

MAKE OVER YOUR *mornings*

A 14-DAY ONLINE COURSE BY CRYSTAL PAINE



MAKE OVER YOUR *mornings*

COURSE HANDBOOK

Crystal Paine

Make Over Your Mornings








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DAY 1

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS, ANYWAY?

Welcome to the *Make Over Your Mornings* course! I'm so excited to have you joining me on this journey! During the next two weeks, we will revolutionize your morning productivity, learn how to set (and achieve) goals, prioritize filling your soul before launching your day, and more.

We all come to this course from different perspectives. Maybe you've just passed through the newborn baby stage and are ready to think about setting an alarm clock again. Or perhaps you want to solidify a new morning schedule as you prepare to launch an at-home business. Or maybe you are tired of the perpetual sensation of putting out fires all day long, rather than beginning your day with a plan in place.

Whatever your current life situation, I'm thrilled you are taking steps to set up an intentional morning routine! As I've found in my own life, when I am purposeful about using my mornings well, it makes such a difference in my entire day. On the flip side, when I don't use my mornings well and/or when I wake up late and don't have a plan, I run around in circles — and it usually ends up making my whole day feel off.

Before we get started, I want to say a few things.

The goal of this course is not to create productivity for the sake of productivity.

As satisfying as it is to cross things off your to-do list, it is not an end in itself. Making over your morning is simply a way to ensure you have more time and energy for the things that matter most: caring for your family, serving in a ministry, starting your own business, learning a new skill, or taking time to refresh and refuel yourself.

It's also highly important that you remember that there is no such thing as a perfect morning routine.

Life is full of interruptions and set-backs. Please know that this is entirely normal. A great morning routine doesn't mean you will be exempt from those unexpected things forever, but it will help you stay on a better track to keep moving forward in spite of unplanned guests, or when everyone ends up sick, or the toilet overflows, or a child is having a difficult morning. I want this course to provide the inspiration, motivation, and practical hand-holding (because we all need a little of that!) to revamp your mornings.

The setup of the course is very simple — I intentionally designed it that way to help you be successful. Each day, there will be a short chapter to read in this handbook (it should take you five minutes or less to read), a three- to five-minute video to watch, and a project or two for you to complete (again, you should be able to complete these in five minutes or less).

Yes, did you catch that? Going through this course will only take you about 15 minutes per day — that's it! And if you follow through with the reading and assignments, those 15 minutes could make a major difference in not just that day, but in the days, weeks, months — even *years* to come.

We can all find 15 minutes a day to devote to making our lives better, right? So, let's do this! I'm cheering for you!

DAY 1 **PROJECT**

- Decide when you will make time every day to complete this course.**

Set yourself up for success now by finding a 15-minute time block in your day that you designate specifically to reading the handbook, watching the daily video, and completing the projects. If possible, I encourage you to prioritize this time block for somewhere early in your day — maybe even right after you get up in the morning.

- Once you have decided when you will complete the daily course lessons, *tell someone* (your husband, your friend, or your kids).**

Take two minutes right now to send that person a text or an email, or make the announcement at breakfast.

Then, be sure to block this time in your calendar as a 15-minute daily appointment with yourself that you're committed to keep for the next 14 days.

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- It's always good to be reminded that we're not alone! Find others in the [MoneySavingMom.com](https://www.moneysavingmom.com) community who are joining you in this 14-day journey by following the **#MakeOverYourMornings** hashtag on Twitter or Instagram. I'd love to have you participate in the conversation and community by posting about your mornings on social media using this hashtag, too. I'll be following the hashtag, cheering everyone on, and jumping in and posting some of my own mornings right alongside you.

DAY 2

YOUR MORNING BEGINS **THE NIGHT BEFORE**

Our first step forward is actually a step backward. This might seem confusing or counterproductive at first, but stick with me for a minute — I think you'll see quickly why this is important.

In many cases, hectic and disorganized mornings are a direct result of **what is not happening the night before**. So revamping the *night before* is the necessary first step to revamping our mornings.

For example, do you often find yourself running around like a crazy woman trying to find clothes, shoes, and socks for your kids or to get everyone fed and find all the homework that needs to be turned in before the school bus arrives? This is usually not because the school bus came too early; it's probably because you didn't plan ahead the night before.

If you find yourself feeling frustrated and behind every morning, step back and look at what triggers your stress. Is it getting everyone dressed? Is it finding your keys? Is it getting people fed? Is it getting yourself looking presentable? Is it finding time to pack lunches? Ask yourself: how can you neutralize some of these stress triggers the night before?

A successful morning begins with a successful before-bed routine. Now, before we begin looking at the routine that will best serve your family, let's be clear about what an evening routine is decidedly not: **it is not simply another opportunity to create a long and overwhelming to-do list.** Rather, the goal is to logically (and intentionally) create a going-to-bed routine that allows you to wake up one step ahead, rather than ten steps behind, in the morning.

Just a short amount of prep time the night before has the potential of eliminating a boatload of decision-making in the morning — both for yourself and your family. For example, setting out your clothes and your children's clothes (or having your children pick out their own if they are able), quickly wiping down the kitchen counters and starting the dishwasher (check out [FlyLady.net](https://www.flylady.net) to find out how motivating a shiny sink can be!), and ensuring backpacks are ready to go in the mud room may all be the perfect kick start to your morning. Or, putting the oats, water, and cinnamon on low in the crockpot, setting out cereal bowls and spoons, and packing lunches the night before could help reduce the frantic nature of the morning.

I encourage you to ask yourself some key questions as you begin to nail down your own, unique-to-you, evening routine. First, what time do you need to be in bed? Bedtimes aren't just important for our children! Far too many of us try to operate on too little sleep, and this causes us to wake up groggy and functioning in low gear — and often leads to being unproductive the entire day.

Also consider what time you need to be up and out of bed in the morning. If possible, count back eight or nine hours from that, and set that as your bedtime. This will not only help you get more sleep, it might also mean you get to have a little relaxation and reading before you fall asleep — or maybe even a bubble bath!

For those of you who are moms of babies and toddlers, have a child with special needs, or have other circumstances that make sleep at night difficult, I just want to encourage you: Give yourself grace as you evaluate your evening routine. Caring for your little ones or your special needs child or dealing with your own health issues may consume the majority of your time and energy right now — and that's more than okay! Just remember to be realistic about and kind to yourself regarding your vision and expectations of what you can do at the end of a long day (which may have come on the heels of an equally long night). If you can, choose just one or two tasks you can do before heading to bed that will

simplify your mornings. Then, maybe consider adding in a nap or two throughout the week or on the weekends.

I have found that eliminating all electronics (no checking Facebook or Twitter!) from my bedtime routine saves me from wasting time on interesting but useless rabbit trails and also allows me to fall asleep much faster. I don't always follow this rule perfectly, and when I don't, I always regret my decision to aimlessly look at Instagram or Pinterest. It's so much better when I just shut it down and go to bed!

If you're struggling with getting a good night's rest, I highly recommend reading *Sleep: It Does a Family Good* by Dr. Archibald Hart. One thing he suggests is if you continue to wake up tired in the morning or have a significant energy lag in the afternoon, you should move your bedtime back in 15-minute increments until you can consistently wake up feeling rested.

After establishing a bedtime, consider the three to five tasks that you could do at night to help you have a more productive morning. What menial tasks do you find yourself doing first thing in the morning that prevent you from launching into your day? In many cases, I bet these tasks could be done the night before, allowing you to start with a fresh slate in the morning. Think of it as waking up in the morning with the ability to move ahead with your day, rather than being forced to move backwards to take care of what should already be done.

DAY 2 PROJECT

We have created a [printable on page 59](#) to help with your Day 2 project. I encourage you to print it out and walk through the steps below.

STEP 1

Establish a bedtime, and if married, ask your husband to hold you accountable to it! Try writing down the bedtime in your planner or as an appointment in your smartphone calendar. Make it clear this is a goal you want to accomplish.

STEP 2

Think about the tasks in your mornings that trigger the most stress. Write these down.

