

Morning Routine + Your Non-negotiables

It's important to feel some degree of control of your life – even though there are a great many factors beyond our control. Regardless of your circumstances, one thing we typically all have control over is how we manage ourselves and the start of the day.

A predictable morning routine that widens your window of tolerance to the day ahead has a disproportionate influence on the quality of your entire day. To conserve neural energy, over 60% of human behaviour is anchored in habitual responses. Intentionally designing a morning routine that supports and doesn't deplete you, what you do in the morning sets the tone of your nervous system and the balance of neurotransmitters and can either set you up to feel positive and intentional OR rushed and reactive (McClellan et al., 2020). As over 60% of human behaviour is anchored in habitual routines, can help reduce stress throughout the day ahead.

With a predictable and healthy morning foundation we are all more productive and feel more in control. It becomes easier to anticipate the day ahead and cope better with challenges. And that leads to less stress and better decisions overall. Disrupting your regular morning routine has been found to create agitation, disturb workflow and concentration and reduce calm throughout the day reactive (McClellan et al., 2020).

What defines a great morning routine?

The activities in your morning routine do not have to be stupendously healthy or life changing. The repetition of any set of behaviours that serve to widen and NOT narrow your window of tolerance is adequate. Ideally your morning routine:

- Proactively creates calm within you and supports you to negotiate the day ahead
- Contains the same things every day: predictable repetition of activities, breakfast foods, goal setting etc.
- Involves waking at a similar time each day
- NOT hitting the snooze button
- Getting up out of bed AND not reaching for the phone first or spending time scrolling/answering emails etc in bed
- Exercise (at least some light stretching or solo dance party activity)
- Ranges from 30-90 minutes and contains activities that you LIKE and will do (not things that you think you should do and yet never seem to have the energy to complete)

How do I create a supportive morning routine?

1. Be real and sensible. Don't set yourself up for failure by having unobtainable or ridiculous standards that leave you thinking "what the hell" when they can't be maintained. Choose things you know are good for you that you ENJOY and exercise tough love only on the behaviours that you know narrow your window of tolerance.
2. Establish a set bedtime and wake time and keep your phone OUT of the bedroom (it's hard but try it for a week and see the difference that this makes) OK – at least beyond arm's length from the bed. This will give you a better quality of sleep and make you nicer, happier and more effective at work.
3. Remember that adults need between 7-9 hours of sleep.
4. Decide on your non-negotiables. These are the 3 or 4 activities that make the greatest difference to how you feel and your readiness for the day ahead. Ideally these are enjoyable and beneficial.
5. Set things up the night before to make it easy to complete your non-negotiables each day.
6. Ensure you have a healthy breakfast (something that supports stable blood sugar) and 2-3 glasses of water.

Do any of these feel like your non-negotiables?

- Making a healthy breakfast and spend some relaxed time savouring it
- Listening to a podcast or music while you get ready
- Doing an online exercise class, going for a walk or jog, stretching

- Doing a hobby like gardening, painting, reading
- Journaling or writing a how to list (a to do list with each item clearly defined into steps)
- Deciding on a new strategy to use in the classroom today

What if I am NOT a morning person?

Regardless of your natural high peak performance time, most people still need to get up and go to work. If the morning isn't your time keep your routine SHORT and focused on creating an internal state of calm and being intentional about the day ahead. This doesn't mean getting up at 7.55am, eating a breakfast bar on the run and doing your hair at work. Let's say short = 30 minutes.

Design your morning routine

1. *What time do you like to wake up?*

2. *What are the 3 non-negotiables that widen your window of tolerance and lead to a better day?*

3. *How can you prepare in advance to make sure these happen each day?*

4. *How can you recapture your calm on days when your routine is disrupted?*

Classroom Morning Routine

The learners in your class share the same need for a predictable morning routine that widens their windows of tolerance and sets them up for a calmer day at school. The first 15-20 minutes of each morning in your classroom exercises a disproportionate influence on the quality of your entire day together.

A clear, predictable and well-trodden daily routine is the foundation for a sense of psychological and physical safety. Fredrickson (1998) notes that feelings of calm arise "in situations appraised as safe and as having a high degree of certainty and a low degree of effort".

The classroom can be enormously stressful for young people, peer relations, sensory overload, self-doubt, learning anxiety and the uncertainty of peer relationship dynamics creates a perfect environment to unsettle

the Wild Brain. A calming and predictable morning routine helps learners shift from a survival focus into learning engagement.

What defines a great CLASSROOM morning routine?

Predictability and repetition create a great morning routine. Just as your personal morning habits can either widen the window of tolerance or narrow it, do too can the things that you lead in your classroom. The repetition of any set of behaviours that serve to widen and NOT narrow your window of tolerance is adequate. Ideally your morning routine:

- Proactively creates a sense of safety and calm = feeds the Wild Brain
- Has relationship rituals that reconnect you with your learners, and learners with each other for the day ahead = feed the Emotional Brain
- Starts with a simple repeated learning activity
- Has an automated and habitual feel
- Sets a tone of optimism and collaboration = feeds the Smart Brain
- Identifies the activities and structure of the day ahead in a clear visual manner
- Is unique to you and your class
- Is fun and encourages engagement

Define your CLASSROOM morning routine

Check the boxes in the list below of what you are doing or would like to do to create a positive classroom morning routine. Be so repetitive in the delivery of this routine that the learners in your room could describe it to a relief teacher. Identify the items in your ideal morning routine below:

- Establish a methodical and calming classroom pre-entry and entry routine (may include a structured lining up activity to reduce conflict, deep breathing, balance or grounding activities (e.g. standing on one leg and breathing), name one great thing for the day ahead etc.)
- Greet each child by name with warmth as they enter the classroom. Greeting each child by name and referencing something that is important to them or that they enjoy doing ensures everyone feels 'seen' and safe within their relationship with you.
- Reference a morning routine visual guide/poster with the morning routine's each step clearly outlined
- Welcome the class collectively with repeated language and rituals that create a sense of collaboration. Cement your positivity and optimism for the day ahead with a script such as: "Good morning most wonderful class in XX School it is wonderful to see you all here again today. We are going to have a terrific day today. There are many exciting and fun learning activities ahead of us."
- Circle time or group morning bonding activities (e.g. silent ball)
- Outline the day ahead with a clear visual timetable. Encourage learners to identify the activities they are most looking forward to.
- Check in with learners on their emotional state and readiness to learn. Support all learners to use strategies to be "ready to learn."
- Mark the roll using clapping activities or singing
- Prepared first morning learning activity to move directly into without time loss
- Morning movement program (gross motor, push pull, heavy lifting etc.)
- Class goal of the day. Identifying one collective goal (e.g. no tears at play break or getting through 10 minutes of learning without a swear word etc.) and the strategies that we might use to achieve our goal