long run - will you end up happy and fulfilled. This book is about empowering your noble brain so it can win the epic struggle and get you out of bed early in the morning.

My Experience

A few times a year, I decide to wake up at 6 a.m. By waking up at 6 a.m., I can go to the gym when it's less crowded; I can read; I can write; I can relax a bit before heading to work.

Right up until 5:59 a.m. of my first morning, my plan makes perfect sense. It makes so much sense that I'm sure it can't fail. I become convinced that it's the only way I'm going to live my life in the future. I'm psyched about it. I tell my friends. In fact, they've probably come to expect it every few months.

Then my alarm actually goes off at 6 am. Immediately, my tired brain overpowers my noble brain. It says, "You don't HAVE to wake up now. Sure, it's a fine idea. You're probably some kind of hero just for considering it. Today just isn't the day, sport. Try it again tomorrow. It'll definitely work. For now, just close your eyes..." Halfway through that speech, I'm already unconscious.



"That was some mighty good motivatin'."

Sometimes my alarm goes off and I actually stumble out of bed. I look around at the quiet, sleeping world around me and wonder why I'm not part of it. Without a plan for my morning, I can't think of a single good reason to be awake.

Then my tired brain starts to chime in: "There's nothing going on right now. You tried, which is great, but you discovered that there's no point. If you go back to sleep right now, you can still get in 45 good minutes before you have to wake up. 44. 43. Don't waste this opportunity to get a little more sleep. You know you want it. 42. 41. Sleep. Sleeeeeeeep." So I do. I give in and go back to sleep, absolutely sure that I'll stay up for real tomorrow.

Sometimes, I even make it through the first day of waking up early, and maybe a few days after that. But it never lasts. I feel massively tired by the afternoon and close to dead by the evening. I forget that this is just a hump I have to get over, rather than a permanent condition. I try to remember why I'm waking up early, but my motivation isn't strong enough, and I haven't done nearly enough to disempower my tired brain as it attempts to bring me back to my old, easy, comfortable habits. Invariably, I give up.

Why Is It So Tough?

Why is it such a challenge to wake up earlier than you have to? I've woken up early before. I used to wake up at 5 a.m. every day to go to work. My alarm went off, I got up, and I started my day. I didn't like it, but I did it. Why?

I did it because I had to. I had to pay my bills. I didn't want to get fired. Waking up late would have gotten me fired, so I didn't do it. That's sufficient motivation. For most of us, this motivation is built-in, and it prevents us from ignoring our alarm and completely ruining our lives.



“I should never have hit the snooze button.”

On the other hand, rising before you have to can be quite a challenge. The motivation isn't built-in. You have to build the motivation, and you have to make it stronger than the motivation to continue sleeping. You have to counter-intuitively leave your bed when you are still tired because deep down, you know it's better for you.

You have to get over the hump of being more tired than usual for a few days, or even a few weeks. All of this is worth it, but none of it comes naturally.

My Quest

Recently, I started another early-rising crusade. It was probably my 8th or 9th try in the past few years, and before this, I was batting .000. I didn't even tell my friends about this one because I was ashamed of failing again.

However, I approached this round differently. Rather than relying on sheer willpower, I looked for tricks, methods, and insights that would make the process easier for me. My search focused on two questions, which form the basis of this book:

1) How can I quiet my "tired brain" so it doesn't prevent me from waking up when I want to?

and

2) How can I change my thinking so waking up early comes easily, naturally, and even happily?

When I asked those questions, I got a ton of answers. Some of them were drawn directly from the insights of others. Some of them were adapted from similar insights, even if the original authors hadn't considered applying their insights to early rising. And some of them, I came up with myself, because nothing else was working.

Amazingly, some of my methods worked. They didn't work perfectly, and there was no instant magic involved. But they worked well enough that I feel confident about my ability to consistently wake up early in the future.

Now, for the first time, waking up at 6 a.m. doesn't feel like an abomination or something unnaturally awful I am doing to myself. It just feels normal. I wake up at 6 a.m. It's what I do. I don't fight it. I don't even feel the need to fight it. I just get up and start my day an hour earlier than I used to.

This Book

There is an abundance of material out there on waking up early. Much of it focuses on common-sense steps like getting enough sleep and avoiding the snooze button. All of this is good advice and should be ignored at your own peril. At the same time, none of it completely pushed me over the wall or made me a happy early riser. The common-sense steps struck me as an essential building block but nowhere near the entire story.

I have attempted to take this book in a different direction. Much of it is about identifying the mindset of a struggling early riser and changing it to that of someone who can consistently and easily wake up when he or she wants to. I am not a psychologist, but I do attempt to lay out, step-by-step, what happened in my brain as I changed my habit, in the hopes that you will recognize some of the same thought processes in yourself.

I do discuss more earthly techniques, such as alarm clocks and coffee, but often critically, and they are not the focal point of the book. For what it's worth, though, you absolutely should avoid the snooze button like the plague.

Keep in mind that if my methods don't work for you, or even if they do, there are plenty more that I haven't tried or haven't written about here. Waking up early isn't rocket science. Anyone can do it with the right tools or with enough willpower. There are likely dozens of techniques that will work for some people, and possibly for you. I've limited this book to ideas I have used or seriously considered, as well as ideas I haven't seen covered in detail anywhere else.

Why Wake Up Early?

I now want to tackle what might be the biggest question of all: Why wake up earlier than you have to? If you're reading this book, then you've certainly thought about it before. Chances are that you want to wake up early.

A strong motivation is one of your most powerful tools, so it's important to be as clear as you can about why you are waking up early. When you're tired and wavering regarding whether to get out of bed, even one bit of motivation can be powerful to have on your side.

Despite Benjamin Franklin's aphorism, waking up early is not a golden ticket to health, wealth, or wisdom. Being awake an extra hour (or just a different hour) does not bring anything on its own. You won't wake up to creative inspiration, or happiness, or six-pack abs.



“Damn you, Franklin!”

Rather, early rising is an opportunity to reach for those things on your own terms. It's extra time - or at least time that isn't as cluttered or stressed - to do the things you want to do.

For me, it's time to go to the gym when there are no other obligations standing in my way and no giant dinner weighing me down on the treadmill. It's a chance to catch up on reading and writing, and to do household chores when I'm not exhausted from work. It's extra time so that I don't have to rush through my morning routine.



“Finally, time to shower AND brush my teeth on the same day.”

Sometimes early rising is simply an opportunity to sit and contemplate - a quiet hour to spend with myself and the birds chirping in the feeder outside. Even a bit of peace is helpful in ways I rarely notice at the time.

Lastly, waking up early is a win for your better angels. For years, early rising was my great white whale - the thing I wanted so badly and just wasn't able to. It ate away at me that there was one accomplishment that would add so much to my life, and yet it seemed perpetually out of reach.

It's massively frustrating when there is something that makes so much logical sense, something you want with every part of your brain, and you consistently push it away because of the simple, dull truth that going back to sleep feels better, day after day. Nobody wants their laziness making their big decisions for them.

Now that I have been able to successfully wake up early on a consistent basis, it feels good just to know I've done it. My noble brain got a victory, and that means a victory for my lofty goals and higher aspirations across the board.

What will you gain from waking up early? Don't be restricted by my vision of early rising. Cultivate your own

motivations for taking on this new habit. One day you might find yourself tired and wondering why exactly you paid attention to your alarm; in that moment, you'll be well-served by knowing why you're doing this in the first place.

DISCLAIMER (first of many)

This book is not a scientific approach towards waking up early. I am not a scientist. I have not tested any of these methods in a lab or on anybody else.

Rather, I am a person who had trouble waking up early and finally found some methods and tricks for making it possible and even easy. I merely want to share these non-scientific tricks with you.

