



make over your
EVENINGS

A 14-DAY COURSE

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Introduction & Welcome

Welcome to the *Make Over Your Evenings* course! I'm so excited to have you join me on this journey! During the next two weeks, I'll be walking you through how to transform your evenings, your days, and your life—one small step at a time.

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 unto itself. Making over your evenings is simply a way to ensure you have more time (and energy) for the things that matter most, such as: caring for your family, reaching out to those you love, 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 evening routine. Life is full of interruptions and setbacks. This is entirely normal. I want this course to provide the inspiration, motivation, and practical hand-holding (because we all need a little of that!) to revamp your evenings. That said, as we're going through this course together, please remember to give yourself grace—no one is ever going to be able to find or stick with a perfect schedule. I'm all about incremental change, not perfection.

The set-up of the course is very simple, and 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 short five-minute project or two for you to complete.

Before you start Day 1, do this:

1. 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 for watching the daily video, reading the handbook, and completing the projects.

Then, be sure to make this time block as an appointment with yourself that you're committed to keep. Block it out as a daily 15-minute meeting on your calendar for the next 14 days.

2. Once you have decided when you will complete the daily course lessons, tell someone.

It could be your spouse, your friend, or even just posting about it on social media. Take two minutes right now to call or send that person a text or an email, or make the announcement on social media.

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 evening, but in the days and weeks and months and years to come.

We can all find 15 minutes a day to devote to this, right? So let's do this!

Find Community & Accountability!

It's always good to be reminded that we're not alone! Find others who are joining you in this 14-day journey by following the **#MakeOverYourEvenings** hashtag on Twitter or Instagram. I'd love to have you participate in the conversation and community by posting about your evenings on social media using this hashtag, too. I'll be following the hashtag, celebrating your successes, and jumping in and posting some of my own evenings as well.

DAY 1

Identify Your Why

At the beginning of 2016, my husband and I sat down and reviewed our goals for the year and talked about areas we wanted to improve in. As we thought over the past year and discussed our hopes, dreams, and goals for 2016, one goal both of us realized we wanted to make a big priority for 2016 was having breakfast together around the table as a family every morning.

This was one of those things that we'd always *planned* to do. In fact, we would often commit to it and do it for a few days, but we always fizzled out. Life happened, mornings would be hectic, and that time together talking and being together as a family would fall by the wayside.

We both committed to make 2016 the year that we actually made family breakfasts together not only a priority, but a habit . . . something we did without contemplating whether or not we had time, or whether or not we should do it. We wanted it to become as much a part of our mornings as getting out of bed and getting dressed.

It wasn't enough for us to say, "*We'd like to start eating breakfast together as a family.*" We needed to have a reason why.

As we've learned through many attempts at making life changes over the years, wanting to do something isn't enough.

You need to know your *why* behind what you're wanting to change.

Your *why* will fuel your *want to*. Your *why* will give you motivation on those days when you just want to quit.

Your *why* cannot be "*because I should*" or "*because my spouse thinks it's a good idea*" or "*because my friend is doing it.*"

Our *why* for wanting to eat breakfast together as a family each morning was simple: We wanted to start our day by spending quality time together. We are blessed to have the kind of flexibility in our schedule right now to be able to make this a priority. But until we spelled out our *why*, we weren't as motivated to actually follow through with this goal.

As we talked about it, we realized that it was a simple thing, but that this simple thing could make a big difference in not just our everyday lives, but in our lives as a whole. We don't always get to eat dinner together due to outside

commitments or kids' practices, but starting our day with time around the table as a family would guarantee that we had all connected, talked face-to-face, and enjoyed being together before the busyness of the day started.

Recognizing the lifelong impact of this one small change gave us the motivation to actually start and follow through with it this year. We're well into 2016 now, and breakfasts as a family have become not only a habit, but the conversations and laughs we share around the table each morning have made it one of our very favorite times of the day!

Today is Day 1 of the *Make Over Your Evenings* course, and as I mentioned in today's video, I want you to probe deep and ask yourself this question: Why are you taking this course in the first place?

- *Do you want to be less frazzled?*
- *Do you want more time to pursue things you love?*
- *Do you want a stronger marriage?*
- *Do you want more time to focus on building a business?*
- *Do you want to have more time for just being instead of feeling like you constantly have to rush around in order to get everything done?*

What is your why?

Every day, for the next 14 days, we're going to review this "why." I want you to keep it at the forefront of your mind. Your "why" will propel you forward and motivate you to keep going.

You can do this! And I'm going to be right here with you, cheering you all the way!

DAY 1 PROJECT

1. To help determine your “why” for taking this course, ask yourself the following five questions.

- *What is the most frustrating thing in my life right now?*
- *What is one area that, if changed, would make the biggest impact?*
- *What am I struggling with most right now?*
- *What drew me to consider starting this course in the first place?*
- *At the end of this course, if I only changed one thing, what one thing would make the biggest difference in my life?*

Think through each question carefully. Based upon your answers, come up with what your “why” is for doing this course. If it helps, use the worksheet at the end of this lesson to guide you as you go through this exercise.

If you’re married, ask your spouse to give their input on the answers to these questions as well.

Your “why” could be something very simple, such as, “I want to have 15 minutes every night to just do something I love to do.” Or, “I want to stop feeling like I’m constantly behind.” Or, “I want to have time to connect with my spouse every night before bed.”

2. Write this “why” down and put it in a conspicuous place. Maybe even type it into your phone in a cute font and save it as your lock screen or home screen. Or write it in pretty lettering and tape it to your bathroom mirror, put it near your computer, or display it on the fridge.

NOTE: Some people have asked whether this is a course to make over your family’s evening or if it’s just for you as an individual. Actually, it can be for both.

However, I’d recommend starting with focusing on going through this course for you personally. Make over your own evenings before you work on making over your family’s evenings.

Go through the course once just focusing on your own evenings. Once you feel good about your individual evening routine, then go back through the course and work on making over your family’s evening routine.

Resources

The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results

by Gary Keller & Jay Papasan

Living Forward: A Proven Plan to Stop Drifting and Get the Life You Want

by Michael Hyatt & Daniel Harkavy

Today Matters: 12 Daily Practices to Guarantee Tomorrow's Success

by John C. Maxwell

DAY 1 WORKSHEET

IDENTIFY YOUR WHY

1. To help determine your “why” for taking this course, ask yourself the following five questions.

1. *What is the most frustrating thing in my life right now?*
2. *What is one area that, if changed, would make the biggest impact?*
3. *What am I struggling with most right now?*
4. *What drew me to consider starting this course in the first place?*
5. *At the end of this course, if I only changed one thing, what one thing would make the biggest difference in my life?*

2. My “Why” for doing this course is:

DAY 2

Brainstorm Your Ideal Evening

I love what Marie Kondo says in the [*The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*](#): “People cannot change their habits without first changing their thinking.” Today, I want to challenge you to change your thinking so that during the rest of this course, you can work on changing your habits.

The first step toward changing your life is recognizing that you actually want and need to change. You can’t just say, “I want to change,” or, “I should change,” or, “I wish I could change.” If you want to see change in your life, you actually have to change something.

Yesterday, we talked about your “why”—the reason you are doing this course in the first place. I want you to review that “why” today, and then I want you to honestly ask yourself, “How am I going to make this happen? How am I going to make my ‘why’ a reality?”