STEP 3

Look at your list of stress triggers and ask yourself these questions: What can I do at night before I go to bed to help alleviate some of that stress in the morning?

STEP 4

Take a few minutes to write down three to five tasks you will do every night before bed to make your mornings run more smoothly. You might come up with many more than three to five things! If that's the case, choose the top three to five things and start with those.

Note: Maybe you'd really love to spend your evenings working on perfecting your underwater basket weaving skills (is there even such a thing?), but that's probably not going to help your mornings run smoother. So make sure your list of three to five things will truly impact how your mornings flow and will help bring more peace and calmness to the rest of your day.

□ STEP 5

Decide the order in which you would like to complete these tasks.

It doesn't make sense to organize the backpacks and lunches in the kitchen, then go upstairs to set out clothing, only to then return to the kitchen to start the dishwasher. Remember that this evening routine is helping serve you, not make for more busy work!

□ STEP 6

After you have really nailed down this evening routine, document it somewhere permanently like an Evernote folder for homemaking, inside your homemaking binder, or on the family message board.

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- Check out this post where I discuss [*my evening ritual*](#).¹
- I also wrote here about the fact that waking up excited for the day ahead depends upon [*getting enough sleep*](#).²
- I give you a little peek into [*my current before-bed routine*](#).³
- Consider using an app like Commit, which tracks your simple daily goals. You can set up a few goals like “went to bed by 9:30pm; set out my own clothes and my kids’ clothes; cleaned and wiped down kitchen counters.” It is incredibly motivating to watch those checkmarks add up!

1 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2014/08/rise-shine-challenge-day-3-2.html>

2 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2014/01/qa-wake-excited-day.html>

3 <https://instagram.com/p/zYtra9jzwG/>

DAY 3

PUT THE **BIG ROCKS** IN FIRST

“How do you do it all?” It’s the question I am asked most frequently. The fact is, I *don’t* do it all!

I’ve intentionally decided to focus on only a few things in my life — areas I have decided are worth pouring myself into, to the best of my ability. I call those few things my “big rocks.”

Today, let’s talk about how we can decide what exactly these “big rocks” are.

Most of us have seen or heard the illustration about ***putting the big rocks in the jar first***.⁴ (If you haven’t already watched today’s video, I tell the story there.) But do we actually follow the implications of this teaching? If your days often feel chaotic and disorganized, it could stem from the fact that the non-negotiables in your life are continually squeezed out of your daily rhythm.

When setting up any routine, one key is to decide what things need to be prioritized in your life **right now**. This will look differently to different women depending on your stage of life, of course.

4 <http://life.familyeducation.com/organization/stress/56271.html>

One example of pouring the sand or water into the jar first, rather than the big rocks, might look something like this: waking up consistently earlier than the rest of the family, quietly making your way to the kitchen to brew that first cup of coffee, and occupying yourself with sorting the mail for the last couple of days. You follow that up with a quick checking of email. Then remembering it is garbage day, you hastily empty multiple trash cans, haul the can to the curb, only to discover your hungry preschooler waiting for you at the kitchen counter when you return. Certainly, everything you accomplished was important and ultimately needed to be done. But were they the most valuable things you could have focused on in that hour before the kids needed your attention?

In her book *What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast*, Laura Vanderkam explains that **highly productive people focus on the “important but not urgent” things early in their mornings.** We all know how easily the “tyranny of the urgent” can dictate our day, and this leads to a very frantic pace of living. We can spend all day long running around in circles, staying incredibly busy and putting out a lot of fires, with nothing to show for the time and energy spent at the end of the day.

We can't always control external circumstances, but we can determine what we prioritize. Once you know your “big rocks,” you can build a framework around fitting in those priorities.

However, it's important to remember that no one “does it all,” so there is no one person who has unlimited space for big rocks in their jar! Wishing that you could do the exact same things in the exact same fashion as someone else will lead to nothing but envy and a sense of defeat. The most valuable thing you can do is to determine what you (and no one else) have been called to in this season of life.

If you are having trouble determining what your “big rocks” are, ask yourself this question: “If I did NOTHING else today except _____, my day would be a success.” Another way to think through this issue of priorities is to ask yourself: “What's the most important thing I must accomplish today?”

I usually pick 2-3 things that are my top priorities and then, in addition to writing them down, I actually tell my husband what those are for some added accountability. There's something about writing them down and stating them out loud to someone that gives me the extra boost of motivation to actually follow through with them.

DAY 3 PROJECT

□ STEP 1

Take a few minutes to determine your non-negotiables. Be realistic about your current season of life. These non-negotiables may change entirely a couple years from now.

□ STEP 2

If you need help coming up with your non-negotiables, ask yourself these questions: “What’s the most important thing I must accomplish today? What’s the one thing I can do to make today a success?”

□ STEP 3

If you are married, ask your husband what the two to three most important things for you to accomplish each day are. His response might surprise you!

□ STEP 4

What’s something you have a longing to add into your schedule — something that always seems to get squeezed out? This could be exercising, reading, daily Bible study, writing, or any number of things.

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- To learn more about what Laura Vanderkam’s research on what the *Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast*, [buy her short eBook](#).⁵
- In this video, [I dispel the myth that I do it all](#)⁶ (I most assuredly don’t!), and I also explain that I don’t do it all *alone*.

5 <http://amzn.to/1Gfc95K>

6 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoMb7ku50ng>

DAY 4

YES, YOU NEED AN **INCENTIVE**

Today I'm letting you in on a secret: one of the reasons I stick with getting up early regularly is purely selfish: *I love it*. Now, let me be clear: I don't always love the whole getting up part, but I love what I do immediately after getting up.

Mornings are one of the rare times when the house is completely quiet, and I don't face the normal interruptions, noises, and pressing needs from others that accompany much of the rest of my day. I relish sitting down with my cup of coffee and delving deep into productivity mode. It is gratifying to know that if I am faithful to get up at my scheduled wake-up time, I will have a good chunk of time to prepare for the day, write, plan, and blog in the peace and quiet of the early morning hours.

Over the years, I've worked hard to develop the habit of getting up, exercising (I usually just run/briskly walk on the treadmill in the garage for 10–20 minutes — while listening to music, praying over my day, or reading a few pages from a devotional book), showering, getting dressed in something that makes me feel

good, then sitting down with my coffee in hand to read my Bible, journal, and get some blogging in before the rest of the house wakes up. It's a great way to get a big jumpstart on the day and guarantee that I not only feel better and look more presentable, but that I've also started my day in the right frame of mind.

Since we homeschool and our kids don't need to be up at the crack of dawn to catch a bus, this allows me the freedom to have more quiet time in the mornings before the rest of the house gets up. I'm also someone who generally is much more productive in the mornings than I am in the evenings. So this setup works really well for us right now.

That said, every person is wired differently and every family has different schedules and needs, and that is why it's important for you to take the time to consider what would work best for you and your family. It's also important to consider carefully what motivates you.

What will help you avoid the snooze button and begin your day, even on mornings when you wake up feeling extra grumpy or tired (we *all* have those days)? Maybe it's getting up and making a protein smoothie right away. Or lacing up your sneakers and meeting a friend for a brisk morning walk. Perhaps it's turning on some fun music and taking a hot shower. It could be something as simple as lighting your favorite scented candle and pouring a cup of coffee before you journal and pray.

Rewards aren't only for kids; they motivate adults, too! Building in a reward mechanism is an easy yet powerful step toward establishing — and sustaining — a disciplined approach to your morning.

That said, the physical reward of doing something you like is critical, but there is also a mental aspect that carries equal weight. *What, after all, are we doing this for?* Remember what we discussed on Day 1: the goal of waking up early and establishing a reliable routine is not simply to demonstrate more efficiency. There must be a deeper foundation.

Most days, I wake up fueled by a purpose and passion for life. I have many short- and long-term goals I'm working toward that I'm very excited about, and each day provides another opportunity to inch a little closer to those goals. I know if I get up and spend my morning productively, I not only start out my day on the right foot, it also allows me to refresh my spirit, get in some writing, and be ready to pour into my family when they wake up.