This is also not a book about proper sleep techniques. It's a book about waking up and getting out of bed. Getting proper sleep is hugely important, both for your well-being and your ability to comfortably wake up in the morning. If you are having trouble sleeping, by all means find a good book on the subject and learn to get better sleep. It will improve every facet of your life.

With that in mind, here is a list of methods and tips that have helped me wake up early. Some are more effective than others, and I try to be honest about their pros and cons and my own personal experiences with each one. I hope they will help you.

Specific Methods

Alarms

The following are nuts-and-bolts methods for getting yourself out of bed earlier than you need to. The first few are widely-used methods that I'm not crazy about, as should come through in my treatment of them. The best methods come after that.

Each method description is divided into 3 parts: the name of the method, a primer for how to use it, and then a list of any possible downsides to it.

The Method

An Alarm Next To Your Bed

How To Do It

This is the basic method for waking up early. Set an alarm next to your bed, and when it goes off, get up and start your day. In theory, you can even luxuriate in bed for a few minutes after the alarm goes off, and then get up at your pace. It's simple, it's cheap (just use your cell phone; or, there are plenty of alarm clocks under \$10), and it should be flawless.

Any Downsides?

If the alarm-by-your-bed method was flawless, then I wouldn't be writing this book. Unfortunately, the easy availability of the snooze button and the possibility of just turning off the alarm (before or after it goes off) make this a hazardous method.

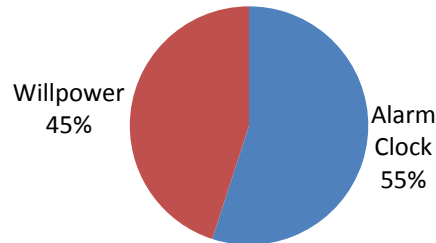
Even if you only intend to luxuriate in bed for a few minutes, that often becomes an extra hour or two before you realize what happened. When you haven't gotten out of bed yet, there's no such thing as "just resting your eyes". There's only "going back to sleep", whether or not you intended to.

This method also requires a ton of willpower, and the earlier you want to wake up, the more willpower it requires.

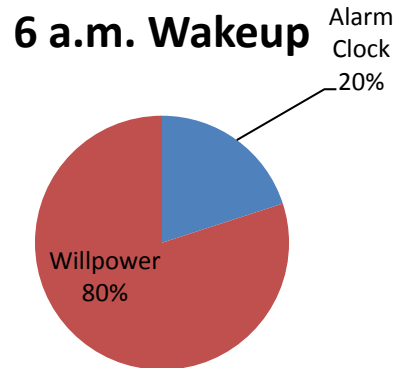
Think of it like a pie chart with two slices representing what you will need to wake up early: 1) Your alarm clock, and 2) Sheer willpower.

If you set your alarm for, say, 8 am, then you don't need as much willpower:

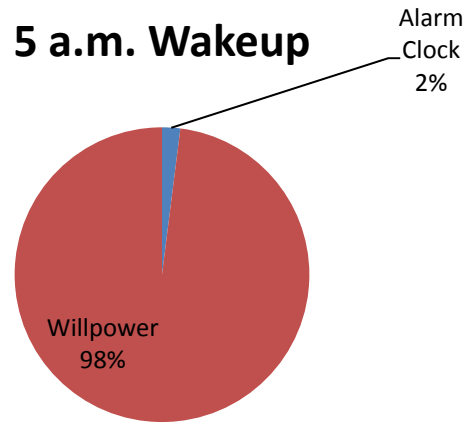
8 a.m. Wakeup



If you set your alarm for 6 am, then the willpower slice gets much bigger:



And, if you set your alarm for 5 am, then the willpower slice is almost the whole friggin' pie:



Don't get me wrong. An alarm is near-essential in the waking-up-early process. However, it can rarely stand alone, and one of the purposes of this book is to provide complementary tools and methods that work with your alarm in order to get you out of bed.

The Method

An Alarm Across The Room

How To Do It

This seems like an easy trick, and it can work. Keep an alarm clock across the room, so that in order to turn it off, you have to get out of bed. Once you're out of bed, you're much less likely to fall back asleep. Use the momentum to begin your day and gradually wake up your brain.

Any Downsides?

There is no compromising with The Alarm Across The Room. It's loud, it's insistent, and it yanks you out of bed without the slightest chance to contemplate your situation. That means it's effective, but it can also be scary and stressful.

If you're anything like me, you may come to fear The Alarm Across The Room like it's a character from a horror film. When it goes off, it's jarring, and it provides no buffer time between waking up and getting out of bed.



“And I’ll wake you up with ‘Juke Box Hero’ by Foreigner.”

This can lead to The Alarm Across The Room becoming a hated object. Often, I’ll wake up during the night, get a glimpse of The Alarm Across the Room, and shudder before I fall back asleep because I know what it’s eventually going to do to me.

Eventually I stopped using it because it caused too much sleep-stress. Remember, waking up early shouldn’t be too stressful.

Note: There are a lot of variations on this one. I once read about a Japanese bed that tips over and slides you out at a certain time. Other alarm clocks pour water on you. In the impulse-buy section of a department store, I even saw a flying alarm clock (!). When the alarm goes off, it shoots a little whirly-flyer around the room, and you have to get up, catch it, and put it back before the alarm stops ringing. All of these tricks are probably effective, but potentially jarring and stressful.

There is, however, a workaround...

The Method

Good Alarm, Bad Alarm

How To Do It

So far, we’ve discussed using an alarm clock near your bed and an alarm clock across the room. Both can be effective, but they also have major drawbacks. Namely: the near-bed alarm is easy to shut off and ignore, and the across-the-room alarm yanks you out of bed on its own hurried, disorienting terms.

However, when used in tandem, they complement each other in a way that should get you out of bed on time and on your terms.

To make this work, set the near-bed alarm for your target wakeup time (say, 6:00 am). Then set the across-the-room alarm for 5 minutes later (6:05 am). When your first alarm goes off, you have the option of staying in bed for a few minutes, stretching out, and enjoying yourself.....knowing that if you don't get out of bed within five minutes, your across-the-room alarm will make it a jarring necessity.

Thus, you wake up to your first alarm, get out of bed at your own pace (but within 5 minutes), and calmly turn off your second alarm before it makes a peep. From there, you walk away from your bed and begin your day.

Any Downsides?

None that I can think of. I don't use this anymore, because I used some deeper methods (described later) to help me become less reliant on my alarm to get me out of bed. However, as a starter method, and possibly beyond that, I find Good Alarm, Bad Alarm tough to beat.

Offbeat Alarms

The Method

Wake-Up Lights

How To Do It

For most people, it is easier to wake up in the light than in the dark. Sometimes this is even possible for early risers: thanks to daylight savings time, it's often sunny at 6 a.m. However, if you're in the wrong half of the year, or if you wake up before 6 a.m., you're out of natural luck.

One solution to this is a wake-up light. Wake-up lights are alarm clocks that progressively shine more and more soft light in your face as your wake-up hour approaches.

The intent is to simulate a natural sunrise, even in a dark room at 4 a.m. Instead of experiencing a sudden wake-up in a dark room, your eyes and brain are tricked into thinking that you're waking up at a sane hour, or that you live near the North Pole.



Partiers in Iceland stumble out after 2 a.m. Last Call.

I have never personally tried a wake-up light, so I can't vouch for them. However, they are quite popular, and I imagine that any extra light at a dark hour can only be helpful.

Any Downsides?

Wake-up lights are still a niche product and thus relatively expensive. Many sell for a hundred dollars or more. Shop carefully.

In addition, if you are lucky enough to sleep next to somebody else, he or she might not want "full morning" to come at 5 a.m. If you're quick about turning off your alarm, it will only last for a second or two; but a wake-up

light might be shining in your partner's eyes for an annoyingly long time.

