Mel Robbins Keypoints — Habits, Goals & Productivity

Mel Robbins Keypoints

Episodes in this pack: 47

This One Episode Will Motivate You to Change Your Entire Life | Gary Vee

Guest: Gary Vaynerchuk
Date: 2026-09-07 · Duration: 1:10:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_wMpEGgc1Q

KEYPOINTS

• What you consume is who you become

Gary Vaynerchuk, entrepreneur and author behind VaynerX, VaynerMedia and VeeFriends, opens by saying listeners who chose positivity just made an important decision. His point is that the feed reflects you: 'The algorithm is exposing who you actually are.' If you don't like what shows up on social media, change what you follow and engage with.

• Stop needing to be understood

When Mel asks how to deal with feeling misunderstood, Gary's answer is not to want the world to get you. Nobody who isn't you, not your spouse, your mother or a coworker, can fully know you, so a stranger in the comments certainly can't. He learned this early as an immigrant who couldn't speak English, a 'ridiculously bad student' and someone who kept innovating in his dad's liquor store against outside advice. By 25 he had been told he was wrong for years, and that made the next 25 years easy.

• Status and stuff can't buy peace of mind

Gary argues that consumer culture is often a proxy: buying things to show the world you're fine when you're not. He suggests the money might be better spent on therapy. Anchoring self-worth to others' opinions means you will always be chasing them. He blames 'keeping up with the Joneses' less on social media than on decades of parenting that left accountability out.

• When is it no longer your parents' fault?

Gary separates real hardship from blame. His mother lost her own mother at 5, and her father was jailed in the Soviet Union for about 10 years when she was 9 or 10. She is still the most optimistic person in the family. He says many people get 'exhausted of pointing fingers' somewhere between 25 and 45. Mel says her own moment came at 41, when she realized nobody was coming to save her.

• Envy and jealousy quietly drain you

Gary says many people are exhausted because envy is 'eating up their soul,' after spending the summer triggered by other people's happiness. His counter is perspective and gratitude: 8.3 billion people, about 800 million without clean water, and the fact that you're listening on a phone that cost hundreds of dollars. Mel describes getting sick of being jealous of people she wanted to be happy for, and deciding she wasn't stuck as that version of herself.

• Live for your funeral, not for 'I wish I'

Gary's worst three-word sentence is 'I wish I…'. He promises that whatever you're scared of is far less scary than telling a stranger 30 years from now what you never tried. He leans on the odds he has heard of being born at all, about 400 trillion to one (while admitting 'I'm no scientist'), to argue that wasting the chance is disrespectful.

• You stop caring what people think by practicing

His answer to 'how?' is simply 'by doing it.' He was terrified of swimming and riding a bike as a kid and worked through those fears by his late teens. For people whose whole framework rests on other people's opinions, starting to exercise or opening an Etsy shop is terrifying, and he admits it is genuinely hard after 20–30 years of that habit.

• One action changes the momentum of a life

'Life is sports. It's momentum.' Gary imagines a 39-year-old listener for whom things haven't gone well, where one point, meaning one action tomorrow, changes the whole game and the next 50 years. Mel connects this to the moment of hesitation on the sideline, where 'the only one criticizing you is you.'

• Happiness has done a bad job at marketing

Gary says unhappy people treat nasty comments like a full-time job while happy people stay quiet. He pushes old-school values: humility, civility, holding the door and smiling at strangers. He calls a lack of humility the number one thing holding many listeners back.

• Own and adjust, and drop 'should'

Gary admits real failures, including being bad at candor and at firing people for about 20 years, and says some people are still mad at him. His method is to own it and adjust. He refuses to think he 'should' have anything. Working 15 hours a day for three years entitles you to nothing unless it brings value, so if something isn't working, ask whether it simply isn't good yet.

EXAMPLES

• The 5-1 tennis comebacks

Twice one summer, Gary was down 5-1 to a friend, Nate, in a set and came back to win 7-5 and 7-6. He changed the energy by talking out loud to himself and to his opponent ('I have a feeling I'm going to come back'). For years afterward, he would remind Nate of it. The lesson is that saying it aloud changes momentum.

• Mel's six-year podcast hesitation

In 2018, Mel watched Gary and others podcasting, despite her start hosting a Saturday-morning radio show in Boston, and told herself 'Gary's already done it.' It took six more years to stop talking herself out of it. Gary notes that he podcasted from 2007, had a top-100 show from 2014 to 2019, and Mel overtook him quickly because she did it better. A head start didn't matter.

• The college-is-not-for-everyone backlash

From about 2007, Gary argued that creative or entrepreneurial kids whose parents couldn't pay shouldn't take on $120,000 in debt for a degree. He says it drew the most public and private heat of his career for a decade, including attacks on his intelligence, until people came around about 15 years later. His point: if it's your truth, keep going even when you stand alone.

• Live shopping is 'where social was in 2014'

Gary says that within your first 15 TikTok scrolls you'll hit someone live-selling. Having made social-media content daily since about 2006–07 (Wine Library TV) and written a book on it in 2009, he sees live shopping on TikTok Shop and Whatnot as today's early opportunity. Mel's example is a mom worried about other parents' opinions at junior-high drop-off.

• Give five hours to the elderly

Gary thinks the last 30–40 years of technology taught people to mock grandparents. He suggests spending time with lonely residents of senior homes. Talking to a 91-year-old woman about her life is a real mitzvah, and 'it's going to do a lot more for you.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Do the thing that's been 'sitting in your tummy'

Gary's challenge: tomorrow, do the thing you've been sitting on for a day, a year or likely a decade. Everyone starts at zero, and in a year your life can look completely different.

• Find your people through what you love

Needlepoint, gardening, tractor pulling or collectibles: there's a community for it. Gary describes strangers hugging at a 4-day collectibles show in Chicago. If the people around you are negative, find your people online. He tells Mel's listeners their biggest mistake is not interacting in the comments.

• Aim for aliveness, not perfection

Mel's takeaway: the goal of life isn't constant happiness. Gary says life can be 'awesome' even when you're $80,000 in debt or your marriage is struggling, because you still have the chance to change it.

• Cheer for competitors

Gary competes hard professionally, but he says he feels genuine joy when people competing with him win. That is how to take envy apart in practice.

Organize Your Life & Home: The Simple System That Gives You More Time, Energy, & Control

Guest: Clea Shearer and Joanna Teplin (The Home Edit)
Date: 2026-08-06 · Duration: 1:09:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfW9ENoucyE

KEYPOINTS

• Polished organizing photos are the "wedding album, not the marriage"
Mel admits she taped in Boston because she was too embarrassed to host them at her Vermont home. She says The Home Edit's colour-coded pantries both inspire and shame her. Clea and Joanna call their Instagram a portfolio: a snapshot, not a standard to live by. Their goal is to lower everyone's standards for what organized looks like and remove the shame.

• You don't have time *not* to be organized
Physical clutter drains your mental energy, and searching for keys or a child's water bottle before school wastes far more time than setting up a home for them. Their joke is that "organized people are just too lazy to look for things." Organizing takes chores off a busy person's plate rather than adding one. It doesn't have to happen in one sitting.

• The edit is 80% of the job, and it costs nothing
Mel says she'll stop saying 'organizing' and start saying 'edit.' Editing means actively deciding what stays, rather than shuffling things around or hiding them in baskets. Containers and labels come later. Every item needs a home, but that home doesn't have to be a bin.

• The 80/20 rule: keep any space only 80% full
As with eating, you don't want to be more than 80% full. That 20% of breathing room brings more peace than colour-coding. The items you keep can't exceed the space you have, whether you live in a studio or a mansion. When there are too many pens, the scissors (or rolling pin, or potato masher) jam the drawer.

• Keep only what you need, use or love; sentimental items must be honoured
Plunger, need. Toaster, use. Love needs no justification. Sentimental is a red-flag subcategory. Either use the item or store it with care, in a keepsake box or a frame. A grandmother's sweater shoved at the back of a shelf isn't being honoured. Set a firm space limit for keepsakes, and remember that storage space costs rent or mortgage.

• "Should" is not a reason to keep something
Shoulds feel powerful, but they aren't a want or a need, and nobody is coming over to check on that tea towel. Grouping a whole category together makes the choice obvious. When Mel imagined all her family heirlooms on one table, she lit up at her grandmother's china on display and deflated at the doilies and broken 1920s costume jewelry crammed in a drawer.

• Clutter is not a character flaw
People link clutter to self-worth because they shame themselves, but clutter is 'a very solvable problem.' Much resistance is really avoidance of 'landmines.' Will these jeans ever fit? Are we having another baby, given the maternity clothes worn once? What about the gift I never liked? Busyness becomes the excuse.

• Start with one landmine-free drawer, never a whole room
A junk drawer is ideal because nobody is attached to a bent paper clip. A small win builds muscle memory and confidence. Bathroom drawers also work, since they're the first and last thing you see each day. A 'daily drawer' holds only your morning items: dental care, contacts, cotton swabs. Never take out more than you can put back the same day.

• Don't fight the tide in 'Grand Central'
In the entry or mudroom, first ask whether everything there belongs; dog food or a vise may belong in the garage. Then accept how your family behaves. Shoes and backpacks will land there, so add a shoe bin and hooks. Nothing goes on the floor except a rug. Look up for vertical storage, and give every flat surface a tray with a job (mail, keys) so it doesn't become an 'endless sea.'

• A me problem versus a them problem
If the glasses and keys on the kitchen island have no home, that's a me problem: create one. If people ignore a simple system, it's a them problem. Both women admit they remake their kids' beds. Standards that are too high break the system.

• Mess returns when systems are too complicated or there's only tidying
Use big floor bins for blocks, not micro-categories. Labels are 'a set of instructions for the household.' Organizing is like the gym: it needs maintenance, and a slip such as steak knives in the junk drawer just means you start again. If it works, it's enough.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's actual kitchen junk drawer, edited live in about 5 minutes
Everything came out: a rubber-band ball nobody uses, a missing cribbage card (dropped there out of frustration), a water-stained to-do list, nail polish, cuticle cream, Irish breakfast tea she dislikes, duct tape, a chopstick, a Tide pen, unclaimed bracelets and expired cat-food coupons. Mel kept only the black, blue and green pens; the rest go to a teacher. Box lids became free dividers, and birthday candles and matches went into their own little kit.

• The joker card test
Mel felt she 'should' put a stray card back with its deck, until she admitted she plays no game that uses a joker. Out it went: 'Take the word should out of your vocabulary.'

• Six pantry categories
Breakfast, dinner, snacks, baking, cooking and dessert are enough for a busy household. Add micro-categories only if you enjoy them.

• The 'no new hangers' rule
The self-described ruthless shopper of the pair buys no new hangers: her hanger count matches her closet, so new clothes mean something leaves. They also urge matching hangers and putting empty hangers back at the end of the rod.

- **No client has missed what they purged**
  Over their client work, they can't recall one person regretting a closet edit. For pricey items, resale services that pick up and sell on commission (they mention Poshmark and The RealReal) remove the barrier, but don't let selling stall the edit.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Item or space?**
  When you're stuck, especially in a closet, ask: do I want this, or the breathing room and the free hanger? Mel adopts it as a lifelong mantra. Do closets by category (pile all your pajamas on the bed), one day a week, and expect emotions.
- **Carry a 'relocation basket'**
  Put things that belong elsewhere in a basket and walk them to the garage or bathroom in one loop.
- **Small-space helpers**
  A three-tier rolling cart holds laundry, towels or a laptop. Over-door units hold shoes, and hooks use vertical space.
- **Low-bar lifestyle**
  Set the bar low enough to step over: 5 minutes of editing counts. Start with a space that's only yours, like your bathroom drawer, before tackling shared spaces where others may not follow the system yet.

The Science of Achieving Goals: How to Change Your Life in 5 Simple Steps

Date: 2026-04-23 · Duration: 1:03:22
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdwDd9NUITg

KEYPOINTS

- **Take back control by putting one meaningful thing into your week**
  In this solo episode Mel lays out five rules for setting and reaching a personal goal: lose weight, start meditating, sell your art, pay off debt, go back to school, write the book. The point isn't a huge overhaul. She wants you to pick something that matters to you and fit it into your life now, because each week you do that, life gets a little better. She calls the rules the skills nobody teaches but everybody needs.
- **Rule 1: Decide what you want and write it down**
  It sounds obvious, but Mel says almost everyone skips it because they manage goals in their heads, and 'you can't hit a target that you don't see.' She recalls Oprah being asked why so many people get stuck; Oprah's answer was that most people never take the time to get clear about what they want. Excuses like no time, exhaustion or the state of the world keep goals vague. Write the specific goal on paper, for example 'this week I'm adding meditation.'
- **Rule 2: Fire your family**
  Expecting your family to be your biggest cheering squad is, in Mel's words, the biggest mistake you can make. Your goals are for you, not them, and if they've never done what you're attempting they'll often ask 'What are you doing? Why?' Firing them means not needing their approval or support to keep going. It doesn't mean cutting them off.
- **You don't have to go it alone: build a team that shares the goal**
  After you're clear and doing it for yourself, ask 'If I did this with a team, what could that look like?' Mel spent two years getting clear before recording her first podcast episode: she wanted longer conversations with listeners and to learn from experts. Supportive peers, groups or collaborators can replace the cheerleading you wanted from family.
- **Rule 3: You need a will and a way**
  Mel bases this on the work of psychologist Dr. Elliot Berkman, co-director of the Center for Translational Neuroscience at the University of Oregon, who says any goal or change requires two things: the will and the way. Mel translates 'will' as your why. Without both, goals stall, which she says explains her own past struggles to stick with goals.
- **A personal why taps intrinsic motivation**
  When you know why something matters to you, it draws on intrinsic motivation, which she calls the purest form because it comes from inside you. Your why can be different from the obvious one: her husband's meditation circle wasn't really about meditating, it was about community. Your why is personal and can change over time.
- **The 'way' should be your way, broken into small bricks**
  There are many routes to the same goal. Mel's image is building a path one brick at a time: brainstorm small actions that fit your life and personality, then lay one at a time, day after day, week after week.
- **Rule 4: The 'Hot 15'**
  Spend 15 minutes on it, daily if you can, weekly if that's all you've got. The first bricks can be absurdly small, because you're building the routine of starting and the identity of being 'the kind of person who' does this. If you can find time to doomscroll, you can find 15 minutes: in a doctor's waiting room, on the subway, or first thing in the morning.
- **Rule 5: Don't quit; consistency beats intensity**
  There's no deadline and it isn't a race; the only way to lose is to stop coming back. Mel cites Angela Duckworth (University of Pennsylvania psychologist, author of Grit), who told her that grit 'doesn't look like intensity, it looks like consistency.' Consistency doesn't mean never missing a day. It means coming back after illness, injury, a breakup or a bad day, the way elite performers do.

EXAMPLES

- **Chris's Tuesday meditation circle**
  Mel's husband Chris realized his real problem was a lack of community. He decided to host a free one-hour meditation circle on Tuesdays at 5:30, posted it on a local Facebook group and found a venue. Mel notes libraries, community centers or a restaurant that's closed on Tuesdays might say yes. He has run it weekly for a year.
- **Sawyer's solo backpacking trip**
  Mel's daughter Sawyer dreamed of backpacking solo through Asia for about five months. Mel calls it her 'biggest nightmare' and admits she was the least supportive person in the family. Sawyer had 'fired' her long ago and went anyway, knowing it would haunt her if she didn't.
- **Chris's book, written without family input**
  Writing a book has been Chris's goal for about five years. He started not by writing a book but by getting clear he wanted to write more, which led him to an online writing group where people write together on Zoom, share work and do assignments. That eventually grew into a manuscript he's worked on for about two and a half years. Mel hasn't read a word or even learned the title, because he hasn't asked and isn't expecting family support.
- **How Mel writes her books with the Hot 15**
  Every morning she does 15 minutes. Some days she stares at the screen and writes nothing, and that still counts as a brick. On others she switches to handwriting: 'I don't know what to write. Why am I brain dead?' She says she has written every book this way.
- **Michael Phelps at 7 out of 10**
  Via Duckworth: Phelps, winner of 23 Olympic golds, didn't give 10 out of 10 effort at every practice, according to his coach. It was more like a 7 or 8, but he swam every day.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Tiny first bricks to copy**

Meditation: walk to your favorite chair with a cup of tea and sit; you don't even have to meditate. Walking: put on sneakers, walk to the end of the driveway, and come back, for the first 10 days. Money: 15 minutes reviewing your bank account for subscriptions draining money, or learning one thing about getting out of debt.

- **The five rules in one line each**

  1) Decide and write it down. 2) Fire your family. 3) Know your why (the will) and your way. 4) Hot 15. 5) Don't quit; there's no deadline.

- **When to do the Hot 15**

  Mel prefers first thing in the morning, but if you missed it, do it at night. Fifteen minutes a week still counts.

You're Not Lazy – You Just Need a Life Admin Day (Here's How)

Date: 2026-03-16 · Duration: 0:56:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFEqqZXzkHU

KEYPOINTS

• You're not lazy; you're buried in 'life admin' without a system

In this solo episode, Mel defines life admin as the overdue appointments, DMV visits, two-hour hold times, bills, returns, receipts and battery boxes that quietly drain energy and make you feel behind. Her fix is one intentional day running the same five time blocks in the same order every time. She promises the payoff: 6–12 overdue appointments scheduled, 10–20 open items checked off, and your future weekends and evenings back.

• Step one: put a Life Admin Day on the calendar on purpose

Open your calendar, look at the next couple of weeks and designate a day. Valentine's, St. Patrick's and Groundhog all have a day; you get one too. Mel recommends a Monday if you can manage it. She addresses 'I don't have time,' whether you're juggling jobs, caregiving, grieving or facing a diagnosis: when you're already stretched, this backlog is exactly what's weighing on you.

• Four ground rules protect the day

1) No decluttering: it eats the energy you need for admin. 2) Make your space as quiet and empty as possible; if you can be alone, with no people or pets needing you, do it. 3) The day is about you first: handle your own admin before everyone else's, because doing others' first is why you run out of energy. 4) No shame and no moral judgment about how far behind you are or what you find.

• Do a brain dump the night before

Write down everything unfinished or bothering you: every errand, return and pile in the house. Mel's example: walking past the bag of summer clothes to donate three times a day and having it pop back into her head every time. 'If it lives in the paper, it can die in your head.' The dump becomes the day's raw list.

• Block 1 (9–11 a.m.): the call block

Two hours of phone calls and bookings that set future-you up. Bulk-book the year: hair, nails, dentist (this year and next), doctor, vet and dog grooming, and kids' physicals well before sports season. Sit wherever you're least distracted; for Mel that's the kitchen table, away from her computer.

• Why calls come first

Mel says decision fatigue is lowest in the morning, and calls give the biggest mental relief per minute. Many offices close at lunch and hold times grow later in the day. Knocking out calls you've avoided for six months builds momentum early.

• Block 2 (11 a.m.–1 p.m.): the errand block

Two focused hours on the out-of-the-house tasks that never fit into your week: drop off the donations that have been in your car for five months, get the oil change that's six months overdue, renew your license or registration, and complete appointments like TSA PreCheck or a Real ID. By lunch, three to five things that have haunted you are done; Mel says the day is worth it even if you stop there.

• Block 3 (about 1–3 p.m.): the money block

Mel remembers how much she and her husband avoided money during their struggles, so this block carries no judgment. Drawing on past guests David Bach, Morgan Housel and Tiffany Aliche, she boils it down to their shared rule: you can't control your money until you know where it's going. Find where it's going, then cut off people and companies drawing money they shouldn't have access to.

• Block 4 (about 3–4 p.m.): the email block

It comes late because it requires little emotion, and getting on screens earlier invites distraction. This isn't for replying to texts or emails. Clean the inbox: unsubscribe from the lists you landed on from old purchases or gifts (her example: snowboarding updates when you don't snowboard).

• Block 5 (4 p.m., five minutes): schedule the next one

Having seen the order (calls, errands, money, email, schedule) and how much gets done, you can book your next Life Admin Day for whenever suits you. Making it recurring is what keeps you from falling behind again.

EXAMPLES

• Baylor's to-do list sleep study

Mel cites research from Baylor University's sleep and cognitive neuroscience lab, directed by Michael K. Scullin. People who wrote down their unfinished to-dos before bed fell asleep faster than a control group who wrote down tasks they'd already completed. Writing it down offloads worry, which is why she has you do the brain dump the night before.

• Charlotte rescheduled TSA PreCheck eight times

A member of Mel's team kept rescheduling the appointment because she 'didn't have time.' When she finally went, it took about five minutes, and she was euphoric and asked why she'd spent so much time thinking about it and rescheduling it.

• The Real ID nobody understands

Mel says about 90% of her company either didn't know what a Real ID was or didn't have one and were still traveling with passports. She uses it as a classic friction item that costs time and money when ignored.

• Tie yourself to the chair

Because the call block is boring and you'll keep wanting to get up, Mel jokingly passes on an Instagram tip: loosely tie yourself to the chair with a leash, rope or belt so you notice every time you try to wander off.

• Stretched-out underwear as life admin

Mel includes replacing worn-out basics on the list, along with car service and the broken door knob, as small daily frictions that are easy to postpone forever.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The day at a glance**
  Night before: brain dump. 9–11 calls; 11–1 errands; lunch; about 1–3 money; about 3–4 email cleanup; 4:00 book the next Life Admin Day.
- **Bulk-booking checklist**
  Hair, nails, dentist, doctor/well visits, kids' sports physicals, vet, grooming, car service, booked for the whole year in one sitting.
- **Hand it back to the adults in your life**
  Mel suggests sharing the framework with the grown kids and family whose admin you've been doing, so they learn to handle their own and you can focus on yours.

The 24-Hour Turnaround: Start Today & Feel Different Tomorrow

Date: 2026-02-09 · Duration: 0:57:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfLwabNA9IQ

KEYPOINTS

• Off days are normal; a stuck feeling that starts to stick is the signal

In this solo episode Mel says you don't need to turn every low-energy day into a crisis. But when being stuck starts to last, through doomscrolling dread, a routine that has collapsed, a toddler waking you at 3 a.m., or months spent focused on someone else, it's time for a deliberate reset. Her answer is a five-step '24-hour turnaround.' Each step takes about 5–10 minutes.

• The 24 hours start whenever you do step one

You don't wait for Monday, a new month, a birthday or feeling ready. If it's 8 p.m., you can do all five steps before bed; if it's morning or midday, start today. When you're thinking 'I don't even know where to begin,' you now have the answer.

• Confidence comes from evidence, not motivation

Her core principle: 'If you want to feel better, you have to move while you feel worse.' Affirmations and waiting for motivation keep you stuck. Small completed actions are proof to your brain that you can handle things, and that proof is where confidence comes from.

• Step 1: Clear mental clutter with a brain dump

Write down everything in your head without thinking or editing: 'the equivalent of mental vomiting,' or taking the garbage out. Much of what clutters your mind isn't hard or time-consuming; your brain just keeps holding it because you haven't gotten to it. Getting it onto paper lightens the load.

• Step 2: Clear one bit of physical clutter

Pick one spot you can tackle, often in under five minutes. Mel says even one chaotic area keeps an 'open loop' running in the background of your brain, like a browser tab nagging that something else is wrong. Clearing it gives your brain less to sort through, and seeing it clean tomorrow reinforces 'I can handle it.'

• Step 3: Move your body for five minutes

Not a full workout, unless you want one. Walk, step outside, or listen to the rest of the episode on a walk. Late at night, do 11 push-ups on your knees or against the wall, or 10 squats. 'Movement isn't something you do once you feel better. Movement is what helps you feel better.'

• Step 4: Make tomorrow easier by removing one bit of friction

'I'll deal with it tomorrow' just makes the future harder. After the first three steps give you momentum, ask: what one thing could I do now to remove friction I normally wake up to? Lay out tomorrow's clothes, for example. That way you wake up to momentum instead of a mess.

• Step 5: Claim one win before bed

Mel's favorite step. Give yourself credit for one thing you did. It seems small, but it trains your brain to scan the day for what went well instead of bashing you for what didn't get done. Wins can be quiet: not losing your temper when work upset you, resting instead of burning out again, eating a healthy lunch, reading a few pages of the book on your nightstand.

• Small turns change your whole direction

Her metaphor: a giant cruise ship doesn't spin on a dime. The captain makes one small adjustment to the wheel, then another, and the whole heading changes. The five steps are your hand on the wheel, and they take you from 'Where do I begin?' to 'I've already begun.'