For me, reminding myself of the important benefits my family and I will reap if I get up early and use my morning well makes all the difference in the world when the going gets tough and I am tempted to quit or even just lie in bed for another hour. Linking joy and purpose to your newly formed daily habits will help you stay motivated long term, will boost your attitude, and will help sustain you on difficult mornings when you really want to slack off.

DAY 4 PROJECT

STEP 1

What are some simple and practical rewards that would make you want to get out of bed in the morning? Is it a delicious bowl of oatmeal? A fun workout? **Make a short list** of external motivators that would make you look forward to getting up in the morning and would help you approach the day with a positive attitude.

STEP 2

Now consider *internal* motivations. How can you link joy and purpose to what you are trying to accomplish every morning, and every day, for that matter? For example, helping your family get out of debt may be directly linked to you waking up early to work on your home-based business which will in turn generate revenue to be used to pay off the debt. Or, waking up earlier than normal will allow you time alone in Bible study and prayer, which will prepare you to face your troop of hungry children coming down the stairs!

STEP 3

Write this short list of internal and external motivators on an index card and tape it to your bathroom mirror. Don't worry; you won't leave it up there forever! But a front-and-center daily reminder will certainly help you stay motivated in your quest to make over your mornings.

STEP 4

Be brave! Share these motivations with a friend who is sharing this journey with you. Sharing will enable her to remind you, when you may be ready to fall off the bandwagon, of the very reasons you were so excited about making over your morning in the first place. Go ahead! Send her a quick text or email right now. You'll be glad you did!

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- I wrote a blog post specifically about [*how to combat waking up grouchy*](#)⁷ (because it happens to us all).
- Anne Bogel wrote a great article about [*dressing for the day you hope to have*](#).⁸
- I wrote here about [*The Fringe Hours*](#)⁹ and highly recommend getting a copy! Jessica Turner will encourage you to make time (even little snippets of time, perhaps in your early morning hours) for things that fill you up and refresh you.
- Create a playlist of your favorite songs on iTunes and load it onto your iPhone or mp3 player so it is ready to go tomorrow morning.

7 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2013/08/10-things-to-do-if-you-wake-up-feeling-like-a-grouch.html>

8 <http://modernmrsdarcy.com/2012/11/dress-for-the-day-dress-for-the-life/>

9 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2015/02/moms-need-give-time.html>

DAY 5

HOW **SETTING GOALS** CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Do you ever wonder what your big, pie-in-the-sky dreams have to do with your everyday life? Well, the truth is, they have a lot to do with your daily life, but only if you begin to take steps in the right direction.

At this point in the course, we have focused on a bedtime routine, a consistent wake-up time, and cultivating our attitude when we do wake up. Now, let's step back for a moment and consider the importance of setting goals.

If you've read my blog or books, you know the importance I place on goal setting! It's not just because I think goal setting is a good idea in theory; it's because I've put the theory to the test in my own life and have seen that goal setting has the power to not just change your days — it can transform your entire life.

On the flip side, without goals, you are aiming toward nothing and nowhere. How discouraging is that?

If you don't have goals and plans in place before you begin your day, there's

a good chance you will spend that day running in circles, often resulting in complacency and floundering. Days upon days of running in circles add up to months and years — or even a *lifetime!* — of a little forward movement along with a lot of frustration and stress.

Intentionally charting a course for each day will help more than just your mornings. It will impact your weeks, your months, and your years! If you want to make a difference in your lifetime, daily goal setting is an important tool to a life well lived. After all, years that are composed of days upon days spent with purpose and focus all add up to a lifetime that has made a mark on this world. While you might not end up as far along as you'd hoped to be at the end of the year — or the end of your life! — if you set goals and whittle away at them each month, week, and day, you're guaranteed to be further along than if you did nothing.

You might be wondering what goal setting has to do with making over your morning. Well, it actually has a lot to do with it. You see, one of the keys in setting goals is to then break them down into bite-sized pieces. These bite-sized pieces can help create your plan for the day — a plan that will provide you with purpose, motivation, and direction.

While I'm a big fan of goal setting, I need to mention a few important precautions. The reason you set goals is to enhance your life, not to exhaust and overburden yourself. If the goals you set become additional stress in your life, they need to be tweaked, rewritten, or dropped altogether.

It's good to challenge ourselves. It's good to push ourselves outside our comfort zone. It's good to aim high and work hard. But there always needs to be room to breathe and enjoy life.

As we talked about in Day 1, we are not setting goals merely to obtain the satisfaction that comes with crossing them off the list. We set goals in order to stay on track with our purpose and vision. They are tools to be used, not masters to rule over us. **Charging ahead at breakneck speed just for the sake of speed and productivity is no way to live.**

So keep this in mind as you consider what goals you want to set. Don't set yourself up for failure by choosing goals that are so huge and impossible, you'll

never be able to come close to achieving them. Otherwise, you're just setting yourself up for defeat and discouragement. Tomorrow, we'll continue talking about goal-setting and I'll walk you through how to take your big goals and break them down into bite-sized pieces.

DAY 5 PROJECT

We created printables to help you work through the projects for Days 5 and 6. You can find them on [page 60](#) and [page 61](#).

STEP 1

Consider the areas of life you are responsible for. For example, my categories for this season of my life are: Marriage, Myself (personal), Mothering, Money (our finances), and MoneySavingMom.

STEP 2

What two or three things would you most like to change, accomplish, or work toward in these areas? You may be tempted to write down 10 things in each category; please don't! That is a recipe for disaster (believe me, I've been down that path before).

STEP 3

Narrow your ideas down to just one or two things that will make the MOST impact in each of these areas. As we talked about earlier, ask yourself, "What is the ONE thing I can do in this area that will have the greatest impact?"

Note: If you're married, ask your husband for his input. Would he tweak any of these goals at this point?

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- There are so many excellent resources on the web about goal setting! Here are [*35 possible spiritual goals for the year*](#).¹⁰
- I have written more about [*goal setting here*](#).¹¹
- Michael Hyatt shares some [*great goal setting tips*](#)¹² in this podcast and video.
- Recommended reading that will help you laser-focus on the one thing you can do to move ahead in your particular area of life: *The ONE Thing* by Gary Keller

¹⁰ <http://stonesoupforfive.blogspot.com/2014/12/35-spiritual-goal-ideas.html>

¹¹ <http://moneysavingmom.com/2013/01/how-to-change-your-life-by-setting-goals.html>

¹² <http://michaelhyatt.com/season-2-episode-10-10-biggest-mistakes-in-setting-goals.html>

DAY 6

HOW TO BREAK YOUR BIG GOALS DOWN INTO **BITE-SIZED PIECES**

A big goal can seem overwhelming and daunting as a whole, but when broken down into small pieces, it becomes much more doable. So how do you break a big goal down into smaller pieces?

Well, first off, I cannot encourage you strongly enough: be as specific as possible when setting your goals! Don't begin with "spending more time with my kids." Rather, pick something measurable like, "I commit to reading aloud to my kids five times per week, for 10 minutes each time."

In addition, be incredibly realistic. You need to follow up each "what" with a "how". So as soon as you formulate the specific goal, then develop a plan of action for how you're actually going to accomplish that goal.

For instance, if one of your goals is to save up a specific amount of money to pay down debt or pay cash for something, take that big goal and break it down into monthly and then weekly savings goals. Then, look at your budget and decide where you're going to come up with the extra money. Will you lower your grocery bill by \$10 per week and then put that money toward your savings goal?

Will you work an extra few hours and save that money toward your goal?

This will not only help you know *what* you plan to do, but *how* you plan to do it. In addition, it will allow you to make sure that you can actually follow through with the goal you set and the plan of action you created for it.

In some cases, if you're struggling to come up with a realistic plan of action (i.e., you can't figure out how you're going to find the time or money to accomplish it), then there's a good chance you might need to go back to the goal-setting drawing board and streamline your goal so it's a bit more realistic for where you are in life right now.