Here is page full of links to wake-up lights:

<http://beth811.hubpages.com/hub/10-Best-Light-Alarm-Clocks>

The Method

Math Alarms

How to do it

There are several iPhone (and presumably Android) apps that purport to wake up your brain by forcing you to do math problems before you can turn off the alarm. The theory is that once you have solved 46×78 , your mind will be alert enough that you will be able to begin your day.

While I have not personally tried a math alarm, they do seem useful. It never hurts to wake up your brain in the morning, and solving a complex math problem is probably an effective way to do it.

Any downsides?

A few:

1) Waking up your brain is only half the battle, and sometimes even less than that. While it can't hurt to clear the fog out of your mind, the need to sleep is an intensely physical desire. It's possible to have an alert mind and a body that still really wants to go back to sleep. Often, your body will win out.

2) Math alarms are still an evolving technology. Most of the alarms I've seen are lacking in some major way: the math problems are easy enough that they might only keep a second-grader awake; the apps have to stay open all night in order to go off in the morning; and worst of all, they allow you to bypass the math problems entirely, either with a snooze button or the ability to simply close out the app.



“I know the answer! The Home button.”

Put all this together, and as much potential as math alarms have, they provide precious little accountability and too many easy avenues for staying in bed.

That said, here are a few math alarm apps that might be worth searching for in the iTunes store:

- Math Alarm
- swAlarm
- FreakyAlarm
- Vapssky Smart Alarm
- Brain Alarm

Mental Methods

The following methods go a bit deeper than using an alarm clock (although it always helps to use an alarm clock or two). To me, these methods are the crux of the book, which I consider to be a psychological approach to happily waking up early. The *starred methods in particular are the ones that I considered absolutely essential to my success in finally sticking with the early-rising habit.

DISCLAIMER

A few of these methods make use of NLP, or Neuro-Linguistic Programming, a science pioneered in the 1970s by Dr. Richard Bandler and Dr. John Grinder. NLP remains controversial, with its devotees hyping it as an effective way to alter the way you perceive the world, and plenty of knowledgeable people calling it a junk science.

I'm a fan of NLP, but this book is not an attempt to sell you on it. Rather, I am listing these methods because they worked for me, and I want to share them with you

I am in absolutely no way, shape, or form attempting to take credit for the NLP-related techniques described in this book. They have been around for decades and have been described in countless books and audiotapes, some of which are listed at the end of this book.

All I have done is adapt them to the specific problem of how to happily wake up earlier than you normally do. The adaptations are mine, but I don't want to represent myself in any way as having invented these decades-old techniques.

The Method

***Ask Your Subconscious For Help**

How To Do It

For years, I could predict exactly how I would feel when I'd try to wake up early. I'd feel tired, grumpy, and stagnant, with no physical or mental desire to get out of bed. It was like clockwork. And you can imagine how successful I was. That's not an easy feeling to fight.

This seems like a problem without a solution. After all, how can you affect how you're going to feel when you wake up? You feel how you feel. Somebody made the decision, and it wasn't you.

It turns out that that isn't entirely true. To an extent, you can determine how you're going to feel when you wake up in the morning. The trick is to ask your subconscious to make you feel a certain way at a certain time.

Hopefully I haven't lost you here. This isn't The Secret, where you ask for a Corvette, and one magically pulls into your driveway. Your subconscious isn't a genie bringing you anything you want.



“You jerk, I asked for a convertible!”

When you think about it, though, when you're asking to feel a certain way, you're not asking for all that much. You always feel *some* way when you wake up. You're merely asking your subconscious to make you feel *this* way instead of *that* way. Unless you're asking for something weird, your subconscious will usually say, "Sure, what the hell. It's all the same to me."

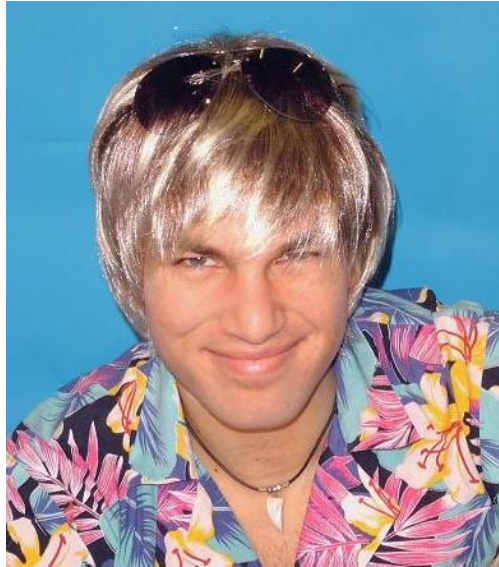
I used to ask my subconscious to help my sleep feel longer than it really was. Say I got home at 1 am, and I had to be awake by 6 am. Five hours isn't a lot of sleep, and it leaves me without the long buffer zone of sleep I like to have between my nights and my mornings.

So I'd say to my subconscious, "Just this once, please make this five hours of sleep feel like it's eight hours." Sure enough, my five hours of sleep would feel like it lasted a heck of a long time. When I'd wake up at 6 am, I felt like I'd gotten a full night's sleep. This wasn't anything I could scientifically measure, but I was plenty happy with the results.

Yes, I'd get tired later - I only got 5 hours of sleep - but in the moment, I never felt like I'd missed out on a full, satisfying night's sleep. It felt like it lasted and lasted and lasted. That was important enough to me.

I don't see this as too far-fetched. Nobody understands sleep-time. Sometimes 6 hours of sleep feels like a lot, and sometimes it's it feels like not nearly enough. Something is causing both of those feelings.

It turns out that if you ask that your subconscious to tilt the odds in your favor now and then, it's usually fine with it. It doesn't care much. Sure, it might make you promise to even things out in the future with some extra sleep, and you should do that. After all, the trick is less effective if you've been sleeping 4 hours per night for the last week; it's much more effective if you normally have good sleep habits but find yourself up a sleep creek on a given night. That aside, though, your subconscious usually has no objections to helping you out. It's pretty amiable as long as you ask nicely.



“Alter your innermost thoughts in order to profoundly change your perception of sleep? No problem, brah!”

How, then, to apply this to waking up early in the morning? Here’s what I decided to tell my brain before I went to bed: “I bring into my life waking up at 6 am in a good, happy mood, with the energy and desire to get out of bed and begin my day.”

Perhaps you’re skeptical. I was, too. But the next morning, my alarm woke me up at 6 am.....and I was fine with it. In fact, I’d sort of known it was coming, and I hadn’t dreaded it. It was almost like my subconscious had prepared me to wake up at 6 am, so that it wouldn’t come as an awful shock. By the time 6 am rolled around, I was ready. I wasn’t too tired. I didn’t feel like there were lead weights attached to me. I wasn’t grumpy. I couldn’t explain it. But I climbed out of bed and began my day.

The next night, I was still skeptical (although a bit less so), but I tried it again. “I bring into my life waking up at 6 am in a good, happy mood, with the energy and desire to get out of bed and begin my day.” The next morning, I again got out of bed without a fight. Yes, I could have stayed in bed and gone back to sleep. Nothing physically yanked me out of bed. But getting up made just as much sense as going back to sleep, if not more. So I got up.

Since then, every night and morning has gone pretty much the same way. My subconscious comes through for me. (I always remember to thank my subconscious in the morning, in case it is petty and/or vengeful, like me.)

This is not a guarantee that your subconscious will come through for you. Everyone’s brain works differently. However, appealing to my subconscious removed a lot of the resistance I normally encountered in the morning. It was a hugely helpful tool in my quest to wake up early - one of the few that I’d consider essential to my getting over the initial early-rising hump.

Any Downsides?