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 9 p.m. closet overhaul

After heavy work travel, Mel had been home a week without unpacking. Her suitcase sat outside her closet, which drives her husband Chris crazy. One night after Chris went to bed, she did her brain dump at about 9 p.m. and then spent two hours redoing the closet she'd wanted to fix for months. She calls it 'cleansing' and 'transformative'; the clean space told her she could handle things.

• The 2025 clutter study

Mel cites a 2025 Journal of Environmental Psychology study led by Francis Quinn of Robert Gordon University. It surveyed more than 500 adults about how cluttered they felt their homes were and how they felt emotionally. Those who saw their homes as cluttered reported more negative emotions, such as irritability, stress and a sour mood, and lower life satisfaction.

• The American Heart Association's numbers

The AHA recommends 150 minutes of moderate activity a week (about 20 minutes a day): brisk walking, water aerobics, dancing, gardening, doubles tennis, easy biking, pickleball. It links that to heart health, sleep, balance, bone health and less weight gain, and says bouts of 5–10 minutes are a fine start. Mel is asking for five.

• Borrowing a stylist's question for tomorrow's outfit

For step four, Mel passes on a tip from stylist Erin Walsh: when you lay out tomorrow's clothes, ask 'How do I want to feel tomorrow?' and choose clothes as a tool for that feeling.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The five steps, start to finish

1) Brain dump on paper. 2) Clear one physical spot. 3) Move for 5 minutes. 4) Remove one bit of friction for tomorrow morning. 5) Name one win before bed. Each takes 5–10 minutes.

• Say 'I'm back' out loud

After your first small turnaround, Mel wants you to feel proud and say it, in the car, the closet or the kitchen while the coffee brews. Not back to perfect, but back in motion, with your hand on the wheel.

- **Reuse it any time**
  Bad week? Habits slipping? Run another 24-hour turnaround. It's meant to be repeated, not done once.

Stop Wasting Your Time: The Scientific Way to Stop Procrastination and Get Control of Your Day

Guest: Laura Vanderkam
Date: 2026-02-02 · Duration: 1:21:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccY2DaPEB9s

KEYPOINTS

• Think in 168-hour weeks, not 24-hour days.
Time-diary researcher Laura Vanderkam points out that nobody actually multiplies 24/7: it comes to 168 hours. Take away a 40-hour job and 8 hours of sleep a night (56 hours) and you still have 72 hours for everything else. Those hours aren't free, since caregiving, housework and community duties live there, but asking 'could I find 3 hours to read or 2 hours with friends in 72?' changes what seems possible. A week includes both your Tuesday and your Saturday, so it's the real cycle of your life.

• Her nine rules were tested, not just recommended.
About 150 people learned one rule a week for nine weeks. Their overall time-satisfaction scores rose 16%, and satisfaction with how they spent 'yesterday' rose 17%. Vanderkam admits that doesn't sound huge but says feeling 16% better about your time is not nothing, and the gains build on each other.

• Rule 1: Give yourself a bedtime.
In her logs, people averaged 49–56 hours of sleep a week (7–8 a night) yet still felt exhausted. The problem was inconsistency: about a quarter of people had a 90-minute gap between Tuesday and Wednesday nights. Adults set wake-up alarms but rarely bedtimes, so work backwards: need 8 hours and a 6:00 a.m. wake-up, be asleep by 10:00. She says it's just math and has 'nothing to do with what kind of person you are.'

• Rule 2: Plan on Fridays.
The most important part is planning at all. Look at the next week and ask what is most important to you professionally and personally, roughly when it can happen and what logistics need to be worked out. If Sunday planning works for you, keep it. But Friday afternoon is usually low-value 'sliding into the weekend' time, you can still reach colleagues to fix problems, and Mel suspects Sunday planning feeds her Sunday scaries.

• Rule 3: Move by 3 p.m.
Short bursts of activity raise energy rather than draining it, so build some movement into the early afternoon before the slump sets in. A brisk walk counts; it doesn't have to be hard cardio.

• Rule 4: Three times a week is a habit.
Because we live our lives in weeks, 'daily' goals set you up to feel like a failure the first day you miss. Three or four times a week is doable and can still become part of your identity. It also fits Friday planning: if family dinner works on two nights, look for a third.

• Rule 5: Create a backup slot.
Borrowed from the rain date on an outdoor invitation, which admits that predictable things go wrong. If you want to work out three times a week, block Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. If the extra slot isn't needed, use it for something else. Things stop festering on your to-do list, and life feels calmer because what you plan usually does happen.

• Rule 6: One big adventure, one little adventure each week.
Routines make good choices automatic, but too much sameness turns whole years into 'memory sinkholes'; we don't ask where the time went when we remember it. A big adventure means a couple of hours, maybe half a weekend day, not a flight to Italy. A little one can take under an hour on a lunch break or weeknight.

• Rule 7: Take one night for you.
This is the rule busy people push back on most: roughly two hours a week for something that isn't work or caregiving and that you enjoy for its own sake. Vanderkam sings in a choir. If no one else could cover for you for two hours, she argues that's a fragile situation that needs a backup system anyway, and she says taking the time changes how you see time.

• Rule 8: Give little things less time by batching them.
Mid-task thoughts like 'did I send the permission slip?' and 'did I book the tickets?' wreck your focus. Write them down, get back to work, then plow through the list in one 30-minute block at a low-energy time such as 4:00 p.m. That protects your prime hours for work that matters.

• Rule 9: Effortful fun before effortless fun.
Effortless fun such as scrolling Instagram needs no planning and fills any amount of time. Effortful fun such as reading, calling a friend, a puzzle or a hobby needs a little activation energy. People say they have no time to read while their screen-time report shows 3 hours a day, accumulated in small bits at low-energy moments. She doesn't ban scrolling; just do a bit of effortful fun first.

EXAMPLES

• From 3 to 9 in five minutes
In a study Vanderkam loves (not her own), people who rated their energy at 3 out of 10 ran up and down office stairs for about five minutes and afterwards rated themselves around 9.

• The Da Vinci Code
About 20 years ago she somehow found roughly 10 hours to read it over three days. When something grips you, the time appears, which is why a page-turner beats a 'worthy' book for building a reading habit.

• Mel's library donation
Mid-conversation Mel remembered a donation form she still hadn't filled out two weeks later. It's a perfect example of a small task that should go on the batch list instead of derailing her.

• Pockets of joy

Read 30 minutes before bed, use 15 minutes of a lunch break for something fun, or take the 15 minutes before your family gets home to sit on the deck or by a favorite window instead of rushing laundry. Twenty good minutes of reading often sends people looking for an hour.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Friday planning questions**
  What needs to happen? What do I want to happen? When roughly can it happen? What logistics need solving? Add your three-times-a-week habits, a backup slot and one big plus one little adventure.
- **Bedtime formula**
  Wake time minus the hours of sleep you need equals the time you should be asleep. Keep it the same every night to avoid the 90-minute swings.
- **Book**
  Tranquility by Tuesday by Laura Vanderkam, where the nine rules come from.

The Science of Self Control: Find Motivation, Increase Your Focus, and Hack Dopamine

Guest: Dr. Anna Lembke
Date: 2026-01-22 · Duration: 1:19:23
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4rTyhYfZhE

KEYPOINTS

• Dopamine is the brain's 'wanting' chemical, not a happiness chemical.
Dr. Lembke, a Stanford psychiatry and addiction medicine professor, describes dopamine as central to pleasure, reward and motivation. It evolved to push us toward food, shelter and a mate, and it makes us 'the ultimate seekers' who are never satisfied and always want more. In addiction, a drug or behavior hijacks that same reward pathway.

• Modern life has made almost everything more accessible, potent and novel, so nearly anyone can get hooked on something.
Her point is that the problem is not weak character but supply. Substances, gambling, social media, video games, online shopping, work and even other people have been made easier to reach and more intense. That is why she says we are vulnerable to getting addicted to 'just about anything,' and why constant quick hits from a phone leave people feeling out of whack.

• Pleasure and pain are processed in the same brain regions and work like a seesaw.
Her central picture is a balance. When you do something pleasurable it tips toward pleasure, then the brain works to level it by tipping an equal amount toward pain: the comedown, the 'one more' feeling. She uses the image of gremlins jumping onto the pain side to explain craving after the fun ends.

• Rule one: any shift away from balance is a stressor, and the brain will push you back to level.
You can get back to level two ways. You can wait for the gremlins to hop off on their own, or you can have more potato chips, which levels you faster. More of the pleasure is the tempting option because it works in the moment, and that is the trap.

• Rule two: with repeated use, the pleasure gets weaker and shorter while the pain afterward gets stronger and longer.
Over days, months and years the gremlins multiply ('Arnold Schwarzenegger gremlins') and eventually 'camp out' on the pain side. Your joy set point shifts, so you need more and stronger forms of your drug just to feel normal, not to feel good. Without it you walk around tilted toward pain: anxious, irritable and unable to enjoy ordinary things.

• A lot of everyday compulsive behavior sits below clinical addiction but still has a grip on you.
She sets out a middle range: you have lost some control, you regret it and you find it hard to stop, but you can stop if you really set your mind to it. Mel's examples include two hours of mindless scrolling, obsessively checking someone's location, or a lost evening on the couch with the phone and TV. Short-form video and social media activate the same reward pathway as drugs and alcohol.

• Willpower alone won't work, so plan ahead with 'self-binding' barriers.
If we have to choose between pleasure and pain in the moment, we will almost always choose pleasure unless we planned for that moment. Self-binding means putting physical, time-based or mental barriers between you and your drug of choice so there is a pause between wanting it and having it. The plan starts the night before.

• Leaning into discomfort on purpose can bring back natural reward.
Pressing on the pain side through exercise, hard tasks or even just getting out of bed may make the brain produce its own feel-good chemicals, dopamine included, so you 'pay up front' and get the reward later. Runner's high is her classic example: exercise causes minor cell stress and the body responds by turning up feel-good chemistry. She presents the gremlin model as a metaphor, not literal brain anatomy.

• A reset takes about four weeks, and craving means it is working.
Acute withdrawal brings anxiety, irritability, insomnia, low mood and intense craving, and for most people the worst of it lasts about 14 days. In her clinical experience about 80% of people feel better and crave less after three to four weeks, but many who stop at two weeks or less never get past the hump. She reframes a 'dopamine fast' as moving toward a better life, not denying yourself.

• Boredom is uncomfortable but valuable.
Boredom hurts partly because we are used to overstimulation, and partly because it raises big questions like 'why am I doing this?' that our distractions normally drown out. Boring activities like walking or stretching let the brain rest, and they let you get your attention and your presence back.

EXAMPLES

• Lembke's romance-novel habit in her early 40s
An expert in addiction medicine, she didn't see it progressing. She needed more and more graphic content, stayed up later, was tired the next day and was mentally preoccupied. She read between patients instead of documenting, stayed in the room through a family beach vacation, and hid in a room at a neighborhood party to read. She was less present for her family and her patients.

• Empty-nest texting
As a new empty nester she noticed herself reaching out to her kids to soothe her own discomfort, then ruminating when they weren't doing well. She says the subtle harm is that her kids can feel unable to tell her when things are going badly, because 'we have to be doing well for her to be okay.' Her test: am I reaching out to connect, or to relieve my own discomfort, the way I'd grab a glass of wine?

• Mel's audiobook spiral
Mel recognized herself in the story through graphic-audio adult fantasy series (she mentions the Court of Thorns and Roses books). She says Lembke's description of tolerance and preoccupation sounds like 'everybody's basic use of their phone.'

- **Teens quitting social media**
  Lembke cites studies where teenagers who got off social media felt less depressed, anxious and lonely, but only after about three to four weeks of abstaining.
- **Exercise during drug withdrawal**
  She points to studies where people withdrawing from alcohol and drugs who did vigorous exercise had fewer withdrawal symptoms, recovered more strongly and lowered their risk of relapse.
- **The 'just 15 minutes' video trap**
  After busy clinic days she plans to watch one video and is still watching two or three hours later. Her lesson is that exhausted days are exactly when to avoid cheap pleasures, because you won't be able to moderate them.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Night-before plan**
  No devices in the bedroom or within easy reach. Decide how you'll start the day with a little 'pain': get out of bed, then exercise, meditate or do mind-body work before any pleasure. Mel charges her phone in a kitchen spot, doesn't check it first thing, and says she follows her morning ritual about 85% of the time.
- **Phone barriers**
  Turn off notifications, switch to grayscale, and move apps you need onto a laptop so they're less portable. Mel started by simply not looking at her phone while standing in lines.
- **A 4-week abstinence trial on anything**
  Pick one habit, such as sleeping next to your phone, location-checking or ultra-processed snacks, and stop it for four weeks. Expect the first two weeks to feel worse. She is not saying never have a drink or a cupcake; moderation is fine once you're reset.
- **Undrugify your kitchen**
  Keep whole, minimally processed foods at home. Fat, salt, sugar and added flavorings create dopamine spikes that keep you eating past full.
- **Calm down without your drug**
  On draining days, plan a walk, a friend, meditation or stretching ahead of time instead of scrolling or watching TV, which she argues aren't actually restful for the brain.

The Science of Making & Breaking Habits: How to Change Your Life in 1 Month

Guest: James Clear
Date: 2026-01-08 · Duration: 1:26:19
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dHEG7WxR4c

KEYPOINTS

• If habits aren't sticking, fix the system, not your willpower

James Clear, author of Atomic Habits (about 25 million copies sold), says bad habits repeat because your system is designed to produce them. 'Fix the inputs and the outputs will fix themselves.' Change the daily habits and you'll be led to a different destination.

• Think in '10 years and 1 hour'

Ten years stands for the big multi-year things you care about: a marriage you're proud of, a thriving business, the best shape of your life. One hour asks what you can do in the next hour that contributes to it. Hold a long-term vision with a bias for short-term action, and never let a day pass without something that benefits you in a decade. He says you usually see shocking progress within a year or two.

• Tiny improvements compound

1% better daily for a year is 1.01^365, about 37.78 times better; 1% worse daily drives you to about 0.03. Ten minutes of reading today changes nothing, but someone who always goes to bed a little smarter gains real wisdom over 10–30 years. Work consistently on almost anything for about two years and you'll likely be in the top 1–5%, though that won't put you in the NBA.

• Start with identity: ask 'who do I want to become?'

He pictures behaviour change as an onion: results on the outside (lose 40 pounds), actions in the middle (the diet plan), identity at the core. Instead of chasing the number, ask who could lose 40 pounds, perhaps 'the type of person who doesn't miss workouts', and focus on being that person.

• Don't confuse motion with action

Motion makes you feel like you're making progress; action is behaviour that can actually produce the result. Designing a logo for a new business is motion because it will never land a paying customer. The business still needs a logo, but know which one you're doing.

• Make it easy: lower the 'activation energy'

A goal of 100 push-ups a day needs lots of motivation at 9pm if you haven't done them; 10 push-ups is doable. He notes the 'same 24 hours' line misleads, since most people control only one to three hours a day. Starting small fits the time you actually have.

• Reduce the scope, but stick to the schedule

When a 45-minute workout shrinks to 15 minutes, he no longer skips it. He changes, goes to his basement gym and does one set of squats. He says bad days matter more than good ones because showing up keeps the habit alive, while a zero can turn one missed day into five days or three months. Ask 'what can I stick to even on bad days?', not 'what can I do on my best day?'

• Habits can change shape with the season

For his first three years he wrote two roughly 2,000-word articles a week, then spent three years on the book, and for the last five years has written a weekly newsletter. None of that, he says, was his writing habit failing. Give yourself permission for habits to shift with life.

• Every habit runs on cue, craving, response, reward

The four laws map onto that loop: make it obvious, attractive, easy and satisfying. Bad habits solve real recurring problems. Coming home exhausted at 5:30pm, one person scrolls Instagram for 30 minutes, another smokes, another runs; same root problem, different solutions.

• To break a bad habit: eliminate, reduce or replace

You can quit cold turkey, cut back to the level you want (most people's goal with phones) or substitute a healthier habit that solves the same problem. Being around people who already have your desired behaviours helps, even if you have to find the courage to gather that group yourself.

• Make it fun and be willing to be uncomfortable early

People who treat a habit as a chore quit when it gets hard. Mel struggles to motivate herself to exercise but finds classes fun, so asking 'what would this look like if it were fun?' changed things. Clear says the gym feels foolish on day one and like 'my territory' years later, and the only route is a little early discomfort: 'Are you willing to be uncomfortable for three minutes?'

EXAMPLES

• The baseball bat injury

In high school a classmate's bat slipped and hit Clear between the eyes, breaking his nose, both eye sockets and bone deeper in his skull. He was airlifted to hospital, put in an induced coma overnight, and couldn't drive for nine months. In college he came off the bench in year one, started in year two, was captain in year three and an academic All-American in year four, a five-to-six-year arc of small gains.

• Mitch's five-minute gym rule

A reader who lost more than 100 pounds and kept it off for over a decade began with a rule never to stay at the gym longer than five minutes. He would drive there, do half an exercise and drive home, which built the habit of showing up first.

• Phone in another room until lunch

Clear keeps his phone down the hall roughly 9am to noon, managing it about 70% of the time. It's only 30 seconds away, yet he never goes to get it, which shows how much use is driven by convenience rather than desire.

• Mel versus her husband at the gym

Mel's husband and daughter walk into a gym with zero friction, while she wanders around bored. Her motivation is hiking into

her 90s and dancing at grandkids' weddings; what actually works is a class, because it's fun.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The two-minute rule**
  Shrink any habit to two minutes or less: meditate 20 minutes becomes one minute, read 30 books a year becomes one page, yoga four days a week becomes taking out the mat. He quotes Ed Latimore: 'The heaviest weight at the gym is the front door.'
- **Action relieves anxiety**
  Ruminating makes problems grow; one small action means you're shaping the outcome. Procrastination, he says, is 'choosing to delay a better future'.
- **Find the room with your behaviours**
  Join a group whose normal behaviour is the habit you want, or find the courage to gather one yourself.
- **Remember everyone's first attempt was bad**
  Your favourite athlete's first workout, chef's first meal and writer's first sentence were as bad as yours. Use low-stakes daily moments to build capacity, because at 70 you'd give anything to be 60 again.

How to Make 2026 the Best Year: 6 Questions to Ask Yourself

Date: 2025-12-15 · Duration: 1:14:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeD8tpOCyIY

KEYPOINTS

• A great year happens by choice, not chance, and planning starts with looking back.
Mel says the urge after a hard year is to say 'let's just put this sucker out' and only look ahead. Skipping the review means skipping the most important part of planning: you can't map where you're going without knowing where you're starting from. She and her husband Chris have done this year-end ritual for 22 years, and their three adult children have joined in for about the last 10.

• The six questions: low points, high points, lessons, stop, continue, start.
The first three are about looking back on the past 12 months. The last three turn those answers into decisions for next year. Mel says the questions are simple on purpose.

• Naming your low points is self-awareness, not drama.
If you've woken up with low-grade dread or constant worry about money, politics, war, climate, your kids, your parents or your health, Mel says that doesn't mean it was a bad year or that something is wrong with you. It means you're alive and paying attention. She cites a 2018 study from UC Irvine and Penn State that tracked what happens when people push down emotions after hard events instead of processing them. Her takeaway is that sitting down to face the low points gives your brain a chance to process them.

• Low points become personal reasons to change.
When your goals come from your own lows, like being lonely, always standing in the back of photos, sitting on the bench while your family hikes, or getting winded on the stairs, they stop being 'the internet says I should.' Psychologists call this intrinsic motivation: 'I get to do this because I want to feel better.'

• High points usually reveal what matters most, and for most people that's other people.
Every one of Mel's highs involved people she loves. That's an obvious lesson, she admits, but slowing down to look back 'sears' it in. She ties it to research: Cornell's Karl Pillemer and the Legacy Project found that the top end-of-life regrets are leaving things unsaid and not spending time with people while you could. The Harvard Study of Adult Development identifies relationships as the number one predictor of a good life.

• Good years are scheduled in advance.
Mel started the year celebrating her dad's 80th birthday because the family put it on the calendar two years earlier. She saw her parents, her kids one-on-one and her friends because she planned it. The lesson is to get out your calendar and book it.

• Deciding what to stop is strategy, not giving up.
Her examples include stopping going to a job that makes you miserable, stopping telling yourself the economy means you'll never find a job or that you'll never meet the one, stopping beating yourself up about your body, stopping trying to change your partner, dropping 'I'm too old or too young,' and no longer sitting home waiting for people to call. Take responsibility for your own social life, and stop doom-scrolling at night. 'Stopping becomes the lever that moves you forward.'

• Keep doing the habits that worked, even if you weren't perfect.
Mel is keeping her daily walk (she did it no matter where in the world she was), therapy with her husband, and the Let Them mindset, which she credits with making her less controlling and judgmental. She's also continuing resistance training and getting more protein, but more flexibly: 'I can walk. I can do Pilates.'

• Start something that scares you a little, because that's a sign it matters.
Start ideas from the episode include walking with a neighbor three mornings a week, starting a walking group (Mel's from when she moved to Vermont still meets), starting therapy, going to bed 30 minutes earlier with your phone in another room, speaking up in meetings, day trips, learning a language, dating again, picking up a hobby, saying no or yes more, and building a morning routine.

EXAMPLES

• The 2006 goals folder
In Chris's office Mel found their planning from 2004. On it: she wanted to get pregnant with a little boy, before their son Oakley was born, and she wanted to consistently get out of bed at 6 a.m. Chris's goals were mostly about health.

• A letter to your future self
Research from Cal State and UCLA, published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied, found that spending even a few minutes linking who you were, who you are and who you want to become makes you feel more connected to your future self.

• Mel's camera-roll highlights
Fly-fishing in Montana with Chris, the same thing they did on their honeymoon 28 years earlier; her parents' first sound-bath healing in Florida; a first-ever solo trip with her 25-year-old daughter Kendall; and morning walks in the park with her daughter Sawyer.

• Acting at 56
Her biggest highlight was a live tour doing mother-daughter skits with Sawyer and Kendall. She had never acted or done comedy. It wasn't fun until they found their rhythm, and she says she grew enormously from it.

• Leaning into AI at 57
Mel uses AI tools at work but admits she uses it personally 'almost like Google.' She cites an estimate that women are falling behind on AI by about 25% and compares avoiding it to refusing to learn email or use a cell phone.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Scroll your camera roll

Go back to January and scroll month by month with questions one and two in mind. You'll find both the lows and the forgotten small joys.

- **Write your answers down**

  Write out the six answers, ideally as a short note to your future self, so you have a plan to come back to rather than just a vague resolution.

- **Do it with family**

  Mel's family does it together every year. Sharing your answers makes the priorities stick and gives everyone visibility into each other's goals.

- **Ideas for what to stop**

  Doom-scrolling before bed, waiting to be invited, beating yourself up, and trying to change your partner.

If This Episode Doesn’t Motivate You, Nothing Will | Mel Robbins and Wallo

Guest: Wallace 'Wallo267' Peeples
Date: 2025-12-04 · Duration: 1:17:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pYim783TCo

KEYPOINTS

• Most people live in a 'cell around their brain'
Wallo spent 20 years in prison, from 17 to 37. When he got out, he decided there were more people imprisoned outside than inside, because most people are 'walking around with a cell around their brain,' too afraid to do what they want. He took that as a reason to be confident: if fear is the main competition, the field is wide open.

• Real change started with a moment of truth in the mirror
He says he wasn't enraged, he was hurt, 'because the truth hurt.' Looking in the mirror, he told himself he was doing all that time 'for being somebody you're not,' and promised that 'tomorrow is going to be better than yesterday.' Mel frames it as using the mirror not for vanity but to admit you're unhappy because you've been someone you're not.

• The wrong crowd costs you more than you think
He got into crime because he 'wanted things that I wasn't willing to work for.' He argues culture glamorizes the bad guy ('America loves the successful criminal') and that we twist ourselves to be accepted by people who 'breathe like you, got 24 hours like you.' His family shows the cost: in 1998 he shared a cell with his stepfather, and in 2005 with his brother, in the same prison.

• 'I'm not in prison, I'm in Princeton'
His mindset inside: 'I'm not in jail, I'm in Yale. I'm not in the state pen, I'm in Penn State.' It wasn't the prison's job to educate him, so he did it himself. He flipped through TV channels studying commercials, wondering why a Big Mac never looked like the ad and why car ads cast different people on different channels. That's how he taught himself marketing.

• Who you say you are isn't proven until you act
The scariest day of his sentence was the day they let him go. He had told his family he'd changed, but he was that person only 'of the mind,' not yet 'off of lived experience and action.' Temptation was waiting, and only daily behavior could prove the change.