When you know your “why,” you can then figure out your “how.” Ask yourself: “How will I actually follow through with the reason I decided to go through this course in the first place?”

Over the course of the next two weeks, we’ll be talking about many different strategies and practical ideas for how to set yourself up for success in the evenings. But I want to start out by having you change your thinking. To do that, I want you to brainstorm what an ideal evening would look like for you.

For a moment, set aside the excuses, the obstacles, the messiness of life, and the regular disruptions of your normal, everyday life. Instead, I want you to dream. Yes, *dream*.

I want you to think what it would be like to have an evening without interruptions or distractions. What would that feel like?

Stay with me here. Close your eyes and let yourself sit there and just imagine that the world is perfect, your house is clean, your kids are well behaved, you aren’t exhausted, and you can design your ideal evening. Pretend that anything is possible. What would you do? How would you set yourself up for success the next day?

Then, think with me about what things you might regularly say or think—“Oh man, I wish I would have done X last night before bed.” Is there anything you can come up with? Also, ask yourself: “What’s my hardest struggle every morning? Are there things I could do to help prevent some of those struggles?”

Some ideas to consider might be going to bed earlier, making lunches for the next day, laying out your clothes, prepping breakfast, taking time to read, taking a bubble bath, working on a hobby, exercising, or hanging out with your friend or your spouse.

If nothing was stopping you, hindering you, or holding you back, what would your ideal evening routine be? Now, of course, this ideal evening is probably not going to be a reality, but I don’t want you to let thoughts of that hold you back from dreaming.

When my husband and I were talking about making breakfasts as a family a priority, we not only had to set that as a goal and determine our “why” for it, but then we also brainstormed what it would actually look like. We talked about different scenarios and options. To come up with the final solution, we first started with what a perfect scenario would look like.

By starting with a “perfect scenario,” it helped us to change our thinking from “that will never work” or “that’s not possible,” to brainstorming what might actually be possible.

Doing this exercise today is for the same purpose: I want to get the wheels turning in your brain so you can start tearing down old patterns, building new habits, and begin down the road to greater fulfillment, order, productivity, and joy in your life.

Why? Because if you always live within the confines of your current reality, you’ll never be motivated to try new things, step outside your comfort zone, aim higher, or break out of ruts that you’re stuck in.

DAY 2 PROJECT

- 1. What is your WHY for doing this course?** Review and remind yourself of it.
- 2. Brainstorm what an ideal evening routine would look like for you in a perfect world without interruptions.** What would you do for the last two to three hours before bed to set yourself up for success in the morning?
- 3. Write down all of the ideas that come to mind, and then choose at least five different things from your list that you feel would be the best way for you to set yourself up for success at night.** Don't skip this step! Putting time into thinking through this could be one of the most beneficial exercises of this entire course! Make sure at least one of the five things is something expressly for you—whether that's taking a bath, watching a show, reading a book, or something else that will fill up your tank.

If it helps, use the worksheet at the end of this lesson to guide you as you go through this exercise. If you're married, consider asking your spouse to create their ideal bedtime routine, too. It's always helpful and interesting to get input from our spouses and to find out what would be important to them.

Resources

How to Create Your Ideal Evening Routine

The 5 A.M. Miracle: Dominate Your Day Before Breakfast
by Jeff Sanders

DAY 2 WORKSHEET

BRAINSTORM YOUR IDEAL EVENING

1. Brainstorm what an ideal evening routine would look like for you in a perfect world without interruptions. What would you do for the last two-three hours before bed to set yourself up for success in the morning?

Write down all of the ideas that come to mind (i.e. *making lunches for the next day, prepping breakfasts, folding laundry, cleaning the house, watching a show, catching up on email, reading a book*).

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. A large, light gray watermark of a stylized letter 'Z' is visible in the background, centered vertically and horizontally. The watermark has a thick, bold appearance. The overall image is clean and minimalist, typical of a template for handwriting practice or general writing.

2. From your list, choose five activities that would dramatically improve your evenings and set you up for success the next day.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

3. Map out your ideal evening routine based upon these five activities you chose. Don't stress over getting this perfect. This is just a brainstorming exercise to help you begin to think through how to set up your evenings well. We'll tweak and improve it over the next two weeks.



6 p.m. _____

7 p.m. _____

8 p.m. _____

9 p.m. _____

10 p.m. _____

11 p.m. _____

DAY 3

Determine Your Calendar Conflicts

My husband knows me better than anyone else in the world, and I've found he has such great wisdom when it comes to helping me determine what to say yes to and what to say no to. I often convince myself that I have the time and energy to do something, but then when I ask him, he helps me think more realistically about the situation.

For instance, I was asked to go out to dinner with some dear friends who were in town on a recent Sunday evening. I wanted so badly to say yes, but we already had our community group get-together that afternoon. So in order to get there on time, I'd need to leave community group early. I'd also end up getting home quite late after the dinner since the restaurant was far away from our home.

As much as I would have loved to say yes to a fun dinner out with friends, my husband reminded me how much I'd already done that week, and that if I didn't get home until late on Sunday evening, it would likely throw our Monday off, too. Plus, after a busy week, he knew what I needed on Sunday evening was not a night out with friends, but a quiet evening at home (I'm an introvert; can you tell?).

As I considered things more, I knew he was right. And a quiet Sunday evening ended up being exactly what I needed!

I love this quote by Alli Worthington in her wonderful book, ***Breaking Busy:*** *"Our lives have gotten so cluttered with things we think we should do that we can't figure out what we were meant to do. Let your life be about what you were meant to do, not full of what you think you should do. This starts with your daily decisions about how you spend your time."*

Alli encourages us to create a "stop doing list"—a list of items you intentionally decide not to do so you can focus your time and energy on your greatest priorities.

She says the best way to identify what you need to stop doing is by asking yourself these two questions:

1. *What is sucking the life right out of me?*
2. *Does this activity get me closer to reaching my goals?*

As someone who loves to-do lists and setting goals, I definitely need the reminder to create a stop doing list. I have found there's so much liberation in doing just a few things well, so I've really been working on streamlining and delegating tasks in my life to allow more free space for what's most important.

Have you ever struggled with the tug-of-war of wanting to do all the things with all the people, and yet also knowing that you need time to refresh and refuel, too? Today, we're digging into your calendar and looking at how you're spending your days—and especially your evenings!

I'm not doing this because I'm trying to zap all of the fun out of your life. I'm doing it for the exact opposite reason: I want to set you free from feeling obligated to commitments that are undermining your family's success.

Because the truth is this: You have a choice. You can choose to say yes to something or to say no to something. Every time you say yes to one thing, you're actually saying no to something else, and vice versa. When you say no to something, it allows you to say yes to something else.

What I've learned (through lots of trial and error!) is that when I only say yes to a few things, I'm able to really, really give my best to those few things I'm saying yes to. I'm able to focus on them, pour into them, and give my all to them instead of giving my leftovers or what little capacity I could muster up because I was stretched so thin and exhausted by all the demands of the other things I've committed to.

And not only that, but by only saying yes to a few things, it's allowing me to have margin and breathing room for what's most important—being fully present exactly where I am with the people I love.