It may feel tedious to remind your brain of your intentions every night, especially in the tired time right before

you fall asleep. Your subconscious is very cool about taking suggestions, but the time in which the suggestions are most powerful - just before sleep - is also the time when you usually don't feel like thinking *anything*. Do your best to push through that and remind your subconscious of how you would like to feel in the morning.

The Method

Absolutely Decide To Wake Up Early

How To Do It

It always feels good to have an "out". An "out" is a safety door, an ejector seat - some way out of a commitment you have made. It's a way of saying, "I'm absolutely going to do this.....unless I decide not to."

An "out" can be useful for decisions you're not sure about, and it is good for lowering your stress level. However, it can also be detrimental when you are embarking on a project that is important to you.

I have failed at early rising many times, in part because I never completely decided I was going to do it. I just took it day-by-day and stayed with it as long as it felt good. As soon as it stopped feeling good, I had no commitment to fall back on, so I stopped.

Thus, if you are serious about waking up early, then absolutely decide to do it. Sometimes it's as simple and cheesy as saying, unequivocally, "I am going to wake up at 5 a.m. every day from now on."

As simple as that statement is, it's also daunting. In the past, I've avoided it and danced around it endlessly rather than just saying it.



Much easier than committing, and set to Tchaikovsky.

If you're serious, though, then say it now: "I am going to wake up at [time] every day from now on."

There. You've said it. You've made your decision. No exception. No "out".

That doesn't mean you can't make it easier on yourself (which this book will hopefully help you do), or that you can't take days off. It simply means that you are committed to the long-term goal of waking up early. When it gets hard for you, or when it doesn't make sense on a given day, you can fall back on the fact that you've made a decision and you're going to stick with it.

Any Downsides?

It's scary to commit to anything. You might feel trapped by your new commitment. If you decide that early rising isn't for you, you might also feel like you can't break your commitment or go back on your decision.

In my opinion, these downsides aren't enough to avoid making a good, strong decision. However, they are worth keeping in mind.

The Method

***Make It Boring**

How To Do It

Waking up early can be scary when you make it a huge deal, or if it's Big Goal you are trying to accomplish.

You certainly don't want to psych yourself out before you even start.

One very helpful technique is to make waking up early boring. Make it dull. Make it just a thing you do.

The same way you brush your teeth every morning without thinking, and the same way you shower (hopefully), you wake up early and start your day. Personally, I don't dread brushing my teeth in the morning or see it as anything other than something I just do. It's something I barely notice. I wanted to see if I could make waking up early feel the same way.

To test this out, I experimented with an NLP concept called submodalities. The theory behind submodalities is that everything in your brain has a certain look, sound, feel, and location (among other characteristics). If you're excited about something, you picture it in a certain part of your brain; if you're scared of something, you picture it in a different part; and so on.

Similarly, a thought that makes you happy comes across in a certain voice, while a thought that makes you mad comes across in a different voice. Most of this, we don't notice unless we specifically try to; but once we notice the sound and feel and location of our thoughts, we can manipulate them to our advantage.

I approached submodalities with a healthy amount of skepticism. They have been pitched as a cure-all, but my experience has been mixed. However, working with my own submodalities helped me tremendously when I was trying to wake up early.

My goal was to turn waking up early into something boring, something routine that I just did without thinking about it much. I listed a few other actions that fit in that category, like brushing my teeth and showering. I just do those things. There's no question. They're not strange or out of the ordinary. So how do I see/hear/feel them in my mind?

I made it literal. I thought to myself, "I'm going to brush my teeth now." Then, "Time to shower." While thinking those boring, routine thoughts, I paid attention to how they sounded and where they popped up in my head.

It turned out, unsurprisingly, that I thought them in a boring voice - think Ben Stein in Ferris Bueller's Day Off. "Bueller.....Bueller....." Similarly: "Time to brush my teeth... Gonna shower now..."



Strikes fear into the heart of nobody – and that's good.

I also noticed that the thoughts popped up in the right side of my brain. I made a note of where they seemed to be happening.

Note that your experience will vary. Nobody's thoughts will sound the same, or be in the same place. The important thing is that you identify what your boring, routine thoughts look and sound like, and where in your mind they float. The goal here is to give the thought "I'm going to wake up at 5 a.m. tomorrow" (or whatever time you choose) the same look, sound, and location as your boring, routine, do-it-every-day-no-big-deal thoughts.

For me, I took the thought "I'm waking up at 6 a.m. tomorrow" and made it sound like the boring Ben Stein voice was saying it. Then, while mentally repeating it in that voice, I moved it to the same "location" in my mind as my other boring, routine thoughts.

Once the sound and location were set, I repeated the phrase over and over until it felt and sounded natural in its new incarnation as "just another boring thing I do, whatever."



“Wash the dishes, Cinderelly. Scrub the floors, Cinderelly. Wake up early, Cinderelly.”

Repetition is incredibly important here. When you really drive these changes into your brain, submodalities become less of an overhyped cure-all and more of a legitimately helpful technique for change. Don't just do it once. Repeat the process multiple times.

My experience after doing this was that waking up at 6 a.m. was a lot less scary. It wasn't a huge life experiment, or something jarring and awful looming on the horizon each night. It was just something I did. I eat dinner, I read, I go to sleep, I wake up at 6 a.m., I brush my teeth, I shower. No big deal.

I still drill this in every few days, because I want it to be a lifelong view and not something that only lasts for a little bit. However, remember that getting over the early-rising hump is a temporary goal, not a lifetime one, and even if this only works temporarily, it may get you to the point where early rising comes easily.

Changing my submodalities was one of the biggest (and easiest) mental shifts I was able to make in turning early rising into an easy habit instead of some impossible dream. I hope it will work for you as well.

Any Downsides?

None. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work, and there are other options. Remember that like everything else in this book, changing your submodalities is not a miracle technique, but one tool among many.

Alternative: Make It A Necessity

An alternative to this is to change your early-rising submodalities to those of something you HAVE to do. I have not tried this, but if you'd prefer to be scared into waking up, it is likely possible. As I stated in the beginning of the book, fear is often what keeps our lives from falling apart. There's no shame in fear.



Good to know.

In this case, picture things you absolutely have to do, like going to work, remembering your anniversary, or paying your bills. Listen to how you tell yourself to do those things, and to how your brain conveys the urgency and the sense that if you don't do those things, then some awful stuff is going to happen. Pay attention to how that voice sounds and where in your brain it's situated.

Now, tell yourself that you'd better wake up early tomorrow and stay up, using the same voice, and in the same area of your brain. Give this message the look, sound, feel, and location of something you absolutely have to do, or else. Repeat this several times until the message to wake up early is indistinguishable from other no-question necessities.

Like I said, I can't personally vouch for this twist on the previous method, but I imagine it will have some effectiveness in making early rising an imperative for you.

The Method

***Turn Your Tired Brain Into A Joke**

How To Do It

Often, the craftiest trick your tired brain has is to tell you to go back to sleep. It's a simple trick, but a powerful one. You wake up early, and immediately your tired brain starts talking to you in its soothing snake voice: "Come on, go back to sleep. You know you want to. Just do it. Go back to sleep."

That shouldn't be powerful, but it is. Remember, you're crazy impressionable when you're tired. In addition, you already know how good it would feel to go back to sleep. You've done it before. It feels awesome. It's right there. Thus, it doesn't take some magic sales pitch for your tired brain to keep you in bed.

Essentially, your tired brain is selling you a gas-guzzling SUV when it's right in front of you and you've already owned and loved 5 other SUV's in the past. Suddenly it becomes very hard to remember why you wanted that eco-friendly hybrid on the other side of the showroom.



“Trust me, Mac, if you go back to sleep, you’ll be taking advantage of me!”