• No one is coming to stop you, or to save you
Coming home to a world with 'computers in our pockets,' he was stunned at how easy it was to open a bank account, register a business or get a trademark. 'Who's going to stop me?' Nobody is worrying about you, he says, so nobody but you is in your way. His one-line takeaway is 'Yes to you and no to them,' and his blunter version is that you are the one in your own way.

• Live inside the life you want before you have it
Prison 'fortified' his imagination. Watching Anthony Bourdain travel, he pictured himself in those places. Mel links this to visualization: the brain starts to believe the life is possible. After his release he rehearsed the life deliberately (see examples).

• Strangers make you rich
Stop worrying about whether high school or college friends support you, he says. Michael Jordan, Bon Jovi and Michael Jackson weren't made by the 20 or 100 people they knew. You have to be willing to be talked about. Change is uncomfortable, and people who are 'too comfortable with being comfortable' repeat the same mistakes a second and third time.

• Forgiveness 'helped me breathe'
His brother Steve was shot and died in their grandmother Nanny's arms in the doorway of their childhood home while Wallo was locked up. He forgave the killer, not for the killer's sake but so he could celebrate his brother by living for him instead of holding on to anger. He never told the man directly. On the show he said, 'I forgive you, man.'

EXAMPLES

• Locked up at 11, sentenced as an adult at 17
His first arrest, for armed robbery in Philadelphia, came on June 30, 1990, when he was 11. He was locked up again the next week and spent about five years in and out of juvenile facilities. At 17, two armed robberies and two firearm charges brought a sentence of 19½ to 52 years as an adult. His grandmother warned, 'You going to realize one day.'

• Hot tea at the Four Seasons
After his release, he'd go to the top-floor bar of the Four Seasons in downtown Philadelphia, order a hot tea with lemon and honey to go, and look over the city as if he already belonged there. He'd also play Springsteen's 'Streets of Philadelphia' like theme music when he left the house, 'getting ready for the life that's waiting.'

• Googling himself and the '267' handle
Home around 2012 or 2013 with a used phone, he typed his name into Google, saw results pop up, dropped the phone and thought the feds were watching. When he set up Instagram, 'Wallo' was taken, so he added 267, his prison number (DG267), which is also a Philly area code.

• Free commercials for local businesses
He'd walk into shops and offer to make commercials for free, filling his page with examples. When his cousin Gil said someone wanted to pay $300, his reaction was 'I do them for free,' and Gil told him he'd done enough for free. That's when he started charging.

• An unpaid TED talk
He initially asked what a TED talk paid and was told just a hotel room. He did it anyway, speaking about forgiving his brother's killer in about 18 minutes. Strangers still stop him in airports to say they needed that video, an impact he values more than the paid bookings that followed.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the mirror for a moment of truth

Look at yourself and ask where you've been living as someone you're not. Name it, then commit that tomorrow will be better than yesterday.

- **Make one bold, practical move this week**
  Research how to set up what you've been putting off, like a business account, a trademark or an application, using the 'computer in your pocket.'
- **Rehearse your future life**
  Visit the places and do small versions of the things your future self does, so the life feels familiar before it arrives.
- **A heads-up on tone**
  This conversation has much more profanity than a typical episode. Mel flags that at the start.

The 7 Day Habit Reset: Start Today, Feel Different By Next Week

Guest: Charles Duhigg
Date: 2025-12-01 · Duration: 1:08:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoEdYHWuqv0

KEYPOINTS

• Roughly 40–45% of what you do each day is habit

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Charles Duhigg, author of The Power of Habit, says behaviours we think of as choices are often automatic: backing out of the driveway, grabbing the unhealthy cafeteria lunch, snapping at kids when you get home. He opens with Aristotle's 'we are what we repeatedly do', adding that slacking off and procrastination are habits too. Any habit, he says, can be changed.

• Every habit is a loop: cue, routine, reward

A cue triggers the behaviour, the routine is the habit itself, and every habit delivers a reward whether you notice it or not. Cues usually fall into five categories: a place, certain people, an emotion, a time of day, or a preceding ritualised behaviour.

• Keystone habit #1: exercise sets off a chain reaction

Duhigg describes research by Megan Oaten and Ken Cheng finding that on mornings people exercised, they used credit cards less, procrastinated less at work, and even did dishes about 20 minutes earlier. Nobody runs thinking 'I'll keep the Amex in my pocket', but the habit ripples into eating and spending. Any movement counts, he says, even standing up for 10 seconds every 35–45 minutes.

• Keystone habits work by changing your self-concept

Asked if she's disciplined, Mel says yes: she was in a 7am exercise class after getting up at 6:30. Duhigg's point is that your brain is impressed by the evidence and starts acting like a disciplined person elsewhere. It's not one day that matters but the pattern over time.

• Make decisions in a 'cold' mind, not a 'hot' one

Walking past an ice cream shop is easy after dinner and a U-turn when you're starving. In the moment ('hot mind') the brain grabs the easiest option because it hates deciding. So decide the night before, in a calm 'cold mind': the class, the route, who you're meeting. That's why plans with gaps, such as 'I'll figure out where to run when I'm out', fall apart.

• Rewards are essential and can be anything

A long shower, a treat, or a calendar check mark ('13 checks this month, I'm amazing') all work, but you must actually give yourself the reward. The typical failed start is saying 'I'll exercise tomorrow', then waking tired, hunting for shoes, running three or four blocks and getting nothing out of it.

• Keystone habit #2: a morning routine with ARC

Anticipation: spend 30 seconds thinking of one thing you're looking forward to today. Relaxation: let your nervous system settle, even 10–15 seconds in the shower or a quiet cup of tea. Connection: connect with at least one other person, whether spouse, kids, the dog or even feeding the fish, which he says makes you seek connection all day.

• Breakfast is a powerful morning ritual

He cites the National Weight Control Registry, which he calls the largest database of people who have lost weight, as identifying eating breakfast as one of two major factors. It stops you being ravenous later. Making room for it, by setting the alarm 10 minutes earlier for cereal, also makes you plan your day intentionally.

• Keystone habit #3: track something

Mel calls it 'the dumbest thing I've ever heard', but in the registry tracking what you eat or weigh mattered even more than breakfast. Tracking reminds you of your 'why' and turns behaviour into data rather than judgment.

• The Golden Rule: don't extinguish a habit; swap the routine

Trying to just 'break' a habit isn't enough. Keep the same cue and the same reward, and insert a new routine. Diagnose the real reward first, which is often not the taste of the food.

EXAMPLES

• Duhigg's habit plan on paper

He writes down cue, routine and reward. The cue: call his friend now to meet tomorrow at 9:30 on a set corner. The routine: a pre-planned route. The reward: the almond croissant at the café where the run ends. It takes about 20 seconds in a cold-mind state.

• Mel's 8pm 'wheels off' problem

After a perfect day of water, good food, movement and a made bed, Mel pours a Manhattan and eats popcorn. Working it through, the cue is boredom and the reward is novelty or distraction, not taste, which is also why she picks up her phone. The new routine is to call her husband Chris before heading to the pantry.

• Mel the 'liar' about bedtime

Mel claims she goes to bed early, but Duhigg suggests a notebook by the bed for bedtimes; it turns out it's more like 10:30 or 11:30. He says she already knew and felt bad. Writing '10:30' down is 'just data' from an experiment, not a failure.

• Tracking water and spending

Mel drinks four large cups of water a day because she has more energy. Duhigg spends 15 minutes a week reviewing downloaded transactions, which caught a forgotten two-year-old subscription he then cancelled.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Build as many cues as possible

For exercise: set the alarm for 7:00, put running shoes beside the bed, and arrange to meet a friend. Stack place, people and time cues.

- **ARC in under a minute**
  Each morning, picture one thing you're excited about, give yourself a few seconds of calm, and connect with someone. Add anything else you'll plan around, such as journalling, prayer, meditation, a call or a favourite comedian.
- **A simple tracking habit**
  Pick one metric (bedtime, water, food or weekly spending) and log it without judgment. Duhigg's spending review takes 15 minutes a week.
- **Golden Rule worksheet**
  For the habit you hate, write down the cue (boredom at 8pm) and the real reward (novelty), then choose a new behaviour that delivers the same reward.

How to Get Things Done, Stay Focused, and Be More Productive

Guest: Cal Newport
Date: 2025-09-04 · Duration: 1:10:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3OA9Q6u9EU

KEYPOINTS

• Busyness is 'pseudo-productivity': visible activity standing in for real value.

Cal Newport, a Georgetown computer science professor, argues that knowledge work never developed a clear way to measure output. So workplaces fell back on a crude rule: the more you look busy, the more productive you must be. That rule produced today's busyness epidemic, and he says people got fed up with it during the pandemic, when many started reacting badly to the word 'productivity' itself.

• If the word 'slow' makes you nervous, that's the problem.

Mel admitted she has an aversion to slowing down because she is so used to being busy. Newport says that reaction is exactly why he developed 'slow productivity.' The aim isn't doing less with your life. It's doing work you're proud of, spending time with people you care about, and not being anxiously overloaded.

• Principle 1: do fewer things at once.

Every yes brings 'administrative overhead': emails, meetings, check-ins. Your hours are fixed, so as commitments pile up, more of the day goes to overhead about the work and less to the work itself. Eventually you're always busy and finish nothing. The key words are 'at once': you can still do lots of things over your life, just not all at the same time.

• Principle 2: work at a natural pace and stop writing fairy tales.

We imagine getting the MBA, the house project and a new skill all done in six months, fall in love with that ending, and then fall apart trying. Newport says to give things the time they actually need, maybe one at a time. Looking back, nobody cares how long something took; they just see that it's done.

• Principle 3: obsess over quality, which isn't the same as perfectionism.

Caring about how good your work is does two things. Busyness starts to look less appealing, because it gets in the way of good work. And as you get better, you gain leverage and freedom to turn things down, like skipping meetings or, in his case, dropping corporate speaking once the books were doing well.

• Your to-do list is really a wish list.

Mel described planning to do 90 minutes of errands in 11 minutes. Newport says we picture everything done and feel good about it, not noticing we just put three days of work into one. The fix is to see how much time you actually have before deciding what fits.

• Time-block your day: give every task a time slot.

Each workday morning, Newport fills in his calendar around fixed meetings, for example 9–10 on one task, 10–10:30 a call, 10:30–noon another task. This lets him put hard work in open morning time and batch small errands into a 45-minute gap between meetings. It also stops the constant inner debate about checking email, because email already has its own slot later.

• When the day falls apart, re-plan at whatever level broke.

Newport doesn't treat a blown schedule as failure. When something throws him off, he simply redoes the plan for the rest of the day, or at a bigger level if the disruption is bigger. The schedule exists to make you think about your time, not to be followed perfectly.

• Focus is trainable, like interval training for your brain.

Newport says he has taken distracted undergraduates to 90 minutes of locked-in focus by the end of a semester. The method is simple: short timed blocks that restart if you glance at your phone, gradually lengthened. In his experience, 90 minutes of real focus gets more done than eight distracted hours. Most people focus best in the morning; he jokes that the 'midnight to 4am' people usually don't have kids.

• You can't just quit distraction; you need something to fill the space.

Young people told him they couldn't use their phones less because there was nothing else to do. So Newport now pairs cutting back on screens with building a life worth paying attention to, starting with practicing being alone with your own thoughts.

• If you feel behind, focus on the process, not the outcome.

The stories we tell about other people's success, often based on Instagram, are usually wrong. We don't see how hard it was or what they regret. Rather than fixating on an exact result like a number one bestseller, commit to the process of doing good work.

EXAMPLES

• Isaac Newton and Jane Austen worked slowly.

Newton worked on the book that set out calculus and gravity off and on for decades. Austen worked on her novels in the background and didn't finish them until her early 40s. Newport's point: we remember the work, not how long it took.

• Chris Robbins's seven-year MBA

Mel's husband wanted an MBA while they both worked and had two kids under five. He took one class a semester, and it took seven years, but he finished. Mel uses it as a model for 'not now, but slower.'

• Mel's wish list

Mel listed things she keeps carrying: learning guitar (everyone else in her family plays), house projects, and a picture wall she keeps mentioning. She found writing them all down sobering. Newport's advice is to pick one and give it a realistic timeline.

• Newport's own trigger

With three boys entering elementary school, he realized they needed every 'dad hour' possible. That pushed him to figure out how to stay successful without the busyness.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Focus-interval protocol**

  Pick a demanding task, such as studying, writing, reading or paying bills, and set a 20-minute timer. If you check your phone or open another tab, restart the timer. After about two weeks, once it feels comfortable, add 10 minutes. Keep going until you reach 90 minutes, then take a break.

- **Morning time-block routine**

  List everything you want to do. Mark your fixed meetings. Assign the open time: hard work in your best block, small tasks batched into gaps, and email at set times. When the plan breaks, re-plan the rest of the day.

- **Agree on a deep-work ratio with your boss**

  Ask what split of focused work versus admin tasks (invoices, client meetings) would create the most value in your role, such as 50/50 or 30/70 for admin-heavy jobs. Then track it. If meetings shrink deep work to 20%, bring that number back to the conversation.

- **Practice being alone with your thoughts**

  Start with 15 minutes at a time, one walk or one errand without your phone. Newport admits it feels terrible at first.

Tiny Fixes for a Tired Life: 7 Habits That Make Your Life Better

Date: 2025-06-14 · Duration: 0:55:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IatBMvg9AcI

KEYPOINTS

• When you're depleted, the fix is tiny habits, not caring more

Mel opens by confessing she missed a good friend's birthday: the card was stamped and on her desk, she thought about her all day, and still didn't mail it, call or text. She'd been missing birthdays and gifts lately, not from lack of care but from exhaustion and overload. Her argument is that the gap between caring and showing it closes with small, doable habits, not a life overhaul.

• Habit 1: replay the good stuff

Open your camera roll and scroll back through favorite people and memories for about 30 seconds instead of checking headlines. Mel cites a UCLA study finding that viewing photos of loved ones activates a sense of social support and reduces stress, and a UK report by behavioral psychologist Joe Hemmings suggesting looking at old photos is almost as relaxing as a bath.

• Photos of loved ones can speed recovery from distress

Mel plays a clip of University of Michigan psychologist Dr. Ethan Kross describing research in which people recalled painful experiences, then looked at a photo of their own loved one or someone else's. Seeing their own 'attachment figure' sped up recovery. Kross says he then filled his office with family photos.

• Habit 2: turn your kitchen into club night

Instead of flipping chicken with one hand and answering texts with the other, put on energetic music while cooking or doing dishes. Mel favors Motown or disco, wedding-dance-floor songs that get grandparents and kids moving. The rhythm snaps you into the present and lifts your mood without effort.

• Dancing stood out for dementia risk in a long-term study

Mel cites a New England Journal of Medicine study that followed older adults for 21 years and compared about 11 physical activities, from cycling and swimming to golf and tennis. Dancing was the only one associated with reduced dementia risk, which she attributes to its mix of coordination, rhythm, memory and social interaction stimulating neuroplasticity.

• Habit 3: get on a first-name basis

Ask a name, say it back immediately, then ask a question using it ('So, Marcus, how long have you worked here?'). Mel calls it one of her secret weapons for feeling connected and seeming warm and engaged. She cites research from Rutgers Medical School showing hearing your own name activates brain areas tied to identity, memory and attention.

• Habit 4: show up, especially when you don't feel like it

Mel says you never regret forcing yourself to go to the funeral, party or track meet. She cites a study in Psychological Science by researchers at UT Austin and the University of Chicago: people writing short gratitude notes expected recipients to feel awkward, but recipients felt surprised and deeply valued, and writers' own well-being rose too.

• Habit 5: cheer like it's yours

Psychologists call responding actively and enthusiastically to good news 'capitalization.' Mel cites Dr. Shelly Gable at UC Santa Barbara, whose research on married couples found responses to good news predicted relationship satisfaction more strongly than responses to hard times. Silence or a flat 'cool' reads as disinterest or disapproval.

• Habit 6: be an eight-minute friend

Dr. Robert Waldinger, director of Harvard's 80-plus-year study of adult development, warns about the 'time surplus' fantasy that you'll reconnect in some future with more time. Mel borrows the eight-minute call from a New York Times piece by Jancee Dunn: call hands-free between errands to say you were thinking of them. She says about half her eight-minute calls lead to an in-person plan, and cites research that brief sincere interactions release oxytocin.

• Habit 7: take a three-minute awe walk

Step outside and look for something that makes you say wow: the sky, an old tree, birds in formation, a mural or building. Mel says research shows a few minutes of awe lowers stress, lifts mood and makes you less self-focused. With practice, your brain starts noticing awe more often, even from a single note in a song.

EXAMPLES

• Kirby's wedding album

Mel scrolled live to an album from her cousin Kirby's wedding, saw her late uncle, who died a year earlier, and Kirby arriving in a wagon pulled by Clydesdales, and caught herself smiling and stopping a guilt spiral about not having seen Kirby since.

• Harrison, Marty and the notes app

At a Boston spot Mel frequents, she learned the names of the parking attendants Marty and Harrison and greeter Thomas, then saved notes like 'Harrison, big smile, bald, my age, gives the best hugs.' She rereads them before walking in. On the Let Them tour, all 35 crew members wore name tags.

• The text to Rich Roll before back surgery

Panicking at her first tour stop, Mel saw ultramarathoner and podcaster Rich Roll's post about a spinal fusion the next day and texted that he'd be protected and loved, with 'you do not need to respond,' then followed up with a funny back-flip meme. He later sent a voice memo thanking her.

• Changing a friend's baby's diaper

Visiting a friend with a newborn, Mel offered to handle a diaper change, one mom to another, as a small way of showing up for the moment rather than out of obligation.

• Charlemagne tha God's backyard awe

Mel plays the Breakfast Club co-host describing taking his shoes off, putting his forehead or back against a tree or lying in the grass with no phone, and promising 'some type of release.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Admit when you've forgotten a name**
  Say you're embarrassed and working on remembering names, ask again, and write it down in front of them. Mel says that leaves a better impression than faking small talk.
- **Celebrate the win that stings**
  If your sister gets pregnant first or a friend finds love while you're mid-divorce, be the first to clap and text 'tell me everything.' Mel used to feel others' wins as her losses and calls changing that life-altering.
- **Don't overthink the note**
  Whether it's a text, voice memo, card or paper plates left for someone after surgery, Mel's rule is that it's always okay to send it and it won't be as awkward as you fear.
- **Pick just one**
  Mel doesn't claim the seven fixes will solve everything. Choose one today as a way back to what matters when life has gotten too busy.

Get Back on Track: 5 Evening Habits to Wake Up Focused, Recharged, and in Control

Date: 2025-03-10 · Duration: 1:01:18
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85vnQT6TI_4

KEYPOINTS

• Your wasted evenings are a symptom of decision fatigue, not laziness

Mel draws on an American Medical Association article quoting psychiatrist Dr. Lisa MacLean, chief wellness officer at Henry Ford Health in Michigan: the more decisions you make, the worse your ability to make more, and the effect is cumulative across the day. MacLean says people with it may feel tired, foggy or physically and mentally fatigued. Mel's picture is a gas tank that's full in the morning and drained by every text, meeting and turn of the steering wheel.

• The average person makes over 35,000 decisions a day

The figure comes from the same article. Mel uses it to give listeners credit: from what to wear to whether to answer a text, you've been deciding all day, so wanting to 'not think' at 8 p.m. is normal, not a character flaw.

• Decision fatigue shows up in four ways

Mel lists procrastination (leaving the laundry for tomorrow), impulsivity (eating ice cream straight from the carton at the open freezer), avoidance (zombie-scrolling because it requires nothing) and indecision (an hour of streaming trailers without choosing anything, which she calls the new doomscrolling).

• Revenge bedtime procrastination is a grab for personal time that backfires

After giving everything to work and family, we consciously choose less sleep to reclaim time for ourselves. But Mel argues scrolling isn't time for you; it's more attention given away. She'd watched herself do it for weeks.

• Make your evening decisions in the morning

Per MacLean, decisions are most accurate, thoughtful and cautious in the morning, plateau in the afternoon and become impulsive by evening. That explains why you resolve each morning to go to bed early and then don't. The five-step routine is designed to run on autopilot with an empty tank.

• Step 1: Pick your bedtime using the nine-hour rule

Drawing on sleep researcher Dr. Rebecca Robbins of Brigham and Women's Hospital, who notes even good sleepers take about 20 minutes to fall asleep, Mel says eight hours of sleep needs nine hours in bed. Count back from your wake time: up at 6 a.m. means in bed at 9 p.m.; 7 means 10. Bedtime is when you get into bed, not when you fall asleep. She cites Harvard Medical School guidance that a consistent bedtime helps you fall asleep faster and sleep more deeply.

• Step 2: Clean up today's mess so tomorrow starts fresh

Like flushing a toilet, don't leave it for later. It's a five-minute pass, not a deep clean: empty the sink, load the dishwasher, wipe counters, take out full trash, hang up stray coats, plug in the laptop, stack tomorrow's work items. Mel says multiple studies link messy surroundings to higher stress, and waking to yesterday's mess drains energy before the day begins.

• Step 3: Make tomorrow easier

Remove morning decisions while you're half asleep: lay workout clothes on the floor, put a water bottle with electrolytes in front of the coffee maker so water comes before coffee, check breakfast options, pack lunch, put keys and backpacks together, set out kids' forms, set the coffee timer. Mel also picks the next day's workout and texts herself the class link.

• Step 4: Take five minutes for yourself

Your attention belongs to you in the first minutes after waking and then goes to the world until evening. Reclaim at least five minutes: a bath, a book, a stretch, journaling, or Dr. Daniel Amen's prompt 'what went well today?' Dr. Rebecca Robbins calls this a wind-down, which Mel describes as signaling to your nervous system that you're safe to rest. Five minutes tends to grow to 20.

• Step 5: Tuck your phone in before you tuck yourself in

You wouldn't let a toddler sleep with an iPad, and at peak decision fatigue we're all toddlers with phones. Mel charges hers in the bathroom so she can't reach it and must get up to silence the alarm. She cites blue light suppressing melatonin, notifications keeping the brain on alert, and Harvard Health Publishing linking shortened sleep to higher risk of depression, diabetes and cardiovascular problems.

EXAMPLES

• Stranded on the couch until 11:35

Chris, whose top habit is sleep, gets up at 9 p.m. sharp and wakes at 5:30 a.m. like clockwork. The night before recording, he went to bed at 9 and Mel looked up at 11:35 p.m., still scrolling and flipping channels.

• Chris's four-year movie list

Chris keeps a Notes app list of movie recommendations, and they've read it '55,000 times,' she jokes, without picking anything, which Mel now recognizes as end-of-day indecision.

• The soaking chili pot

A team member admitted leaving dishes 'to soak' overnight. Mel describes plunging your hands into a cold, greasy, chunky pot first thing in the morning as a 'dish hangover' and the opposite of an easy start.

• The suitcase trick and Chris's frozen smoothies

Home from a trip, Mel didn't unpack; she simply zipped her open suitcase and put it in the closet so it wasn't the first thing she saw. Chris makes triple-batch protein smoothies, freezes them in Mason jars and microwaves one each morning before his workout.

• Mel's bath-first wind-down

She turns on the bath, then clears the kitchen, locks doors, sets the alarm and puts the dogs in the mudroom while it fills. Some nights she adds mint tea with a scoop of magnesium. The whole thing takes 5–10 minutes.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Set a phone alarm for bedtime**
  Decide your bedtime in the morning and set an alarm so a nudge from your clearer-thinking self interrupts the scroll.
- **Keep the cleanup minimal**
  Tiredness is an advantage: you won't turn putting scissors away into reorganizing the drawer. Save projects for when you have energy.
- **Handle the 'what if someone needs me' worry**
  Tell family and work to call, not text, in an emergency. Turn notifications off and leave the ringer on, then charge the phone away from your bed: kitchen, bathroom, across the room or, like Chris, in a closed closet.

How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2025-03-03 · Duration: 1:10:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SO9FHaF4EJw

KEYPOINTS

• Your phone is built to capture your attention, because attention is what's being sold

Mel's main point is that we live in an 'attention economy.' Phones, social media and the news make money simply from you staying on them, whether or not you buy anything. Her takeaway number one is that the phone is designed to take your attention because people profit from it. She stresses that these companies aren't villains, just for-profit businesses, and that's why the design won't change on its own.

• The scale has crept up on all of us

Mel cites research that the average American spends about 7 hours a day consuming media on their devices, roughly 59 hours a week. The first iPhone came out in 2007, but she says the biggest shift happened in the last five years. Her suggestion is to check your screen time, not to shame yourself, but to see how far it's gone.

• Use it as a tool or it uses you

Mel says she's genuinely torn. The same tools let her reach listeners worldwide from above her garage in southern Vermont, and they help with connection, learning, art and marketing a business. They help you only if you pick them up deliberately for a purpose. Her image for unlocking the phone is stepping into the Hunger Games arena: go in clear-eyed, get what you came for, and get out.