DAY 3 PROJECT

1. What is your WHY for doing this course? Review and remind yourself of it.

2. Pull out your calendar and look at the past month and your upcoming month. Think about your current commitments and activities. As you look through each of them, ask yourself:

- *Do I have breathing room in my life?*
- *Do I love my life? Is it full of things I enjoy?*
- *Do I have room in my schedule to embrace the little moments?*
- *Do I often feel like I am rushing from one activity to the next?*
- *Do I struggle to get enough sleep at night because there is just so much to do?*
- *Are my current commitments adding to my family and my life, or are they hindering my success, making me feel exhausted, and stealing my joy?*

Are there things you need to say no to in order to say yes to things that are more important? Do you need more rest and margin in your life? How are you going to make that a priority? Be willing to get courageous, to say the hard no's, in order to experience the freedom to really be able to invest your time and energy on those things that will bless and benefit your family most!

Bonus: Use the following worksheet to create your own **Stop Doing List**.

Resources

Say Goodbye to Survival Mode: 9 Simple Strategies to Stress Less, Sleep More, and Restore Your Passion for Life by Crystal Paine

Breaking Busy: How to Find Peace and Purpose in a World of Crazy
by Alli Worthington

The Best Yes: Making Wise Decisions in the Midst of Endless Demands
by Lysa TerKeurst

DAY 3 WORKSHEET

CREATE A STOP DOING LIST

1. Take a few minutes and make a list of all the activities you can think of that you regularly do on a daily basis. These could be things that are necessary to complete to keep things moving in the right direction (i.e. making food for you and your family, doing laundry, running errands, taking kids to sports, etc.) or extra things you do during the day that might not necessarily be considered “productive” (i.e. *playing games on your phone, watching your favorite TV show, checking social media sites, etc.*).

[illegible]

2. Look at the list above and circle all of the things you have to do during the day—no negotiation, no discussion. These are the tasks you absolutely must do in order for your family to be able to survive and function.

3. Review the remaining items and decide which items you're currently doing that you would feel so relieved to stop doing completely. Could you give these up, let these go, or hand these off to someone else? If so, put a big "X" through those tasks and take a deep breath.

4. Now, list below the items you crossed off above. This is your temporary **Stop Doing List**.

5. For the next two weeks, commit to stop doing everything on this list. For two weeks, you are not responsible for these items. You do not need to worry about them!

6. At the end of two weeks, evaluate how your *Stop Doing List* is going. Did anything fall apart because you didn't do these things? Could you put most of the items on your temporary **Stop Doing List** onto a permanent **Stop Doing List**?

DAY 4

Admit Your Character Flaws

I'm good at coming up with excuses for so many deep-rooted bad habits in my life. For a long time, I excused being late and behind as the result of being busy and having so much on my plate.

I finally realized that my lack of being on time and getting things done early is because I'm really good at productive procrastination. I don't plan ahead like I should. I wait until the last minute. I do *good* things instead of doing the important things I should be doing.

Until I admitted these character flaws in my life, I couldn't begin working on solutions. It's the same in your life, too. If you're going to work on making over your evenings, you've got to start by admitting your character flaws.

Think about your current evenings. What are your greatest struggles and hindrances to having a successful evening? Are you staying up getting sucked into the rabbit hole of the Internet? Or, are you staying up too late watching things on TV or online instead of just going to bed? Maybe you're trying to cram a bunch of to-do's or work from the day into your evening and not allowing yourself any room to breathe. Or, are you like me and you're procrastinating during the day so then you have to try to finish a bunch of work at night, which means you end up going to bed way too late, and then you wake up late only to start the cycle over again?

Admitting your struggles and character flaws is just the first step. Next, you need to create an action plan to actually follow through with overcoming that character flaw—or at least taking baby steps toward improvement in that area of your life.

In *I Used to Be So Organized*, author Glynnis Whitwer says, "Success with small, solid, disciplined habits leads to achievement with greater projects, which is why making your bed and being on time for church are important habits to master."

What are some very simple, small, disciplined habits you can work on developing? Focus on small things—habits that don't require a lot of effort or time to pull off. Little tweaks and changes can add up to big changes over time.

Maybe that's making a commitment to have lights out by a certain time every evening or reading for 30 minutes before bed or cleaning up the kitchen right after dinner instead of saving it to do until before you go to bed. Perhaps it's keeping the computer off after dinner or switching your phone to airplane mode at 8 p.m. or only watching one episode of your favorite TV show each evening.

These are all small things, but small things often add up to big differences. For instance, one small change I recently made was to not check email until after lunch. I had realized that email was becoming a big distraction to me in the mornings. I would check it soon after I woke up, and then I'd get sucked into answering emails and thinking about all the other emails I had read and hadn't yet had a chance to answer.

Instead of being able to focus on my morning cleaning projects and breakfast and homeschooling, my email was distracting me and stealing my mental energy and focus. Committing to not checking my email until after lunch was a small change, but I discovered that it made a HUGE difference in my day. I felt so much more at peace. My house stayed cleaner. I was able to be more present with my family.

"I have defined greatness as the active pursuit of my potential. Greatness is not a finite position or end goal. It is a process, an ongoing battle, and a daily fight. You achieve greatness by becoming the highest and best version of yourself every single day."

—Jeff Sanders, *The 5 AM Miracle*

DAY 4 PROJECT

1. What is your WHY for doing this course? Review and remind yourself of it.

2. Write Down Your Character Flaws—Take some time to consider what your greatest struggles, setbacks, and hindrances are to having a successful evening. Write down everything that comes to mind.

3. Pick One Area to Focus On—Once you've determined what areas you want to work on, choose one (and only one!) area to focus on. I encourage you to choose that one area that is going to immediately make the biggest difference in your overall life, sanity, and fulfillment. You can always go back and choose another area at a later time!

4. Create a Simple Plan of Action—Decide one simple change you are going to make starting today to help you start overcoming the character flaw you chose to focus on. Remember, simple is key here. Don't just try to remove bad character from your life. Instead, prioritize replacing bad habits with good practices.

Resources

How to Stick to a Diet

3 Small Things Can Add Up to a Changed Life

The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business
by Charles Duhigg

DAY 5

Create a Prioritized To-Do List

Just recently, I had someone ask me what my number one key to success and productivity is. Without missing a beat, I knew the answer; It's that I am very committed to writing everything down that comes into my brain in a systematized manner.

If you are trying to remember everything you need to remember in your mind—all of the important dates, appointments scheduled, things to do, tasks to complete, extra thoughts to remember for later—you will absolutely forget some things at least some of the time. And there's a good chance that you'll end up forgetting a few very important things! Plus, you'll constantly be carrying around the weight of worrying about whether you're remembering everything you need to remember. It's exhausting and overwhelming!

For me personally, if I don't write things down, my mind becomes a swirling unorganized list of ideas, thoughts, and things to remember. I quickly become stressed and feel as if my life is chaotically spinning out of control.

I use Google Calendar to brain dump all my ideas, to-do's, tasks, and projects. (You can download my [*FREE 7-Day Course on how to Make Over Your Calendar.*](#))

Every night before bed, I sit down and open up Google Calendar and write out a prioritized to-do list for the next day. It may seem boring or simplistic, but doing this consistently has completely changed my life.

Are you wondering how I do this? Well, let me walk you through how this works for me.