The solution here is to strip your tired brain of that power. Make it laughable. Make it pathetic. Take that villain and make it a cartoon character.

Disclaimer: This technique is straight out of Tony Robbins and NLP. I am not for one second claiming that it's my idea. All I'm doing is adapting it to this specific topic.

The technique is one that Tony Robbins calls "scrambling a pattern". He likens it to scratching up a record or a CD, except you are doing it with an unhappy memory, or, in this case, an insidious voice telling you to go back to sleep. Once the CD, or voice, or memory is scratched, it will never play the same way again.

That much makes sense, but how do you scramble something? Well, you make it funny. You turn it into a cartoon, with happy animals and funny noises and crazy music playing in the background. There's no specific thing you have to do as long as you take something scary or powerful and turn it into something you can only laugh at.

NLP practitioners use this technique to cure phobias. You're going to use it to wake up early. Here's what I did: I pictured myself waking up early and tried to imagine what my tired voice would say. It

immediately started with the usual pitch: "Go back to sleep. Come on, it'll feel good. Just close your eyes. There you go..."

Sounds normal enough. But then I pictured it again, only this time turning my tired brain into Mickey, Donald, and Goofy. Yes, that Mickey, Donald, and Goofy.



Yeah, I'm not getting sued over this. You know who I mean.

The first time around, I turned my tired brain into a frantic, high-pitched Mickey Mouse. Mickey ran around with his hands on his cheeks, screeching "Nooooo! Don't wake up!! Don't get out of bed! You can't do it! Nooooo!" On he screamed, "Nooooo! Nooooo!", as he scrambled around the room, running himself into a tizzy, trying to prevent the calamity of me getting out of bed.

Suddenly, the idea was a little harder to take seriously when it was insane-Mickey telling me to stay in bed. He wasn't exactly a formidable opponent to deal with.

Then I pretended again that I was waking up early. Again, my tired brain tried to keep me in bed, but this time I turned it into Goofy: a big, fat, cigar-smoking (but still lovable) Goofy.

"Gawrsh!" fat-Goofy said. "Why do you want to get out of bed so early? I've never woken up early in my life, and I'm just fine!" Then Goofy took the cigar out of his mouth and hacked a loud smoker's cough.

Collecting himself, he said, "You should be like me! I sleep till 11 am every day, and I love it!" Then he coughed up another lung.

I looked at Goofy's huge belly and overall unhealthy (yet still lovable) appearance. It cracked me up. There's just something funny about good-ol' Goofy being a fat cigar-smoker. And once again, my tired brain became a

little less insidious, and a little funnier: something I could laugh at, something much harder to take seriously.

I ran the pattern again a few more times: waking up, hearing my tired brain start to convince me to stay in bed, and immediately turning it into a crazy cartoon character. Every time I did it, it became that much harder to hear my tired brain as it used to sound. All I could hear and picture was Mickey screaming and Goofy coughing. These were the first voices that popped into my head when I pretended to wake up, and they were funny, and they were not at all convincing.

The big test came when I tried waking up early the next morning. Predictably, my tired brain went into action, trying to keep me in bed. But instead of the usual soothing sales pitch, all I heard was, "Noooooooo! Don't wake up! Noooooooo!! Nooooooooo!!". Then, "Gawrsh! Why do you want to wake up? Just sleep all day like I do! ::cough, cough, hack::"

I laughed. I got out of bed. One of the major obstacles between me and waking up wasn't so scary anymore. It's worked for me since then.

Note: I haven't found a use for Donald yet. So far, Mickey and Goofy have done the trick. I'm holding Donald in reserve just in case.

Go crazy with this one. Identify the voice that tries to keep you in bed (if it's not immediately apparent, listen for it when you wake up) and then make it toothless. Turn it into any cartoon character you can think of. Picture colors, animals, music. Give it a dancing choir in the background. Put donkey ears on it. Make it something that makes you laugh, something you would never take seriously. Doing this was one of the most important steps on my path towards comfortably waking up early, and I'm betting it will work for you too.

Any Downsides?

None that I can think of, unless Disney's lawyers come after you. It's important to remember, though, that like any habit, you need to keep drilling this in, a lot at first and then periodically after that. You can't scramble a pattern once and expect it to go away forever. A tiny scratch on a CD might make one song skip, but most of the album will play fine. A ton of deep scratches will prevent the CD from playing at all. This is a great technique for waking up early, but make sure you work with it so it becomes a regular thought pattern.

The Method

Wake Up An Hour Early, Then Go Back To Sleep

How To Do It

Often, the worst part about using an alarm is the finality of it. The alarm goes off, and you're done. The night flew by, and you barely had a chance to enjoy it. Now sleep is over, and everything begins. You had no warning, no time to prepare.



“What’s happening to me?!?!?”

One way to circumvent this finality is to set an alarm an hour before you want to wake up. Setting two alarms should be easy if you use your cell phone; otherwise, just keep two alarm clocks next to your bed.

When the first alarm goes off, it will serve as a warning, but not a harbinger of imminent doom. It will say, “This isn’t the real thing; I just want to let you know that the real thing is coming in an hour”. After that, whether you’re awake or asleep, you’ll have a more realistic idea of how much time is left.

In addition, this method can lessen the sting of your alarm by dulling any negative associations you have with it. When you have two alarms, suddenly an alarm doesn’t automatically mean “Out of bed, now!” It may also mean, “Go back to sleep; there’s still time.”



I work on many different levels.

Personally, I find it comforting to wake up in the middle of the night and realize that I still have time left. I’m most distraught when the night goes by without me even realizing it was there. Having that last hour to mentally, even subconsciously, prepare would make me feel better. It might work for you, too.

Any Downsides?

I'm no sleep-ologist, but interrupted sleep probably isn't the best sleep. Even if waking up an hour early is more comforting, it might reduce the quality of your sleep. Pay attention to whether or not this method makes you more tired in the long run.

In addition, while this method may work as a temporary crutch, it is at odds with other key advice in this book: namely, that waking up in the morning should not be something that you dread, but rather something that excites you. If you want to wake up early on a consistent basis, then it should be your goal to make it something you enjoy doing.

I'm not knocking crutches here. In a sense, this entire book is a crutch. No matter what gets you to start waking up early and stick with it for a while, eventually it will become a habit. You won't need anything I'm writing here because waking up early will just be a thing you do. Thus, tricks like setting an "early alarm" can make it easier to get over the hump of your first few weeks until you get there.

The Method

Coffee

How To Do It

Make coffee as soon as you wake up. Have iced coffee waiting in the fridge. Go to Starbucks or some less-evil coffee shop. Drink coffee and enjoy the effects. If you react to coffee the way I do, you'll be awake and jumping at small noises within a few minutes.

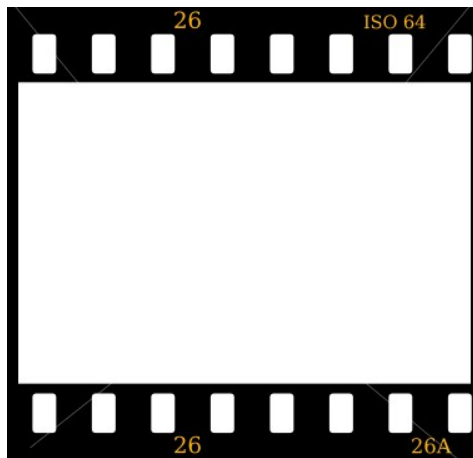


"I think I just heard a sound in China."

Any Downsides?

I have a love-hate relationship with coffee. It's a temporary stimulant that absolutely works and hasn't been shown to have any long-term negative effects. You might get addicted, but that just leads to withdrawal headaches, not a stint at the Betty Ford Clinic. Also, it tastes good. I almost always have a cup when I get to work.