• It's designed to be hard to quit, so stop blaming yourself and your family

Deleting TikTok and downloading YouTube instead, tapping past app limits, or scrolling while watching TV aren't signs of weakness. They're signs the design is working. Mel compares blaming people to blaming a smoker for being hooked on cigarettes. The kids at dinner, the partner always online, and the aging parent on an iPad are all losing a game they don't know they're playing. Understanding that is more useful than being angry at them.

• Morning scrolling drains your motivation for the rest of the day

Mel plays a clip from Dr. K, known online as HealthyGamer,, a Harvard-trained psychiatrist who specializes in gaming addiction. He explains that we wake up with full dopamine reserves in the brain's reward circuitry, which drive both pleasure and motivation. Four hours of work followed by a reward feels great. Four hours of technology first, then work, and even the same output feels flat. His analogy is a lemon: a full one gives lots of juice from a small squeeze, and tech is a hard squeeze that leaves little for the rest of the day.

• That's why evenings collapse into more scrolling

Mel connects Dr. K's point to the end of the day. If you've drained your reserves early, everything feels dull. By evening, after work, the dogs and dinner, you're numb and exhausted, so you pick the phone back up, feel worse, stay up too late, and repeat the next morning.

• It has rewired your cravings, but brains can change

The evidence is the fidgety urge to check your phone in a checkout line, reaching for it when a show slows down, and feeling agitated at the idea of going to bed without it. Mel's hopeful point is neuroplasticity: just as your brain learned it needs the phone at bedtime, it can learn that it doesn't. She wants listeners to get 'the ick' about their phone, like an ex you've finally seen clearly.

• Boundaries matter more than knowing the advice

'Thanks, Sherlock,' Mel says. Everyone knows they should cut screen time. What changed her behavior was understanding the manipulation. Of all the tactics, she says physical separation is the one that worked. Timers got tapped past, and moving apps off the home screen just made her scroll more.

• Too much screen time crowds out what gives life meaning

Mel's biggest realization is that the time and energy the phone takes come out of exercise, friends, gardening, painting and picking up the guitar, the things that naturally lift you. Less of those leaves you more tired, which sends you back to the phone. She frames winning back control as getting three things back: time, energy and your mood.

EXAMPLES

• AI says Mel is divorced

Searching 'Is Mel Robbins divorced?' got an AI-generated answer saying yes, linked to an episode where she advised someone going through a divorce. She uses it to warn that AI tools pull together whatever is online, true or not, and present it as fact.

• Airport hallways, museum gift shops and giant stores

Mel compares phone design to airports that funnel you through shops, exhibits that end in a gift store you have to walk all the way through, and a big furniture store whose route makes you walk past every display. The longer they hold your attention, the more you spend. She adds that sensational headlines work the same way, because fear drives clicks.

• The grayscale study

Mel cites research from Cornell and IE University in Madrid finding that switching phones to grayscale cut daily screen time by about 50 minutes. Without color, she says, the phone feels about as exciting as an Excel spreadsheet, which reminds you it's a tool.

• The 80-year-old and his iPad

A close friend told Mel her father, since retiring, sits rocking with his iPad all day and takes it to bed, which is straining a 45-year marriage. Mel's point is that this isn't only a teenager problem.

• Exercise and internet addiction

Mel cites a study by researchers in China, published in the journal Addictive Behaviors, that found exercise strongly reduced symptoms of internet addiction. Her explanation is that movement releases dopamine naturally and holds your attention. Nobody scrolls while hiking, skiing or playing pickleball.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Mel's five-question self-check**

  Is your phone the first thing you reach for? Do you check apps for notifications that aren't there? Can you sit, walk, do chores or go to the bathroom without consuming content? Does leaving your phone behind make you anxious? Do you doomscroll to unwind and end up empty? A yes to any one means the design is winning.

- **Physical separation boundaries**

  Mel charges her phone in the bathroom so it can't come to bed. At work it stays on her desk, not on her body, so she isn't checking it in meetings. On morning walks it's zipped into her fanny pack with the dog treats. Her family's rule is no phones at the table, at home or in restaurants, not even face-down.

- **Audit who gets into your head**

  Look at everyone you follow. Mel notes that platforms keep showing you the same handful of accounts. Unfollow anyone who doesn't teach you, make you laugh or lift you up, including accounts you follow out of guilt or old college ties, and including her. Treat a spot in your feed as a privilege you grant.

- **Practice small offline moments**

  Stand in a checkout line without looking at your phone, try grayscale for a day, and swap evening doomscrolling for a walk or other movement.

The 7-Day Reset for More Time, Energy, & Happiness (Backed by Science)

Date: 2025-02-24 · Duration: 1:07:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSaI8Rluel8

KEYPOINTS

• Your week is being taken unless you plan it
Mel argues that headlines, endless work, never-ending to-do lists and doomscrolling are all pulling at your time, energy, focus and joy. The result is crawling to Friday, collapsing on the weekend and hitting the Sunday scaries. Her answer is a seven-item checklist, done each weekend or any day a week has gone badly. She admits each item looks like a low bar, and says her worst weeks are the ones where she did only one or two.

• 1. Brain dump everything — and it is not a to-do list
Write down everything rattling around in your head: dry cleaning, lasagna, calling your mother, a work presentation, a birthday gift. Each item frees a little mental space and shows why you can't focus. Mel stresses she has no intention of doing most of it; the point is to get it out of your brain. She sometimes draws a line down the right side of a meeting notebook page and dumps there when she starts to swirl.

• Level up with three sticky notes: work, personal, home
Before a Los Angeles trip, Mel stuck three big Post-its labeled work, personal and home on her kitchen island and added items all weekend as she walked by, from a Microsoft speech to packing three microphones. Afterward she could stick them into the journal she carries.

• 2. Free yourself by crossing off what you won't do this week
Much of the list — especially home projects — isn't happening this week, yet you're carrying it. Cross it off with zero guilt. Mel struck through a FedEx box of old photos she'd sent to a TV show years ago and the family photo album from her dad's 80th-birthday trip to Peru. Otherwise she'd have spent the flight thinking about them.

• 3. Circle one thing that matters to you and book a "hot 15"
From what's left, pick the item that would make you feel better if you'd moved it forward by next weekend — playing guitar, a health-insurance claim, bringing lunch to a sick friend. It should matter to you, not your boss or family. You don't have to finish it; schedule a 15-minute block with an alarm, because it isn't real until it's on the calendar. Mel likes arriving at her desk half an hour early for this.

• Progress beats completion
Mel cites Harvard Business School research analyzing about 12,000 diary entries from employees at seven companies: the most common trigger for a "best day" was making progress on meaningful work, not finishing it. She says progress boosts mood, pride and motivation, which is why 15 minutes on a bookcase often stretches to 40. Getting started is the hard part.

• 4. Plan just one meal
This isn't about dieting or Instagram-style meal prep. Scan your week and plan something: a Saturday brunch reservation, three family dinners with a shopping list, or doubling a recipe for tomorrow's lunch. Mel says research links meal planning with better nutrition, healthier weight, saving money and lower stress, partly because it removes nightly decisions.

• 5. Schedule one good workout
If you can't find time to exercise, it isn't a habit yet, so start with one. Mel cites a University of Sydney-led study of about 72,000 people tracked for five years and published in the European Heart Journal: people doing just 15 minutes of vigorous activity a week had about 17% lower risk of death from any cause compared with people who did none; around 50 minutes was linked to a 36% reduction. Her hack: paste the streaming class link into a calendar event with an alarm.

• 6. Plan one moment of rest — phone-free
Doomscrolling feels restful but keeps your nervous system on edge. Try a bath, tea in a favorite chair, lying on the grass, a walk without earbuds, knitting or playing piano. Mel cites research from the University of Konstanz suggesting even 10 minutes of rest can activate the parasympathetic "rest and digest" system, plus work she attributes to Harvard Medical School, the NIH and the University of California linking relaxation to clarity and better health.

• 7. Put connection on the calendar
Plan coffee, a walk, dinner or a museum date. Mel points to the Harvard Study of Adult Development, running since 1938, and its director Dr. Robert Waldinger: close relationships matter more than wealth or fame for health and happiness, and lonelier participants declined earlier. Having a slot booked makes it easy to invite someone along.

EXAMPLES

• Four years without a family photo on the wall
"Picture wall" has shown up on every one of Mel's home lists since moving to Vermont. This week she circled it, searched for picture-wall services, found a Boston store and booked a four-hour Sunday appointment three weeks out. Her producer Tracy confessed a shelf still covered in baggies a year after moving in.

• The leaking soup
Before a Boston taping week, Mel made a chicken, spinach, jalapeño, ginger and rice soup her daughter Kendall found and drove it down in a Tupperware on the passenger floor. It leaked an inch of green soup onto the mat, but it fed her all week. Tracy said she was noticeably more dialed in and should make it weekly.

• Breakfast for dinner, again
As new empty nesters, Mel and Chris kept meeting in the kitchen at 6:45 p.m. with no plan in a town where restaurants close by 8, ending up with breakfast for dinner.

• Seven-minute calls
On drives to Boston, Mel calls a different old friend each time: "I was thinking about you, I only have seven minutes."

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run the checklist weekly**
  Brain dump; cross off; circle one and book a hot 15; plan a meal; plan a workout; plan rest; plan connection.
- **Start mid-week if needed**
  Mel says a bad Tuesday is a fine time to pull the list out.
- **Pair items**
  Invite a friend to the workout you've booked to cover two items at once.

Try It For 1 Day: Do This Every Morning to Boost Motivation & Focus

Date: 2025-01-13 · Duration: 0:54:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5juT-Oh4zWI

KEYPOINTS

• You already have a morning routine, even if it's a bad one

Mel's opening provocation: hitting snooze five times, scrolling your phone for 45 minutes, or pulling the pillow over your head all count as a routine. The question isn't whether you have one but whether it works with or against your biology. She describes her old version: anxiety on waking, repeated snoozing, racing out the door late, no breakfast, no exercise, wallet left at home.

• Not being a morning person has real explanations, not character flaws

Mel lists seven reasons mornings can feel heavy: shift work, a disrupted schedule after retirement or an empty nest (citing a University of Wisconsin study showing retirees sleep later and longer), a too-comfortable bed, genetics, trauma, anxiety and depression. Her point is to drop the shame: you work with the wiring you have, and the routine is designed to push through all seven.

• Morning grogginess can be inherited

She cites a Nature Communications study identifying 351 genetic markers linked to being a morning person, and a Genome Biology and Evolution paper tying morning-type traits to Neanderthal ancestry. Harvard Medical School research describes the internal biological clock as personal, but still adjustable. Her husband springs out of bed; she describes herself as 'a hunk of meat marinating' in the morning.

• Trauma and PTSD can leave you waking up in a freeze response

Mel references University of Arkansas research linking traumatic experiences and PTSD to disrupted sleep, so people wake exhausted and want to go back to bed. Connecting her own morning heaviness to past trauma was liberating for her: it reframed the feeling as something to heal and push through, not a personal deficiency.

• Morning anxiety has three physical drivers

Cortisol, the stress and energy hormone, is naturally highest on waking; if it stays elevated you feel anxious all day. Alcohol the night before drops blood sugar overnight, and a hangover commonly brings anxiety. Low morning blood sugar can also trigger adrenaline and fight-or-flight. Mel, who has woken up anxious since age 15, says she had no idea drinking was part of it and believed she was 'damaged goods.'

• Lying in bed feeds depression and rumination

She cites research that 75% of people with depression struggle to get out of bed, and Emory University work describing 'bed rotting' as a common symptom of mood disorders. Her husband went through a serious depression, and she notes depression 'lies to you' about your ability to do what helps. An occasional slow, alarm-free morning when you're truly tired is fine; chronic lying in bed ruminating is the problem.

• You fall to the level of your systems

Mel builds the episode on James Clear's line from Atomic Habits: you don't rise to the level of your goals, you fall to the level of your system. Snoozing, skipping breakfast and hydrating on coffee is a system, and big goals can't outrun it. A morning routine is simply a system you can redesign.

• Mornings are the only part of the day you fully control

Once you check your phone, the news or walk into work, you're reacting. Mel treats the first 20–30 minutes as protected time before you hand your energy to everyone else, and stresses that each morning is a clean slate you can return to after days or months off track.

• Get up on the alarm and leave the phone alone

Step one is no snoozing and no lying in bed, since that increases rumination while cortisol is high. Her 5 Second Rule, invented about 15 years ago, is to count 5-4-3-2-1 and move before hesitation kills motivation. She compares the countdown to a first domino that can topple something larger. Her phone lives in the bathroom so she must get up to turn the alarm off.

• Water first, caffeine 60–90 minutes later

Water makes up 45–75% of body weight and about 80% of the brain, and dehydration brings brain fog, headaches and mood swings. Mel relays what Dr. Amy Shah told her on the show: caffeine in the first hour or two after waking traps adenosine, the sleepy chemical the brain is trying to clear, which drives the mid-morning crash and second cup.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's coffee habit collapsed after one change

She used to drink at least six cups of coffee a day, later three double or triple-shot lattes. After drinking a full glass of water and white-knuckling a 90-minute timer, she found she no longer craved a second cup. She now enjoys one coffee 90 minutes to two hours after waking. An internal focus group her team ran reported similar results, with some participants switching to occasional decaf.

• UC Berkeley's NBA high-five study

Read from her book The High 5 Habit: researchers counted high fives and fist bumps early in the NBA season and could predict which teams would finish with the best records. Mel's takeaway is that high fives signal trust and 'I've got your back', and doing it in the mirror makes you your own teammate.

• Neurobics and the mirror high five

Drawing on Duke neurobiologist Dr. Lawrence Katz, she explains neurobics: pairing a routine action like brushing your teeth with something unexpected snaps the brain to attention and works like 'brain fertilizer' for encoding a new habit. Here the habit being wired is self-belief. The high five is silent.

• Dr. Rebecca Robbins on cloudy mornings

The Harvard sleep scientist told Mel that morning light resets the internal clock, shuts off melatonin and starts the countdown to bedtime. She called it a myth that cloud or rain blocks the benefit. Mel adds a 5-10-20 rule, popularized by Andrew Huberman:

5 minutes outside if sunny, 10 if cloudy, 20 under bright artificial light if you can't get out.

- **Bond University on clutter**

A study from Bond University in Australia found your physical environment significantly influences cognition, emotions and behavior, including relationships. Mel uses it to explain why making the bed matters: less visual clutter, less chance of climbing back in, and a small daily act of discipline.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The six-step, roughly 14-minute routine**

1) Get up on the alarm with 5-4-3-2-1. 2) Make your bed. 3) Silent high five in the mirror after brushing your teeth. 4) Drink a full glass of water and delay caffeine at least an hour. 5) Get outside for light using 5-10-20. 6) Take a 10-minute walk. She keeps it short on purpose so it works on busy days, on vacation or in a hotel.

- **Walk for 10 minutes, ideally without headphones**

Mel explains 'forward ambulation': walking creates optic and auditory flow that quiets overthinking. It works with low vision too; a legally blind producer on her team relies on the auditory version. Combine steps five and six by walking while you get light. A quiet, phone-free walk is best for building a calmer mindset.

- **Add a 'Hot 15' before opening your phone**

After her walk, Mel sits at the kitchen table for 15 minutes on a project that matters to her, before email or social media, because that's when she feels most focused and motivated. Meditation, journaling or strength training can also go here; the six steps are just the foundation you build on.

How to Achieve Any Goal You Have in 6 Simple Steps

Date: 2025-01-06 · Duration: 1:05:32
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxJjAuG3qkQ

KEYPOINTS

• Step 1: decide what you want, and know a dream from a goal

Mel says a dream exists in your head and heart: you can picture it and feel it. A goal is something you do in the world. Compare 'I dream of writing a book' with 'I have a goal of writing a book this year.' She says most people skip this obvious step and never actually define what they want.

• If you can't measure it, it's a wish

Ask how you'll know you've achieved it. 'Out of debt' means the credit cards are paid off. 'Financial freedom' needs a number in the bank. Mel's own measures: fitting into a size 28 pair of pants after hormone-related weight gain, drinking two quart-size mason jars of water a day, and holding a printed copy of her book.

• Step 2: write it down, because your brain filters for what you mark as important

Mel describes written goals as 'external storage': seeing the paper daily reminds you, and through what researchers call encoding, the hippocampus treats it as worth keeping in long-term memory. Your brain then starts surfacing related opportunities, like noticing Ford Broncos everywhere once you want one. She adds that written goals are linked in research to higher achievement, and the note helps on days you lack motivation.

• Step 3: find the formula, because someone has already done it

There are formulas for real estate businesses, motivational speaking, publishing, podcasts and weight loss. Mel spent two years researching podcast formulas (episode frequency, length, gear, advertisers) before launching hers. She says many people refuse to copy what works for fear of looking unoriginal, like skipping keto because a sister-in-law is doing it. Research online, ask people who've done it, or ask an AI tool for the steps. You'll put your own spin on it regardless.

• Other people don't block your way; they lead the way

Listener Elise had been stuck for years on a business teaching teens singing for Broadway. Mel's suggested measure of success: five paying clients and at least one client landing a Broadway or off-Broadway audition. Write that down, then study the websites, Instagram accounts and marketing of people already doing it.

• Fear of judgment is often what stops you following the formula

Mel says people often know exactly what to do and don't do it because they worry what friends will think. Her fix is the Let Them Theory: let them judge, think you copied, or unfollow. Then 'let me' do what the goal requires and act in ways that make you proud, which she says quiets the worry better than being told to 'stop caring.'

• Step 4: do the reps, and expect them to be boring

Borrowing from business coach Jeff Walker, Mel says the secret is doing the tedious daily actions, like gym reps. There are no big leaps, only small gains, and 'overnight' successes usually spent a decade doing reps nobody saw. If it were fun, everyone would be debt-free with six-pack abs.

• Write an implementation intention: 'I will [rep] at [time] in [place]'

Mel's examples: 'I will write for 30 minutes at 9 a.m. in my office.' 'I will do a Pilates mat class at 7 a.m. in my bedroom.' She cites an exercise study comparing three groups: people who only tracked, people who also read a motivational piece, and people who wrote a time-and-place plan. In the plan group, 91% exercised, which she says was roughly double the others.

• Lower resistance by naming it

Besides the 5 Second Rule (count 5-4-3-2-1 and move), Mel shares an idea from psychiatrist Dr. K, a past guest: we're wired to move away from what feels painful, so admit it. Say 'I know I don't want to do this, but I'm doing it anyway.' Mel says acknowledging that it will be hard lowers your resistance. She reframes tedium as a sign it's working.

• Step 5: make it fun and easy

After about a week of consistent reps, look for ways to remove friction: phone alarms, Post-its, workout clothes laid out, workouts picked on Sunday, a playlist, a partner, a class or an online community. Mel quotes James Clear's Atomic Habits: you rise or fall to the level of your systems.

• Step 6: don't quit, because coming back is what defines success

Missed days, weeks or even seven months don't end it. What counts is the day you return. Mel points to Michael Jordan being cut from his high school team as an example of the perseverance behind most success stories.

EXAMPLES

• Two years of drafts that never got posted

About 10 years ago, deep in debt and needing money for bills, gas and town soccer fees, Mel asked established speakers how to get paid. Their formula: a simple website with stage photos and keynote takeaways, testimonials from event planners, and above all posting about speaking on social media. She did the first two but sat on hundreds of draft posts for two years. She'd delete any that didn't get likes within five minutes, fearing friends would think 'who does she think she is?' Her measure of success was a single paid speech. She tells this story in The Let Them Theory.

• Hanging from a pull-up bar

Mel admits she's been practicing just hanging for two weeks because she can't yet lift her shoulders a quarter inch, a reminder that reps rarely show progress early.

• The mason jar by the coffee maker

She fills her water jar the night before and leaves it in front of the coffee maker so she drinks water before making coffee.

• Eleven drafts of The Let Them Theory

Writing in the room above her garage in Vermont, Mel wanted to quit at nearly every version up to number 11, and again when the publisher pushed back. Holding the printed book was her definition of success.

- **'Putting in the reps' in the family chat**
  Mel's kids now use the phrase in the family group chat as shorthand for doing the hard, boring work on something.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **When you're ready to give up, go back to step one**
  For a listener whose online bakery has slow orders and is exhausting her, Mel's answer is to decide again: keep going, or close it, learn and move on. Either choice is a new goal. If you keep going, define success, write it down and find the formula successful bakeries have used.
- **Put the goal and plan where you'll see them**
  Write the goal, how you'll measure it, and your time-and-place rep on one sheet. Post it by your computer or make it your phone's lock screen.
- **Expect it to be hard**
  Mel's view: doing hard things now makes life easier later, and always choosing what's easy makes life harder over time.

How to Make Next Year the Best Year: Ask Yourself These 7 Questions

Date: 2024-12-26 · Duration: 0:48:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cm6oJwpuOYc

KEYPOINTS

- **You can't get directions until you know where you are**
  Mel compares goal-setting to calling a friend when you're lost near their house: the first thing they ask is where you are. Most New Year planning skips that step and jumps to manifesting and fresh starts, missing the wisdom of the past 12 months. Her 'yearly audit', which she and her husband Chris have done for 20 years and now do with their kids, is about locating yourself first.
- **You've forgotten about 95% of your year — use your camera roll and calendar**
  Mel says that after 20 years of audits she's certain people forget most of what happened. Scrolling photos and calendar entries jogs memory. Doing it live, she found 6,927 photos from 2024 and had already rediscovered forgotten moments by mid-January. Few photos, or the same old scenes, is data too: maybe you weren't present, or life has become too samey.
- **Write your answers down so they become real**
  If you're walking or driving, just listen and think; then come back with paper or a laptop and your phone. Mel says answers trapped in your head aren't real. You can also do it with a spouse, family or roommates — reminding each other of good moments and learning what matters to each person.
- **Question 1: What were the highlights?**
  Highlights aren't only accomplishments; they're whatever warmed your heart, and you want more of that next year. Mel's included finishing The Let Them Theory, climbing Mount Katahdin with her family, her daughter Kendall playing Carnegie Hall, and the tulips from her first-ever cutting garden. If flowers bore you, she says, they don't belong in your directions — but it would be silly to leave them out of hers.
- **Question 2: What were the hardest parts?**
  It's okay if this makes you sad. Something can appear on both lists: writing the book ate weekends and late nights. Mel's hard parts included her father's back surgery and slow recovery, becoming an empty nester (she prefers 'bird launcher'), Sawyer's devastating breakup, Oakley's rejections from his top three colleges and Kendall doubting her music career.
- **Question 3: What did you learn about yourself?**
  Both highs and lows teach you something. A year earlier, Mel had learned that her old approach to health didn't work in menopause and that she had to stop managing everyone's emotional breakdowns. This year: she'd outgrown running the operations of her business. Admitting a limitation, she says, lets you pivot instead of slogging on and beating yourself up.
- **Friction means you're in the wrong seat on the bus**
  Wherever you felt friction or frustration — work, marriage, parenting, roommates — Mel believes the fit no longer works. For her, the clash between the podcast role she loves and managing P&Ls, teams and leases made her want to throw up. Seeing that it's a role problem, not a personal failing, is liberating: what's the right seat and who do I need around me?
- **Questions 4–6: stop, start, continue**
  Mel borrows the classic business planning tool used by executive teams and coaches, adding that people tend to forget the 'continue' part. Last year she vowed to stop travelling for work; she went from 30–40 keynotes a year to seven. She also vowed to stop complaining about menopause and learned it came down to strength training, protein and hormone therapy if it's safe for you.
- **Question 7: What one step can you take today?**
  With your directions written down, pick something small you can do now: watch a video on planning spring flowers, or put a date on the calendar with parents or friends. Mel's conclusion is that the best year comes from small things you stop, start and continue, not from 'I'm going to make a million dollars'.