Before heading to bed, I sit down with a notebook in hand and ask myself:

- *What appointments do I have tomorrow?*
- *What do I absolutely have to get done tomorrow?*
- *What would I really like to get done tomorrow?*
- *Are there fun things that I should put on the schedule?*
- *What does my soul need? (Down time, rest, laughter, time with friends, etc.)*

Once I know what needs to be done the following day, I write out a time-blocked to-do list and put each of the things on my list in one of the blocks of time. I try to make sure there is time for some fun and breathing room, too!

I will block out the first hour of the day to include getting up and taking time to read my Bible, journaling, and exercising. The next two hours are focused on getting ready for the day, getting in a little blogging, and scoping; the next hour on breakfast, Bible time, and reading aloud; the next hour on homeschooling ... and so on.

I block out each hour or half hour of time for a specific project or to-do item—in order of significance and priority. Certain parts of every day are the same, but each day varies somewhat, depending upon the projects and activities scheduled for that day.

It's so easy to write down a massive to-do list that is unrealistic and overly ambitious. There are only so many hours in a day, so making a time-blocked to-do list helps to ensure that I actually have enough time to accomplish what is on my list for the day.

I don't always follow these specific times to a T, but a time-blocked to-do list makes certain I don't try to cram 36 hours' worth of tasks into a 24-hour day. Throughout the day, I know that I might shift things around or allow myself some wiggle room.

By looking over my [Google Calendar](#) and taking time to map out the day, it gives me peace of mind. It clears my head and helps me to sleep better. And when I sleep well at night, I wake up refreshed in the morning, which allows me to be more energetic, more productive, and more joyful the next day.

DAY 5 PROJECT

1. What is your WHY for doing this course? Review and remind yourself of it.

2. Beginning tonight, develop the habit of writing out a prioritized to-do list before bed. Just try it and commit to sticking with it every night for the rest of this course. You just might find that it has a significant impact on YOUR life, too!

Note: I usually factor in at least two hours of margin time so that when unexpected situations come up, I can move things around as needed and still get everything done.

Bonus: If you need extra step-by-step help for developing the habit of writing out Prioritized To Do Lists, be sure to [download my free 7-Day Make Over Your Calendar Course](#). In this course, I share how I effectively plan my days using Google Calendar and a written to do list.

Resources

[*Tell Your Time: How to Manage Your Schedule So You Can Live Free*](#)
by Amy Lynn Andrews

[*33 Things I Do Every Day*](#)

DAY 6

Make Sleep a Priority

I have discovered that if I don't get enough sleep, it affects every other area of my life. When I get enough sleep, I am more productive, happier each day, and have so much energy! When I don't get enough sleep, I am exhausted, stressed, unmotivated, and not nearly as productive.

For years, I didn't get enough sleep. Life was busy. I had three kids. I had goals and to-do's and distractions and projects and ideas . . . and, well, it felt like sleep was the area I could scrimp on. And while I thought that getting up early and staying up late was helping me be more productive, in reality, it was an ineffective way to live. I was always tired. I felt like I was running on empty. And I wasn't able to focus on projects intently or function at the top of my game—because I was just SO tired.

Are you feeling exhausted when you wake up in the morning, struggling to keep your eyes open after lunch, or hitting a productivity wall in the afternoon? If you feel any of these things, you are most likely not getting enough sleep.

Here are four suggestions to get more sleep:

1. Go to bed earlier.

This is a no-brainer, but it's one of the harder ones to do—and something I'm still working on! Most importantly, learn to go to bed when you're tired. Don't wait for your body to catch that second, third, or fourth wind.

2. Plan ahead for great sleep.

Start getting ready for bed at least an hour before you want to go to bed. Having an evening routine can really help you get in the mindset for going to bed. Think about what helps you relax. Maybe it's reading a book, taking a bath, or listening to music.

3. Consume less caffeine.

I love my coffee, and I will not be giving it up any time soon. I do limit myself to two cups per day, and I try not to drink it after 3 p.m. If you're struggling with falling asleep at night, limiting your caffeine intake might be something worth trying.

4. Turn off the electronics.

Turn off the electronics at least an hour before bed time. I try to shut down the computer after dinner and not turn it back on until the following day. This helps my mind stay calm so that I can wind down and relax at night.

I encourage people to make sleep a priority because I believe that many of us are sleep deprived and exhausted, and this is contributing to a number of health issues. However, I don't say this to lay a guilt trip on anyone or to put everyone in a one-size-fits-all sleep box.

Some people genuinely need more sleep than others. Some people can truly function well on less sleep. You need to figure out what works for you.

If you're feeling exhausted all the time, look at your schedule with your spouse or a good friend and ask them for their input on how you might be able to fit more sleep into your schedule. Get creative, if need be!

In addition, make sure your exhaustion is actually sleep related and not the result of poor diet, lack of exercise, not drinking enough water, too much stress, or another physical problem that's contributing to your fatigue.

No matter what season of life you are in, make sleep a priority as much as you can. This doesn't have to mean you get 8 hours of solid sleep every night, but it does mean that you prioritize sleep and that you take any opportunities you have to sneak in naps, go to bed early when you're tired, and get up a little later if you're feeling drained.

It might mean that some other things get set aside so you can squeeze in a little extra sleep, but it will be worth it. Because here's the thing: If you make sleep a priority, it will have a positive trickle-down effect into almost every other area of your life.

DAY 6 PROJECT

- 1. What is your WHY for doing this course?** Review and remind yourself of it.
- 2. Track your sleep over the next few nights.** I've found it's so helpful and insightful to track my sleep with either the [Sleep Cycle App](#) or a [Jawbone Up Tracker](#).
- 3. Based upon the results you discover from tracking your sleep, decide if you need to make any adjustments to help you get a better night's sleep.**

Resources

[Sleep: It Does a Family Good—How Busy Families Can Overcome Sleep Deprivation](#)
by Archibald D. Hart

[How to Become an Early Riser—Even if You Hate Mornings.](#)

DAY 7

Replace the Negative With the Positive

We can waste precious amounts of time, energy, and thought worrying, fretting, stewing, or convincing ourselves that we just can't do something, that we're not good enough, or that we're not cut out for something. But this does nothing to help us move forward in a positive direction.

Especially at night, I've found I have to be very careful with what I allow to go around and around in my brain. I can struggle with guilt, worry, and anxiety that keeps me up, makes me feel frustrated, and just wastes time.

So what can we do to eliminate or lessen the negative thoughts?

1. Listen to music.

When I'm down, I've found that music can be a huge pick-me-up. Even if I don't feel like listening to music, if I turn it on, I usually can't help but be uplifted. And singing along with some of my favorite songs can also be a big mood-brightener. I love to [use Amazon Music](#)—it's free if you have an Amazon Prime account!

2. Count your blessings.

It's easy to become discouraged if you focus on everything that's wrong or difficult in your life. However, instead of dwelling on the negative, challenge yourself to think of at least three to five things to be thankful for. It's amazing how a grateful spirit can change your mood and even your whole outlook on life!

3. Smile!

Even when you don't feel like it, if you make yourself smile at others, it's almost impossible to stay grumpy for long. Try it sometime and see if I'm right!

4. Hug Someone.

When you're down in the dumps, you might not feel like talking to someone, but make yourself go hug someone and you're almost guaranteed to feel better. And you'll probably boost the spirits of the person you hug, too!