At the same time, coffee feels like cheating. This might be the hippie in me, but I always feel like if I need a coffee jolt, then I am not doing something right: either I'm not getting enough sleep, or I'm not eating right, or I'm not exercising enough. I can't escape the nagging feeling that while coffee works, I should not need it. Relying on coffee exclusively feels like putting a band-aid on a broken leg.



(no photo available)

That's just me, though. You don't have to agree. If you don't have these hang-ups, and especially if you need some powerful help waking up in the morning, coffee is probably for you.

The Method

Repetition

How To Do It

Keep waking up early. Every time you wake up early, it will become that much easier to wake up early tomorrow. Remember that you are building a habit, and that every repetition makes the habit stronger. Even if there is a grueling hump in the beginning, it will get easier as you keep doing it.

Any Downsides?

None, unless you love quitting. And remember, nobody loves a quitter.



“Point well taken.”

The Method

Sheer Freaking Willpower

How To Do It

After everything else, you will still need willpower. One of the purposes of this book is to lessen your need for willpower and to share techniques that will make waking up early less of a slog. It's incredibly important to build strong motivation for waking up early, and it's incredibly effective to diminish the influence of your tired brain so it's not standing in your way.

However, none of these techniques will make you 100% awake and motivated from day one. There is no toy-machine arm reaching down to pull you out of bed. You won't change your life if you don't want to and if you don't try to. You will still need to make smart decisions, and you will still need willpower. Willpower will always be at least a small slice of the pie.

Any Downsides?

Willpower alone may work, but I don't recommend making it your only tool. However, it is a necessary component of any early-rising program.

Helpful Tips

The following are not specific methods for waking up early; rather, they are ideas, insights, and helpful mindsets that are intended to make early-rising easier for you:

Keep reminding yourself why you're doing it.

A tired body can be loud and whiny. It's almost like a baby. "I want to go to sleep!" "Don't make me get out of bed!"

Often, it's easy to give in to this, especially in the moment. That's why it's important to fight back by reminding yourself over and over of the benefits of waking up early. Why are you doing it to begin with? What are you hoping to accomplish? What bad habits are you getting rid of?

Keep those thoughts fresh in your mind. Repeat them over and over. That way, when you wake up at 5 am, and your body asks, "Seriously, why?", you'll have all the right answers at your fingertips. Solid motivation goes a long way towards getting you out of bed.

Make your identity someone who wakes up at 6 a.m.

I have sometimes seen adults who are in good shape described as "fat kids starving themselves thin". What that means is that these fit adults were once fat kids, and that since then, they have been frantically trying to keep off the extra pounds that they still see as part of their core identity.

Even after years of being fit, they do not see themselves as naturally fit people; rather, they are naturally fat people who have managed lately to stay one step ahead of the bulge.



Closet fatty.

This is a useful cautionary tale, because it illustrates the danger of changing a habit, even a major one, without also changing your core identity. For sure, it can be done, but it will always feel harder, and it will always seem temporary.

Why do our old identities stick around? We form many of them as children and reinforce them every day for years and years. It seems absurd: Bill Clinton doesn't still think he's President, but part of me still thinks I'm the awkward, unathletic kid I was in the early 90s. When something is mentally driven in every single day, it's damn hard to let go of.



“Wait, go back. I’m not *what* anymore?”

For instance, I still find myself making statements like, “Waking up before the sun rises is uncivilized.”

Statements like that have helped to cement my identity as a comfort-seeker and a late riser, even as that is the exact opposite of what I do in the morning.

This is what I’m up against: I’ve always been a late riser, or at least an average riser. Even when I have tried to change that, I have been unable to succeed. The reason, I tell myself, is that it must be my identity, my core, who I really am. I may wake up early every day, but I am not a guy who wakes up early every day.

It’s really tough to alter thoughts like this. They’re buried deep. The solution is to change your identity so it reflects your newer, healthier habit - but how?

Actually, here’s where I admit that I don’t completely know. I have not yet successfully changed my identity to that of an early riser (or, for that matter, an athletically-capable, in-shape adult).

I can, however, urge you to try - just try. Catch your louder thoughts where you identify as a late riser, or a slacker, or as lazy, and do your best to get rid of them. Replace them with thoughts that would make sense for an authentic early riser to think.

Act like somebody who wakes up when he or she wants to wake up and isn’t a slave to tiredness or comfort.

Think like that person; talk like that person. Little by little, it will seep in and positively affect the way you see yourself.

Even if you just do this surface work, it will help you immensely. On a dark morning, the less your actions are

battling your core beliefs, the easier it will be to get out of bed and start your day.

Make it your hour.

It can be disorienting to wake up before the rest of the world. Looking around your quiet house, you can start to feel out of step with everyone. Maybe you're doing something you're not supposed to be doing. Maybe everybody else is right.

This, of course, is your mind playing tricks on you. One trick is to turn the thought on its head. Make it a point of pride that you're the only person awake. This is your hour, and only yours. This is where you accomplish things that most people are too asleep to even contemplate. Own it. Look at your clock, and when you see an hour that few people see, say to yourself, "this is my hour".



"Technically, this town *is* big enough for the both of us, but not until 8 a.m. So scram."

Keep your room warm.

One of the biggest impediments to getting out of bed in the morning is a freezing room, or one that is uncomfortable in any way. If the world outside your covers is uncomfortable, then your tired brain will pose a simple question: "It's cold out there, but it's warm in here. Which do you prefer?"



Go ahead, be *that* guy.

This visceral “Are you kidding me?” steamrolls over any nobler arguments you might make. It’s simple; it’s correct; and it will keep you under your covers and eventually send you back to sleep.

The solution to this is to make it less scary to leave your covers. Run your heater enough that your room will be toasty when you want to wake up in the morning. Your comfort-seeking brain will still come up with arguments to keep you in bed, but you will have deprived it of a whopper.

Tell yourself all night, “I can’t wait to wake up in the morning.”

Yes, this sounds cheesy. It probably is. But I indulge way too often in the alternative. I’ll wake up at 2 am, or, God forbid, a half-hour before my alarm, and think, “Crap! Why isn’t there more time to sleep??”

That’s right. I dread waking up. I don’t dread being awake. I don’t dread living life. But because of what I say to myself in the dead of night, I find myself dreading waking up. After all, sleep just feels so good. Why ever end it?



There goes my hero.

That's pretty cracked. Is sleep is the most important thing in the world? I should be excited about beginning my day. If I'm not, then something probably is wrong with my life.

Even if you aren't willing to get too analytical about sleeping, it can't possibly be productive to dread your alarm. It's not a happy thought. So go ahead and change it.

Remember, if you fear your alarm, it will always be a road-block on your path to happily waking up early. Even if you wake up early, you will hate it to some extent. Even if you get enough sleep along the way, it will be filled with more anxiety and dread than is healthy.

The solution is to look forward to waking up in the morning.



“Sure, just as soon as I’m finished looking forward to my dentist appointment.”

For real. When you wake up in the middle of the night and begin thinking, “Ugh, only two more hours to go” or “I wish I had more time to sleep”, catch yourself. Cut off that junk before it does any more damage.

Start thinking, “I can’t wait to wake up in the morning. I can’t wait to wake up in the morning.” Do your best to feel genuinely excited about it. Even if you’re lying to yourself at first, you will eventually start to believe it. Never underestimate how gullible you are when you’re half-awake.

What I’m suggesting here is changing your entire outlook on waking up early, and I won’t pretend its easy. Changing a negative thought pattern is never easy. However, it’s easier to at least change what you say to yourself. Replace the negative “Ugh, only two more hours left” with “I can’t wait to wake up in the morning. I can’t wait to wake up in the morning.”