When you break your goal down to weekly bite-sized pieces, you are better able to know exactly what you need to do to stay on track. If you want to read 24 books next year, you know you'll need to read two books per month, or half a book each week. That boils down to around a chapter per day, give or take. That's much more concrete and doable than a big audacious goal of reading 24 books in a year.

I like to set yearly goals, but some goals are too big or too small for a year's time frame. Consider how much time you realistically think it would take to accomplish your goal and then set a date to have it accomplished. You can always change the date, if need be, but having a goal finish date gives you momentum and drive. And you just might find yourself picking up speed the closer you get to the finish line!

Accountability is also key in goal-setting success. My husband and I review our financial goals on a monthly basis, and I review my personal goals at least every few weeks. I've also found the public accountability of blogging my goals and process to be amazingly motivating.

Also, keep your goals visually front-of-mind. Print them off and stick them where you will see them, load them into an app on your phone, or just have a legal pad you devote to your lists, and work from that!

It doesn't really matter how you store your goals. It matters that you review them to keep them front-of-mind. The more often you remind yourself of what you're actually aiming for, the more apt you are to stay motivated to keep aiming for it.

DAY 6 PROJECT

Continue using the printable from yesterday for today's project.

STEP 1

Review your one to two goals in each of your areas of responsibility.

Do you want to make any changes?

STEP 2

Take your first area of responsibility, and fill in the name of the priority, plus the one or two big goals for that priority. Then break down those one to two big goals into monthly goals. Be realistic! Think of these monthly goals as intentional steps (rather than leaps) towards the 12-month goal.

STEP 3

As you are breaking down these goals into monthly action steps, consider what things you can do each month to progress in this area. What habits could you establish to help make these goals a reality? Write them down.

STEP 4

Create a method (whether that is a notepad, an Evernote folder, an app, or goal sheets in a binder) for you to list and track weekly goals.

STEP 5

Revisit your goals regularly! Set up a reminder on your phone or pencil in a reminder on your calendar to review your goals every month. Or jot a note in your planner for 30 days from now to review your goals.

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- Check out this post about some [*failures in goal setting*](#).¹³
- Interested in creating folders in Evernote for storing information like goals? Read this [*free tutorial*](#)¹⁴ at Simplified Organization.
- Sometimes reaching a goal is as simple as [*checking a box every day!*](#)¹⁵
- Anne Bogel writes about the [*value of focusing on the habits formed in the process of goal setting*](#).¹⁶

13 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2013/12/im-changing-goal-setting-2014.html>

14 <http://www.simplyconvivial.com/2015/use-evernote-homeschooling>

15 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2015/01/one-simple-trick-stick-goal-youve-set.html>

16 <http://modernmrsdarcy.com/2014/01/forget-about-results-my-new-approach-to-goals-for-2014/>

DAY 7

ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS: THE MISSING INGREDIENT

As I hinted in yesterday's reading, I believe that accountability is the key to our success in so many areas in life. And *lack* of accountability is likely the biggest culprit for so many of our failed projects, bad habits, poor routines, and unmet goals. This is why I heartily recommend that you find at least a few accountability partners to be your cheerleaders in both this 14-day endeavor and any other area(s) of your life you're working on changing.

It might seem like an extra unnecessary step, but trust me on this: don't skip it. You don't want to go through all this work to create and map out a goal-setting plan only to not follow through because you don't have good accountability in place.

You can't build good habits and discipline in life alone. Well, you *can*, but it will be a lot harder to keep at it if you don't have anyone encouraging you along the way.

For example, whenever I run alone, I find that I tend to go easier on myself and stop earlier than I planned. If my side starts hurting or I have a long to-do

list, I use that as an excuse for a short run. However, when I run with someone else, I'm always motivated to push a little harder, go a little faster, and not give up when I feel winded and tired.

It's the same with life: when you feel like you're going at it alone, it's harder to keep on when the going gets rough. But when you have others around you who are encouraging you, checking up on you, or texting you to make sure you're following through with what you've set out to do, you're much more apt to actually *stick* with your goals.

Perhaps the idea of opening up to someone about a difficult goal may sound excruciating. Believe me, I get that. But please don't let fear of vulnerability stop you! Take a step out of your comfort zone and try opening up with a friend, family member or coworker about a goal or two you are working on.

One important thing to remember: **an accountability partner can be your friend or your spouse, but they have to be as committed — or more committed — to your success than you.** They cannot be someone who will let you just fall off the bandwagon and slack off. They need to hold your feet to the fire. That's what accountability is about, after all.

If you find it helps, you can even have two accountability partners that you check in with every day. This might seem tedious and time consuming, but that daily accountability will play a key role in your eventual success.

DAY 7 PROJECT

□ STEP 1

Take the time right now to jot down a short list of potential accountability partners. It could be as simple as your husband and your sister, but it's possible you may have to think a bit more about it. Do you happen to know anyone else taking the *Make Over Your Mornings* course? Who do you know (even if you don't know them that well) in church, at work, in your moms' group, or the drop-off line at school you could share your goals with?

□ STEP 2

Send a text or email right now to this person who came to mind — or talk to her in person if you'll be seeing her today. Please remember this doesn't have to be awkward or complicated; simply ask if she would be willing to text, call or email you regularly to ask how you are doing with the goals you have set in this course. It's as simple as that!

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

Need some extra motivation to follow through with today's project? Check out these articles on the value of accountability partners:

- [*5 Accountability Sources to Help You Reach Your Goals*](#)¹⁷
- [*Why Accountability?*](#)¹⁸
- [*Dieting or Working Out With A Partner Shows 95% Success Rate, Study Finds*](#)¹⁹
- [*Your Best Business Asset: An Accountability Partner*](#)²⁰

17 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2013/12/5-accountability-sources-to-help-you-reach-your-goals.html>

18 <http://www.ozprinciple.com/self/why-accountability/>

19 <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2013/2/prweb10408614.htm>

20 <https://gigaom.com/2009/12/20/your-best-business-asset-an-accountability-partner/>

DAY 8

CREATING A **TO-DO LIST** THAT SERVES, NOT STRANGLES

You know all those sticky notes on the fridge, the kitchen cabinets, the computer screen, and floating around in your purse? The random notes that say “schedule dentist appointment”, or “ask about fall soccer schedule”, or “clean out the van”?

Yes, those. They all need a home — not multiple random locations around your house and purse — because creating an actionable and accurate to-do list is essential to smoothly running a home.

Now, this might feel impossible and overwhelming. If you’re anything like me, you have many, *many* things you would like to do — if only you had hundreds more hours each week. There are so many good options to choose from — great books to read, people to meet, events to attend, opportunities to volunteer, home decorating projects to tackle, skills to learn...we can certainly exhaust ourselves trying to do way too much. I know I have been very guilty of this in the past!

You see, I tend to be a highly optimistic, overly ambitious person. This can be a good thing and a bad thing.

When it comes to do lists, it's not a helpful trait. I'll write out this massive list of all the things I want to do in a day — more tasks than I could accomplish in 36 hours, without stopping to sleep or having any interruptions! And then halfway through my day, I find myself completely frustrated at how much I have to do and how “far behind” I am. But the problem is that I set myself up to be unsuccessful from the beginning by trying to be superwoman's clone!

I've had to learn that it's imperative to pick the best from among the good instead of setting myself up for failure and frustration from the get-go by having a mile-long to-do list.

How do you do this? Well, here's step-by-step help to creating a to-do list that actually serves you instead of overwhelms you:

Take a few minutes before you go to bed or first thing when you get up in the morning to create a task list for the day. Whether or not the tasks are actually completed during your morning routine is not important; the list simply needs to be **created** before you jump into your day.

As you brainstorm your to-do list, remember what your personal priorities are for this season of life (refer back to Day 3 where we talked about “putting the big rocks in the jar first”). Don't add all sorts of “would like to do” things to your list at first. Start with the most important things — the stuff that's really going to matter in 10 or 25 years.

Then, think through the basics. Depending upon your family and season of life, these could be things like laundry, hygiene, children, activities, preparing for work and school, or setting doctor appointments. What are the things you **MUST** do in a day? Not the things you think you **should** do or the tasks you feel **obligated** to do, but those responsibilities that are absolutely necessary.