5. Express Appreciation.

There's something about telling someone how much you appreciate them that always makes you feel more cheerful yourself. Make a habit of starting the day by telling someone thank you for something—whether it's your spouse or child, a co-worker, or a neighbor. Also, look for opportunities to express appreciation and brighten someone's day by sending a text, a short email, or even a note in the mail to say thank you. Take time to notice and appreciate the little things. It will make your world brighter—and just may mean the world to someone else, too.

6. Stop Comparing.

You can spend all of your life trying to measure up to someone else. You can waste away hours of time wishing you had her hair or her figure or her energy or her gifts. But you are not her; you are you. You have unique gifts, talents, and abilities. You can improve upon what God has given you, and you can wisely steward what He has given you, but you cannot change who He has created you to be. So instead of living life wishing you were someone else, embrace your own uniqueness.

Note: As a Christian, I have made a commitment to pray instead of worry. When I start mulling over something and being concerned or fearful over what might be, I try to remember to refocus my thoughts on what I know to be true; God is in control, and He will give me grace for whatever situation comes my way. And then I pray and commit that situation over to Him, and I try to get busy doing something else that's much more important and productive than worrying.

You are never going to be where you want to be. There will always be something undone or left to do. And as soon as you complete one project, there's another project (or five) that need to be started.

Don't beat yourself up that you're not as far as you'd like to be. Instead, give yourself grace, and focus on the progress you have made and are making. Rath-

er than becoming discouraged that you have 12 things left to complete on your to-do list and it's 10:30 p.m., be encouraged that you accomplished three of the things you set out to do today.

When you have a day where it seems like nothing gets done and you just go around and around in circles, remind yourself that tomorrow is a new day.

Finally, remember that life is meant to be enjoyed and savored, not run through at breakneck speed. Take time to stop and smell the roses, even if it means fewer things get crossed off the to-do list!

DAY 7 PROJECT

1. What is your WHY for doing this course? Review and remind yourself of it.

2. What are the top three to five areas where you struggle with negative attitudes and thought patterns—especially at night? What are some practical ways you can replace those negative thought patterns? Use the worksheet provided to complete this project.

For instance, if you struggle with feeling guilty at night about things you did or didn't do or things you said or didn't say during the day, here's a challenge: Stop beating yourself up, and instead, replace that guilt with grace.

Maybe you do need to ask forgiveness for something you did or didn't do. If so, ask forgiveness and then move on from guilt to grace. Ask yourself, "What did I do right today?" That simple question can transform your perspective and help encourage your heart before bed.

Resources

Choose Gratitude Blessings Journal by Crystal Paine

Calm My Anxious Heart: A Woman's Guide to Finding Contentment
by Linda Dillow

3 Ways to Get Over a Bad Attitude

15 Ways to Have More Energy

DAY 7 WORKSHEET

REPLACE THE NEGATIVE WITH THE POSITIVE

What are the top three to five areas where you struggle with negative attitudes and thought patterns—especially at night? What are some practical ways you can replace those negative thought patterns? Use the following worksheet to help you think through these negative attitudes and positive replacements.

Negative Attitude

Example: I struggle with feeling guilty at night about everything I didn't do

Positive Replacement

Example: Ask myself, "What did I do right today?"

DAY 8

Plan to Dress for the Day You Want to Have

When I first started blogging, I had a barebones minimalist wardrobe. And by barebones, I really mean it. I had six shirts and six pants/shorts/skirts. That was it. For real. (Don't believe me? [Watch this old, old video I did for proof.](#))

Yes, I re-wore many things over and over and over again. Yes, people saw me in the same outfits all the time. But honestly, I didn't care because it kept my life so simple.

Over time, as I've had more speaking engagements, interviews, business meetings, TV, and video opportunities, I've realized I need to adjust and expand my minimalist wardrobe. (I quickly found that one dressier/business outfit just didn't cut it—especially when I was on a three- or four-day business trip!)

At first, this was really hard for me. I don't like shopping. I don't like messing with figuring out clothes and outfits. But I took some time to really evaluate and figure out what would work best for my current season of life. I asked myself what would allow me to have enough options to choose from for different occasions, yet also not result in having more than I need or will use.

With this in mind, I came up with three principles that guide what I purchase and have in my closet:

1. Know Your Colors

I basically wear two main colors: mostly greens and blues, with a few other colors thrown in. I have found the colors I absolutely love, make me feel great, complement my skin, and make my eyes pop.

I highly recommend the helpful book [Color Me Beautiful](#) to help guide you through the process of figuring out what your best colors are. It's an old book, but it has a lot of great information in it. I also found the book [Help Me, Jesus! I Have Nothing to Wear!](#) to be helpful, too.

2. Know Your Style

There are different styles for different people, and there are different styles for different body types. The [Dressing Your Truth course](#) helped me figure out my style, completely changed the way I dressed, and made me feel much more confident about myself each day.

With the help of this course, I discovered that I like and look best in classic styles, tailored items, and straight lines (I'm a Type 4). Those beautiful, flowy shirts that look SO gorgeous on some of my friends simply do not work on my body type. (Seriously, I look like I'm wearing a bag when I try on something like that. Plus, I just feel plain frumpy—despite how cute it looks on someone else!)

Note: The [Dressing Your Truth course](#) is a little bit pricey, so I recommend downloading the [Dressing Your Truth eBook](#) first to see if it's really worth it for you. There are also a number of free videos online with more information that will give you a great peek into what the course is about.

3. Only Own What You Love

Get rid of anything that does not make you feel great every time you put it on. Don't hang on to anything that doesn't fit you, is worn out, is the wrong size, or you don't absolutely love wearing.

Think, "Am I wearing this because it looks cute on someone else, or am I wearing this because I really love it?" As with everything in life, comparison steals joy. Focus on what works for you and what makes you feel amazing when you put it on.

By following these three principles, I've been able to still keep my wardrobe streamlined, but I have options for a variety of opportunities as they come up. Best of all, putting together outfits I love and that look great on me is very simple to do. This makes it much easier for me to dress for the day that I want to have—and it helps me feel great about myself all day long!

DAY 8 PROJECT

- 1. What is your WHY for doing this course?** Review and remind yourself of it.
- 2. Go through your closet today and challenge yourself to put together six outfit combinations that you absolutely love.**
- 3. Commit to wear one of these outfits for each of the next six days.** See if you notice a difference in how you feel about yourself by dressing in outfits you love.

Need some practical inspiration? [Putting Me Together](#) is an amazing blog that gives women very simple, real-life, doable ideas for mixing and matching clothing pieces to come up with an almost endless number of different cute and simple looks. Highly recommended!

Resources

[*Dress for the Day You Want to Have*](#)

[*The 10-Item Wardrobe*](#)

[*My Completely Honest Review of Stitch Fix*](#)

[*Embracing Beauty: Practical Style for Every Shape and Season of Motherhood*](#)

by Trina R. Holden

DAY 9

Prep for a Successful Day

If you go to bed late, the house is a mess, the dishes are piled in the sink, you're way behind on laundry, you don't have food ready for breakfast or lunches, and you don't even know what appointments or events are scheduled for the next day, no wonder you wake up feeling frazzled, stressed, and behind!

If, on the other hand, you go to bed at a decent hour, your house is picked up, you have clothes laid out to wear, breakfast is in the crockpot, lunches are made, and backpacks and your purse and keys are by the door, you've given yourself a huge head start on a successful morning.

Instead of trying to get up at some too-early hour to cram in a crazy amount of things in the morning, focus on changing your before-bed routine first. You might find that this is the thing that transforms your morning much more than getting up early does.