EXAMPLES

- **The flamingo yoga class**
  Mel had forgotten a 50-minute yoga class where a flamingo walked up and rested its beak over her shoulder. Seeing the photo still brings her joy — a reminder that new experiences and time with family are what light her up.
- **Strength training that didn't happen**
  Last year's top 'start' goal was strength training three days a week. Rather than trashing herself, Mel got curious: it worked when she was in Boston taping in a steady routine, and fell apart when life got crazy or she was in Vermont. Her lesson: rhythm and doing less make things happen, overambition doesn't.
- **'I grocery shop when I'm hungry'**
  Mel's metaphor for her pattern: when she's agitated or in the wrong role, she overcommits, overcomplicates and overreacts, like buying everything at the store on an empty stomach. Her audit told her that next year she must do less, not more — 'stop adding things' and start subtracting.
- **Letting her kids struggle**
  Watching Sawyer's heartbreak, Oakley's rejections and Kendall's doubts while writing The Let Them Theory taught Mel she can't rescue people from life's lessons. Stepping back and simply supporting them created space for her adult kids to step forward and grow.
- **'Can we bring ease to this?'**
  Mel's new 'stop' is tolerating friction and intensity. When Chris got anxious that a shared project might fail, she asked if they could just bring ease to it; with family members who get an edge, she asks to dial down the tone and breathe. She adds it doesn't mean being steamrolled.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Treat unmet goals with curiosity, not shame**

Ask why it didn't happen and treat the answer as information about how your life works — Mel's showed she says yes to too much and lets others hijack her time.

• Doing less can be a radical goal

Mel's plan: focus on three or four things that make her happy and three or four at work that move the needle, be 'maniacal' about ignoring the rest, and protect her peace so she doesn't take stress out on others. She also plans to keep limiting alcohol, which she says shows up whenever she's stressed.

• Keep last year's list in front of you

Her savings goal worked because the written list reminded her. Rereading old answers also reveals wins to add to highlights, like cutting keynotes to seven.

Simple Life Hacks That Will Change Your Future: Steal These Habits From Billionaires

Date: 2024-09-30 · Duration: 0:44:17
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxOKIB1s9-g

KEYPOINTS

• Daily reading builds the mental 'filters' behind fast decisions

In a 2015 Arizona State interview with Professor Jeff Cunningham, Warren Buffett said he reads five to six hours a day: five daily newspapers, magazines, 10-Ks, annual reports and biographies. He says this gave him 'filters' in his mind, so when someone pitches him an investment he usually knows within two or three minutes whether he's interested. Mel's point is that his quick decisions rest on decades of slowly built knowledge, and that the habit costs nothing if you use a library or free reading online.

• Make yourself do the scary skill, and sign up for a class that forces you

Buffett was so terrified of public speaking that he avoided any high-school or college class that required it. After school he paid $100 for a Dale Carnegie course, got 'this little diploma', and proposed to his wife during the course. Mel calls public speaking the most common fear, ahead of dying, and argues it's a learnable skill that lets you speak up for yourself at work, at home or in a wedding toast.

• Get ideas out of your head and into one place every day

Taylor Swift told songwriter Ryan Adams in 2015 that she is always 'pre-writing'. Any observation or lyric she likes goes into 'this endless notepad on my phone', even when she isn't making an album. Mel's takeaway: whatever you want to get better at, make it a daily practice. Ideas you plan to remember are usually gone a minute later.

• A stored library of ideas pays off later

When Swift wrote the chorus of 'Blank Space', she searched a year's worth of saved lyrics that matched the over-dramatic, luxurious picture she wanted and pulled lines like 'darling I'm a nightmare dressed like a daydream'. Mel adds that writing an idea down honors your own wisdom, because it treats the idea as worth keeping.

• Sleep is a free performance tool

LeBron James told a student podcast at his I Promise School that his self-care is sleep: 'eight hours plus', to re-energize body, mind and spirit and come up with ideas. Mel says that on the road he aims for 10 to 12 hours. She ties this to what earlier sleep experts on the show explained: sleep clears out the brain 'like a Zamboni', supports immune repair and stress recovery, and is when the day's learning and muscle memory take hold.

• You don't get what you don't ask for

Sara Blakely, who started Spanx with $5,000 in savings, landed Neiman Marcus as her first account. When people in the industry asked how, she said 'I called them'. They had spent six or seven years at trade-show booths waiting for a chance. Mel turns it into the habit 'make the call': send the DM, the letter or the FedEx, find the buyer, ask the person out.

• Not knowing the usual way can be an advantage

Blakely says she didn't even know trade shows existed: 'what you don't know can be your greatest asset if you let it.' The real obstacle is self-talk like 'I have no idea what I'm doing.' Mel says doing things differently is what sets you apart, and that you're the one telling yourself you're not ready.

• Break routine on purpose to spark creativity

Shigeru Miyamoto, creator of Super Mario, Zelda and Donkey Kong (Mel admits he isn't technically a billionaire), regularly wanders city streets and parks watching people, which has inspired his game worlds. Neuroscientist Dr. Tali Sharot, speaking on an earlier episode, explains that the brain gets used to whatever it sees repeatedly (habituation). New inputs break that and create new connections.

• Your gut either leads you to the next right step or the next lesson

Jamie Kern Lima, who co-founded IT Cosmetics, sold it to L'Oréal for $1.2 billion and became the brand's first female CEO, says life comes down to whether you listen to the 'no's' from the outside world or your inner 'knowing'. Self-doubt 'will lie to us all day long'. She doesn't believe your gut is ever wrong, because even a rejection gives you the lesson you need next.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 14 years of reading

People often tell Mel she can boil down dense research from neuroscientists. She traces that to 14 years of reading psychology and happiness research every day. It started when she was trying to climb out of a dark period, and it became the kind of knowledge filter Buffett describes.

• Record-breaking songwriting output

Mel notes that The Tortured Poets Department came with 16 songs plus bonus tracks, followed by a surprise anthology of songs 17 to 31. All 31 debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 and took the top 14 spots, which she says was a first in Billboard history.

• LeBron's split night of sleep

After a heavy week of flights and games in December 2021, at 37, LeBron credited his stamina to 'sleep and inspiration' from his son's team. He slept from midnight to 8, ate breakfast, then slept again from 8:30 to 12:30. Mel jokes she'll quote this to Chris when he's up at 5:30.

• The Neiman Marcus bathroom pitch

Blakely flew from Atlanta to Dallas with her lucky red college backpack, a prototype in a kitchen Ziploc bag and packaging printed on a friend's computer. Sensing the buyer, Diane, losing interest, she asked her to come to the bathroom, put the product on under her white pants, and showed her the before and after. The buyer said 'I get it, it's brilliant' and tried it in seven stores.

• Changing your writing spot

Maya Angelou rented a small hotel room to write, bringing a dictionary, a Bible, a deck of cards and a bottle of sherry. Mel's

husband Chris, working on a master's and his first book, writes at a local coffee shop three days a week because the new sounds and people make him more creative.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick an idea-capture system and use it**
  Options from the episode: a phone notes app like Swift's, or a pocket notebook like Chris's, who has filled about 50 in 30 years and keeps one in his back pocket even in the truck. Mel admits that with ADHD and dyslexia she has bounced between Moleskines, 3x5 cards and Instagram save folders. The habit matters more than the tool.
- **Small ways to break routine**
  Sharot's suggestions: take a different route to work, take a free online course, try a new podcast, or befriend someone whose personality isn't the type you usually spend time with.
- **Turn 'make the call' into one action today**
  Name one ask you've been avoiding, at work, in dating or a pitch, and do it before your self-talk talks you out of it. If you get a no, Kern Lima's framing is that it's a lesson pointing to the next step, not proof that your gut was wrong.

9 Small Things That Will Help You Feel Amazing Again

Date: 2024-09-23 · Duration: 0:40:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOopSj40Zro

KEYPOINTS

• "Whether you think you can or you can't, you're right" works because belief controls whether you act at all

Mel borrows the line from her grandmother and walks it through a job search: if you believe you can't get a better job, you won't update your résumé or LinkedIn, reach out to college friends or ask your parents' friends for introductions. The belief doesn't predict the outcome so much as cause it, by stopping the effort. Flip it to "I think I can" and you open the door to optimism, hope and resilience, which makes you willing to try, and the results come from the trying.

• To get eight hours of sleep, plan for nine hours in bed

Mel admits she spent her life climbing into bed at 10 p.m. and setting a 6 a.m. alarm, then wondering why she never got eight hours. Sleep researcher Dr. Rebecca Robbins of Brigham and Women's Hospital told her that falling asleep is a process, not a switch, and even a healthy sleeper with no problems takes about 15 to 20 minutes to drift off. Budgeting nine hours covers that lag, and if you fall asleep fast you simply have spare time in the morning.

• The 5-10-20 rule makes morning-light advice easy to follow in any weather

Getting outdoor light into your eyes soon after waking resets your circadian rhythm and helps you sleep that night, but most people stall on how long and what if it's raining. Mel's shorthand: bank five minutes outside if it's sunny, 10 if it's cloudy, and 20 if it's rainy or if you can only sit by a window. She remembers it as the fives, tens and twenties in the cash envelope she dropped in the bank's night deposit box after closing shifts as a waitress and barback.

• A short walk helps with almost any problem because it changes you, not the problem

Mel jokes that a little walk solves 93% of your problems, a playful number rather than a statistic. Her point is that walking quickly shifts your mood, clears your head and puts space between you and a wave of emotion, so you come back able to choose a response instead of reacting.

• Stop talking, because you learn while listening and not every conversation needs your input

Mel says she has spent much of her life feeling she had to weigh in on everything and get the last word, especially at work and with family. She frames silence as growth (input is how you learn) and as protection: not everything deserves a response and not everyone deserves an explanation. In a tense argument, stop talking and lower your voice, which signals you're in control. She is clear this is not the silent treatment.

• Put things where they belong, not back where you found them

Pitched especially to people who struggle with ADHD or clutter, the rule is to move anything out of place to its proper home the moment you notice it, which usually takes under a minute. Doing this one item at a time, in every room, stops small piles from turning into what Mel calls a gigantic volcano of stuff.

• Wait a week before any impulse purchase over about $100

A cooling-off period lets you rise above the thrill and instant gratification of buying without shaming yourself or saying "I can't afford that." Mel blames social platforms that have become 24/7 shopping networks. She adds a second rule of thumb: if you can't afford to buy it twice, you can't afford to buy it once. Mel's own Amazon cart is full of items parked under this rule for months; once the urge fades she realises she doesn't need them.

• Noticing the colour of someone's eyes is a simple way to practise eye contact

Mel struggled with eye contact, which she calls a common ADHD symptom, and worried that her darting eyes looked disrespectful or dishonest. Looking for someone's eye colour gives you a reason to hold their gaze and something real to compliment, without staring creepily. She says research shows eye contact with small nods signals that you're listening and care.

• Deliberately smiling can lift your mood a little, but it's not a fix for real distress

Mel compares it to fixing her posture, and says she now catches her resting face looking serious or mad. You don't have to force a smile during a breakdown, grief or depression, but on ordinary days pulling the corners of your mouth toward your ears is a small nudge that helps.

EXAMPLES

• A producer's sleep tracker stuck at 7 hours 35 minutes

Amy, one of the show's producers, noticed she consistently logged about 7 hours 35 minutes of sleep. The reason was the same mistake Mel made: going to bed at the exact time she wanted to fall asleep and setting the alarm eight hours later.

• Five problems, one walk

Mel runs through a looming work deadline (a 10-minute walk beats sitting there spinning), a breakup text, a call saying your dad's tests suggest cancer (walk instead of spiralling on WebMD so you can support your parents), a nightly sundae craving, and a roommate who blows up when you raise that their partner is always over. The walk helps you see that managing the roommate's disappointment isn't your job. For the craving, she cites studies finding a 15-minute walk curbs chocolate cravings, plus research tying after-dinner walks to lower stress and better insulin processing.

• A speaker friend who decided to stop talking

When Mel's career was mostly motivational speaking, she told a friend she felt burnt out and stale. He had felt the same and committed to sitting in an audience at least 10 times a year. Mel realised her life was all output, so she signed up for two events as an attendee and set aside weekly time for books, online courses and watching masterful speakers.

• The bowl of studio objects, swim trunks, an owl statue and a T-shirt eye mask

After taping an episode about owls in her studio above the garage, Mel put the leftover props in a bowl and took it to the kitchen. Later she carried the swim trunks and owl statue on to the bedroom, where she found a T-shirt she'd used as a makeshift eye mask and put it in a drawer instead of under the pillows.

• A 3,800-person, 19-country smile study

Stanford researcher Nicholas Coles, who was on the fence about whether smiling makes you happier, organised a large

study that brought both camps together. Across 3,800 participants in 19 countries, people who mimicked smiles in photos or simply pulled their mouths toward their ears showed a noticeable increase in happiness, consistent with a facial-feedback effect. The researchers stressed it won't pull anyone out of depression or solve their problems.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Set bedtime by counting back nine hours from your alarm**
  If you need to be up at 6 a.m., be in bed by 9 p.m. A healthy sleeper still needs 15 to 20 minutes to fall asleep, and anything extra counts as a bonus.
- **Do one put-it-where-it-belongs pass right now**
  Mel's challenge is to look around wherever you are, find one item in the wrong room, and put it away as soon as the episode ends.
- **Know the limits of these hacks**
  Mel presents walking and smiling as ways to change your state, not to erase serious problems. Forced smiles are not a treatment for depression, and grief or heartbreak should be felt rather than smiled over.

How to Get Ahead of 99% of People (In 4 Months)

Date: 2024-09-05 · Duration: 0:43:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2js5sm7sis

KEYPOINTS

• January is when the calendar changes; September is when life changes

Mel's first argument is that September brings real-world change, not just a new date. Summer turns to fall, leaves change color, the weather shifts, and breaks give way to school and work routines. Because your whole life is visibly changing around you, you feel more ready to change yourself. She suggests treating fall as a bigger moment for change than New Year's.

• Use January to dream and September to do

Mel isn't against January. New Year's is a temporal landmark, a clean-slate moment that opens you up to dreaming big, and she recommends using it every year to audit the last year and envision the next one, five or ten. But dreaming differs from executing. She lists four reasons January is poor for productivity: you're exhausted from the holidays, you've spent your money on gifts, cold weather keeps you indoors, and dark days bring seasonal depression. She cites the figure that only about 10% of New Year's resolutions succeed.

• Other seasons work against momentum

Spring brings a short burst of cleaning energy that leaves Mel depleted, and then everyone coasts toward summer. Summer is the worst for productivity because schedules are irregular, people take vacations, and festivals and barbecues pull you outside. Productivity isn't about sprints but small, consistent moves over time, and consistency depends on a steady rhythm that summer breaks. By fall you should be rested and full of sunshine and vitamin D.

• The 'back to school effect' is wired into you

Mel's second reason: however long you've been out of school, every fall of your life has carried fresh-start energy. Back-to-school signs, buses, changing traffic and other people getting organized act as environmental cues that prompt thoughts of change. She argues that your environment makes change easier or harder, and September arrives already set up to support you. New Year's goals are optional, but back-to-school conditioning has been with you since childhood.

• You'll be more productive in fall anyway, so aim it at yourself

Her third reason is that research ranks fall as the most productive season, and the boost lasts from September through October and November rather than fading like a January spike. She says this is when people most often join weight-loss programs, go to the gym, start cooking at home, change their haircut and get serious about money. Winter is the least productive season, by her figure 25% less than fall. Her strong caveat: don't pour this extra energy into work, because you already give work enough.

• Only four months left is an advantage (Parkinson's law)

Her fourth reason relies on Parkinson's law, from the 1950s: a project expands to fill the time you give it. Two weeks for a presentation means it takes two weeks; twenty minutes means twenty minutes. January goals expand to fill twelve months, while a September goal has a built-in deadline at year's end. Tight deadlines sharpen focus and narrow attention. 'Stick to a budget through December' feels far more urgent than 'this year.'

• Four months matches how long goals actually hold our attention

Mel cites a Forbes Health survey finding that the average January goal stays top of mind for 3.74 months before people either achieve it or fizzle out. That is almost exactly the time left between September and the new year, so a fall goal fits your natural stamina rather than fighting it.

• Frame changes as starting, not stopping

Mel cites research showing changes stick better when framed as something you'll begin, like a new school year. Instead of 'stop eating sugar,' say 'start eating fruit instead of cookies.' Instead of 'stop drinking,' say 'start drinking non-alcoholic beverages.' Instead of 'stop eating gluten,' say 'start eating gluten-free.'

• When unsure what to work on, work on yourself

If no single goal comes to mind, Mel's default assignment is to spend the next four months improving yourself in some small daily way that makes you healthier or happier. Examples include signing up for an art class, reading ten minutes before bed, or going to bed half an hour earlier. Think of the evening as homework done for yourself rather than for a teacher or boss, because how you experience life depends on where you put your time and energy.

EXAMPLES

• UK survey: 69% think September changes are easier

Mel shares a survey of UK adults in which 69% said small improvements in September are much easier to achieve than New Year's resolutions. She uses it to show that most people already sense the back-to-school advantage.

• The $2 notebook ritual

Mel suggests buying a cheap new notebook, recalling the crisp crack of the spine, and writing 'September' plus the year (or 'Fall' and the year) on the cover in Sharpie, like a college notebook with the school seal. It symbolizes deciding to take the next four months into your own hands, and you can use it to track the change you're making.

• Mel's 15-minute Pilates lesson in consistency

After climbing Mount Katahdin in Maine with her family, Mel hurt her hip and skipped the gym for a few weeks. When she returned with a 15-minute streamed Pilates mat class, she immediately felt she should do more. Her own start-not-stop change: stop worrying about how long she exercises and start focusing on consistency, even five minutes a day.

• Why everyone needs the reminder again each year

Mel lists how much changed in her family in twelve months. A year earlier she and Chris still had a high school senior, she was 11 months into hosting the podcast, Sawyer was leaving for a four-month solo backpacking trip around Asia, Kendall was moving into her first apartment after college in LA, and Chris was starting a master's in spiritual psychology. Because you're a different person each fall, familiar advice can land differently.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick one theme with an end-of-year deadline**

  Choose a single area and size it for four months, such as writing the book, finishing a resume, taking a coding or AI certification class, sticking to a budget, or moving out of your parents' basement. Use the deadline to create urgency instead of letting the goal expand to fill a year.

- **Protect the fall lift from your job**

  You'll likely be more productive in fall whether you plan it or not. Decide deliberately where the extra energy goes, and put it toward something that makes you happier rather than more output for your boss.

- **Aim for good days rather than perfect ones**

  Mel's definition of a good life is a life with many good days. Each day, do what's in your power to make it a good one. Expect bad days too, and come back to your notebook the next day.

How to Get Motivated (Even When You Don’t Feel Like It) With Dr. K, HealthyGamerGG

Guest: Dr. Alok Kanojia (Dr. K)
Date: 2024-09-02 · Duration: 1:13:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_WJ5hgWLFo

KEYPOINTS

• Motivation isn't one thing, and trying to increase it is the core mistake

Dr. Alok Kanojia, the Harvard-trained psychiatrist behind HealthyGamerGG, says there is no motivation center in the brain; it emerges from emotion, 'shoulds,' ego, identity and comparison. Chasing more motivation means trying to make action easy, which collapses when circumstances or feelings change. His alternative is learning to act independent of motivation.

• Are you in control of your wants, or are they in control of you?

If you only act when you feel like it, your wants are running your life. He links this to addiction: whether opiates, social media or video games, addictions activate the nucleus accumbens to give pleasure and craving, and suppress negative emotional circuitry. Scrolling when you're tired doesn't give you energy to cook dinner; it only delays the tiredness.

• Emotions fade and rewards dull, so motivation built on them wavers

He describes homeostasis (joy naturally recedes: a perfect wedding day doesn't guarantee a happy marriage) and tolerance (the second cookie is less delicious than the first). Chasing past highs to stay motivated is a losing game.

• Focus on action, not outcome

He draws on the Sanskrit idea of karma (action) and its fruit: the more you devote yourself to actions rather than results, the easier life gets and the more you control your behavior. He ties a society fixated on outcomes like GPA and stock price to one that is increasingly burnt out and unmotivated.

• Moving toward a goal costs pain before it pays off

Your brain runs an action-success calculation. Before the gym, both its pain and the comfort of staying home are hypothetical; once you start, the pain becomes real while the beach body doesn't appear. Your brain concludes 'this is dumb' and tells you not to go tomorrow. That's why people quit diets and workouts when results lag; you aren't lazy, you're fighting your wiring.

• Running from negativity creates a pendulum

Going to the gym because you hate how you look means moving from pain into pain, so you go one week and not the next. Mel describes a friend promised a promotion for two years who alternates between wanting to quit and working harder. Dr. K says they are following through 100%, just on moving away from whatever feels worst that day.

• Outcome goals like 'sober for a year' can't be done

As an addiction psychiatrist, he tells patients they can't be sober for a year because that's an outcome, not an action. Mel admits her brain jumped straight to the checkbox. 'Every day' goals turn success into failure: meditate 39 days, miss day 40, and you call it a failure; someone 48 days sober relapses and thinks 'what's the point.' Abandon 'every day' and focus on today.

• You aren't stuck; you're strongly motivated not to move

Feeling stuck, he says, is a misdiagnosis: a powerful resistance says don't pick the fight, don't upset your boss, stay seated. Going out to fix loneliness can trigger social anxiety that sends you home: 'a lot of irrelevant movement.' Since awareness precedes control, simply seeing the conflict clearly is the main intervention.

• Willpower is staying in conflict, not calm resolve

He cites research on the anterior cingulate cortex suggesting that what we experience as willpower is the brain monitoring conflict. You don't make a calm decision and then act; you stay conflicted until the action happens. Staying in that discomfort, whether skipping the happy-hour drink or studying chemistry for two hours, is how willpower grows.

• Separate the problem from what you do to yourself about it

His parting point: you can't control whether a medical school admits you or someone marries you, but you can control whether you beat yourself up. Most shortcomings, he says, are manufactured by that self-punishment, which is the part actually in your control.

EXAMPLES

• From a sub-2.0 GPA to 120 med school rejections

The child of Indian immigrant doctors, Dr. K played video games 16-20 hours a day and had below a 2.0 GPA after his first year. His father sent him to an ashram in India; at 21 he wanted to become a monk, but his teachers said he had nothing worth giving up yet and should earn a doctorate first. He graduated with a 2.5 after five and a half years, was rejected by about 120 medical schools over three years, then got into Tufts and trained in psychiatry at Mass General and McLean.

• Why application 100 is the same as application 1

The action of filling out forms and hitting submit is identical; the only difference is the story that you've failed 99 times. People who quit after 20 rejections envy those who try 60 times, but he says each action is individual.

• Mel's ice barrel

Mel doesn't hype herself up for cold plunges; she tells herself it will be 90 seconds of misery and gets in. Dr. K notes she never 'decided' calmly; she monitored the conflict for an hour until she was in the water.

• The motivational interviewing role-play

Playing a partner with a sedentary lifestyle, Mel answered 'how do you feel about your health?' with 'I'm okay.' Dr. K reflected back each answer until she admitted feeling nagged and misunderstood. He validated how hard that must be rather than justifying the nagging, then asked whether she wants to change at all, rather than 'how can I help?'

• Streaming therapy concepts on Twitch

Noticing he was teaching gamer patients the same dopamine and motivation concepts over and over, he started streaming conversations on Twitch, which briefly became the fastest-growing stream on the platform. HealthyGamer now has over 175

employees.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Anticipate the negative**
  Before tomorrow's workout, tell yourself you won't feel like it and it will be hard. He says studies show predicting difficulty helps; give yourself an accurate preview, like warning someone an injection will hurt for a moment, rather than a pep talk.
- **Dwell for a few minutes after acting**
  After a 30-minute walk, sit for two or three minutes and ask how it felt and what was hard. He says research shows letting the brain mull consequences reinforces good behaviors and reduces bad ones. Also sit with wins, like an A, instead of moving the goalposts.
- **Run a personal post-mortem, not a shame spiral**
  If you scrolled for two hours instead of updating your resume, skip both self-blame and jumping to a fix. Ask whether the goal was reasonable, where the desire came from and what got in the way. Often you'll see you can be uncomfortable for one day or every day until it's done.
- **Create space instead of pushing others**
  Pushing produces resistance. Reflect, validate the difficulty, then ask whether they want to change, so the motivation comes from them. With kids: 'which do you want first, jacket or shoes?'
- **Study your own controls**
  His one action: spend time understanding your conflicting parts and where your drive to change comes from, since much of it is social conditioning, instead of copying other people's answers to fit your unique situation.

4 Habits for Energy, Productivity, & Happiness That Changed My Life (Science-Backed)

Date: 2024-07-29 · Duration: 0:58:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo8mD5NIfM4

KEYPOINTS

• Old favourite songs can reset your mood
Mel's first music hack is 'neural nostalgia': we tend to have more memories tied to older songs than newer ones, and hearing a song from high school, college or an early chapter of life brings back how you felt then. Researchers call this music-evoked autobiographical memory. You don't have to try to remember anything. The song takes you there.

• Why it works: strong emotion records strong memories
Music activates the limbic system, which handles memory and emotion. Mel points out that the same recording system that stores trauma also stores your best moments. High emotion, plus hearing a song over and over that summer, locks the memory in. That's why you remember your graduation day but not the Thursday before it.

