

ROUTINES

For so many entrepreneurs, juggling the many hats of business ownership can feel daunting at times. One of the best ways to set yourself up for success is to create a daily routine that promotes efficiency and cultivates creativity.

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CREATE MORE ENERGY WITH DAILY ROUTINES

BY @DAVEYTJONESY

It's about 2 p.m. when I'd begin to notice a significant decrease in focus and productivity. I'd begin a task, and about two minutes later I'd be mindlessly browsing Instagram, Facebook, or the news. It's been long known now that mental fatigue is as real a #struggle as physical fatigue. What is the main culprit of mental fatigue? Choices.

Yep, the more choices we have to make throughout the day, the more fatigued our brain becomes. Intuition might tell us that the more choices we have, the happier we are; however, some studies have actually shown that we become less happy when we have more choices.

Need more proof? Think about the last time you tried a strict diet. When were you most likely to cheat on the diet? For me, it's always harder to eat clean at the end of the day. It's easier to choose the less healthy, easier option at the end of the day because you're worn out from

making decisions all day.

Successful CEOs and other leaders have known this for a while now. Popular examples include Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, and President Obama wearing the same outfit (or type of outfit) each day to limit the amount of trivial choices they have to make.

And while choosing outfits in advance is certainly a way to preserve mental energy, that's just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Creating a strong daily routine is the best way to preserve mental energy for the important decisions that you need to make throughout the day.

The key is limiting the amount of trivial choice on a given day, in order to maximize energy for more important decisions.

Great daily routines provides a framework for your day, week, and month that take a lot of the thinking out of the day. Here are three considerations to help you create a killa' daily routine:

WHEN ARE YOU MOST PRODUCTIVE?

Me? I'm a morning person, and my most productive hours are from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m. During my "peak hours" I'm sure to tackle my most daunting or least appealing tasks because I have the mental fortitude to do so. If I'm stressed about something towards the end of the day, I try my very darndest to shelf that issue until the next morning when I can examine it with a fresh mind.

After you determine your most productive hours, guard them. Mark them off in a calendar... yes, in writing. People are more likely to commit to something when it's in writing. Make sure that time is used to get things done, and don't sacrifice it for appointments or social calls that take less mental energy. We'll make time for that later.

Bonus Thought: For most people, the beginning of your day is easier to control than the end. Why? Because "things come up." Create a daily routine that takes this into account, and don't schedule uninterrupted work time at the end of the day, when it's most likely to be interrupted.

WHEN ARE YOU LEAST PRODUCTIVE?