Pick just one or two bite-sized pieces from your goal lists and add that to your task list, too. Remember: keep it simple and don't bite off more than you can chew. What tasks can you accomplish in 15-30 minutes that will help you inch in the direction of the finish line with your current goal(s)?

If possible, assign general time frames for each item on your to-do list. I find assigning a time block to each task helps me ensure I don't bite off more than I can chew each day, helps me think through my day in a logical, step-by-step manner, and helps me stay on track with tasks.

Important note: please keep your to-do list short. I repeat: please keep your to-do list short. The worst kind of to-do list you can make is one that has dozens and dozens of items on it and defeats you every time you glance at it.

We are human beings — not robots! — and we don't have 56 hours in a day. Plus, we need to take some time to breathe and refresh ourselves. Because of this, I encourage you to have no more than five to ten tasks on your to-do list each day. This might seem like a crazy short list, but I dare you to try it. You may find, as I have, that only picking the most important priorities for each day makes you feel a lot less overwhelmed about your day, helps you to become an expert at saying “no”, and sets you up for success.

It's also much easier to actually start and finish tasks when you know you only have a few to do each day. You'll feel much more accomplished and fulfilled getting a few top priorities done each day, rather than spending hours and hours running around in circles, feeling swamped, and having little to show for all your activity at the end of the day.

Now, all that said, there are many days when I'm trying to write out my to-do list and it starts to become unrealistic. When this happens, here are three questions I find it helpful to ask myself:

- 1. Does this task have to be done at all?**
- 2. If the answer is yes, does it have to be done today?**
- 3. If the answer is yes, can someone else complete the task (my kids, my assistant at work, etc.)?**

Working through this simple set of questions means I am able to delete, defer, or delegate a large number of tasks that otherwise would pile up on my own plate.

You might be wondering, “Crystal, how should I track this to-do list? Electronic or paper? Should I write down routines, or just the unique tasks that are to be done that day?” What I have learned is you need to choose what works best for you. No one else can decide how you best function, what helps keep you accountable, and what builds motivation.

I know many people love to use online task management programs like **OmniFocus**,²¹ while others love the gratification of physically crossing off a line

21 <https://www.omnigroup.com/omnifocus>

from a yellow legal pad or checking a box. Experiment with a few different options and determine what kind of to-do list serves you and your needs the best.

Personally speaking, I'm a pen and paper gal. I also love using Google Calendar to schedule out activities and keep track of all upcoming tasks. I not only schedule events, things related to our family's activities, and speaking engagements on my calendar, I also schedule out tasks as All-Day Events. These could be projects that are due, people I need to call, things I need to remember, or a post I want to write.

When I'm planning my to-do list for the day, I consult Google Calendar first to see what projects are due, activities are planned, and reminders I've made for myself for that day. I then create a to-do list with specific time blocks based upon all the tasks I've already scheduled and made note of on Google Calendar.

Sometimes, as I'm planning my day, I realize that I have scheduled too many projects and to-do's for that day. When that happens, I curtail my list to the most important and must-do things and re-assign everything else to another day. With the drag-and-drop feature on Google Calendar, it makes it incredibly simple to reassign tasks.

Remember that there is no badge of honor awarded for marking off the greatest number of things possible for your to-do list. You want a list that aligns with your current season of life, takes you a step closer to meeting a goal, and serves your family. It's better to do less if that means you feel less overwhelmed, have more breathing room, have more time to be present with those you love, and actually start and finish projects!

DAY 8 PROJECT

□ STEP 1

Set up a daily system of creating a to-do list. Decide now whether you want those tasks to be entered into your phone or iPad, or whether a notebook or homemaking planner will work best. Some fabulous apps for to-do lists include Omnifocus, Evernote, and ToDoist. If you are a paper kind of a gal like me, there are so many fantastic printables out there as well that help with to-do lists, including these [*customizable Daily Dockets*](#).²² If you're a journal fan, you should check out [*the Bullet Journal*](#)²³ as another system for to-list organization.

□ STEP 2

Decide when you will create your to-do list — last thing before you go to bed or first thing in the morning? Try it both ways and see which works better. I prefer before bed because I find it to be an incredibly relaxing exercise to write out all the contents swimming around in my brain onto a piece of paper and then structure it into an organized manner for the next day. Plus, when I add in time frames for the projects, it allows me to revise the list until I get a list that actually fits into 24 hours — with room to spare! That's such a good feeling at night, to know that there is enough time the next day to do the things you need to do. You already have your plan in place and you can go to bed in peace knowing you just need to wake up in the morning and follow your plan.

²² <http://moneysavingmom.com/downloads/household-management-forms>

²³ <http://www.bulletjournal.com/>

□ STEP 3

Begin creating a “master list” of all the tasks you would like to get done at some point (reorganize the Christmas Rubbermaid bins; replace the curtains in the nursery) but are not time sensitive. This is also called a “brain dump” in the organizational world. With a master list created, you can simply transfer a few of these each week to your daily task lists and chip away at them a little bit at a time. You can keep this master list on the notes section on your phone, on the Evernote app, on a piece of paper on the fridge, or do what I do and assign each project to a day on Google Calendar.

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- Read more about [*how I use Google Calendar*](#).²⁴
- Feel like there are 10,000 tasks floating around in your head that need to get down on paper? Take this free 6-part eCourse: [*Declutter Your Head*](#),²⁵ which applies the *Getting Things Done* philosophy to homemaking.
- I’ve said it before and I’ll keep saying it: [*I’m not Superwoman, and I don’t pretend to be!*](#)²⁶
- Want to [*experiment with task-management apps*](#)?²⁷ Here are some suggestions.

²⁴ <http://www.livingwellspendingless.com/2014/01/20/google-calendar/>

²⁵ <http://www.simplifiedorganization.com/brain-dump/>

²⁶ <http://momlifetoday.com/2012/01/i-gave-up-on-trying-to-be-superwoman/>

²⁷ <http://www.simplifiedorganization.com/2015/how-to-set-up-a-task-management-app/>

DAY 9

NAILING DOWN YOUR **MORNING ROUTINE**

Today's lesson is one of my very favorites! Not only do I love coming up with routines, but today is when we start pulling together all the pieces we have discussed up to this point and truly begin to **make over our mornings**.

As we get started nailing down a morning routine, I want you to consider all the things you would like to get done in the first **one to two hours** of your morning. Remember, I said one to two hours, not ten! Focus on some of the key things that will keep your family life humming, and will set you up for a successful and productive day.

Can you narrow this wish list down to eight to ten things? If this is difficult, ask yourself: which items on my wish list will make the biggest difference to my day, every day?

Now, an even tougher assignment will be to pare down this list to the three to five must-do's each morning. Include something that nourishes your soul and positively creates your mindset for the day. You are in the process of creating a

real space of exclusivity, so this is not the time or place to write down things like “scrub the kitchen floor.” Don’t get me wrong. Clean kitchen floors are important, but sweeping and mopping are simply not first orders of business for your day.

Ever since I was in my teens, I have begun my day with Bible reading, prayer, and journaling, and I can’t ever imagine this routine changing. When something unexpected comes up, or I am traveling and have to be on a different schedule and this chunk of my morning is skipped, I feel like my whole day started off on the wrong foot.

One of the side benefits to this habit is it helps me get out of bed in the morning. Yes, for real. Why? Because I love my mornings and my morning routine so much! Within minutes of waking up, I am setting the groundwork for my day. I am nurturing my heart and soul (through Bible reading and prayer), my body (through exercise), my mind (through blogging), and also tending to the needs of my family by getting myself fully ready for the day (hair, makeup and all), and starting a load of laundry.

True confession: I don’t always get all of that done every single morning before my kids get up. There are even some mornings when I skip the getting myself ready for the day part altogether until later on in the morning. Because, well, sometimes life happens and you just gotta do what you gotta do!

But even if I only get three or four of the five planned things done in the morning, it’s a lot better than waking up and having no intention and just immediately jumping into trying to deal with overwhelming piles and projects without a plan in place.

