

Cultivating a Mindful Morning Routine

Wake Up With Gratitude: As you open your eyes each morning, take a moment to express gratitude for the gift of a new day. Consider the things you're thankful for, whether it's the simple pleasures of life, your loved ones, or the opportunities that lie ahead. This practice of gratitude can shift your perspective and create a sense of positivity that carries throughout your day.

Mindful Breathing: Begin your day with a few minutes of mindful breathing. Find a comfortable spot to sit or lie down, close your eyes, and focus your attention on your breath. Inhale deeply and exhale slowly, paying close attention to the sensation of each breath entering and leaving your body. This practice can help calm your mind, reduce stress, and increase your overall awareness.

Mindful Movement: Engaging in gentle and intentional movement, such as yoga or stretching, can help you connect with your body and center your thoughts. Focus on each movement, allowing yourself to fully experience the sensations and the connection between your body and mind. As you move, be present in the moment and let go of any worries or distractions.

Nourish Your Body and Mind:

Prioritize a wholesome breakfast that nourishes both your body and mind. Choose foods that provide sustained energy and include nutrients that support brain function, such as whole grains, fruits, and lean proteins. Eating mindfully, savoring each bite, and paying attention to the flavors and textures can create a sense of satisfaction and connection to your nourishment.

Set Intentions for the Day: Before diving into your daily tasks, take a moment to set clear intentions for the day. Identify one or two meaningful goals or intentions that you'd like to focus on. By establishing a sense of purpose and direction, you can guide your actions and decisions in alignment with your values.

Digital Detox: Consider starting your morning with a brief digital detox. Instead of immediately reaching for your phone or other devices, allow yourself some uninterrupted time to engage in activities that promote mindfulness, such as journaling, reading, or simply enjoying a quiet moment of reflection. Cultivating a mindful morning routine is a powerful way to start your day with intention and care.

By incorporating practices like gratitude, mindful breathing, movement, nourishment, intention-setting, and a digital detox, you can create a positive foundation for your day ahead. Remember that building a routine takes time and patience, so start small and gradually incorporate these practices into your morning. As you prioritize mindfulness and self-care, you'll likely find that your days become more centered, peaceful, and fulfilling.

Prevent Post-Vacation Whiplash

Research supports the notion that vacations boost overall life satisfaction, improve sense of health, reduce exhaustion, increase overall wellbeing, and reduce burnout or mental fatigue. When we truly unplug, we also boost creativity and productivity in the time that follows. We even reap psychological benefits prior to the trip as we rev up excitement during the planning and packing phases. Vacations also offer benefits once we've returned home and assimilated into our everyday pace again – a process which can last up to four weeks!

But this post-vacation time is also known to cause travelers additional stress. It can even raise stress levels higher than pre-vacation. Post-vacation time is often

referred to as the fade-out period, when the benefits of vacations slowly dissolve. This is why we have to be proactive and put in place a well-thought-out plan to reduce or eliminate post-vacation whiplash altogether, allowing us to transition smoothly back into our pre-travel pace and even extend the healthy benefits of vacationing.

Whether you're getting ready for winter travel or looking ahead to next summer already, consider investing some planning time to ensure your next post-vacation transition is as smooth and healthy as possible.

"How to Avoid Post-Vacation Stress," Shana B. Tiayon, greatergood.berkeley.edu, July 19, 2023.

"Why You Should Take More Time Off From Work," Emma Seppala, greatergood.berkeley.edu, Aug. 10, 2017.

Here are some tips to help:

Block your calendar.

For the first two to four days after returning to work, block your mornings, for example, and save that time for catching up on messages and looking things over, rather than diving right into your next project or attending meetings. If you can, try to schedule activities and meetings that feel energizing in the week following a vacation. Finally, be sure to block your calendar for lunch daily (30 minutes to an hour) for the first two weeks after a trip to ensure you have a break. These tips can also apply if you are a stay-at-home parent, caregiver, etc.

Arrange leisure activities.

Science shows scheduling post-vacation leisure activities, like golfing or hiking, helps prolong the benefits of the vacation further. It's even more beneficial if the activities focus on relaxation, such as a massage appointment or an afternoon at the pool.

Reduce home stress with a "minimal-effort" plan.

Tidy up and clean the house prior to your trip; make sure your everyday laundry is put away so it doesn't compound with vacation clothing; create an Instacart order with the groceries you'll want when you return and schedule the delivery the day you return; consider hiring a lawn crew for the week you return to remove another item from the to-do list; or plan ahead to reduce the effort for any chore you dread upon return.



Veggie-Filled Breakfast Frittata

This egg dish is packed with veggies and perfect for an on-the-go breakfast that you can put together for yourself or your family in a pinch and enjoy hot or cold.



Makes 6 servings Prep 5 minutes
Cook 21 minutes Total 26 minutes

Ingredients

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| 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil | ¼ cup chopped fresh tomatoes |
| 1 small green bell pepper, diced | 1 clove garlic, sliced |
| 1 small red bell pepper, diced | 10 large eggs, beaten |
| ½ small red onion, thinly sliced | Kosher salt |
| 2 cups packed baby spinach | Freshly ground black pepper |
| | Hot sauce, optional for serving |

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Heat oil in a medium oven-safe nonstick skillet at medium-high heat. Add bell peppers and onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for 6 to 7 minutes, or until softened. Add spinach, tomatoes and garlic and cook, stirring frequently for about 1 minute, or until spinach is just wilted and still vibrant green.
3. Reduce heat to low and add eggs, 1 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of black pepper. Stir gently to distribute the vegetables. Bake 13 to 15 minutes, or until eggs are set.
4. Let stand for 5 minutes. Slice into 6 pieces, serve straight from the skillet, add hot sauce if desired, and enjoy!

Storage: Refrigerate in an air-tight container for up to 1 week.

PER SERVING 180 Calories • 13g Total Fat • 3.5g Saturated Fat
310 mg Sodium • 4g Total Carbohydrate • 1g Dietary Fiber
2g Sugar • 12g Protein

Recipe adapted from foodnetwork.com.