



7 Productivity Tips to Get From Wake to Work

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7 Productivity Tips to Get From Wake to Work

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Over the years I've found myself at the end of many a workday beckoning to the heavens, "Where did the day go???" I eventually came to the realization that I needed to streamline my life and structure my days around my energy levels.

I used to immediately grab my phone when I woke up to scroll through emails. To be honest, many mornings I still do if I'm anxious about some aspect of work, but I try not to because it drains me instantly.

These days I try to take a moment first — to kiss my husband, to kiss my cats — to have a moment of personal life before I entrench myself into work mode.

You can close the door to your office (if you have one), tell everyone not to bother you, and turn up the white noise in your noise-canceling headphones all you like (and believe me I have!) but when it comes to productivity and focus it's all about preserving your energy — or willpower.

This stuff is personal and requires trial and error. What works for me won't necessarily work for you, but here are some tactics I've adopted to put me at my most productive. And I'm thankful for them!

Pave the Road from Wake to Work With Something Fun, Relaxing or New

*Bon jour, Madame! Où est La Rue Saint Jacques?
La Rue Saint Jacques? C'est là-bas!*

I have started to learn French in the wee-early hours of the morning and I'm loving it. My husband and I wake up at the crack of dawn and take a brisk hour walk and listen to our French lessons, he a few feet behind me so I don't have to hear him and his perfect French accent while I struggle with "Je."

The morning air, the exercise, the brain cell increase from learning a new language — it's a great way to wake up and prep the mind for taking in information.

Yes, there's a certain willpower depletion that comes from learning something new, but because it's not work-related it feels invigorating and allows me the time and relaxation in the morning to transition from waking to working.

If you can't handle me in my active wear, then you don't deserve me in my...active wear.

I wear active wear every single day that I get to work from home. Leggings and a shirt is my uniform.

By reaching for leggings and a shirt I don't tap into any serious brain functioning to decide what I'm going to wear. Being that I get to work from home when I'm not with clients it doesn't really matter anyway. Might as well be as comfy as can be. When I'm out with clients, I have my go-to also. A black skirt or pants, a belt and a button down blouse or a dress with a belt. Simple and done and already known.

Every decision we make depletes our willpower and you need as full a reserve of willpower as possible to get through the workday. My willpower is thus still relatively intact after I've showered and dressed for the day because I'm not thinking about what I'm going to wear.

Mark Zuckerberg does the same, as did Steve Jobs. This probably isn't the first time you've heard about the uniform routine. I'm a believer in it; it helps me. I actively feel the absence of having to choose what to wear and that relaxes me, as do my leggings.

Find your uniform! It can be as simple as "I like blue shirts" or "I like boots" (and who doesn't love a great pair of boots?)

Hardboiled eggs are my best friend; so is Sunday cooking.

I like a couple of eggs every day with some vegetables, maybe a little sweet potato, a cup of coffee and I'm good. No more "What am I going to eat?" "Where will I eat?" "Should I eat this?" I save the more exciting breakfasts for weekend brunches when I have the luxury of choice.

On Sundays I roast vegetables, bake sweet potatoes, boil eggs, cook some meat, and voila: food for the week.

Being able to not think about food, although it's fun to think about food, saves so much time and so much energy.

Let it all out.

I need to be able to emote freely, speak at full volume on the phone freely, pace if need be.

Suppressing emotion or curtailing your personality in any way is a willpower zapper.

If you don't have a door or a private room, step outside for a moment to vent; grab a cup of coffee. Make sure you have an emotional outlet, otherwise it churns inside you, gathers momentum and power, and steals your focus.

System Preferences → Notifications → None

"Cheryl also commented on Rebecca's post about feeding the giraffe at the zoo."

"@luvsrockclimbing44 has sent you a message."

"LinkedIn Message: "Hi Nicole, I'm new to organizational psychology and was wondering if you could give me some pointers about..."

I love social media and I love the notifications, so much so that if I don't turn them off I will find myself typing a lengthy considerate email to Jennifer Somebody about how to start your consulting practice while I ignore my own.

I save all social media follow-ups for post-dinner / TV watching or early AM coffee time. It has no place in the meat of the day. Only eating meatballs belongs in the meat of the day. Chunk isn't just a Goonies character, it's also a productivity hack

At the end of each day I look at what I have lined up for the next day. Then I chunk out my day. Tasks that are going to require a fair amount of mental energy I schedule as early as possible.

Did you know that the average worker actually checks their email up to 74x/day???

Our willpower is fullest at the start of the day. You'll need that willpower reserve for the tasks/projects that tax your brain. If you spend the first half of your day answering emails, crossing off the easy-to-do items on your to-do list you are putting yourself at a disadvantage for the harder stuff later in the day.

Sometimes life is boring...and that's OK.

Resisting temptation — to abstain from distraction — depletes our willpower. The more depleted our willpower, the less we are able to attend to important projects and important conversations.

Giving in to every distraction versus training your brain to be still creates a scattered, inattentive mind.

I've learned not everything I do is exciting or interesting. Sometimes I need to perform a solo brainstorm session and it's not fun. Sometimes I need to write lots of proposals that are boring. To get these tasks done so I can move on to the next point of business I have to accept that boredom is part of my life, and presumably part of yours too.

If you allow yourself to distract every time boredom creeps into your day you are empowering your ego, which aims to grab and attach to something — anything! — in every second of every minute, all day long.

Take back control of your mind. You steer the boat.

Productivity is less about tricks and more about just managing your energy in a way that works for you.

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