• You don't have to want it to work
Put on a sad friend's favourite song and they may be annoyed at first, but by the end of the song they usually feel better. Mel's point is that you don't need to be in the mood. You just press play.

• Build mood playlists before you need them
Make a few playlists in advance, even empty ones, and add songs as they come up: a hype playlist, a pick-me-up playlist, a high school favourites playlist. Mel notes that streaming services already sell playlists by mood because they know this works.

• Hack two: 'walk-on music' before a performance
Like athletes running out to their entrance songs, listen to 'familiar energetic music', meaning upbeat songs you already like, before a test, an interview, writing or paying bills. Mel cites a roughly six-year NYU Tandon study using wearables. As she describes it, energetic music raised brain arousal more than coffee or stimulating scents, by increasing activity in the beta band linked to peak thinking.

• Nostalgia songs and hype songs do different jobs
Mel separates the two. Nostalgic music, like the yacht-rock 'Piña Colada' song her parents played, moves you from one emotional state to another. Energetic music, like her current Lizzo and Dua Lipa picks, primes your energy. You can use the hype kind on your commute so you don't drag yourself into the office. Any genre works, from EDM to country, as long as it gets you going.

• Hack three: binaural beats for focus, relaxation or sleep
Each ear gets a slightly different tone, and your brain mixes them into a third humming sound that isn't actually playing, an 'auditory illusion.' Mel explains that brain waves tend to sync to that frequency (called entrainment), so different tracks are designed for focus, stress relief or sleep.

• How to use binaural beats
Headphones are essential, because each ear needs its own tone. Start somewhere quiet and undisturbed, keep the volume comfortable, and listen for 15 to 30 minutes, longer for relaxation or sleep. Try them both before and during focused work, use them daily so your brain adapts faster, and choose quality recordings from reputable sources.

• Hack four: solfeggio frequencies, or 'angel music'
Mel describes certain high, pure tones as making people feel calm, get goosebumps or tear up. Listen for 10 minutes, an hour or all day in the background. She presents claims about healing as early and exciting. Treat them as a calming practice, not a medical treatment.

EXAMPLES

• The motor home road trip
In eighth grade, Mel's family drove across the country to national parks with only three 8-track tapes: Neil Diamond, America and Hooked on Classics. Hearing Hooked on Classics puts her back on I-90 toward the Corn Palace, playing gin rummy in the back with her mom and brother.

• Taylor Swift with her daughters
Mel saw Taylor Swift in concert with her adult daughters, whose childhood soundtrack her music had been. Kendall had picked up a guitar around age seven to learn the songs. Even listening to the set list on errands beforehand flooded Mel with a decade and a half of carpool memories.

• U2 at Gillette Stadium, 2017
Joshua Tree came out in March 1987, the spring of Mel's freshman year, and she played it 'until the needle broke.' At the 2017 tour show, under a 200-foot-wide 8K screen, the sky cleared just before the band came on, and the crowd felt like the world's biggest college reunion.

• The snow-crunch trigger
Mel was once in a car that rolled in the snow. Decades later, the crunch of snow underfoot puts her back in the car. It's the negative version of the same memory system behind neural nostalgia.

• The YMCA dish party
After big dinners, Mel starts a disco playlist that opens with YMCA. Guests start wiggling toward the kitchen with their plates, and the cleanup turns into a party.

• Malachi on Britain's Got Talent
Mel's first experience of 'angel music' was a viral clip of 13-year-old Malachi singing very high, pure notes. Simon Cowell called it the best voice he'd ever heard and gave him the golden buzzer.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Before a big exam, put headphones on early**
  Mel suggests putting on a hype song as you walk into the test centre or the office, to block out other people's anxious energy and walk in 'like a boxer in a ring.'
- **Binaural beats in surgery**
  Mel cites a Danish study in which cataract surgery patients listening to a relaxation binaural-beats playlist through headphones relaxed during the procedure.
- **Keep the sound-healing research in proportion**
  The RMIT study in Melbourne that Mel mentions used high-frequency sound waves in the lab to nudge stem cells toward becoming bone cells. That's interesting cell science, not proof that listening to music heals the body.
- **Background music at home**
  One of Mel's producers, Amy, plays 'healing frequency' tracks in the background when her family is home and says they get along better. It's a personal experiment, not a study, but it costs nothing to try.

How to Get Unstuck: Do This to Create the Future You Want

Guest: Dr. Adam Alter
Date: 2024-07-11 · Duration: 0:51:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ss_15MixTc

KEYPOINTS

• Everyone is stuck somewhere, and knowing that is freeing

NYU researcher Dr. Adam Alter, author of Anatomy of a Breakthrough, has surveyed thousands of people worldwide. He says everyone reports being stuck in at least one respect and can name it quickly. Some answers are narrow, like a piano piece someone has failed to learn for six years; others are 'my whole life is one big sticking point.' He argues that stuckness feels personal and messy, but there is a step-by-step path through it.

• There are two kinds of stuck

The first is goal-based: you know you want to get from A to Z, such as a nursing degree or no longer being single, but can't get past B. Alter says this is usually easier to solve. The second is diffuse 'blah,' where life feels dull and gray and no day builds on the one before. He believes modern life holds a lot of that emptiness, which is why loss of direction is so common.

• Life quakes stall even people who were doing well

Alter cites author Bruce Feiler's research on 'lifequakes,' major events that blindside nearly everyone: divorce, a death, illness. Good ones count too, like a promotion, a move or a new child, because they force change. If you expect ups and downs, you skip the 'why me' rumination and start acting sooner.

• Run a friction audit: find, intervene, confirm

Paradoxically, Alter says that when you crave freedom, tight structure helps. Step one is to find the biggest friction points, such as the part of the day you dread most or the step in your career you can never get past. Step two is to intervene by removing the friction or smoothing it down, spending time, energy or money if needed. Step three is to confirm that it worked. He developed the method with companies before applying it to individuals.

• Raise your lows instead of adding more highs

Alter argues that bad things drag you down more than good things lift you up, so 'we are often as good as the worst stuff that's going on.' He says the best return comes from smoothing out friction points, not from booking the next flashy vacation. The natural instinct is to turn away from those problems, which is how they become traps that can last for decades.

• Ages ending in nine trigger a spike in soul-searching

With UCLA's Hal Hershfield, Alter found that people question life's meaning more at 29, 39, 49 and 59, which he calls an end-of-decade crisis. At those ages more people sign up for marathons and buy books on aging. The research also found rises in extramarital affairs and a small rise in suicide. Alter's advice is to audit your life every year so you don't depend on an overwhelming decade marker.

• Set a goal to prove to yourself that you can move

Alter ran his only marathon at 29, when he was single, lonely in New York, missing Australia and unsure of his new career. The goal itself doesn't matter, he says; it's a 'palate cleanser' that signals you can make things happen and counters helplessness. Options include athletic goals, intellectual ones like coding or the Saturday New York Times crossword, and creative ones like painting or music. Connecting with people also restores meaning.

• Take a minimally viable action

The habit stage starts with the smallest step in the right direction. Stuck in a job? List alternative industries, then specific target companies and their pros and cons. Alter credits experimentation with getting him unstuck from a degree he didn't want: lay out your options and spend a week tasting each one. Turning it into an experiment removes the pressure of 'getting it right.'

• Good failure tells you what to do next

Alter says very few failures are irreversible. Bad failure leaves you dejected without knowing why. Good failure shows what worked, where you fell short, or that you should quit and move on, which is also valuable. His test: 'Have I learned what the next thing should be?' If so, he says it wasn't really a failure.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 'I hate' list

In 2019, with a marriage, money, health and work she liked, Mel felt empty and guilty about it. Her close friend and mentor Peter, a business strategist, told her to write down everything that created friction, and it poured out of her: 'I hate packing on a Sunday… I hate how much I miss my kids.' He told her every item was now a project: remove it, hire it out, or do it without complaining. She now makes the list every year.

• Seven years of not starting a podcast

'I haven't started the podcast yet' showed up on Mel's friction list. She committed to 15 minutes a day for about a year: deciding to launch within a year or two, listing shows to study, listening, researching equipment. She says she stopped feeling stuck years before the podcast launched.

• Jeff Tweedy's worst-sentence warm-up

The Wilco frontman, who writes music and books, spends 10 minutes producing the worst, most boring sentences or music he can when he doesn't feel creative. It gets the ball rolling, and some of those 'bad' pieces turn out to be better than he expected.

• Booking a campsite six months out

Chris set a calendar reminder months ahead and logged on to the National Park Service site at 6 a.m. to reserve a campsite for the family's goal of climbing Mount Katahdin in Maine. His first two choices were already gone, so he took the third. Mel cites it, and Chris doing 75 Hard four times, as small steps toward something meaningful.

• Couples therapy as a friction audit

About four and a half years earlier, during a terrible stretch, Mel and Chris went to counseling. She compares it to digging up

dead bodies, but says the relationship on the other side was better than she knew was possible.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Build a three-part brain trust**
  Consult people similar to you, people who are deliberately different (companies recruiting at NYU take the best finance, marketing, French-literature and chemistry students), and a 'black sheep' who pushes back. Alter cites Pixar bringing in a narrative-first skeptic to a team of animators. Talking only to people like you entrenches you.
- **Helping a stuck loved one: ask, don't bully**
  Alter says you can't make someone care about getting unstuck. Without judgment, ask questions like 'Do you want this to change?' or invite them to list what annoys them, then offer to work on it together.
- **Alternate between exploring and exploiting**
  Alter's single takeaway: you can't explore options and drill deep at the same time. Try different things, commit to the best one until you hit a wall, then go back to exploring.

Before You Waste Time, Watch This with Dr. K (@HealthyGamerGG)

Guest: Dr. Alok Kanojia (Dr. K)
Date: 2024-06-05 · Duration: 1:11:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AG88lmHXP0

KEYPOINTS

• Technology is shaping your thoughts, wants and identity without your consent

Harvard-trained psychiatrist Dr. Alok Kanojia, known as Dr. K of HealthyGamerGG, says the goal is to become aware of how technology shapes you so you can counteract it. He describes an 'attention marketplace' and the field of neuroeconomics, which uses brain scans to shape purchasing behavior. Platforms compete for your attention, and whichever wins, you lose.

• Tech is a 'whole-brain' addiction, unlike substances

Alcohol and opiates mainly act on specific receptors (GABA, opioid). Early video games mostly hit dopamine circuitry, but features keep being added: Facebook went from contact list to social validation via the like button, and now identity, work, dating and relationships live online. Developers have learned that the more of the brain they engage, the more you use them. He likens tech to an invasive species with no natural checks.

• Scrolling numbs negative emotion more than it relaxes you

Dr. K says studies show tech suppresses the amygdala and limbic system, the brain's negative-emotion circuits; he thinks much of the addictive pull is pushing negativity away, not just dopamine. Mel realizes her 'relaxing' scroll is a lever to switch off busyness, unlike a phone-free walk. He isn't anti-tech: cat videos can genuinely make you laugh.

• No idle time means emotions never get processed

For most of history people did rote tasks like churning butter or walking two hours back to camp, giving the mind time to process feelings. Dr. K says part of this is supported by science and part is his own conjecture, but he links reduced emotional processing to symptoms seen in almost every mental illness. It's also why emotions flood in once the screen goes off at bedtime, sending people back to their phones until exhaustion wins.

• Don't ask whether you're addicted; ask whether you're using tech the way you want

Clinically, addiction means impaired function in work, school, relationships, or mental or physical health. Most people's phone habits fall just under that threshold, which makes them harder to quit. The better question: looking back on your week, are you glad you spent 2 hours and 10 minutes on TikTok at 11 p.m. on a Thursday?

• Short-form content does the focusing for you and deconditions attention

Reading a textbook forces your mind to focus, strengthening that capacity through neuroplasticity. Content engineered to hold you within 15 seconds means 'taking the elevator instead of the stairs.' Dr. K connects this to rising ADHD diagnoses and to many people identifying with ADHD traits without a diagnosis. In college his distractions cost two minutes; now with Face ID, one impulse can cost 45 minutes to an hour. Teens average four to six hours a day on phones.

• Morning phone use squeezes your dopamine 'lemon'

You wake with full dopamine stores in the nucleus accumbens, which create pleasure and reinforce behavior. Work first, and the payoff feels great; scroll first, and even the same work later feels flat. Mel suggests even 10–15 minutes counts, and he agrees, because tech is 'a vice of a squeeze.' That's why people moving in the right direction still feel unmotivated.

• Numbing emotions erodes your sense of self and puts you on autopilot

Identity is built from emotional experiences, such as a divorce or surviving cancer, not ordering chicken salad for the seventh day. He draws on trauma research on dissociation. With no inner drivers, goals get supplied by feeds (a thigh gap, a side hustle, this bag, that supplement), so you feel confused and full of 'shoulds.' 'We are not driving anymore; we are being driven.'

• Boredom is withdrawal, and the skill is tolerating it

Dr. K calls boredom the brain punishing you for not supplying dopamine, like hunger or opioid withdrawal; it's a healthy signal hijacked by tech, as hunger is by Twinkies. You don't need motivation, just endurance: by homeostasis, the signal subsides. Over time cravings reset, as Mel's daily McDonald's habit disappeared in college. Then 'shower thoughts' return.

EXAMPLES

• From failing out of college to psychiatrist

Skipped a grade and outmatched in sports, he competed through video games, which became a problem in high school; after freshman year he was on probation with under a 2.0 GPA. His doctor parents sent him to an ashram in India. At 21 he wanted to become a monk; a teacher said 'you have nothing worth giving up' and told him to finish a doctorate first. He spent seven summers there, met his wife, trained at Mass General, and started asking mentors about gaming addiction in 2015.

• Trading against 1 a.m. buyers

He cites allegations that one trading house took the opposite side of trades placed around 1 a.m. by people too fatigued to think clearly, illustrating how products exploit late-night depletion of willpower.

• The online friend at his wedding

A gaming friend he met at 15 and never saw in person was a real friend for 13 years and came to his wedding, showing how real relationships now live inside technology.

• Staring at a wall for one hour

In his community, about half of people find the exercise transformative: 15 minutes of boredom, then thoughts, sometimes tears from suppressed emotion. Even an uneventful hour builds boredom tolerance. The 'senior version' is a six-hour flight with no entertainment.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Increase friction between impulse and phone

Turn off Face ID and biometrics, leave the phone in another room at home, take addictive apps off your home screen, or delete native apps and use browser versions. Keep work off your phone, since email easily turns into TikTok; if you're truly

tethered, use a separate work phone with no social apps.

- **No tech for the first hour and last hour of the day**

  Keep the phone away and do the tasks you never get to, like taking out the trash; Dr. K meditates about 21 minutes and showers. Before bed, use a computer to check tomorrow's schedule rather than your phone. And no phone in the bathroom.

- **When bored, pace or walk**

  Mel's dare: leave your phone in the kitchen or car and walk for 10 minutes. Expect a flood of thoughts at first; it's your brain sorting the backlog, like overdue mail, and it settles into calm.

- **How to talk to a loved one about their tech use**

  Trust your instinct even without impairment; many people 'show up for life but don't live it.' Say you're concerned, apologize for past pushiness, then ask 'help me understand.' Reflect back what they say rather than interrogating. If they want to stop, respect it and ask if you can bring it up again. His book How to Raise a Healthy Gamer has sample dialogue.

#1 Neuroscientist: How to Motivate Yourself (and Others) to Change Any Behavior

Guest: Dr. Tali Sharot
Date: 2024-05-30 · Duration: 0:57:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slD8f_qtEYY

KEYPOINTS

• Pressure backfires because it threatens people's sense of control

Dr. Tali Sharot, a behavioural neuroscientist who directs the Affective Brain Lab at University College London, says the desire for control is hardwired because controlling your world brings rewards and avoids harm. Once someone feels you're restricting their agency, their motivation drops and anxiety rises. In a partnership, nagging also signals that you see their negatives and that they're not enough.

• Trying to change someone is often about managing your own stress

Mel's example is a partner happily watching golf on a Sunday while she feels judgment rising. Sharot says that changing the other person may be an unconscious attempt to lower your own stress, perhaps from worry about their heart or their spending, and your stress is itself contagious.

• You influence strangers more than you realise

Through emotional contagion, even unknown people on the subway shape your mood and choices. Studies show stressed people make those around them more stressed, and seeing someone eat an apple or ice cream nudges what you crave. Sharot says it evolved because someone else's fear may signal real danger. The takeaway is to model the behaviour you want, such as not being on your phone if you want your kids off theirs.

• Fear is especially poor at getting people to act

Sharot's approach-avoidance principle: expecting a reward triggers a 'go' signal deep in the brain that makes action more likely, while expecting something bad triggers a 'no-go' signal that travels to the motor cortex and promotes freezing. In her experiments, people pressed a button faster to gain money than to avoid losing it. Fear can still help when you want someone to stop doing something, like sharing confidential information.

• Reframe messages around gains

Scare tactics also fail because people assume 'it won't happen to me.' Sharot's friends who smoke are motivated more by wanting better skin than by fear of cancer. Instead of 'Route A will lose you time and money,' say 'Route B will gain you time and money.'

• Lever one: social proof

Highlight what others are doing well, and model it yourself. For a partner, Sharot suggests inviting them to join your run rather than citing a friend's fit husband.

• Lever two: immediate rewards

Present bias means we value now over later; most people take $100 today over $110 next week, partly because the future is uncertain. Cake, a drink or Netflix pay off instantly, while books and fitness pay off years later. So attach something good to the action now: a trashy show only on the treadmill, a podcast on a run, or a sincere 'thank you for asking.'

• Lever three: progress tracking

Sharot says progress itself brings joy, and even top performers find simply maintaining demotivating. A 3:28 marathon after a 3:30 feels better than repeating 3:30. Track the specific elements tied to your goal.

• Give choices, but only two or three

Ask 'carrots or cucumbers?' or 'should I pick your outfit, or will you?' Sharot notes that asking you to choose is still their choice. The same applies to employees and patients. She cites the famous jam study, where 60 options left some shoppers leaving empty-handed.

• Change, on average, makes people happier

In economist Steven Levitt's study, thousands of people facing a decision flipped a virtual coin: heads meant change, tails meant stay put. Heads made people about 25% more likely to change, and at two weeks and six months, changers were on average happier. Sharot's caveats: this doesn't say which change (therapy may count), and the benefit likely comes from fixing something already wrong and from the joy of learning.

EXAMPLES

• One sentence that raised £5.6 billion

Adding 'nine out of 10 people in Britain pay their taxes on time' to UK tax letters increased compliance by 15%, which Sharot says brought in £5.6 billion.

• Hospital handwashing went from 10% to 90%

In a New York State hospital, cameras showed only 10% of staff washed their hands before and after entering patient rooms, even though staff knew they were being filmed. An electronic board giving instant 'well done, good shift' feedback plus running rates pushed compliance to 90%. A second unit went from 30% to 90%. Sharot credits immediate positive feedback, social proof and visible progress.

• "You'll look better for your girlfriend"

A mother had nightly fights telling her teenage son he'd be tired if he didn't sleep by 10 p.m. After reading Sharot's book, she told him he'd look better and have more energy for his girlfriend, and she said it worked perfectly.

• "I can really feel your muscles"

A woman whose husband disliked the gym touched his arm after his first visit and admired his muscles. He went back the next day. Sharot similarly thanks her husband whenever he lets her sleep in and takes their kids to school, and praised her daughter Olivia for ordering a sandwich with vegetables.

- **The neuroscientist and her bike helmet**
  Sharot admits she doesn't always wear a helmet cycling in London and rewards herself with a small Hershey's chocolate when she does. For months she wore a badly fitting one that 'wasn't protecting me at all' before finally buying a new one.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Open with a question, not a prescription**
  Ask 'How are you feeling about your job?' and listen. Focus on what they want, not what you think they should want. Sharot asks her team 'tell me how you're doing' at least once a year.
- **Praise out loud, without 'finally'**
  We tend to notice what people aren't doing and only think 'that's nice' when they do. Say it, but skip the condescending 'finally!' that Mel admits using when her son ate something green.
- **Pick your battles and work on yourself**
  Sometimes the best move is letting the golf game happen and addressing your own stress, which Mel admits is not the answer she wanted.

6 Simple Science-Backed Hacks That Will Make Your Life Better

Guest: Dr. Adam Alter
Date: 2024-05-13 · Duration: 0:55:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTacS2ZJfIw

KEYPOINTS

• Modern life drains attention, and nature restores it.
Alter says that being in nature is, apart from sleep, one of the few states that refills you. Screens and work demand intense, focused attention all day. Nature still catches your attention with birdsong, running water or trees, but in a soft, undemanding way. He points to a body of research known as attention restoration and calls natural environments one of the best forms of medicine available.

• Even a small or indoor dose of nature counts.
City dwellers can use real plants, or fake ones if necessary, and a small plug-in fountain, since even the sound of running water stands in for the real thing. He suggests about five minutes a day of doing nothing but taking in a natural setting, however small. On a recent forest run he made himself stop and sit on a rock by the water for five minutes, against his instinct to keep going, and calls it the most restorative part of his day.

• Colour mostly works through association.
Alter, who is colour-blind, became interested in colour because of it. He thinks most colour effects come from what we associate the colours with. Blues and greens calm us because they remind us of sky, water and leaves, while reds and yellows activate us, which can help or hurt depending on the situation.

• Red signals dominance and attractiveness, with a caveat.
In many species, animals with more red, such as redder-faced birds or apes, tend to be the dominant ones. People wearing red feel more dominant and are seen that way by others. Alter says it can help in a negotiation, interview or date. His caveat is that red is a conspicuous, deliberate choice, so in a setting where it would look unusual it may send a message you don't intend.

• Mirrors make us more honest with ourselves.
Seeing a face, and especially eyes, makes us feel watched. Looking at our own reflection pushes us to judge whether what we're doing is right. Stores with shoplifting problems that can't afford constant surveillance often put up more mirrors for this reason.

• Seeing money makes people more independent and less helpful.
In studies Alter describes, people who had just been shown money or dollar bills were a little less helpful and less generous on a later task. The theory is that money reminds you of your resources and that you need other people less, which makes you more self-reliant and less community-minded.

• Clutter pulls at your focus even when you ignore it.
Every object in view draws you slightly out of the present, a phone most of all, but also photos and mementos. Alter isn't against family photos on a desk, but he favours a clear space for thinking. He notes that many people struggle to manage even 10 to 20 minutes of focused work in a row, especially with a phone nearby or email pinging.

• Scrolling works less like a thrill and more like a soothing trance.
Alter compares evening doom-scrolling to sitting at a slot machine: people stay not because it's exciting but because it numbs them. After a hard day it's like 'taking a bath in the screen', because nothing is asked of you. He notes that alcohol is the other common source of easy calm. Phones are harder to resist than TV because they respond to your actions, while TV is more passive and leaves you a little more control, even if it encourages binge-watching.

• Tech has removed the natural 'stopping cues'.
Chapters, credits and the end of a newspaper used to signal that it was time to move on. Alter says tech companies have systematically removed those signals, the bottomless feed being the clearest case. Because humans tend to keep doing whatever they're already doing, without a cue we simply carry on.

• Over a lifetime, scrolling adds up to 15 to 20 years.
Alter estimates that the average person will spend something like 15 to 20 years scrolling. Heavy use also lowers our tolerance for slow, effortful work: a brain fed constant one-second hits finds reading lessons or a quiet elevator ride hard. He argues that very few people, offered 20 extra years at the end of life, would choose to have spent them scrolling.

EXAMPLES

• Hospital rooms with a view of greenery
In a study Alter calls the most striking he knows, patients recovering from identical surgeries were randomly assigned rooms looking onto a lawn and trees or onto another part of the building. Those with the natural view needed about half as much pain medication and left hospital three days sooner.

• Olympic combat athletes in red win about two-thirds of the time
Olympic judo, wrestling and taekwondo randomly assigned competitors red or blue for fairness. Researchers found that when opponents were evenly matched, the one in red won about two-thirds of the time. Online dating studies also found that the same photo got more attention when the person wore red, or even when it had a red border.

• 'Drunk tank pink'
Alter's book Drunk Tank Pink is named after a bubble-gum pink used in holding cells, where aggressive detainees reportedly calmed down within about 15 minutes. He says the evidence is 'a little bit shaky' even though it drew wide attention in the 1980s. The visiting locker room at the University of Iowa is painted that pink, and some boxers wear pink trunks hoping to soften their opponents.