In fact, if you prep well ahead of time in the evening, you just might be able to sleep in a little bit more the next morning. (Yes, I know that all of you non-morning people are probably excited to read that sentence!) Later on in this course, we'll be talking about how to set up a successful evening routine, but today, I want you to think about two things you can do every night to prep for a successful day tomorrow.

1. Prep Your Breakfasts

When breakfast is already prepped in the morning, not only does it help you to wake up and feel like you're already ahead, but it also will help guarantee that you eat something healthy before jumping into your day.

Here are a few of our favorite make-ahead breakfast ideas:

Breakfast burritos

Make a big batch of breakfast burritos on the weekends, freeze individually in

foil, and then they can just be pulled out and microwaved before heading out the door in the morning. (Be sure to remove the foil before microwaving!)

Muffins

We love muffins at our house! To make them ahead of time, bake your favorite muffin recipe, let them cool, and stick them in an airtight freezer bag or other container. When you're ready to eat them, pull out however many you need and let them thaw for 15 or 20 minutes and they are ready to eat! Recipes to try:

[Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Muffins](#) or [Pumpkin Carrot Cake Muffins](#)

Homemade Instant Oatmeal Packets

Love oatmeal? [Make your own instant oatmeal packets](#)! They are quick and easy to make, very inexpensive, and you can [get creative adding in a variety of mix-ins](#).

Smoothies

If your family loves smoothies like we do, but you want to speed up your prep time in the mornings, try your hand at making homemade smoothie kits with some of your favorite smoothie recipe ingredients. You can also [make your smoothies ahead of time and then freeze them for later use](#). Some of our favorite smoothie recipes are [Pick-Me-Up Smoothies](#) and [Chocolate Peanut Butter Banana Smoothies](#).

Homemade Egg McMuffins

Why stop at McDonald's when you can make your own [Homemade Egg McMuffins](#) for half the price? These can be made ahead and frozen and just pulled out and microwaved or baked when you're ready to serve.

Baked Oatmeal

We're big fans of [Baked Oatmeal](#) around here! You can make it the night before and refrigerate to bake in the morning, or you can freeze it to thaw and bake later.

Take some time on the weekend to [plan out your breakfasts, lunches, snacks, and dinners](#) for the following week, and it will help your mornings run much more smoothly, not to mention saving you unnecessary trips for takeout!

2. Prep Your Purse/Diaper Bag

If you need to head out in the morning (to work, to drop your kids off at school, to run errands, etc.), do yourself a favor and prep your purse/diaper bag ahead of time.

Get in the habit of thinking through what you'll need for the next day. Do you need some snacks in the diaper bag, extra diapers, or an extra outfit? Do you need to take the library books back or return that thing to your friend when you're near her house? Whatever you need to take with you when you head out the door, get it packed and ready sitting right next to your purse or diaper bag near the door. This way, you can just grab it as you head out.

DAY 9 PROJECT

- 1. What is your WHY for doing this course?** Review and remind yourself of it.
- 2. Pick two to three breakfasts** that work well for your family and are quick and easy (or can be prepped ahead of time), buy the ingredients, and then, for the rest of this course, plan the night before to have breakfast ready to go in the morning. Use the worksheet provided to plan these out.

Resources

[Free Make Ahead Breakfasts for the Freezer Cooking Plan](#)

[15 Things You Can Do Each Morning to Make Your Day More Successful](#)

DAY 9 WORKSHEET

PREP FOR A SUCCESSFUL DAY

Breakfast Plan For the Week

DAY	BREAKFAST	WHAT TO PREP THE NIGHT BEFORE
Sunday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Monday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Tuesday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Wednesday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Thursday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Friday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Saturday	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

DAY 10

Take Care of YOU

One of the BEST things you can do for yourself and those closest to you is to take time to refuel and refresh yourself. To stop and savor life. To make time for things you love.

Think about it. If you're constantly giving to others, pouring into your family, and wringing yourself dry to meet people's needs, yet never taking time to replenish, refresh, and refuel, no wonder you feel exhausted and spent! No wonder you have nothing left to give! No wonder you're so tired! No wonder you feel brain-fried! No wonder you feel like you might just snap right in two if one more person asks you to do something or if one more child hollers "MOOOOOMMMMMYYYYY!"

As women, we are capable of so much. We can multi-task. We have "eyes in the back of our head." We can pull all-nighters when our child is really sick. We can juggle many different things.

But at some point, when a rubber band is stretched out too far for too long, it's going to snap. At some point, when you keep running on empty, you are truly going to run out of gas and be stranded on the side of the road. At some point, the lack of sleep and running around like a chicken with your head cut off will catch up with you and knock you flat.

And that's why I cannot say it strongly enough: Give yourself permission to take time for YOU. To do things you love. To have coffee with that friend. To work on that hobby. To read that book. To update your scrapbooks. To work in the garden. To S-L-E-E-P! To piddle around in the kitchen. To engage in stimulating discussions. To study new things.

What fills you up? What refreshes you? What makes you come alive? What gets you really excited about life? Set aside some things you think you "have" to do or "must" do or feel obligated to do to carve out some space to invest time into some of those things you truly love.

Investing in yourself is not selfish. Instead, it gives you more energy to be able to pour more into those you love most.

To recap what I shared in today's video, here are five ways to take care of you:

1. Eat Good Food

Nourish your body with good, healthy food. I've found that I feel so much more energetic if I eat at least one big salad every day. If I don't eat one for lunch, I try to eat one for dinner. Some days, if I'm feeling like I really need the extra nutrition and energy boost, I'll eat one for lunch and dinner.

2. Take Quality Vitamins

I used to be one of those people who felt like you could get all the nutrition your body needs from food alone. But my husband encouraged me to start taking a high-quality multivitamin on a daily basis, and I've been amazed at the difference I've felt.

3. Drink More Water

Most of us suffer from dehydration, whether we realize it or not. Make sure you're drinking at least 64 to 80 ounces of water every day. If you haven't done so already, track your water intake each day for two weeks. You might be surprised to realize you don't drink as much as you think you do!

4. Exercise Regularly

If you feel like exercise is boring and dull, try something new! Join an exercise class, try biking, or check out some exercise DVDs from the library. Keep experimenting with different things until you land on something you enjoy.

5. Do Things You Love

While I love spending time with other people, I'm most refreshed with quiet. Going and doing and being with people exhausts me after a while. So in order to recharge my batteries, I need time away—going to a coffee shop and writing for a few hours, curling up with a good book, or going grocery shopping by myself.

DAY 10 PROJECT

- 1. What is your WHY for doing this course?** Review and remind yourself of it.
- 2. Look through the list above and choose one area that you're going to focus on making more of a priority.** I recommend choosing the one that you feel will make the biggest difference and is the area you are struggling with the most right now. Ask your spouse or friends for their input if you're not sure which area to choose.
- 3. Next, decide on one small change you are going to make each evening for that specific area.** For instance, if you know you want to nourish your body with better food instead of trying to overhaul your entire diet, commit to eating a healthy breakfast every single day. Each evening, make sure that you have a simple plan for the next day for what you're going to eat. Once you've made that change, then add one more small change. Remember, small changes over time lead to big results.
- 4. Put a reminder of this one small change in a conspicuous place so that you see it often.** Maybe you put a sticky note on the dashboard of your car, or tape a Post-It to your computer, or set up a daily reminder on your phone.