While I don’t always follow my morning routine exactly and perfectly, I do follow it fairly closely on a very consistent basis. I usually tweak it at least once or twice per year as life seasons, children’s needs, and household and personal responsibilities ebb and flow.

Here's what my current routine looks like:

- ✓ *Wake up around 5:30 am (this time fluctuates a little depending upon what time I went to bed the night before. I try to get at least seven-plus hours of sleep every night.)*
- ✓ *Make coffee and light a candle.*
- ✓ *Read my Bible, pray, and write in my Gratitude Journal.*
- ✓ *Work on blogging and business projects.*
- ✓ *Exercise for 10-20 minutes.*
- ✓ *Take a shower and get dressed and ready for the day.*
- ✓ *Start a load of laundry.*

Because I have written about schedules and routines so many times on my blog, I am aware you may be tempted to fall into despair when you see everything I set out to do in the first few hours of my day. Please try not to do that.

Don't compare your morning routine with mine. No two families are alike and no two humans are wired in the same manner! In addition, any long-time reader of my blog knows that there are days when my best intentions are sacrificed on the altar of the urgent (or on the altar of exhaustion).

I don't maintain my morning routine perfectly every single day, but I keep coming back to it because it has borne such good fruit in my life and in my family's life. Remember, a **good** routine will help simplify your morning rather than create new anxiety about perfectionism.

One of the keys to establishing and maintaining this morning plan will be to keep it front and center. Would you prefer typing it up on the computer and printing it out for the refrigerator? Or jotting it down on an index card and posting it on your bathroom mirror? Or perhaps both, for a little added accountability?

I have found that my husband is my best accountability partner in this area, because he sees on a firsthand basis how helpful my morning routine is. Blogging about it regularly has also helped create endurance to keep going and humility when I fail.

DAY 9 PROJECT

We created a printable to help you work through the project for Day 9 (see [printable on page 62](#)).

□ STEP 1

Work through this step-by-step worksheet and then try out your new morning routine for a few weeks. There's a good chance you'll need to tweak it some, but commit to sticking with the bones of it consistently for at least four to six weeks.

□ STEP 2

At the end of four to six weeks, re-evaluate, ask for your husband's input, and make a few changes. Then, commit to sticking with it again for another four to six weeks.

Keep tweaking your morning routine as needed, especially as your life circumstances change. Consistently follow through with a morning routine for four to eight weeks and there's a good chance it will become such a habit for your life. That means it won't just change your whole day, but your new routine will become second nature.

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- Struggling to figure out how to allocate your hours each week? Consider reading Laura Vanderkam's eBook called [168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think](#).²⁸
- Amy Lynn Andrews has also been a tremendous help to me in thinking about the concept of a time budget in my own day. Her eBook is [Tell Your Time](#).²⁹

²⁸ <http://amzn.to/1QE5fSE>

²⁹ <http://amzn.to/1envb4d>

CRUSH THE MINDSET OF "I CAN'T DO IT"

If there is one thing I've learned over the past four years, it's that the messages in my head can dictate whether or not I even have the gumption to pursue anything. I've been on a mission to eliminate the self doubt and insecurities that have plagued me, and in the process have purposefully taken on projects and goals that intimidated me even as I said "yes." In November 2014, I [*wrote quite candidly*](#)³⁰ about one of these experiences.

Michael Hyatt talks about how many times, the best things happen just outside your comfort zone. Immediately, you might think, *"Well, I'm not trying to start my own business, launch a major marketing campaign, or go on an overseas mission trip. This does not apply to me in my everyday life as a wife/mother/coworker."*

But it does apply to you, my friend! Whether intentionally or not, all of us have established a comfort zone. It's far easier to operate within that zone (hence the word "comfort"). What does it look like to step outside it?

30 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2014/11/heart-throat-stomach-knots-just-want-run-away.html>

It might mean that you stop telling yourself, *“I can’t possibly get up any earlier than I do now.”*

It might mean eliminating the thought of, *“I can’t possibly stick to a routine five or six days a week. I’ve failed in the past, and I’ll fail this time around. I’m just not the personality type that does well with a disciplined lifestyle.”*

It might mean putting to death the mantra you’ve been telling yourself, *“We’ll just never get out of debt. We’ll never have enough discipline to reduce our spending, and there are no more hours in the day to earn income.”*

Whatever resistance you are feeling right now (internally or externally) about making changes in your routine, I encourage you to press on. Don’t back away. Growth happens when things are stretched, broken, and refashioned. Where there is no resistance, there is no growth.

Yes, God created some of us to love routine and rhythm and others of us to love flying by the seat of our pants. But we all benefit from routine and habit. In fact, we all rely on it (even if you don’t like to admit it!). I encourage you to be mindful of the messages currently percolating in your head. If you feed them, they take up permanent residence. But if you replace them with something new — with truth and hope — new life has space to flourish instead.

DAY 10 PROJECT

STEP 1

Are there lies you've been telling yourself over and over again?

Take a moment to see if you can complete this sentence with something you've recently told yourself: "I will never be able to change _____ because I will never change." Or maybe this sentence " _____ will always be this way and that's all there is to it."

STEP 2

Have you just identified a lie that needs to be replaced with truth?

Have you identified a bad habit that needs to be replaced with a good one?

STEP 3

Jot down one or two habits (and the negative thoughts that go with them) that you want to intentionally replace with new, life-giving habits and thoughts. For example, *I hate my habit of mindlessly checking social media when my kids are eating breakfast.* **NEW HABIT:** *I will always keep a book parked on the kitchen island so that I can guarantee my default becomes to pick up a book for those 10 or 15 minutes a day.*

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- Check out this post: [*Three truths that pulled me out of a pit of insecurity*](#).³¹
- And this one: [*Punching Fear in the Face*](#).³²
- And this one, too: [*Moving Outside My Comfort Zone*](#).³³
- Need help replacing an old habit with a new one? Ann Voskamp has created a beautiful [*printable for tracking habits for 100 days*](#).³⁴
- Trying to break some bad social media habits so you can be more focused during designated computer time? The [*Anti-Social App*](#)³⁵ is something to consider.

31 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2013/09/three-truths-that-pulled-me-out-of-a-pit-of-insecurity.html>

32 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2013/04/punching-my-fear-in-the-face.html>

33 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2012/09/video-the-rewards-of-stepping-outside-your-comfort-zone.html>

34 <http://www.aholyexperience.com/a-100-day-calendar-printable-for-fresh-start/>

35 <http://anti-social.cc/>

DAY 11

DON'T NEGLECT DIET AND EXERCISE

We often worry about the quality of fuel we're putting into our vehicles and we worry about the amount of vegetables we're feeding our kids. But often, we forget to pay attention to how we're fueling our own bodies.

No, this is not a healthy living course, but I encourage you to consider the subject of creating a routine from a holistic perspective. Our minds and bodies were designed by God to be intimately connected and inter-dependent. How many times have you eaten something (a boatload of sugar, for example) only to become grouchy and lethargic for the rest of your day? And how many times have you seen a toddler who is in desperate need of a nap become completely unhinged over something of no consequence?

In both situations, the physical needs of the body have directly, and significantly, influenced the emotional stability and well-being of the mind. We are whole creatures and a holistic view of our life will place a premium value on caring for our bodies and minds with quality fuel.

Exercise is something we will pretty much never regret doing. You have probably never heard someone say: “I really wish I wasn’t stuck in the habit of walking for two miles every morning.” Or, “I shouldn’t have gone out jogging this morning. That just ruined my day.”

Our bodies crave movement because they were designed for it. The same goes with nutrition. Have you heard someone say: “I wish I wouldn’t mindlessly prepare oatmeal sprinkled with almonds every single morning? Why can’t I just take an extra 3 minutes and stick a Pop-Tart in the toaster?” We all know balanced nutrition is something to aspire to; sometimes, we just need a little kick-in-the-pants to get it going.