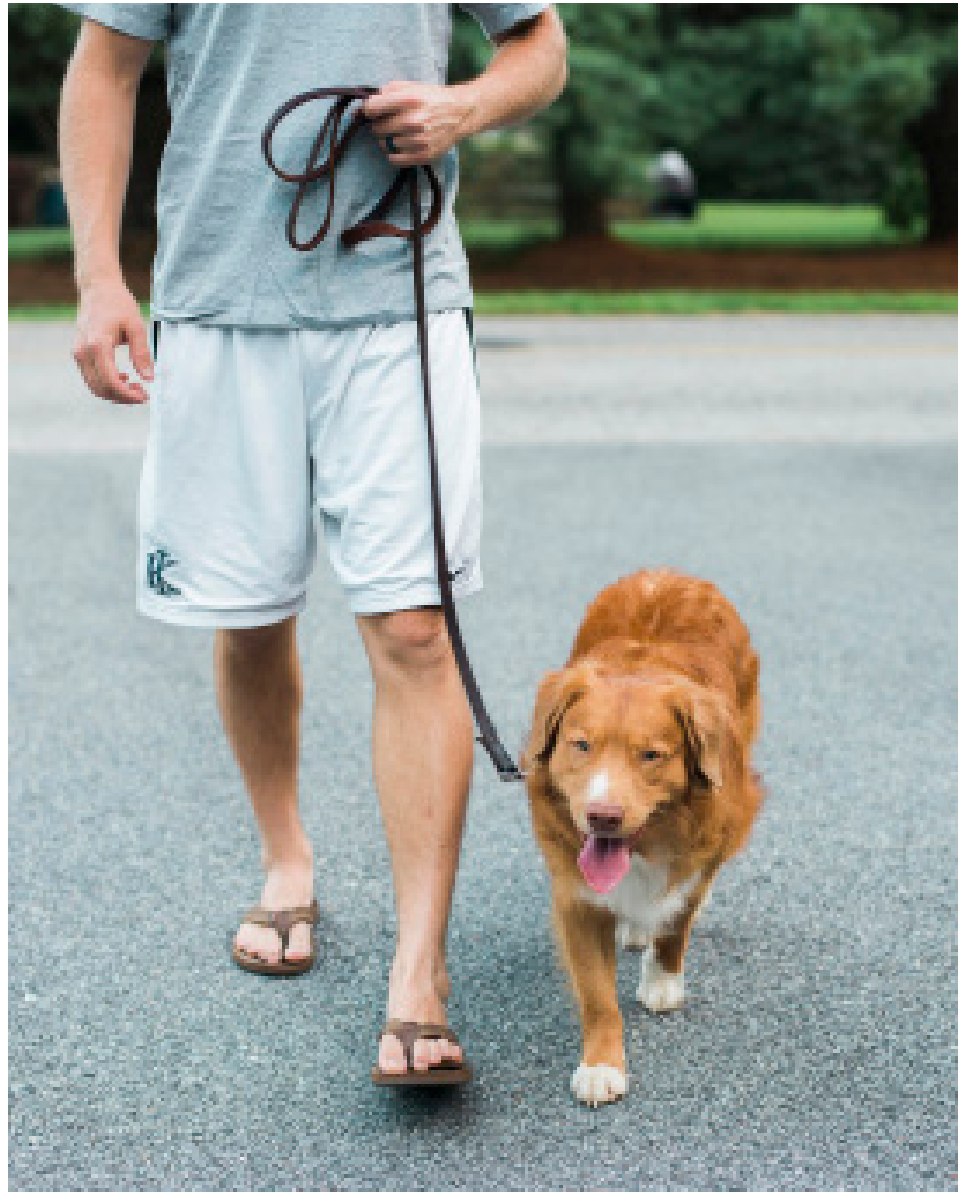
Let me paint you a picture. This is the time that you start a task and then subtly begin staring into social media space without noticing the transition. Or maybe you peer longingly into the refrigerator—not even hungry—just bored, but with things left to do.

Combat this by recognizing what time of day this usually happens, and scheduling something that will give your brain a break. I do this twice during the day: at lunch and around 4 p.m. I know that around 12 p.m. I become far less productive, so I stop for lunch and take the dogs for a walk. It gives my mind a break, and the physical exercise helps stimulate brain activity. Side bonus, it's a great opportunity to spend some time with the wifey.

This will look different for everyone, but there are a few ways you can't go wrong: 1) Eating a healthy meal; 2) Exercise (even 10-15 minutes will do the trick); 3) Nap. No, not a three hour nap—more like twenty minutes. Don't feel like you have to incorporate all three into your routine at the same time. Simply try being intentional with one or two.

WHAT ARE THE TASKS YOU HAVE/WANT TO DO EVERYDAY?

For most humans a daily routine will include at minimum eating, drinking, and dressing yourself.



For others it might include a daily quiet time, working out, studying, or journaling.

Schedule these things into your day after determining your most productive and least productive hours. It's best to schedule these items last because they provide natural breaks in the day.

These tasks are great bookends for larger segments of the day. And bookends will help you transition from one task to the next. I plan for about 30 minutes to wake up

in the morning. I use this time to read a newsletter (TheSkimm), and catch up on social media that I may have missed that night. Krista and I have separate quiet time routines in the morning that we do with while drinking a cup of coffee. And then we use working out in the afternoon to bring our work day to an end.

Prevent these tasks from becoming a distraction by removing the guesswork. It's not enough to pencil in some time for the gym. Determine what you'll do at the

gym from the outset; otherwise you'll get there and do a lot of moseying. This is why I love Crossfit—show up, read workout, and complete with class. No guessing.

It's also why we use PrepDish, a meal-planning subscription service. We receive a grocery list, prepping instructions, and cooking instructions. We spend Friday grocery shopping, Sunday prepping, and then it takes 15-20 minutes to cook the meal when we need it. We know what the meal that night will be, we know it's healthy, and we know it's delicious. No guessing.