Resources

Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion
by Wayne Cordeiro

My Favorite Vitamins

Why I Quit Trim Healthy Mama

DAY 11

Prioritize What Really Matters

It's not always easy to say no. I want to help everyone. I want to volunteer for a multitude of opportunities. I want to accept most all of the requests that come my way.

But I also want to take care of my health. I want to grow in my spiritual walk. I want to be a loyal friend. And I don't want to give my family the leftovers of my time and energy.

So I have a choice: I can exhaust myself trying to do most everything, or I can choose to say no to most things and only do a few things well.

Just today, I had to say a hard no—and it hurt my heart. A dear woman asked if I would help her with her book project. She wanted someone to look over it and give her honest feedback.

I love to do this sort of thing as often as I'm able, but because of what I'd already committed to this week, I knew that the time for helping her with her book could only come out of family time. At a different season or on a different week, I could probably carve out time to help her. But right now, I have to look at my priorities and realize that I have to prioritize family time over other projects right now.

And so I wrote her and said no as graciously as I could. She was so understanding in her response to me—which I was grateful for. Even though my heart really wanted to help her, I knew my family had to come first in this situation.

My first book [*Say Goodbye to Survival Mode*](#) was all about how I failed at balancing motherhood and a business and the lessons I learned from that. When my kids were ages five, two, and newborn, I was running three blogs (crazy, I know!!) plus doing a lot of other things.

I had started way too many projects, taken on way too many responsibilities, committed to too many activities, and then found myself completely exhausted and overwhelmed.

To try to do everything I felt I had to do, I pulled all-nighters, pushed myself too hard, sacrificed sleep, and burnt myself out. I almost lost my marriage, health, and my business in the process.

I finally got to a place where I simply couldn't do it anymore. I hit rock bottom. In desperation, I poured out my heart to my husband, telling him how overwhelmed I was, expecting he would give me a pep talk and encourage me.

Instead, he told me these powerful words: ***"Crystal, you are bringing this on yourself."***

While I didn't want to hear it, it was exactly what I needed to hear. I realized deep down in my heart that he was right. I was the one who was saying yes to way too many things. I was the one who was feeling obligated to take on too many responsibilities and commitments. I was the one who didn't have good boundaries in place and was stretching myself too thin.

As I pondered my husband's words, the truth hit me: **I was the problem. However, this was also good news because it meant that I could be the solution!**

As I chronicle in my book, one thing that made such a difference for me was challenging myself to live my life according to what I call my "best-stuff list." This is a list of the very few things I want to wrap my time and energy around.

To come up with my best-stuff list, I had to fast forward in my mind to 25 years from now and think what my priorities would be then. I want to live my life now in a way that I won't regret in years to come. When you consider what's going to really matter in 25 years, it pares your life down to a few true priorities.

I now hold up everything in my life in light of my best-stuff list and those few things I've determined are true priorities. Everything—from opportunities to commitments to everyday responsibilities—is compared against my best-stuff list to see whether it's in line with these priorities or not.

This might seem harsh or rigid, but in reality, it's freeing for me. Because I don't want to waste my days spinning my wheels on things that don't really matter.

DAY 11 PROJECT

1. **What is your WHY for doing this course?** Review and remind yourself of it.
2. **Following the steps in the worksheet provided, determine your own best-stuff list—that list of just a few priorities that you want to wrap your time, your energy, and your life around.** Start with thinking through the hats you wear, the roles you play, the people you serve, and the responsibilities you have. Then, stop and consider yourself 25 years from now. What will your priorities look like then? What should you wrap your time and energy around in light of that?

Note: What is a priority for one person won't necessarily be a priority for another. And what's a priority for one season, won't necessarily be a priority for another. Stripping away all the fluff and getting to the heart of what is actually a priority for you at this season of life will change the way you live. It will empower you to stop feeling obligated to say yes to things that aren't important and allow you to focus on your true priorities.

Resources

168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think by Laura Vanderkam

Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem
by Kevin DeYoung

The Fringe Hours: Making Time for You by Jessica N. Turner

3 Questions to Ask Before Saying Yes

What To Do When You Disappoint Someone

DAY 11 WORKSHEET

CREATE YOUR BEST-STUFF LIST

1. Write down the hats you wear and the roles you play in your everyday life (*wife, mom, co-worker, friend, church pianist, business owner, etc.*)

2. What responsibilities are you in charge of in your home, at work, or in other areas of your life?

3. Now, set all these aside and fast forward 25 years. What do you think your priorities will be then?

4. With this perspective, come back to your current roles, hats, and responsibilities. What are the most important things you should be wrapping your time and energy around?

5. Create a best stuff list of the few things that matter most right now.

These are the things you want to invest the bulk of your time, your energy, and your life into.

My Best-Stuff List:

[illegible]

DAY 12

Create Your Realistic Evening Routine

It's the day many of you have been waiting for—when all of the pieces and lessons we've covered so far start to come together and we turn what we've learned into a realistic evening routine!

If you're unfamiliar with morning, afternoon, and evening routines, it's basically just coming up with three to five simple things that you do in the same order when you first get up, after lunch, and right before bed. Simple is key here. A routine is not a spreadsheet with every 15 minutes of the day mapped out. And it doesn't even need to have times assigned to each item.

Since this is the Make Over Your Evenings course, we're going to only focus on creating a realistic evening routine. If you want some help with your mornings, be sure to check out my 14-day [*Make Over Your Mornings*](#) course, too!

Here's how to create this routine:

1. Make a list of all your ideas.

Write down every single thing you can think of that you would love to do before you go to bed. To give you a starting point for ideas, think of all of the different topics we've discussed in this course and some of the different strategies I've taught you and encouraged you to implement in your life.

Here are a few suggestions you might consider putting on your list:

- *Lay out your clothes for the next day*
- *Clean up the kitchen*
- *Make lunches for the next day*
- *Get breakfast ready*
- *Create your time-blocked to-do list for the next day*
- *Clean up the main living areas of your home*
- *Prep your purse and/or diaper bag*

2. Determine your bedtime.

What time do you need to get up each morning in order to start your day off on the right foot? Write that time down and then count backwards by eight to nine hours. Whatever time you land on is your new bedtime. This is the time that you are aiming to be in your PJs, have everything finished for the night, and be in bed.

Sticking with a consistent bedtime just might be your number one key to morning success. When you're well rested, you have more energy, more clarity, less stress, and more productivity.

3. Prioritize the list.

Once you have written down your ideas and determined your bedtime, go through the list of ideas and star the most important priorities that will make a huge impact on your life. Look for what Charles Duhigg calls "keystone habits." Keystone habits have a trickle-down effect on all other areas. Keep in mind that you can't realistically do everything—and also remind yourself of the timeframe you have to work with based upon the bedtime you determined.

4. Pick three to five things to do every night before bed.

I know you probably want to commit to doing 15-25 things before bed, but promise me you're going to whittle it down to just the top three to five for starters. Keep it simple and you're most apt to actually stick with it and follow through with it. I've learned that one the hard way! Decide which priorities you will choose to do in the same order every night and make sure you put them in order of priority. This is your new realistic evening routine!