• The coin-toss test in front of a mirror
People privately flipped a coin, with heads earning a jelly bean and tails meaning something unpleasant to eat. Without a mirror, well over 50% reported heads. In front of a mirror the reports went back to about 50/50. Alter suggests putting a small

mirror in your snack cupboard, and Mel considers one for her snack drawer or a liquor cabinet.

- **Teens who spend 10 to 12 hours a day on their phones**

When Alter taught a summer high school class at NYU, students who tracked their screen time averaged six to eight hours a day, and some reached 10 to 12. Teens told him they wished everyone would quit together, because quitting alone means social isolation.

- **Twelve hours of driving for three minutes of eclipse**

Alter drove six hours each way with a friend to northern Vermont to see the eclipse. For days afterwards, he says, he had a 'hangover' of patience, and spending a few hours on a single task felt easy. He calls this time dilation, the opposite of the time contraction of five-second content.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Lock your phone away for one hour a day**

This is Alter's single biggest recommendation. Pick an hour, keep it at about the same time daily so it becomes a habit, and put the phone in a drawer or cookie jar. A family version is putting all phones in a jar with a 30-minute timer at dinner.

- **Replace the habit instead of relying on willpower**

Nobody has enough willpower to just stop. Plan something enjoyable to fill the gap. It doesn't even have to be screen-free: the test is whether you come away feeling better and more fulfilled, or hollow.

- **Build 'timeless' time into each day**

Spend some of the day doing something that could have happened a thousand years ago: being in nature, closing your eyes and letting your mind wander, a face-to-face conversation, or physical activity such as lifting heavy things.

How to Change Your Life in 6 Months: This One Hack Will Make It Happen

Date: 2024-04-08 · Duration: 0:41:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYwewgQMK-o

KEYPOINTS

- **One question frames the next six months: what do you want to make happen?**
  Mel builds the whole session around a single prompt she repeats again and again: what do you want to make happen in the next six months of your life? She recorded in April, roughly a third of the way through the year, and argues that the remaining months will pass whether or not you decide anything. The point of asking it over and over is to move you from a vague sense of wanting things to be different toward a specific target.
- **Planning is easy and fun; execution is where goals fall apart.**
  She notes that almost a million people did her year-start goal-setting exercise, yet four months later most people could not say how they were tracking. She is careful to say she is not calling anyone out. Her view is that the gap between a plan and a result is the actual problem worth working on, and that this check-in is about turning clarity into action rather than setting fresh goals.
- **Things don't happen by accident; they happen on purpose.**
  This is the line she keeps coming back to. Whether the goal is a career move, more time with family or a small project at home, Mel's argument is that good intentions get swallowed by a busy life unless you treat the goal as a deliberate project.
- **A four-month check-in should end in a strategic pivot, not guilt.**
  Mel suggests reviewing each goal and making one of three moves: keep going and raise the bar, change the approach, or remove the goal to make room for something you care about more. Someone already making progress can use the review to set sharper targets; someone who has stalled can use it as a reality check and try a different approach.
- **Time-travel visualization makes the target concrete.**
  She asks listeners to close their eyes if they can and picture life six months out: how the day-to-day feels, what has happened at work, whether relationships, money or health have changed, whether they moved, whether they are happier. The idea is to imagine a specific future date and notice what you would want to see when you get there, instead of brainstorming in the abstract.
- **Five life categories keep the review whole.**
  The exercise runs through the same five areas Mel used in her year-start planning: health and wellness; career, money or school; relationships, love and friendship; happiness, which covers hobbies, daily habits and how home feels; and purpose, spirituality and meaning. Going category by category stops one loud area, usually work, from crowding out everything else.
- **You have permission to drop a goal you no longer care about.**
  Mel calls it liberating to admit that something on your list just isn't a priority anymore, whether because life changed or because you now see how much work it would take. She suggests writing those items down, clearing away the guilt and taking them off the list entirely, since keeping a goal you have no desire to pursue just takes up room.
- **Without a game worth playing, life slides into autopilot.**
  She describes the loop of getting up, going to work, coming home, making dinner, cleaning the kitchen and going to bed until you look up and it's October. Her claim is that sometimes the only thing missing from your life is a project worth getting out of bed for. She compares it to a child's team chasing a winning season, planning a wedding or training for a marathon: having something to aim at creates meaning and excitement.
- **The project only has to matter to you.**
  Mel insists the goal can be small or even crafty. If it would give you a sense of purpose and momentum as you chip away at it, it counts, even if it sounds silly to someone else.

EXAMPLES

- **Her hormone and health goal is working, so she is reassessing**
  At the start of the year Mel committed to balancing her hormones and to stop complaining about her health. For four months she did more resistance training, went through a gut reset program, practised intermittent fasting and did a lot of zone 2 cardio. She says following simple, science-backed advice is producing results, and that this progress is exactly why she wants to decide deliberately where to take it next.
- **The savings goal she failed at, then dropped**
  Mel admits she did nothing toward her goal of saving money and has probably spent more than usual. Thinking it through out loud, she decides she doesn't care about making it a project right now: she has already saved for years because she once faced bankruptcy and couldn't pay for groceries, and she calls herself extremely risk averse. Admitting it isn't a current priority felt freeing, and it's her model for dropping a goal honestly.
- **A photo wall she has imagined for two years**
  Her home in southern Vermont, where she and Chris have lived full time for two years, has no framed family photos anywhere. She has always pictured a matching-frame photo wall above the bench in the breakfast area. She points out that even this takes real work, from choosing photos to measuring and picking sizes, and she wants to sit down with coffee in October and see it finished.
- **Time with Oakley before he leaves, and with her parents**
  Her son Oakley graduates high school and leaves for college in the fall, and she describes her time with him as a melting ice cube. She also wants more time with her parents: her father is turning 80, and recently three of his friends suffered catastrophic events, two dying suddenly and one breaking almost every bone in a fall down the stairs. Both are intentions she says will slip away unless she plans for them.
- **Her career targets for October**
  Six months out, Mel expects to be in the middle of launching her book on the Let Them Theory, due in mid-September, which

she says needs its own plan. She also wants to start a women's health product company after finding her own hormone supplement routine confusing. Her picture of success by October is specific: the market research done, a business plan sketched out, funding decided and a CEO identified.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run your own six-month review**
  Pick a date about six months out and picture it. For each of the five categories, write what you would want to see when you get there. Then compare that with the goals you already set and mark each one to keep and raise, rework, or drop.
- **Turn wishes into projects**
  Mel's own examples show the difference between an intention and a plan: the company goal becomes research, a business plan, funding and a hire. For each item you keep, list the concrete pieces that would have to exist by the deadline.
- **Be honest about what no longer matters**
  Make a separate list of goals that were once priorities and aren't anymore, and take them off your plan without guilt. Clearing them out leaves real room for the one or two things you will actually push forward.
- **Do the exercise with other people**
  Mel says many people did her earlier planning exercise with family, roommates or work teams and found it improved how they got along. She suggests it for anyone at a transition point: graduating, laid off, job hunting, applying to graduate school or starting a business.

3 Small Decisions That Make You Feel Incredible: Do This Every Morning After Waking Up

Date: 2024-03-25 · Duration: 0:52:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbBvEO0FI8Q

KEYPOINTS

• Knowing isn't the same as doing
Mel opens with the gap between knowing what you should do (exercise, update your resume, return a hard phone call) and actually doing it. Lack of motivation is one reason people get stuck. The other, she argues, is false confidence about how a decision will affect you.

• False confidence makes you think the rules don't apply to you
Mel describes it as believing that time will stretch, your body will cope or people will change just for you, against common sense and evidence. She links it to what psychologists call the overconfidence effect, a well-established cognitive bias. Her rule of thumb: easy decisions make your life hard, and hard decisions make life easier.

• It's easier to spot in other people
Examples: the friend sure a partner who treats her badly will change, the boss adding a huge project due in a month with no new hires, the sister planning to lose 30 pounds without changing her diet or exercise. Mel's own version is believing she can clean out her closet in 30 minutes over lunch, then ending up with a giant pile on the floor.

• Decision one: get up when the alarm rings
Picture person A, who hits snooze for an hour, and person B, who throws off the sheets and starts the day. Mel asks which one you'd hire, date or bet $1,000 on. She used to set her alarm at 6:00 for a 7:00 wake-up so she could snooze four or five times, telling herself it was how a non-morning person had to wake up.

• Mel cites research on staying in bed
She describes a University of South Carolina study, which she says was published in a sleep medicine journal and used sleep trackers, monitors, blood pressure tracking and blood work. As she reports it, people made to stay in bed longer had fivefold higher depression and anxiety and twice the inflammation of those who got straight up.

• Snoozing adds up to about a month a year
Mel cites a University of Notre Dame study published in the journal Sleep, which she calls the biggest study of snoozing, with participants wearing trackers for over a year. In her reading, the average snoozer spent 26.93 minutes snoozing each morning, about 164 hours a year or more than four work weeks.

• Decision two: natural light before artificial light
Mel says 89% of people look at their phone within 10 minutes of waking. Instead, turn off the alarm, leave the phone behind, and get outside for even a minute or two: sit on the porch, walk around the block, or even stick your head out a window.

• Two reasons morning light works
First, attention: opening your phone lets influencers, headlines and work emergencies jump to the front of your mind before you've decided what matters. Second, circadian rhythm: experts on the show have explained that early natural light signals your internal clock to wake up, which also sets up better sleep that night.

• Decision three: water before coffee, and delay caffeine
Mel used to start with a huge, candy-sweet coffee on an empty stomach, then sweat, feel anxious and shaky, and feel sick in exercise class. She says caffeine on an empty stomach spikes cortisol, which can worsen stress and anxiety. Now she drinks water first and waits about 90 minutes before coffee.

• The adenosine explanation, via Dr. Amy Shah
As Shah explained on an earlier episode, adenosine is a sleepiness chemical that builds up all day and clears during sleep, with some left on waking. It takes an hour or two to drop. Caffeine blocks its receptors, so coffee right away keeps adenosine from clearing, and when the caffeine wears off you slump and reach for more.

EXAMPLES

• The Las Vegas nightcap
After a speech to 17,000 people at a Keller Williams event and dinner with her team, Mel was back at the hotel by 8:45 pm, planning a bath with the hotel's salts, packing and an early workout before a 6:30 am flight. A friend said 'You're not going to bed, are you?' She stayed until midnight, skipped the bath and workout, and was racing to pack at 5 am, angry at herself.

• Almost climbing back into bed on Sawyer's 25th birthday
Mel got up early to surprise her daughter with balloons and a playlist. Her location app showed Sawyer two miles away hiking with Chris, and false confidence said she had time to go back to bed. She caught herself and got up. Moments later Sawyer was halfway up the driveway, just in time for Mel to blast Katy Perry's birthday song.

• From four lattes to one half-finished coffee
Mel says coffee was part of her identity and she was sure she couldn't change. Within about three days of drinking water first, she went from three or four coffees a day plus a 2 pm slump to one cup around 10 am. She often doesn't finish it and says the afternoon slump is gone.

• Sawyer's morning walk
Mel and Chris walk most mornings. Asked how she felt after walking with her dad, Sawyer described what Mel says the research predicts: better mood, more present, calmer and more energised.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Expect false confidence to come back every morning
Mel calls it hardwired and sneaky, even for her. When it says you're the exception, override it with the decision you've already

made.

- **Keep your phone away from the bed**
  Mel's phone sits in the bathroom, so turning off the alarm means getting up. That also keeps the phone out of your hand first thing.
- **Try the water-first swap for three mornings**
  Mel's challenge is to drink water first and delay caffeine at least an hour for three days, then see how your energy and afternoon feel. She still drinks coffee, just later.

How to Achieve Your Most Ambitious Goals

Date: 2024-02-26 · Duration: 0:47:37
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_GO-hVw-LI

KEYPOINTS

• Liken yourself to a plant that was planted

This solo episode starts with a phrase from Victoria Monét's Grammy speech for Best New Artist: 'I like to liken myself to a plant who was planted.' Monét spent 15 years writing for and with Ariana Grande, Kendrick Lamar, Selena Gomez, Doja Cat, Brandy and Fifth Harmony before being recognized as an artist herself. Mel's daughter Kendall, a 23-year-old singer-songwriter, urged her to listen to it. Mel builds the whole episode around the metaphor as a way to keep going while the payoff is invisible.

• Name your 'Grammy moment', or settle for a small seed

Mel asks you to fast-forward 1, 5 or 15 years and picture something big. It could be money, a beach house, a tour, a million YouTube subscribers, a design brand or selling a business. If nothing comes, go smaller: the nagging idea you keep ignoring, like picking up your paintbrushes or walking after breakfast. Stop debating whether to be 'a tulip, a daisy, an oak tree or an asparagus.' You don't need to know what you'll become.

• Everything the plant needs is already in the seed

An acorn holds all the intelligence to become an oak, and a tulip bulb holds everything it needs to bloom. Mel's point is that having the vision at all is evidence the seed is in you. When doubt shows up ('that is a dumb idea'), let the seed take root instead of arguing it out of existence.

• You're designed to grow, toward the light

Put cut tulips on a counter and within 24 hours they'll be leaning toward the window. That's phototropism, and Mel says the human version is action. Feeling stagnant or lost is often a sign you aren't acting on the idea. Ask yourself every day what one thing you can do to move toward it.

• You can't force a bloom

Gardeners know peas go in by St. Patrick's Day and pumpkins right after Mother's Day if you want them by Halloween. No one plants zucchini Monday for Friday's dinner. Mel says a planted acorn takes almost six weeks to show anything. That invisible stretch is when the roots form, and people quit during it.

• Social media sells the overnight myth

Feeds push million-dollar-in-a-week and two-week six-pack programs. Even the makeup tutorials and new clothing lines took two or three years of work before that one polished post. Thinking in those terms makes you feel things should be faster and that it should be your turn already.

• Soil can be dirty or nourishing

Monét said the music industry 'can be looked at as dirty or as a source of nutrients and water.' Mel asks whether you're even planted, or still 'a pack of seeds on the display rack at Home Depot' while you look at other people's gardens. The honest checks: have you drafted the book's table of contents, talked to your boss about moving from HR to marketing, or actually called therapists and checked insurance?

• The grass grows where you water it

If your lawn is dirt, stop staring at the neighbor's, whose dad maybe installed it for them. Seed it and water it every day. Planners and prep can feel like progress, Mel admits, but they aren't the work. 'No one is coming.'

• Those who already made it are allies, not competitors

For people who have started but stalled, Mel's fix is a bigger pot: richer soil and a new environment. She joined a mastermind of authors and podcasters. Those who have had their Grammy moment know what you're going through and 'should be your best friends.' They won't cast shadows on you.

• Stalls usually mean you dropped the fundamentals

If you've been at it a while, you may be on autopilot and resigned, skipping the tedious basics. A lawn that's lush in June burns up if you stop watering. Success, Mel says, is a game of stamina: have your cry, then get back after it tomorrow.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's own Grammy moment: women's health

Saying it publicly for the first time, Mel shares that she has wanted for three or four years to build something in the women's health and supplement space. She sees women confused about hormones and supplements, and says most companies targeting women are run 'by a bunch of dudes.' She can already picture the packaging on a conveyor belt.

• Lonely in her 40s and doing nothing

When her social life 'dropped out' in her 40s, Mel scrolled other people's girl trips, college friends and '55 bridesmaids' and complained, but did nothing for years. The turning point was admitting that scrolling and jealousy wouldn't get her friendships. She calls it being a tulip in a tub of concrete.

• Chris's 400,000 handwritten words

Mel's husband Chris has journaled every morning for five years, by his estimate over 400,000 words that no one has read. He often told her he had nothing new to say. About a year ago he'd clearly stopped growing, so he hired a writing coach he talks to monthly, who helps with the table of contents and gives assignments.

• 5,478 days

Mel puts Monét's 15 years at 5,478 days. She notes those years weren't wasted: the co-writing was root system, which is why Monét won three Grammys that night (best new artist, best R&B album, best engineered album) and why Mel expects she won't be 'one and done.' Monét ended by saying she felt she was 'sprouting above ground.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the six-word question

On days you feel unseen or start calling the idea dumb, ask: 'What if this does work out?' Mel says it keeps her in the game.

- **Count the small wins already underway**

If you're halfway through 75 Hard, on a third manuscript draft, in week one of marathon training or month five of job interviews, the roots are spreading even with nothing above ground. You're gaining skills and confidence.

- **Bigger blooms need bigger roots**

Mel argues the time you spend building is directly proportional to how big your life becomes, so treat patience as part of the plan rather than a delay.

4 Easy Nighttime Habits to Feel Energized & Sleep Better

Date: 2024-02-19 · Duration: 0:40:55
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-VuxetScRE

KEYPOINTS

• You already have an evening routine, it just may be working against you

Mel's point is that the 5-to-9 counts as a routine whether you plan it or not: a glass of wine that becomes the bottle, four hours of scrolling, eating at 9, dishes left in the sink. While 9-to-5 drags, the evening disappears. Her test: does what you do at night help you relax, sleep and feel like the person you want to be?

• What you do at night decides how tomorrow morning goes

She describes the cycle she lived in for years: a wasted evening leads to midnight guilt and lying awake, then an alarm that feels instant, anxiety on waking, cold greasy dishwater, lost keys and lateness. 'Tomorrow is the new me' only works if you did last night's dishes. Otherwise the new you spends the morning cleaning up the old you's mess.

• Obvious isn't the same as done

Mel expects listeners to say they already know they scroll too much, drink too much and should go to bed earlier. Her reply is that common sense isn't so common, and knowing something doesn't mean you're doing it. She also notes the steps take almost no brainpower, which matters because by evening you've already used up your energy on work, school and the day's to-do list.

• A short, consistent routine helps you fall asleep, according to sleep researchers

She cites the American Academy of Sleep Medicine: even a 10-minute evening routine helps you fall asleep faster and stay asleep, because a steady rhythm works with your circadian rhythm and signals your body that sleep is coming. She also cites Harvard Medical School sleep scientist Dr. Rebecca Robbins, whose research links a consistent bedtime and wake time to better sleep and falling asleep faster.

• The foundation is picking a bedtime by working backward from an honest wake time

Mel used to think she could wake at 7 and fit in her bed, exercise, journaling, breakfast, dog walks and kids in 15 minutes. Her daughters call that 'girl math' and her husband Chris calls it 'Mel time.' Most people, she bets, need to wake 30 to 60 minutes earlier than they do. Her real wake time is 5:45 to 6:15.

• Bedtime means when you get into bed, not when you fall asleep

Count back eight hours from your wake time to get the time you need to be asleep (6 a.m. means 10 p.m.). Then subtract how long it takes you to drift off. Chris is asleep as his head hits the pillow, while Mel needs 5 to 25 minutes with a book, so her bedtime is 9:15 to 9:30.

• Step one: flush the day so the morning starts clean

Her blunt image is a toilet: you flush it so nobody walks into your mess, and you should do the same with the day. In about five minutes, empty the sink, load the dishwasher, take out the trash, wipe the counters, put other people's stuff in piles by the stairs or their door, turn off the lights and charge your computer. Because you're tired, good is good enough.

• Step two: prep tomorrow to cut decision fatigue

Another five minutes goes to setting yourself up: workout clothes out, leash by the door, a filled water bottle in front of the coffee maker, vitamins laid out, lunch packed, keys on the counter. Mel ties this to decision fatigue, where each decision makes the next one harder, and to habit research showing that a visible cue makes the habit more likely. You can do it half-asleep, even while texting.

• Step three: take five minutes for yourself before the TV or your phone gets them

Out of 1,440 minutes a day, she argues you deserve five at night before screens take them. Use them for a side hustle, a grant application or student-loan forms, or for nothing at all: tea, a book, skincare, quiet. Hers usually falls between 7:45 and 9:15. Those five minutes break the couch-and-scroll habit and often grow to 45 minutes of reading or yoga.

• Step four: put your phone to bed somewhere other than your bedside

Mel cites research that bright light suppresses melatonin: one study of kids found melatonin suppressed by 98% after bright light an hour before bed, and about 50% in adults, plus fragmented sleep. She says she can't be trusted with her phone, so it goes in the bathroom before she gets into bed. Notifications, she adds, are a separate problem on top of the light.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's old 7 p.m.-to-midnight routine

Dishes stacked and drowned in soap as if 'Scrubbing Bubbles' would clean them, email on the laptop on the couch, drinks, endless scrolling, no lunches packed, no gym bag, an hour clicking through thousands of TV options with nothing to watch. Then at 12:15 a.m. she opened her gratitude journal and wrote a to-do list instead.

• The 15 minutes a day she lost to keys

Mel says she used to burn about 15 minutes every morning hunting for her keys. Putting them on the counter the night before won back time at the part of the day when, she argues, time is scarcest.

• Workout clothes on a Boston hotel chair

The night before recording, brushing her teeth in pajamas, she laid her exercise clothes over a chair so that at 5:45 a.m. she could pull them on and go straight to the gym.

• The disappointing four-inch lanterns

A couple of weeks earlier she broke her own rule, scrolled in bed and one-click bought outdoor lanterns that looked amazing online. They arrived about four inches tall and looked nothing like the photos, which is why her phone now sleeps in the bathroom.

• The running bath as her 'take five'

While she clears up and preps for tomorrow, her bath is filling. Her five minutes is often lingering in it, reading or listening to an audiobook. She notes many listeners play the podcast at night, which she counts as taking time for themselves.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Do the bedtime math tonight**
  Write down the wake time you actually need with real runway, subtract eight hours, then subtract your usual time to fall asleep. Adjust over a few nights until you find a bedtime that works most nights.
- **Run the four steps in order**
  After dinner: clean up the mess, set up tomorrow, take five for yourself, then put your phone in another room before you get into bed. Mel suggests trying it for four days this week.
- **Set 'traps' for the habits you want**
  Put the cue where you'll bump into it: water bottle at the coffee maker, gym bag by the door, vitamins by your mug. That way the morning habit needs no memory or decision.

Don’t Quit: The Reminder You Need to Hear When You Feel Unmotivated

Date: 2024-01-18 · Duration: 0:39:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUKpLEN3E1Q

KEYPOINTS

• 'Quitter's Day' falls on day 19 of a new routine

Mel cites Strava, the fitness-tracking app, which analyzed more than 800 million logged activities and found that people most often abandon a new resolution on day 19. She calls it Quitter's Day. If you know where the pothole is, you can steer around it. The pattern applies to any fresh start, whether a Monday, a new quarter or a school year, not only January 1.

• Week three is hard because the novelty has worn off and the work is real

Weeks one and two of dry January, Whole30, the gym or the Peloton feel exciting. By week three it's a grind. Mel explains that building new neuroplasticity and overriding old habits takes a lot of activation energy. Once the shine fades, she even starts rebelling against herself and gets snippy with Chris about the after-dinner walk she agreed to.

• Results lag behind effort

Another reason people quit around now is that they don't see results yet. Mel jokes that she thought cutting gluten would make her 'menopause middle' disappear by now. Expecting quick visible change sets you up to decide it isn't working.

• Vacation resolutions collide with real life

Changes that felt easy on holiday, like a daily hotel smoothie or a walk in warm weather, get hard when you're back at work or school. The new you is trying to live inside your old life. Your home, job and schedule didn't change; only your intentions did. That mismatch is what makes it feel like so much work.

• Missing a day doesn't erase your progress

Mel argues that breaking a streak doesn't wipe out what you've built. Neurologically and physically, your body doesn't forget a few weeks of weight training or not drinking in a day or two. 'You did not fall off the wagon; you hit a bump.' Her personal rule for month-long challenges: if she misses a day, she adds a day at the end instead of quitting.

• Reconnect with your 'why' when you're dragging

In the tired moment, ask why you wanted this change: why a month without alcohol, why resistance training, why get serious about money, why heal. Mel cites University of Oregon research that she says supports knowing what you want and why. Knowing your reason makes Quitter's Day irrelevant.

• Your life is a melting ice cube, so stop waiting for someday

Many people move the same dream, such as a book, a business, a move or healing, from one year's list to the next. Mel insists you'll never feel ready or worthy before you start acting; the feeling comes from the action. Time passes whether you begin or not, and 'today is that someday.'

• Where you put your time and energy defines your life

Mel reduces habit advice to one idea: point your daily time and energy at what you want, not just at maintaining what you have. That includes reassessing relationships that drain you without giving anything back. Even 5, 10 or 15 minutes a day counts. Simply working on something that matters to you, she says, brings meaning and joy because it validates something deep inside.

• You're not an impostor, you're a beginner

To a listener who wants to become a surgeon but finds the path complicated, Mel says it looks overwhelming only if you stare at the end result. Ask each day how you can put a little time and energy toward it. With dreams you've never pursued, you aren't afraid, unworthy or a fraud. You're simply new.