Starting your day off with exercise and a healthy breakfast is one of the best ways to kick start a great day. If you struggle to have healthy breakfasts in the morning, take a little time to think of three or four favorite healthy breakfast options so you (and your family!) don’t grow tired of the same options every morning. You can defrost something overnight; prepare slow-cooker oatmeal in the crockpot; select a whole grain muffin from the freezer and fry an egg in five minutes; or mix up a quick smoothie in the blender. We’ve found it helpful to just rotate a few different breakfast options (smoothies, fried eggs, and oatmeal) to keep it simple and eliminate decision fatigue.

One other super simple tip is to drink a glass of water right after you wake up. I know a warm beverage is tantalizing in the early mornings, but hold off for a few minutes, because rehydrating with a cold glass of water first thing in the morning can have a major positive impact on your energy levels! I like to put a little lemon juice in mine to perk me up and to add some extra zing.

While I believe wholeheartedly that it’s important to include some sort of exercise into your daily routine, I don’t think you need to stick to one kind of exercise or that you need to spend 45 minutes to an hour exercising — unless you want to do so. I like to change things up and think about my current season of life when planning out what exercise program to follow. There are some seasons, like when I went through P90X, where I’ve devoted quite a bit more time to exercising every day. But there are other seasons, like right now, when I’m keeping it very simple and just spending 10-20 minutes briskly walking/running on the treadmill in our garage.

I encourage you to keep exercise simple and to remember that something is always better than nothing. Even 15 minutes of exercise will get your heart pumping. A couple sets of sit-ups, push-ups, jumping jacks, squats, or lunges could all be done in 15 minutes. Or queue up an exercise video from YouTube the night before so it is ready to go. Of course, an early morning jog could be another great option if that works with your husband and children's schedules.

DAY 11 **PROJECT**

STEP 1

Make a list of quick and easy breakfast ideas. Use the [printable on page 63](#) if you'd like. Think of ways you could find time to prep some of these recipes ahead of time or make breakfast prep go more smoothly. That might mean quadrupling a batch of muffins on the weekend and freezing them or teaching your kids how to make their own oatmeal in the mornings and to clean up after themselves.

STEP 2

Think of two ways you can incorporate more physical activity into your day. An early morning walk or a lunchtime jog? A set of hand weights in the corner of your bedroom for a quick arm workout and some lunges three times a week? Dusting off the treadmill that is currently serving as a laundry-drying rack in the basement? List these possible early morning workouts and add them to your morning routine list.

If you could use the extra accountability, use the printable [Daily Nutrition & Fitness Tracker on page 64](#) to help you get a better idea of how well you're taking care of yourself and to motivate you to stick with your goals.

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- Interested in learning more about implementing baby-step changes in your kitchen? Try [*Your Real Food Journey, a Gentle Guide to Steady Progress*](#).³⁶
- I have written about [*100 Days of Real Food*](#)³⁷ in the past, and I wholeheartedly recommend the website as a great resource for recipes and tips to get you and your kids eating healthier.
- [*Simplified Pantry*](#)³⁸ is another great resource for feeding your family simply, frugally and healthfully, all from a basic pantry and freezer list.
- Schedule an hour this week to prep [*instant oatmeal packets*](#)³⁹ or [*waffles for the freezer*](#).⁴⁰

36 <http://trinaholden.com/real-food-journey/>

37 <http://www.100daysofrealfood.com/>

38 <http://www.simplifiedpantry.com/>

39 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2012/08/20-minute-freezer-cooking-barbecued-meatballs-and-homemade-instant-oatmeal-packets.html>

40 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2012/05/4-weeks-to-fill-your-freezer-waffles-day-3.html>

DAY 12

BUILDING **ENDURANCE AND STRENGTH** + ELIMINATING **DECISION FATIGUE**

Today, I suspect some intervention may be in order. Is the initial buzz of excitement of a new routine beginning to wear thin? Has the adrenaline-pumping glory of change faded?

Now that you have several days of a new bedtime routine and a new (possibly earlier) wake-up time under your belt, what can you do to help yourself stay on track and stick with your new routine for the long haul?

Here are some ideas:

- ✓ *Listen to upbeat music.*
- ✓ *Light a candle.*
- ✓ *Diffuse oils.*
- ✓ *Dress the way you want your day to go.*
- ✓ *Turn on some uplifting music.*

- ✓ *Count your blessings and write them down in a journal.*
- ✓ *Hug/snuggle all the little people in your house when they come downstairs in their pj's.*
- ✓ *Express appreciation for your husband, your family, your job, your health — pick one thing and be thankful!*

More times than I can count, I have gotten up at the pre-determined wake-up time feeling groggy and resentful. But as I stuck to my routine and did what I needed to in order to launch my morning, my attitude has changed. I have never regretted my commitment to getting up early because it always ends up serving me, and, by extension, my family. We've all heard it said, but it bears repeating: ***there is long-term gain for short-term pain!***

When setting new goals, it's important to remember that after the novelty wears off, the goal still remains, even if your willpower does not. Progress will not magically happen without you exerting some sustained effort. We all know this, of course, but we don't necessarily like to implement it. Sometimes sticking with this new morning routine will be hard. Obstacles will arise, and invariably your routine will need to be tweaked. But more often than not, the best things in life are all the more satisfying precisely because they were so difficult to achieve.

At this stage of making over your mornings, please do not overlook the value of accountability! We discussed it in Day 7, but perhaps a reminder is in order. Be sure to let someone else know that you are working hard to establish a new morning routine. Give that person permission to ask you how it's going (and then don't be offended when they do ask you!). I have found that one of the best ways to help keep me on task about something is to ask my kids to hold me accountable. They don't have to be official accountability partners, but you can encourage them to ask you how your new morning routine is going. If your kids are old enough, perhaps they will have even noticed some of the changes themselves and even become inspired to make changes of their own!

Finally, don't forget to reward yourself. Rewards do not have to be expensive endeavors, mind you. Set a goal to stick with your routine for 21 days and at the completion of those three weeks, celebrate with your husband and kids by baking some muffins, making hot cocoa and having a fun party together. Or give yourself the evening off and watch that movie you've been wanting to watch.

Or take an hour and head to the bookstore or library and get that book you've been wanting to read. Or buy a special blend of coffee or breakfast treat to enjoy in the morning. Or make plans with a friend to meet at a coffee shop on a Saturday afternoon, and celebrate by having someone else make your caffeinated beverage of choice!

DAY 12 **PROJECT**

STEP 1

What decisions do you make on a regular basis that are constantly bogging you down? Is it meal planning, outfit selection, activity-scheduling issues, cleaning systems? Write down two decisions that can easily (or with some effort) be replaced with an ongoing system.

For example, *if meal planning is a weekly mind-stretching exercise, come up with categories that work well with your family's tastes.*

- ✓ *Mondays = grilled meat*
- ✓ *Tuesdays = breakfast for dinner*
- ✓ *Wednesdays = pasta and salad*
- ✓ *Thursdays = leftovers*
- ✓ *Friday = pizza night*

STEP 2

Make a note on your calendar, for sometime in the next week, to spend 15-20 minutes creating two new systems (meal planning, outfit selection, etc.) that will help eliminate the burden of decision fatigue.

STEP 3

Set a goal for how many days you want to work on sticking with your new morning routine, and then pick a reward when you reach that goal! Write it down, and mark it on your calendar.

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- Anne Bogel writes about the *importance of eliminating decision fatigue*⁴¹ in something as mundane as our wardrobe.
- Interested in learning more about the concept of a capsule wardrobe? *This eCourse*⁴² will guide you on setting up a wardrobe with only 33 items.
- In this article, I challenged my readers to *stop making so many decisions*.⁴³

41 <http://modernmrsdarcy.com/2014/11/simplicity-productivity-personal-uniform/>

42 <http://theproject333.com/capsule/>

43 <http://moneysavingmom.com/2015/01/want-get-done-stop-making-many-decisions.html>

DAY 13

WHAT TO DO **WHEN YOU FAIL** (BECAUSE WE ALL DO!)

Nothing truly valuable in life is accomplished without some blood, sweat and tears. That's part of what makes them so valuable, isn't it?