You’ll be surprised at how effectively it changes your attitude when you do actually wake up. It won’t be something you dreaded; it will be something you were actively looking forward to.

Keep doing it until the benefits become apparent.

The best way to convince yourself of the benefits of waking up early is to.....wake up early. Then wake up early again. And over and over and over.

Like most things in life, advice regarding early rising only goes so far. You may believe it, but not enough to influence your actions. If people actually took advice and substituted others’ mistakes for their own, then nobody would ever do anything stupid. As a society, we’re not there yet.

On the other hand, you will believe your own experience. So wake up early, and then keep waking up early, and eventually you will be authentically convinced that it’s the best thing for you to do.

Make sure you get enough sleep each night.

This is a no-brainer, but I am including it for completeness’ sake. The more sleep you get, the less sleep you will crave when your alarm goes off.

This book is not a primer on how to get healthy sleep or how to get the right amount of sleep, but doing both of those things will help you in immeasurable ways. The less your body is screaming out for more sleep, the easier it will be to listen to your nobler, more productive thoughts.

Especially in the beginning, give yourself an extra hour of sleep at night. Go to bed an hour earlier. If you eventually want to transition towards sleeping less, that’s great, but I’m just trying to get you to build the habit of waking up earlier. Everything else can come later. In the beginning, make it easier on yourself.

Have a plan.

This is important. Waking up early provides you with more time in the morning, and this is both a blessing and a curse. Often, it feels like you have too much time. When the world is quiet, as it invariably is early in the morning, it can feel unstimulating to be awake unless you have specific plans.

Often, I've done the physical work of getting out of bed early, only to think, "There's no point to this" and go back to bed. Without plans, it sometimes seems like there is no point to being awake.



"I love the smell of an existential crisis in the morning."

The benefits of waking up early usually only become clear after you have found things to do with your extra time. Thus, do your best to have a plan. Plan to go to the gym; plan to do yardwork; plan to take a walk; plan to catch up on your email. You can plan to read, but keep in mind that reading immediately after you wake up isn't a good way to stay awake (see below). Try to make your morning activities as physically stimulating as possible.

The important thing, though, is to have a plan. Know in advance what you want to do, or have a "grab-bag" of possibilities to choose from in case you get bored. Without a plan for your extra time, "waking up early" sounds less like something practical you are doing for your own life and more like some vague self-improvement goal that won't motivate you to do anything.

Don't Read.

As mentioned earlier, reading is not the best activity for the early-early morning. What begins as well-intentioned learnin' often becomes a one-way ticket back to sleep. Especially after you wake up, focus on more movement-oriented activities like walking, exercising, or even something quiet but productive like writing.

At the very least, don't just roll over, grab a book, and begin reading. If you must read early in the morning, first get moving, get your blood flowing, and then find a reading position that isn't conducive to immediately falling back asleep. Sit straight up; don't recline, and especially don't lie down. Sure, lying down feels

good.....until you fall asleep and drop a hardcover on your face.



And that's why you should never read at 5 a.m.

Wake up to a song you enjoy.

Sometimes it just helps to not hate your alarm. I used to wake up every morning to the most god-awful buzzer, and I hated it every time it went off. A sudden BZZZZZZZZZZ!! can wake you up, for sure, but it likely won't make you enjoy waking up.

On the other hand, if your alarm sound is too soft or innocuous, then you run the risk of ignoring it. It's too easy when you're half-awake to switch off "Sounds of Waterfalls" and go back to bed.



**"Look, if it's not too much trouble, do you think you could wake--
I'm just saying, it might help if--
Never mind..."**

A worthwhile middle ground is to use a favorite song as a wake-up sound. Most phones allow you to use a

custom ringtone as your alarm sound. This will give you something to look forward to, rather than dread, when you wake up.

I used to think that using a beloved song as my alarm would make me hate that song. However, after waking up every day to “Turn It On” by the Flaming Lips for a few years now, I haven’t gotten tired of it. Waking up doesn’t tarnish the song for me; rather, hearing the song energizes me as I wake up, day after day.



It’s always a party at 6 a.m.

Additionally, though I am a creature of habit, it probably can’t hurt to change up your song every once in a while; the novelty will help you wake up that much more.

Play an enjoyable song after you wake up.

If you don’t want to use a favorite song as your alarm, or even if you do, you can play one after you wake up. This way, you will have something enjoyable and comforting to latch onto as you attempt to orient yourself in the strange, quiet world of the early morning. It can’t hurt to enjoy the first few minutes of your day.

Keep your goals separate.

If, for you, waking up early is tied to another goal - going to the gym, writing three pages of your novel, etc. - don’t be overly rigid about it. While having a plan for your extra morning time is important, it can also lead to excuses when you don’t feel like implementing your plan.

Say your plan is to wake up at 5 am and catch up on your email inbox. If you wake up at 5 am and don’t feel like answering emails, it’s very easy to say, “Since I’m not answering emails, I might as well sleep in.” Or you

might dread answering emails and thus come to dread waking up early because you've associated the two so closely.



“If I’m not turning into a werewolf today, then forget waking up early.”

Neither of these thoughts is conducive to building a healthy early-rising habit. It's important to separate your two goals so that when you don't feel like doing one, you will still do the other. Even if you're not going to answer emails, wake up at 5 am and take a walk, or watch TV, or take a relaxing shower. Keep building your early-rising habit, and don't let other goals interfere with it.

Realize that it will be okay if you don't get enough sleep.

Anybody who has worked all day on a few hours' sleep knows how much it stinks. The day drags. You drag. Activities that are normally stressful become interminable. All you can think about is going home and sleeping.

It's a feeling I avoid as often as possible, and for good reason. It's healthy to get a lot of sleep. If you don't, then your body will take it out on you.

However, it's also healthy to realize that if you don't get enough sleep one night, it's not the end of the world.

Don't get me wrong. I am often like this. I get phobic about not getting enough sleep and being tired all day. If my alarm goes off and I haven't gotten enough sleep, I start to freak out about how the day is going to go. I use that freaking out as an excuse for shutting off my alarm and going back to bed until it's absolutely necessary to wake up.

Like a lot of built-in preconceptions about sleep, though, this one doesn't pass the reality test. Yes, it will suck if you don't get enough sleep and are tired all day. But it's not the end of the world. It's one day. You've survived it before, and you'll survive it again. Sleep is less than a day away, and that day will pass.

This isn't a rock-solid tip like “put an alarm across your room” or “drink coffee”. It's a little more vague and

under-the-surface. It might not even apply to you.

However, I have noticed that the fear of not getting enough sleep is a negative pattern that holds me back from doing the things I want to do. The more I chip away at this negative pattern - this irrational fear - the healthier I feel. The same might be true for you.

Remember, it gets easier.

Like everything else, waking up early is a habit. At any given point, you are either building the habit or losing it. The more often you wake up early, the easier it will get.

This can be very hard to remember for the first few days, or even the first few weeks. Almost everything worth doing has a hump in the beginning that can be absolutely excruciating. Seth Godin calls this adjustment period The Dip, and it can be as scary as that sounds. I've given up after a few days because I was too tired to see that things would get easier in the long term. You might end up being so tired that you don't believe a word I'm saying here.