Here's an example of what the finished realistic evening routine could look like:

1. Clean up kitchen—7:00 to 7:30 p.m.
2. Do a quick 10-minute house pick-up—7:30 to 7:45 p.m.
3. Lay out clothes for next day—7:45 to 8:00 p.m.
4. PJs on and face washed—8:00 to 8:15 p.m.
5. Read—8:15 to 8:45 p.m.

5. Plan your start time and stick with it.

Think realistically about how long it's going to take for you to accomplish your three to five things and then work backwards from your bedtime to figure out your evening routine start time. In most cases, your start time is going to be at least an hour before your bedtime. I'd add in some extra time just to be on a safe side and to give yourself a cushion in case something comes up.

Write this start time down on your realistic evening routine and set a timer or an alarm to go off to remind you when you're supposed to start. Then, just do it! Stick with this for three weeks and I promise you'll start to see significant improvement in your evenings, in your mornings, and in your days as a whole.

At the end of three weeks, you can tweak your evening routine and even add a few more things, if you're sure you're up to it. If you miss a few days or have a few hiccups along the way, don't be discouraged—just pick back up where you left off and start again the next day.

DAY 12 PROJECT

- 1. What is your WHY for doing this course?** Review and remind yourself of it.
- 2. Follow the five steps outlined to create your own realistic evening routine and commit to sticking with it for the next three weeks.** Put this routine in a very conspicuous place so you'll be reminded of it often. Use the worksheet provided to go through these steps.

Resources

[FlyLady](#)

[5 Things You Should Do Every Single Day](#)

[21-Day Go to Bed Early Challenge](#)

DAY 12 WORKSHEET

CREATE A REALISTIC EVENING ROUTINE

1. Make a list of all your ideas—Write down every single thing you can think of that you would love to do before you go to bed.

2. Determine Your Bedtime—What time do you need to get up each morning in order to start your day off on the right foot? Write that time down and then count backwards by eight to nine hours.

My bedtime is: _____

3. Prioritize the list—Once you have written down your ideas and determined your bedtime, go through the list of ideas and star the most important priorities that will make a huge impact on your life.

4. Pick three to five things to do every night before bed:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

5. Plan your start time and stick with it—Think realistically how long it's going to take for you to accomplish your three to five things and then work backwards from your bedtime to figure out your Evening Routine start time.

Every evening, I will start my *Evening Routine* at: _____

DAY 13

Create Plan B & C

Just having a routine written down on paper is not enough. You actually have to stick with it! Now, hear me clearly on this: **You don't have to follow your routine perfectly for it to make a big impact**, but you do need to use it as a guideline on a daily basis. Even just following 75-80% of it almost every day can mean a world of difference in your home and your life.

Want to know a secret? We rarely follow our morning and evening routines exactly. In fact, I view them as guidelines, not a strict slave master. Routines are there to keep us moving in the right direction, but they are not set in stone.

I was inspired by Jeff Sanders in his book [*The 5AM Miracle*](#) to take this a step further. He encouraged his readers to not just come up with one morning routine, but to come up with multiple morning routine options to choose from depending upon what kind of day it is.

I thought this was brilliant and can easily work for evening routines, too! Do you have some evenings where you have to be out late at activities or a few evenings a week where your spouse works late and you are home with the kids by yourself? Plan a very abbreviated or different routine for that kind of evening. What other kinds of variations do you have in your evenings? Plan a **Realistic Evening Routine B** and a **Realistic Evening Routine C** for these evenings.

For us, we have an evening routine for nights that we're home and an evening routine for nights when we're gone until after 8 p.m. One is longer, one is more abbreviated, but both work—and it means that when we're out later, we're not thrown off our schedule!

In addition, here are two suggestions to help you stick with your routine:

1. Create a Checklist

I've found it really helpful to print a new routine for each day of the week to follow and check off as I complete each task. This might just be the type A in me, but there's something about checking off things from a list that helps to keep me on track.

If you don't want to mess with having a new page for each day, you could print and laminate your routine and use a dry erase marker to check it off, and then just wipe it clean at the end of the day.

Or, if you're more of a techie person, you could use some type of online program on your computer or smartphone. Check out [the To-Do App](#)—you could easily set it up to have a standard routine to check off each day.

However, don't make it more complicated than it needs to be. A simple list printed on scrap paper with a pen to check off each item as you go can work just fine. What matters most is not how high-tech or elaborate your system is, but that it inspires you to follow through with your routine!

2. Get an Accountability Partner

If you feel like you're not disciplined enough to stick with a routine on your own, [find an accountability partner](#) to help keep you on track. Maybe it's a friend who checks in with you via email every morning to see how your routine went the night before. It could be your spouse who keeps you accountable at night. Maybe you form a group of online friends on Facebook to keep each other accountable.

As much as I wish it were true, no one is born self-disciplined. It's something you must intentionally cultivate with time and effort, and it starts with making a choice. You must draw a line in the sand and say, "*I am choosing to make changes to get me where I want to go.*" And then, do whatever it takes to keep showing up and sticking with it every single day.

Don't try to overhaul your life all at once. Slow and steady changes in the right direction will result in lasting and long-term changes down the road. As I've often said, moving in the right direction—even at a microscopic rate—is still moving forward.

DAY 13 PROJECT

- 1. What is your WHY for doing this course?** Review and remind yourself of it.
- 2. Create a Plan B & C for your evening routine.** Do you have certain evenings where you have to be out late at activities or a few evenings a week where your spouse works late and you are home with the kids by yourself? Plan a very abbreviated or different routine for that kind of evening. What other kinds of variations do you have in your evenings? Plan a **Realistic Evening Routine B** and a **Realistic Evening Routine C** for these evenings. You can use the worksheet from Day 12 to create these, if you'd like.

Resources

Free printable and customizable [Morning, Afternoon, and Evening Routine Cards](#)
[The Evening Routines of the Most Successful People](#)

DAY 14

Go Make a Difference!

You made it to the finish line! I'm so honored that you stuck with me for all 14 days of this course! I am SO proud of you and your commitment to finish this course. Congratulations!

I hope that you are beginning to reap some of the benefits of being more intentional with your time, developing some consistent habits, and setting up your days for success by having a realistic evening routine.

My goal in putting together this course was, most importantly, to challenge you to stop living life stuck in survival mode. I have a passion to help women live with more purpose and intention. I don't want you to just survive and make it through your life—I want you to thrive and make a difference!

When you spend your life dedicated to what really matters, you'll have so much more energy and excitement for waking up and living each day. I try to ask myself often, "What will matter 25 years from now?" I then seek to fill my life and invest my days into those things.

By taking care of you and making over your evenings, you'll be able to be in a position to live your life with outstretched arms. The more you live for others, the more you step outside your comfort zone, the more you give freely and generously of your resources and time, the more you'll wake up feeling blessed, motivated, and inspired to live life to the fullest!

At the end of my life, I don't want to look back with regrets and wishful thinking. I want to know I gave it everything I had—because I only get one shot at this life!

That's my hope and prayer for you, too! You were made to make a difference. The world needs your story. The world needs your gifts and your talents.

Don't just sit there waiting for life to happen to you; get up and go happen to life. The world needs YOU!

Resources

Want more encouragement and step-by-step help to live your life with purpose and intention? Check out my other two courses: [*Make Over Your Mornings*](#) (a 14-day course to help you start your day well) and [*Make Over Your Year*](#) (a 4-week online goal-setting course to help you actually create and follow through with realistic, doable, life-impacting goals).

