

12 Ideas for Establishing a Calming Routine

One of the most rewarding changes in my life in the last couple of years has been finding peace with a morning routine.

I've made it a habit to wake before most of the world, at about 4:30 a.m., and just enjoy the quiet and solitude.

It has made all the difference in the world.

I sit quietly with a cup of coffee, and enjoy the silence. I go for a morning run, which relieves stress and is perfect for contemplation. I use the quiet time before my family awakes to write something each morning. I read, as a good novel is one of my favorite companions.

Now, not everyone is a morning person, of course. But that doesn't mean you can't create your own routine, **one that incorporates something that gives you solitude, quiet, or stress release**. While morning is an ideal time for such a routine, other ideal times are after work and before bed — and really, any time that works for you is good.

I recommend that if you haven't yet, you create your own calming routine. Give it a couple of weeks to become a habit, focusing on doing it every day, and soon, you will not want to miss it.

Here are just a few ideas to get you started:

1. **Morning coffee.** If you're not a coffee person, tea or cocoa work great as well. Sit and enjoy the silence as you wake up, and even better, watch the sun rise. It's the perfect way to greet the day.
2. **Exercise.** I like to go on an easy run. It relieves stress, and gives me time to myself to think, and enjoy nature. Evening runs are great too, especially as the sun goes down. If you're not into running, walking, cycling, swimming, or really any exercise works well. Just take it easy in the beginning, and try to do a little every day. Don't overdo it.
3. **Meditation or yoga.** I haven't been meditating on a regular basis, but when I do, it's so calming, and so centering. You don't need to do anything formal — simply focusing on your breathing, as it goes in and out, is a good meditation. While I've never been into yoga, I know a lot of people who swear by it, and I would recommend you give it a try if it sounds appealing to you.
4. **Gratitude session.** This is one of my favorite rituals: every day, take a couple of minutes to think about everything and everybody you are grateful for in your life. This may sound corny, but it is an amazing ritual. Try it right now — it only takes a minute. Who are you grateful for? What are you grateful for? I've found that this little ritual has so much power that it makes me happier and more compassionate. Btw, every time I do it, I thank the people who donated and helped me become [a giant step closer to my dream](#) (that's you guys!).
5. **Goal mantra.** This is another one of my absolute favorites. I got the idea from [Guy Kawasaki](#), who tells us that corporate mission statements are basically useless, and recommends you create a corporate mantra instead of three or four words (tops). So instead of creating a corporate mantra, I created a personal mantra to remind myself of why I do everything I've been doing this year (with the blog, all my writing, and some new projects that are coming up, including an e-book). Here it is: *Liberate Yourself*. And I just make sure to repeat this mantra at least once a day (if not several times). It helps me stay focused. I suggest you do the same for your personal mission.
6. **Evening review.** I think this would be an especially fruitful routine for anyone. Basically, it's a routine that Ben Franklin did himself: he would spend some time at the end of each day to review how he did with his goal, and reflect on how his day went. It only needs to take a few minutes, but just go over your day, think about your goal (your mantra), what you did to further that goal, what you did right and what you did wrong today, what you can improve, what you need to do in the future. If you want to journal this, it would be even better!
7. **Bath time.** My home doesn't have a bath tub, but I truly cherish a long hot bath. If you have the time to do this, it can be extremely relaxing.

8. **After work unwinding.** Long day at work? Stressed out? Take 30 minutes to unwind. Some great ideas for that: a 20-30 minute nap, snuggling with your kids, deep breathing, stretching, self-massage, or really anything that relaxes you.
9. **Pre-bed ritual.** Another ideal time for a calming routine is just before you go to bed. You can do any of the calming things mentioned in the other items, or just develop a routine: get clothes ready, get lunches ready, clean up, brush teeth, decide on your three Most Important Tasks (MITs) for tomorrow, etc.
10. **Journaling or writing.** A morning writing ritual is a good thing, but you can do a writing ritual at any time that works for you. Or instead of writing, try journaling. It can be very productive and relaxing.
11. **Conversation.** Try this: every night for an hour, just sit and talk to your spouse. Share the highlights and lowlights of your day, talk about your goals, your finances, your relationship, movies, music, books. This can, of course, be adapted for conversation with your children.
12. **Reading time.** Ah, one of my favorites. Take time each day to spend with a good book. Or a trashy novel. It doesn't matter. I actually like to take time in the morning and evening, but whatever time is convenient for you will work.

Do you have calming routine? Tell us about it in the comments.

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