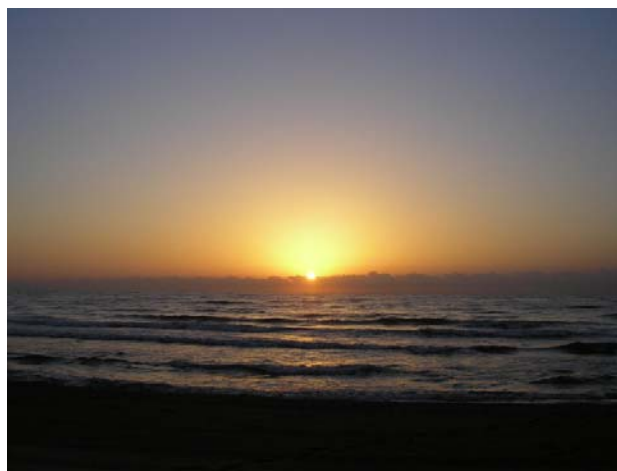
That's fine. Just tell yourself enough times that it will get easier, and the thought will begin to stick. After a while, you will see that it's true. Everything done long enough gets easier and becomes more of a habit. Waking up early is no different. Soon enough, you will enjoy the rewards, and you might not even remember how tough it used to be.

What will I do when.....

Early rising is hard - and some days are even harder than others. What works after 8 hours of sleep might not work after 3; what works sober might not work hung over. Some mornings, you just won't want to wake up early. The following is a list of questions you might want to answer before committing to waking up early.

Answering these "What will I do when...?" questions is important and can prevent you from sloughing off the early wakeup and possibly killing your momentum. The answer might be "I'm going the heck back to sleep" - and that's fine.

Just think about it in advance so you are working from a long-held plan instead of dumbfounded by an endless series of unexpected events. "The sun is too bright" is no reason to abandon your goal of consistently waking up early.



"I did *not* see this coming. Back to bed."

What will I do when....

- ...I am achy from exercising the night before?
- ...I haven't gotten nearly enough sleep?
- ...I didn't get quality sleep?
- ...I am hung over from the night before?
- ...I'm sick?
- ...I just don't, don't, don't want to get out of bed before I have to?
- ...I can't think of anything to do in the morning?
- ...I can't remember why waking up early is important to me?
- ...it's a weekend?
- ...I'm away on vacation?
- ...it's my day off?
- ...it's a miserable-looking day outside?

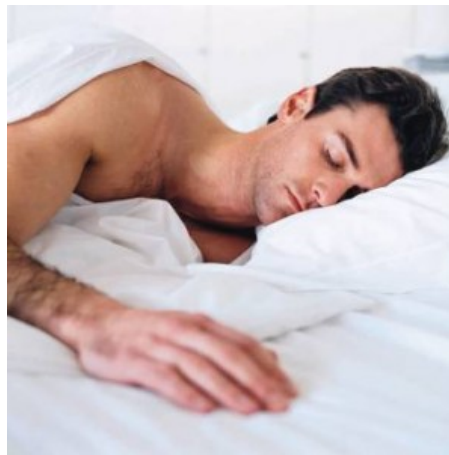
Special Note: Weekdays vs. Every Day

The conventional wisdom regarding waking up early is that you have to do it every day. Missing even one day, or being at all inconsistent will screw up your attempt to build a positive habit.

Now, doing something every day is certainly a great way to build a habit. No argument there. It might even be the best way. I don't, however, think it's the only way.

Waking up early every day means waking up early on Saturday and Sunday. If that idea sounds exciting to you, or even tolerable, then have at it. You'll build the early rising habit faster, and you'll have a lot of extra time on weekends to do interesting things. More power to you.

I, on the other hand, still value sleeping in now and then. Saturday and Sunday are my days to say "Eff you, alarm - I'm waking up when I want to." Part of me still likes to sleep until it's physically impossible to keep sleeping. Maybe one day I'll give up that habit, but I'm not ready to yet.



“Folks, he’s made it to 2 p.m., and he’s shown no sign of stopping.”

Luckily, I've found that sleeping in on weekends does not prevent me from waking up early on weekdays. The two are either unconnected or connected little enough that it doesn't make a tangible difference. I can sleep until 10 a.m. on Sunday and still happily wake up at 6 a.m. on Monday.

The early-rising methods in this book are mostly psychological: they focus on getting you to want to wake up early, and on gaining mastery over those initial few moments after your alarm goes off. On the other hand, the every-day method focuses on the physical habit of waking up every day at a certain time. That's great, but it's not what I'm preaching here. More is better - I would recommend 5 days per week so you don't throw yourself totally out of whack - but every day is not necessary.

Conclusion

This book is by no means the last word on waking up early. There are thousands of other words, many of which I will point you towards in the next section. What I attempted here was a psychological approach to waking up early, with an emphasis on the mental techniques and mindsets that will help you get over the early-rising hump.

However, if none of these techniques worked for you, don't give up. Keep reading - again, see the links below - and keep experimenting with ways to wake up early. Waking up early is an incredibly rewarding habit, and if you try hard enough, you will absolutely be able to build it in yourself.

Other Resources

The following is a list of other sources of information on how to wake up early. Most of them are quite useful. Note: None of these are affiliate links. The authors don't know me, so they would probably not react well to paying me.

1. Steve Pavlina, aside from being an amazing personal development blogger, has written several useful articles on waking up early. I highly recommend them:

How To Become An Early Riser:

<http://www.stevpavlina.com/blog/2005/05/how-to-become-an-early-riser/>

How To Become An Early Riser - Part II:

<http://www.stevpavlina.com/blog/2005/05/how-to-become-an-early-riser-part-ii/>

How To Get Up Right Away When Your Alarm Goes Off:

<http://www.stevpavlina.com/blog/2006/04/how-to-get-up-right-away-when-your-alarm-goes-off/>

Next, read every other article on his site, and then check back in here.

2. Tony Robbins (<http://www.tonyrobbins.com>) has never specifically addressed waking up early.....on the other hand, I can't picture him sleeping till noon, either. In any case, his writings on Neuro-Linguistic Programming (along with his original ideas) contain a ton of useful methods for making positive change in your life, and I have gratefully adapted some of them in this book. His books are the cheapest introduction to his work, but his audio programs are the most immediately engaging and energizing. Search for him on Amazon to see if any of his products seem right for you:

<http://amzn.to/qIN0E4>

3. Richard Bandler's Get The Life You Want provided the template for several of the adapted techniques in this book. On the whole, it's a useful and accessible introduction to NLP and provides plenty of easy jump-off points for useful changes.

<http://amzn.to/qWxXKN>

4. Seth Godin's tiny book The Dip has a lot of insight into making it past the initial hardship on the path to any goal:

<http://amzn.to/pLJSId>

5. Finally, you can just search Google for "how to wake up early" and find tons of useful sites:

<http://bit.ly/oPceBc>

Feedback

This book is not a money-making venture. I am not selling it, and it is not a teaser for a \$400 e-program. I don't even want your email address.

This book is a collection of information that I found useful, and my hope is that people will read it and make positive changes in their own lives.

That said, I am including a PayPal donation link. If this book revolutionized your life, I certainly won't discourage you from sending a few bucks my way:

Donate through PayPal: <http://bit.ly/pn48W3>

Alternatively, here is a list of great charities that might make better use of your donation:

American Institute of Philanthropy: <http://www.charitywatch.org>

What I'd like even more than money, though, is feedback: positive, negative, threatening, whatever. Tell me if this book helped you, and how. Tell me if it didn't help you at all. Tell me it ruined your life and that you'll see me in court. Any feedback is great feedback. Send it over.

ben DOT marlin at gmail DOT com

If it seemed like something was missing from the book, like a useful technique for waking up early, or a clear description of how to use a certain technique, let me know. I'll do my best to incorporate your suggestions into the next edition of this book. I really hope you'll share your thoughts with me.

ben DOT marlin at gmail DOT com

Just knowing the book had some kind of impact would make me ten times happier than receiving any money. If you've made it this far, please take a minute and write me an email.

ben DOT marlin at gmail DOT com

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Somewhere in this book, I have referenced the fictional time 5:73 a.m, purely as a copyright trap. If 5:73 a.m. shows up in your book, be warned that my lawyers will be all over you.

It is, however, a beautiful time of morning to wake up.