Set-out your clothes the night before so you're not staring, half-asleep into your closet. Eliminate the morning guesswork.

See a theme? These “bookend” tasks have the potential to propel your day forward or destroy them.

So, what does your daily routine look like? How do you prevent yourself from turning into a brainless zombie by the end of the day?

MY IDEAL DAILY ROUTINE

6-7 AM Wake-up, quietly chuckle while reading the Skimm, scroll through social media, and die a little inside while glancing at my inbox.

7-8 AM Personal Time: Coffee, quiet time, and some more serious reading

8-9 AM Make breakfast and walk/exercise the dogs

9-12:30 PM Work: These are my most productive hours, so I tackle my largest or most daunting tasks

12:30-1:30 PM Lunch and walk/exercise the dogs

1:30-3:45 PM Work: Less daunting tasks like responding to e-mails and inquiries, and running errands

4:00-5:30 PM Exercise.

5:30-6:30 PM Dinner and walk/exercise the dogs

6:30-?? PM Appointments, Young Life, Social Time

8:30-10:00 PM Writing. Turns out, a lot of people find it's easier to write in the evening (and I find it's even easier with a beer or glass of wine).

PRODUCTIVITY TIPS FROM #TUESDAYSTOGETHER LEADERS

TRELLO!!!! It's a free task management tool that has been a complete game changer for me. I'm able to organize my tasks in a way that effective & efficient for me, and establish a daily routine that's 10x more productive. It's my new favorite tool!

- KATHERINE SCHMOYER

1. Use Mondays as my blog for the week day. I am trying to post consistently 3 times a week (MWF). 2. Keep one weekend day (Friday, Saturday, or Sunday) free each week for family/hubby date night time. 3. Answer all emails once in the morning and once in the evening (when you get one, don't let it interrupt what you're currently doing and throw you off track).

- ELIZABETH NORD

A way for me to stay organized is by making BIG goals, breaking those goals into categories and then breaking them down into small tasks. I feel like the Day Designer does the perfect job organizing that for me. Especially working a very demanding full-time

desk job and running the ever flourishing small business on the side. Each month has a certain task, like in September it is to re-do my website. I have weeks broken up into video, headshots, graphics, re-write all my text. I look at the first category, "Video" and think, I need to book the videographer on this day, write the script on this day...etc, then by the end of the week the video is done! Breaking things down seems much less daunting then thinking about a complete web-site overhaul, which I will never make the time for if I didn't know exactly what to do!

- TAHJAH HARMONY

I have a set schedule and I rely on programs like Trello for to do lists and task management. As I sit at my desk I check Trello and Basecamp to see what projects I should be working on, I then make a list of the top five things I *must* accomplish that day, sometimes it is longer than five but I focus on those. I save email for the afternoons when I am burnt out and I try to get up and stretch every hour. I

also recently started timing my tasks and using a blocker on Chrome to block sites that distract me (like Facebook!) So I'll say, it should only take me 45 minutes to design an initial website layout, and I'll put that on the clock.

- BRIANNA VENZKE

I have an app that blocks Facebook on my computer for a set amount of time. That alone has made my work time 100x more productive.

- TAVIA REDBURN

During the school year I turn off my wi-fi from 3-8 so I can focused on my family & dinner & homework...it makes me more productive during my "working" hours & helps me to relax!

-MEG HAMILTON

Something that works great for me is not opening my emails until at least 11am! I'm far more productive in the AM without the distraction of lots of new emails!

- LAURA ADAMS

Every morning I open my TeuxDeux app and sort the items by priority and note which items absolutely must happen that day. I also aim to actually take a lunch at the kitchen table, but preferably on my back patio with a magazine if the weather is lovely! And finally, I try to schedule at least 1 coffee/brunch at my home on either Wednesdays or Thursdays with a friend/fellow creative to give me something to look forward to toward the end of the week! It helps break up the days and give a refresh before weddings on the weekends!