Perhaps you have already hit a rough patch in your new morning routine. Take heart: you're not the only one! But don't stop with the commiseration. Remember on Day 10, we talked about *pressing in* to the resistance you are feeling? One bump in the road does not automatically sound the death knell for your new goals.

Would you tell your child to never try to ride her bike without training wheels again, after she couldn't reach the end of the driveway without falling? Of course not. You would cheerlead her, build her back up, give her a few more tips, and place her right back on that bike.

Perhaps some modifications are in order, and that is perfectly fine. In fact, I'd say it's more than fine; it's a good thing. The point is to get something in place that works for your family.

In the summer of 2013, our family gathered around the computer and watched the live feed of Nik Wallenda as he tightrope walked across the Grand Canyon. Without realizing it, I held my breath with each step he took. When he finally made it safe and sound to the other side, I let out a massive sigh of relief.

I was so intrigued by him and his story that I ended up getting a copy of his book *Balance: A Story of Faith, Family, and Life on the Line*. One of the parts that fascinated me was when he talked about one of the biggest keys to success as a tightrope walker. Nik said in order to stay balanced, he has to constantly make little adjustments.

While to the outside viewer, it appears like he is pretty smoothly and seamlessly walking across the tightrope, but in reality, he is tweaking, shifting, and making little corrections so that he doesn't get completely off-kilter. I think this is also important in our own lives.

You will probably need to regularly make small (or sometimes large) tweaks in how your morning routine looks in order for it be in line with your priorities and to make sure your morning routine is a blessing to your family, not a burden or a taskmaster. The point of a morning routine is not to create a rigid schedule that never changes, but to have a routine that serves you and your family well.

Any time you get off track, however, it is valuable to take some time to evaluate why. Consider this: am I trying to fit a round peg into a square hole? Or is just a slight tweak all that is required to make the morning doable?

Ask your spouse or friends (or someone else in the MoneySavingMom.com community) for suggestions and solutions if you feel stuck or like something just isn't working. Oftentimes, fresh perspective can give you some simple tweaks that will make a world of difference!

DAY 13 PROJECT

STEP 1

Are there areas of your evening routine, morning routine, task list, or goal setting in need of some rethinking or tweaking? Is there something that just isn't working at all? Ask your spouse and friends for some input if you feel like you're stumped on how to tweak things to serve your family better.

STEP 2

Remember, this is not the time to scrap the plan entirely! Unless something is just completely wrecking your day or clearly not working at all, I encourage you to only make *minor* tweaks until you've stuck with something for at least a few weeks. You are forming new habits, and they take time. A common mistake is to give up on great ideas too soon.

STEP 3

Mark your calendar for three weeks from now, when you will spend ten minutes evaluating your morning routine. Three weeks from now, new habits will be well underway, and you will have gained significant traction. Three weeks will also provide a better perspective of whether any of your morning routine components need to be more significantly revamped.

HAVE TIME FOR **A BIT MORE?**

- Be encouraged by Ann Voskamp's post on [*creating \(and failing, and getting back up again\) good habits*](#).⁴⁴
- Check out the eBook [*How She Does It*](#)⁴⁵ to read how women in different situations handle work/life/home balance.
- Read Greg McKeown's book [*Essentialism*](#)⁴⁶ to consider more about focusing on the specific things you are called to do, which may help you stay motivated.

44 <http://www.aholyexperience.com/2008/11/hummin-along-how-to-compose-new-habits/>

45 <http://amzn.to/1envlbO>

46 <http://amzn.to/1N2xAww>

DAY 14

YOU MADE IT TO **THE FINISH LINE!**

You did it! You have taken the steps to create a new evening routine and a morning routine; you have set goals in the most significant four to six areas of your life; you have broken down those big-picture goals into monthly and weekly tasks; you have prioritized cultivating your soul every morning; and you have established a consistent method for the ever-present to-do list.

Congratulations! I am so proud of you!

Now is the time for me to step back for the wide-angle view of what you have worked so diligently toward. You have taken fabulous — and significant! — steps in the right direction, but we need to keep those steps properly in their place.

Remember, these routines, task lists, and goals are just tools. The people in our lives are not. These tools are the means by which we are able to fill ourselves up so we can pour ourselves out. These tools, however, are not valuable in themselves. They gain their value only insofar as they support us to pursue what we were created to do.

A disciplined life is not an end to itself. This, from the author of *21 Days to a More Disciplined Life!*

I want to encourage you to come back to these big-picture questions from time to time. One of my favorite things to ponder when making a decision or thinking about a change is this: will this matter 25 years from now? How will this better enable me to do what God has created me to do?

You were made for more than just surviving and making it through each day. You were made to make a difference!

It is my desire that you will take the tools you've gleaned from this course to not only *make over your mornings*, but to ultimately approach your entire life with more purpose and intention. You've only got one life; make the most of it!

MY MORNING BEGINS THE NIGHT BEFORE



MY GOAL WAKE-UP TIME

MY GOAL BEDTIME*

**ideally 8 or 9 hours prior to the wake-up time*

MY TOP EVENING PRIORITIES

What are the three things that cause me the most stress in the morning?

1
2
3

SPECIFIC IDEAS & STRATEGIES

What is your plan for eliminating or reducing these three areas of stress?

1
2
3

NOTE: Be as specific as you can be. Don't say something generic like "kids." Rather, write down "I'm stressed because my kids are wandering around asking what their choices are for breakfast."

FOR EXAMPLE: If breakfast decisions are causing the most trouble, write down something like: Create a 5-day breakfast schedule and post it on the fridge so that everyone knows what the plan is and make sure I buy the necessary ingredients each week for these breakfasts.



MY CURRENT LIFE PRIORITIES & GOALS

GREATEST PRIORITIES

What are the 3-5 areas in your life that are your greatest priorities in this season of life?

1
2
3
4
5

FOR EXAMPLE: My areas of life that are my priorities this year are: myself, my marriage, our kids, and our business.

SPECIFIC GOALS

What are 1-2 specific goals you want to accomplish in each of these areas?

1
2
3
4
5

NOTE: You may be tempted to write down 10 things in each category, but please don't. That is a recipe for disaster and frustration! Instead, narrow it down to 1-2 specific goals and ask yourself, "What is the ONE thing I can do in this area that will have the greatest impact?" If you're married, I'd encourage you to review your priorities and goals with your spouse, too.



BREAK MY GOALS INTO BITE-SIZED PIECES

Complete one sheet for each priority in your life now.

MY PRIORITY

MY 1-2 GOALS FOR THIS PRIORITY

WHAT WILL I DO EACH MONTH TO ACCOMPLISH THESE GOALS?

Be realistic! Think of these monthly goals as intentional steps (rather than leaps) towards the 12-month goal. As you are breaking down these goals into monthly action steps, consider what things you can do each month to progress in this area. What habits could you establish to help make these goals a reality?

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

CREATE A REALISTIC MORNING PLAN

STEP 1

Create a list of 8-10 things you want to include in your “ideal” morning routine.

STEP 2

Trim your list down to the most important 3-5 things.

STEP 3

Go back through your list to ensure you have included at least one soul-filling component (journaling, reading, praying, etc.). If not, add that in.

STEP 4

In addition, remember the goals you set in Days 5 and 6? I encourage you to include 10-15 minutes in your morning routine to working toward one of those. It’s amazing how much progress you can make just by working on something for 10-15 minutes 5 times per week.

STEP 5

Post your routine somewhere for accountability (Index card? Typed up and on the fridge? Loaded into an app on your phone? All of the above?).



OUR FAVORITE BREAKFAST IDEAS

RECIPE NAME	LOCATION <i>(link, cookbook page #)</i>	INGREDIENTS NEEDED
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

DAILY NUTRITION & FITNESS TRACKER

DAY:

FOOD/WATER INTAKE

BREAKFAST

LUNCH

DINNER

SNACK

WATER



EXERCISE

ACTIVITY

TIME SPENT

DAY:

FOOD/WATER INTAKE

BREAKFAST

LUNCH

DINNER

SNACK

WATER



EXERCISE

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