- LAUREN LOCHER CARNES

My husband and I are both full time in our photography business and have two small children that are at home with us everyday. We have found that scheduling ourselves specific work times is crucial to our productivity. Our schedules never overlap and so while one of us is on kid duty the other is working on their "role" in the business. We have designated roles that we are each in charge of...for example mine are emails, phone calls, album design, and social media. Nathan's are editing, accounting, and blogging. The housework and kids we split responsibility depending upon who is busier with work that week! We also schedule a Tuesday morning weekly

meeting for a couple hours and make the following weeks schedule for ourselves! With kiddos we have to be flexible and our weekly schedules look different every week but we have found ourselves a lot less stressed and we have more peace of mind during our family time when we know everything is organized and accounted for!

- ASHLEY ATKINS SINER

Balance is everything, especially as entrepreneurs sometimes we think we need to be on top of everything, every moment of the day! And we forget how this mentality can affect our life. I established rules last year and it has seriously created a better business and better family life. Especially since my husband works in the same business (both photographers) we needed to have ground rules. So I created business hours, that start off with my contract stating I only answer emails & business calls Monday through Thursday. During the week I drop my daughter off at school and then have breakfast with my husband. At 8am with Latergramme I automatically post to instagram & Facebook before I start my day. At 9am I start my day. 9:00am (e-mails & messages) 10am-12p.m (editing sessions) 12p.m-1p.m (networking, sending photos to vendors & preparing next

days posts. 1p.m I jot down my to do list for the next day on my notes app and on Wednesday I clock into my calendar any things for next Monday. Thursday's I dedicate solely to writing my weekly newsletter, recording our bi-weekly podcasts for creatives, vendor connections and any meetings all between 9am and 1p.m and Fridays is Family Day so I do date afternoon with the hubby and after we pick up our daughter we do something with her. If I am flying out then Thursdays get substituted with Friday Fun!

- VANESSA VELEZ

I get up every morning at 5am to begin my work day. This is a great time for me because I can work for 3-4 hours completely uninterrupted. As the mom of three little ones, these hours are golden because I have no idea what is going to come up in the remainder of the day. So if we are looking at an 8 hour work day, I am already almost half done before the kids even get out of bed. I also try very hard to only work when my kids are at school and napping. This way they don't see me working all the time and feel like I am distracted. The other amazing thing about getting up so early is that my productivity has actually gone through the roof! Instead of staying up all night, like many of us do or have done, and working

while we are exhausted from a busy day, I am working when I have had a good night sleep, am refreshed, and my mind is sharp.

- **ABBEY KYHL**

I am a full time nurse 3 days a week, a part time student 2 nights a week, a wife and a mom. Sooooo, I really have to be productive with the two weekdays I can actually dedicate to growing my biz. Here's how I do it: One day is dedicated to client care and the second day is dedicated to growing my biz and marketing/networking. I schedule 3-5 must do tasks for each day, which are prioritized in the order of impact it will have on my business. I have to think what's the one thing on this list that is going to make me more profitable and give my clients the best experience. I ask myself this question while I order each task on my daily

list. With only two days, I realized I had to outsource my photo editing, album design and my laundry!!! I also use Prepdish to plan our family meals (thank God for Davey and Krista's blog post on this) and Instacart to schedule delivery of the grocery list (oh and the occasional bottle of wine!). These necessary, but often time consuming tasks are outsourced so that I can knock out my business work and enjoy my off time for my family. I no longer feel burnt out or burdened by my dreams that seem so huge and distant at times. I know that being part time in my biz means that I'm going to grow at a much slower rate, but I am also relishing in the fact that I am finally enjoying the process and no longer comparing myself. Outsourcing mundane chores and house tasks are just as freeing as outsourcing your image editing.

- **ANN MARIE BLAKE**

I also work full time, so productivity is key! I have weekly duty days and schedule out my entire week with to do's and meetings. I schedule things using block scheduling and use a timer for each task. When time is up, it rolls over to the next day. I always leave one evening only partially full, so I can overflow anything that didn't get done earlier in the week.

- **JENN POCHOBRADSKY**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What's your biggest struggle when it comes to routine and staying on task?
- How do you organize your day? Why?
- What techniques do you use to stay on task?
- What applications or planners do you use to organize your day/week/year?
- How do you balance personal life (family, friendships, etc.) and your business?

These are just to start the discussion. Feel free to include your own and encourage group members to do the same!

Thank you to our TuesdaysTogether Leaders
for contributing to this roundup!

Rising Tide