• Confidence is forged in failure, not in winning

Mel argues that winning tends to build bravado, while real confidence comes from surviving setbacks. Her drive to keep reinventing herself at 54 comes from not wanting regrets on her deathbed. That means being willing to take risks, look stupid and mess up, because each failure has equipped her with skills for something better.

EXAMPLES

• The back of the marathon pack

Mel urges everyone to watch a marathon finish. Elite runners blur past early, but her favorite part comes five to five and a half hours in, when ordinary people walk, limp, crawl or wheel across the line. Some wear shirts dedicated to loved ones; blind runners are guided by partners. It isn't about time but about the spirit of putting one foot in front of the other.

• The friend who's 'technically' doing dry January

When a friend declares a wedding weekend an exception, Mel's verdict is that it isn't dry January, just normal drinking. She uses the example to show how others' wavering can tempt you to quit too, and why you may need encouragement from someone who truly backs your why.

• Mel's failures that led somewhere

A decade earlier she was $800,000 in debt, unemployed and drinking her way through problems, a period that produced the 5 Second Rule. Her CBS daytime talk show, a long-held dream, was canceled, which eventually led to the podcast she calls her favorite work ever.

• Driving away from the family home

After selling the house outside Boston where they lived for 26 years and raised their kids, Mel watched it disappear in the rearview mirror for the last time. She uses the moment as a reminder that you will look back on today, too, and wish you had started.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Put day 19 on your calendar

Count forward from whenever you started and mark day 19. Plan a little extra support or a reminder of your why for that week,

and remember the rule: miss a day, add a day.

- **Be your own cheerleader for the long haul**

  Mel offers herself as the person cheering on the sidelines, but she stresses that life is a marathon, not a sprint, so you have to learn to believe in yourself too. Keep your eyes on the windshield, not the rearview mirror.

- **Start with the minutes you actually have**

  Single parents, caregivers and people underwater with bills may have only 5 to 15 minutes a day. Mel's ask is to aim those minutes at the dream you keep postponing and let the progress compound.

How to Motivate Yourself: Leverage Dopamine & Overcome Your Excuses

Date: 2024-01-11 · Duration: 0:47:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91G7M_Wgj0M

KEYPOINTS

• Motivation simply means you feel like doing something

Mel notes the research definitions (a general desire or willingness to act; the force behind starting, continuing or quitting something) and boils them down: motivation is feeling like doing it, and a lack of motivation is not feeling like it. When you feel like it, action is easy; the trouble is the other '99%' of life.

• Dopamine drives cravings, not chores

Often called the molecule of motivation, dopamine is tied to the brain's reward system and pulls you toward what you crave. You're eager to cook when you get home hungry, but not to do the dishes afterward. Mel says foods you love spike dopamine by about 50%, and lists meth, cocaine, nicotine, sex, social media, video games and sugar as top spikers. College applications, résumés, dating profiles and stepping on the scale aren't on the list.

• 'Motivation is garbage' because it vanishes when you need it

If motivation were on tap, Mel jokes, everyone would have a million dollars, six-pack abs and a dream side hustle. Waiting to feel motivated for things you don't crave is effectively deciding they'll never happen, and knowing what you need to do isn't enough.

• Let yourself feel the setback before you push

Sadness and frustration after working hard and falling short are appropriate; Mel says they show you're mentally healthy. She knew it wasn't the moment for a pep talk. What matters is what you do after the wallowing.

• You can't motivate someone else, and pressure makes it worse

Mel badly wanted her son to push through, but says she couldn't feel it for him or 'spray him with motivation'; more pressure would leave him more demoralized. What you can do is help someone reconnect with their own drive through the same two steps you'd use on yourself.

• Step 1: Remind yourself why this matters to you

If you don't really want something, or don't know why, you won't do the work. Mel cites University of Oregon research that knowing your why aids self-regulation and helps you prioritize the work over easier distractions: coming home from ski practice instead of taking extra runs, or getting up early to work on your résumé.

• Dreams set a direction; you don't have to achieve them

Pursuing reach goals forces you to do things you normally wouldn't, and that shapes the person you become. Mel says Oakley wasn't applying just to get in somewhere but to be the kind of person who gives it his all.

• Step 2: 'Just do it,' and the key word is 'just'

When Mel asks keynote audiences of 10,000 which word in Nike's tagline matters most, they guess 'do,' then 'it.' Her answer is 'just,' which captures the universal moment of hesitation on the sidelines, when fear or feeling unworthy keeps you thinking instead of acting. Push through with the 5 Second Rule's 5-4-3-2-1 and act.

• Full speed means 100% of what you have today

Mel's caveat: slow down first to know your direction, since speed without clarity is running in circles. Then give your best effort, whatever that is today. Borrowing from brain coach Jim Kwik, if you only have 20% and you give 20%, that's full effort; Mel says she has been at about that level for two months from overwork.

EXAMPLES

• Oakley's early-decision rejection

His top-choice school posted decisions at 8 a.m. on a Saturday. Oakley, who is dyslexic, had no audition, recruitment or interview to lean on, but strong grades, two varsity captaincies and a senior mentor role. With Chris's hand on his back he opened the portal, went silent, and said, 'It's a no... they didn't even defer me.' Mel said 'that sucks, buddy,' offered his favorite Bolognese, and he went to his room.

• Eleven days and zero motivation

Expecting to get in, Oakley had put off other applications and then had 11 days to finish them while feeling not smart enough. After letting him decompress, Mel and Chris laid out every option, from a gap year or job to more top schools. Oakley chose to apply to more reaches, saying that otherwise he wouldn't have given it his all, and that more rejections would help him feel better about wherever he landed.

• Mel's 'why' for doing the dishes

She doesn't want to start her morning coffee and incense by scrubbing cold, crusted pots and resenting that she left them for herself. Knowing that, and how good a clean kitchen feels, matters more than not feeling like it at night.

• 'Fail at full speed'

At dinner, Sawyer's boyfriend Gavin shared what his Division I lacrosse coach taught him: run at the thing as hard as you can. Mel loves that it requires no motivation, only a decision about who you're being, and says she'd rather fail having tried everything than succeed by cutting corners.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Expect the same demoralization in other setbacks

Mel lists parallels: a relative laid off without warning after 10 years, being single while friends get engaged, fertility struggles while everyone seems pregnant, failing a finance licensing exam, or a year in real estate without a single listing. Not feeling like it is normal; it doesn't have to stop you.

• Supporting someone after rejection

Acknowledge it, say you're proud they went for it, ask what support they want today, give them a day or two, then lay out the

full range of options so the choice is theirs, not yours.

- **Use it on small tasks too**

  Mel applies 'why does this matter?' then 'just do it' to taxes, Sunday snack prep, closet clean-outs, a three-month-avoided conversation with your mother, or choosing a mocktail over a beer.

How to Make 2024 the Best Year: 6 Questions to Ask Yourself

Date: 2023-12-21 · Duration: 0:45:33
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gn48zmBb1Ek

KEYPOINTS

• You need your starting point before you can get directions

Mel compares goal-setting to Google Maps, which can't route you without knowing both where you are and where you're going. Most people skip straight to resolutions without stopping, and end up with goals they think they should have rather than ones they actually want. She has done this year-end ritual of six questions with Chris for 20 years, and now with their three kids too.

• Questions 1–3 look back; questions 4–6 look ahead

The first three questions (highlights, hardest parts, lessons) show where you are now. The last three come from a business consulting practice Mel says top companies and executive teams use: stop, start, continue.

• Q1: What were the highlights of the past year?

Don't rely on memory, Mel says, because you'll forget a surprising amount. Scroll your camera roll and calendar week by week. The point is to remind yourself that your life is bigger than how you feel right now, especially since year-end reflection often happens in a temporary low mood.

• Q2: What were the hardest parts?

Get specific by sorting struggles into five areas: health and wellness; career, money and school; relationships, love and friendship; fun and happiness; and purpose, spirituality and meaning. Highlights and struggles can overlap. Mel's highlight of sunrise photos in Vermont sat alongside the loneliness of her first months there.

• Goals that grow out of your struggles are the ones you'll stick with

Mel cites research showing that goals need to be relevant to your current life. Goals built on what's been hard tap into intrinsic motivation because they're personal. If not being lonely again matters to you, or not getting winded on the stairs, you'll act. After a loss, a goal might be giving yourself permission to be happy again.

• Q3: What did you learn about yourself?

Answer across the same five areas, and ideally with family or friends, because they'll point out things you don't give yourself credit for. Mel's lessons: diet and exercise that worked when she was younger stopped working after menopause, and there's a difference between supporting someone and being responsible for their emotions.

• Q4: What will you stop doing?

Mel says that sometimes stopping something changes more than adding something new. Examples include stopping complaining about your job or money and showing up differently. She walks through each of the five areas.

• Q5: What will you continue doing?

Typical goal-setting never asks what's already working. This question avoids 'whack-a-mole', where focusing hard on fitness means neglecting your relationship, or paying off debt means skipping fun. Mel will continue using the Let Them Theory: letting people have their reactions and show who they are, and not managing everyone's meltdowns.

• Q6: What will you start doing?

Starting can include restarting something you used to love, like making playlists, playing guitar or piano, taking cheap day trips, or doing 'Unfollow Friday' to curate your social feeds so they don't make you feel bad.

EXAMPLES

• Lost leaving a retreat

After taking her team on a four-day phone-free retreat, Mel drove off the property and couldn't get Google Maps to connect. She pulled over instead of guessing at the intersection. An older man in a golf cart asked if she was lost, and she said she just needed a minute to figure out where she was so she could figure out where she was going.

• Mel's highlight reel

Scrolling her photos turned up the podcast's one-year anniversary, Kendall graduating from college and singing the national anthem in front of 60,000 people, rescuing an owl hit by a car on the night of her 27th wedding anniversary, and signing a five-year lease on a new production studio. She saw the lease as 'placing a bet on myself' and evidence that her success wasn't luck.

• Hypergrowth and menopause

Mel's struggles included a podcast that grew so fast it 'ran our asses over', with no one on the team having done their job at that scale before. Too much work squeezed out fun and relationships, and menopause changed her body. The year before, the ritual surfaced betrayal in her business and loneliness, which shaped goals that she says left her feeling like a different person 12 months later.

• Stopping work travel

Mel once spent 150 days a year on the road, sometimes booking 120 speeches a year ahead, and says she missed much of her daughter's high school years. She did about 25 the previous year and had agreed to just one for the coming year. She also planned to stop saying yes to outside content requests and to stop complaining about menopause.

• What Mel planned to start

Strength training three days a week, inspired by a muscle-centric medicine episode with Dr. Gabrielle Lyon. Writing her Let Them Theory book. Testing a work rhythm of one week producing together in the Boston studio and one week of deep work. Getting aggressive about saving and startup investing again after going over budget on renovations.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Do it with others

Mel recommends doing the six questions with your partner, family, team or mastermind group. Sharing answers deepens connection, and others remember wins you've forgotten.

- **Use the same questions for any big decision**
  Mel also uses this exact sequence for business planning or a major life pivot, not just at year's end.
- **Write your answers in all five areas**
  Going through health, career and money, relationships, fun, and purpose for each question gives you much richer answers than general themes, and turns vague resolutions into specific stop, start and continue lists.

10 Genius Hacks To Keep Your Home Organized (When Getting Out Of Bed Is Hard) | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: KC Davis
Date: 2023-09-11 · Duration: 0:51:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLGT9ZmkRb4

KEYPOINTS

• Motivation and getting started are different problems
KC Davis, a therapist known for her approach to care tasks, defines motivation as believing a task is worth doing. Looking at laundry and thinking 'I don't deserve clean clothes' or 'I don't care' is a motivation issue. Thinking 'I wish it were done, but I'm frozen' is a task-initiation problem. For that, she says, build momentum: often action comes first and motivation follows.

• Use 5% momentum to do 5% of the task
Don't wait for 100% energy to do everything. Fold one item, wash two dishes, or set a timer for five minutes. The choice isn't between staying in bed all day and doing all the laundry. You could stay in bed 10 hours and then wash one outfit.

• Being frozen during a crisis is a sign you're processing it
For listeners stuck after a layoff or a breakup, KC says they are doing something: using limited mental and emotional resources to process pain. Mel adds that the laundry pile and the breakdown can be a sign of mental health, because that's how you're supposed to feel. It becomes a problem when it's chronic and stops you functioning.

• Shame freezes you; self-compassion gets you moving
KC cites studies linking self-compassion to better psychological functioning, while shame paralyzes. Start by checking how you're talking to yourself, and use the mantra 'I'm allowed to be human.' Even real mistakes, like being rude or blowing a deadline, call for 'I don't want to do that again, how can I grow?' rather than self-punishment.

• Care tasks are morally neutral, which opens up creative fixes
If the problem is moral failure, the only answer is to try harder on the same broken wheels. If it's a neutral problem you deserve to solve, options appear: stop folding clothes, use paper plates, buy a grabber or a wheeled stool, put a 32-gallon trash can on wheels in the kitchen, or set up a 'toy library' where kids check toys out of a closet.

• Crisis is part of life, not a detour from it
KC rejects the idea that life is a highway and hard times are side roads you push a broken car down. A child's autism diagnosis, for example, is life. In seasons like that, aim for survival-level functioning: paper plates and napkins, outsourcing whatever your budget allows, and one small corner you can make beautiful in under five minutes to retreat to.

• Clothes are made to fit your body, not the other way around
KC realized much of her dislike for her body came from clothes that didn't fit. Get rid of 'matronly' pieces bought because you felt you didn't deserve better, and things three sizes too small kept for 'one day.' Mel admits about half her closet doesn't fit since menopause, including favorite cargo jeans that felt like 'a tourniquet' around her waist.

• You don't have to care about yourself to start caring for yourself
KC says self-esteem is overrated and self-compassion is what predicts better outcomes, and it doesn't require liking yourself. Care builds worth, not the reverse. Her analogy: you can adopt the scruffiest dog at the pound and care for it simply because you decided it was worthy.

• Rest is a right, not a reward
Childhood teaches 'chores first, then play,' which works when the list is finite. An adult's list never ends, so people never rest, then collapse and call themselves lazy. 'People who work in shame rest in shame': if tasks feel like moral obligations, you can't relax even when you sit down. Instead of breaks that require babysitters and coordination, make things easier, such as a Friday pizza or snack-plate and movie night with no dishes and no bedtime routine.

• Aim for fair rest, not equal labor
Arguing over whose work is harder breeds competition. KC suggests asking how to divide the tasks so both partners get the most free time. A default parent doing care tasks that never stop is always on call. Options include alternating who's the default parent on weekend days, or the other partner stepping in without being asked. Agree on a minimum standard of functioning, and respond with grace rather than accusation when the trash isn't out.

EXAMPLES

• Hygiene kits around the house
For a listener overwhelmed by her son's autism diagnosis, KC suggests kits with baby wipes, dry shampoo, something that smells nice, and single-use pre-pasted toothbrushes placed around the home. She also recommends a laundry basket and trash can in every room so cleanup is one step, not five.

• Cover the mirrors
For a listener who hates how she looks, KC suggests covering the shower mirror and using a small pocket mirror for makeup or hair, so she can experience life 'first-person' instead of constantly watching herself.

• Do one small kind thing for tomorrow-you
Choose one inconsequential irritation, like cold feet or a chilly early dog walk, and fix it the night before: slippers by the bed, a robe by the back door, coffee set to auto-brew. It shouldn't be a chore that earns praise, just something that immediately feels good.

• 'You can't save the rainforest if you're depressed'
KC tells people to throw out the moldy Tupperware that blocks them from tackling the kitchen. She notes no environmentalist shames diabetics for single-use syringes, yet new mothers and grieving people get shamed for paper plates.

• Mel and Chris's role reversal
When Mel became the solo breadwinner and Chris the 'first-call' stay-at-home parent, Mel found herself valuing her paid work

more, adopting the very stereotype she rejected. She realized his role was priceless. Chris's trigger: unflattened cardboard boxes stacked by the garage, which make him feel like 'the maid.'

- **The gift of a cleaner**

During severe postpartum depression after Sawyer's birth, Mel spent 12 weeks in bed heavily medicated and wasn't left alone with the baby. Cousins Lisa and Steve paid for their cleaner to come weekly, which Mel calls one of the greatest gifts she's received. Parents, in-laws and her friend Joanie took turns staying with her.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Bring paper goods to someone struggling**

KC's favorite gift is a big stack of paper plates and paper goods left on the porch. No dietary questions, no need to come inside, no guilt about the environment because you supplied it, and everyone gets a break from dishes.

- **Ask what your best friend would do**

When you're in a hard season, give yourself the practical, judgment-free help you'd offer a friend: rest, shortcuts and reasonable expectations.

- **Think about long-term accessibility**

If chronic pain or illness means things will always pile up, change your home rather than waiting to feel better. Use tools, put things at reachable heights, and simplify routines.

What To Do When Your House Is A Mess (And You Can't Function) | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: KC Davis
Date: 2023-09-07 · Duration: 1:02:29
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWm1Usbv0pA

KEYPOINTS

• Four things make simple chores hard

Therapist KC Davis, author of How to Keep House While Drowning, names emotional difficulty (we moralize care tasks, so a sink of dishes becomes proof we're failing), physical factors such as disability, mental load under stress or grief, and societal messages about whose job domestic labor is and what it's worth — which she says carry a surprising amount of racism and sexism. Mel adds that she absorbed it from her mother, a stay-at-home mom who did everything while her father worked.

• Care tasks are morally neutral

Davis's core message: mess is morally neutral, and 'dishes do not make meaning, only people do.' We tie being a valid adult, a good mother or a competent spouse to the state of the house. Even as a self-described progressive feminist, she notes the insidious version: 'boss ladies' should have a career without letting the house fall apart.

• Ask what else the mess could mean

When Mel called her laundry pile proof she couldn't keep it together, Davis asked what else it could mean. Ten days of visitors, swimming, cribbage and dinners meant she'd prioritized hospitality and relationships. Other times it simply means you're having a hard week — which, Davis says, deserves compassion rather than an indictment. That's not toxic positivity; you still deserve clean clothes.

• Shame lowers functioning, and self-compassion raises it

Davis says research shows drowning in shame arrests psychological functioning while self-compassion improves it, so stepping out of shame is practical, not just nice. Many people cling to self-hatred as a kind of atonement: if I'm not worthy, at least I'm right to hate bad things.

• A shower is about 35 steps for your brain

Executive functions — initiating, time management, shifting focus, staying motivated — falter under stress, sleep deprivation, pain or emotional load, and with conditions like ADHD, autism, PTSD, depression, anxiety and OCD. Davis compares the brain to air-traffic control. She walks through feelings about showering, timing it around the day, ignoring distractions, body image, water temperature, the order of washing, getting out of the warm water and deciding where the towel goes. Showers are also boring, she adds.

• Toothbrushing is the task people are most ashamed of

Davis says it comes up more than anything when people describe their most shameful struggles, because dirtiness feels disgusting and unlovable. She admits she brushes at best every other day, a struggle since her second child, when working from home removed her lifelong motivation of other people smelling her breath.

• Your space exists to serve you, not the other way round

Overwhelm tends to make people either freeze or pinball frantically without rest. Davis distinguishes enjoying a functional, beautiful space from needing it perfect to feel worthy: what you tell yourself when the house is clean will mirror what you say when it's messy.

• Chores are cycles, not done-or-not-done

Laundry is always somewhere in a loop — closet, body, floor, hamper, washer, dryer — and every stage is morally neutral. You aren't obligated to line every cycle up at 'done' at once. Her line: 'I signed up to make sure my family always has clean clothes, not to make sure they never have dirty ones.' Set a pace that's functional: too fast and you're exhausted and perfectionistic; too slow and you can't function.

• Momentum beats motivation

Lower the barrier to entry: give yourself permission just to stand up, or stand in the kitchen without doing dishes. Davis has stood there scrolling TikTok for 30 minutes before washing one dish, then two. Sometimes she stops at two — still two clean dishes for tomorrow.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's sour milk and blue towels

The morning of the interview Mel found the milk had turned and berated herself for not even keeping the fridge stocked. She also confessed to once-white Target towels turned blue by jeans, doing laundry only when she runs out of underwear, and a closet stool holding 'a Tetris game' of dirty clothes.

• Mel's toothbrush confession

Mel admitted she rarely brushes the full two minutes because she gets bored and has a strong gag reflex, and went about five days with mouthwash and gum after her dog chewed her toothbrush — feeling dirty all day. Davis's suggestion for people who hate the burn of mint, strawberry toothpaste, hit Mel's instinct that it's 'for kids'.

• The clean laundry pile and the fleece onesie

For eight months after her last baby, Davis's clean laundry sat in a pile everyone stepped over. Folding one day, she realized she was folding fleece pajamas, onesies and underwear that didn't need it. She moved everyone's clothes into one closet by the laundry room, hung the dozen items that need it, and sorts the rest into baskets 'like throwing cards'. Now laundry gets done every week.

• Why unloading feels worse than loading

Loading the dishwasher or washer follows a satisfying pattern, Davis explains, while putting things away means bending and deciding where each item goes, with no pattern for the brain to enjoy. Mel realized that's why she groups dishes on the counter before putting them away.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Get clean without the full shower**

  If the goal is being clean, wash at the sink or use a wipe. Skip washing your hair if that's the barrier, run a small heater beforehand if temperature swings bother you, or pick a 'shower podcast' for the boredom.

- **The five-things tidying method**

  Tidy every room in the same order: trash out; dishes to the sink; laundry into a basket; put away things that have a place; pile up things that don't. Davis does it when she's already on her feet with shoes on, such as right after the kids leave for the bus, sometimes with a timer.

- **Cut steps that add no value**

  Look for the step where a cycle always jams, like folding was for Davis, and question whether you need it at all. Doing one outfit's laundry, or paying for a laundry service if you can afford it, is a practical choice, not a moral one.

How to Get From Here to There: A Framework for Creating the Life You Want | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Kendall Robbins and Amy
Date: 2023-06-01 · Duration: 0:53:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKNBwfxZfyM

KEYPOINTS

• 'I can do it': every word matters, and many people lack the 'it'
Mel's Tampa keynote for her publisher Hay House, crammed together on the plane, breaks the phrase down. 'I' means you're responsible and no one is coming to save you. 'Can' means belief. 'Do' means action. 'It' is your North Star. She finds that stuck people are missing at least one of the four, and this episode is about the 'it.'

• A North Star can be anyone, and only one aspect of them
Mel's examples are The Rock and Michelle, a fan in her late 50s whom Mel met in a hotel lobby after Michelle had just finished an Ironman-type race, training with the podcast in her ears. Mel loved her ripped arms and energy. North Stars don't have to be famous or people you know, and you can admire one slice, like a shop clerk who always smiles.

• Three steps from Kendall's USC program: emulate, assimilate, innovate
Mel's daughter Kendall just graduated in popular music performance (vocals) from USC's Thornton School, a program she says is built on this method, credited to its founder Chris Sampson. Emulate: pick a North Star and break down what they have that you don't. Assimilate: put in the long practice to absorb it. Innovate: make something of your own. Kendall says anyone can use it, from a banker to a mom.

• Emulation means breaking your North Star into categories
Kendall's North Stars are Sara Bareilles and Brandy. She sorted their traits into skills (songwriting, singing, instruments, arranging, producing), character (strong, fierce, advocates, collaborators) and career. That turns admiration into a concrete list. Amy notes many people stop because they don't know they're allowed to pick a North Star, or because 'I'll never be like The Rock' feels final.

• Say 'want,' not 'need'
When Mel says 'need,' Kendall corrects her: 'need' implies you're lacking something, while 'want' frames it as something to gain, which she finds more motivating. In the same spirit she rejects calling it 'the gap.' The space between you and your North Star is the road you get to travel, and Mel likens each step to lighting up a lily pad you keep.

• Assimilation is the 10,000-hour montage, and the best part
Kendall calls assimilation 'the music montage moment,' like an ice skater at the rink at 6 a.m. day after day. For her it meant four years of classes, lessons and singing 'a hundred million songs.' It's the longest phase, and she says you discover parts of yourself you never knew existed along the way.

• No clear North Star? Declare what you're graduating from
For goals like dating, health or money, Kendall suggests imagining your future self (how she wakes up, talks, eats, moves) and breaking that down, or picking someone from a magazine. Mel wanted to graduate from the money fear she'd carried since she and Chris nearly went bankrupt over 15 years earlier. Once she decided, North Stars appeared: Ramit Sethi came on the show, and a weekend with more successful business-owner friends showed her what she hadn't learned yet.

• It's a circle, not a finish line
Kendall pushes back on the idea of 'becoming' your North Star: you'll never be Sara or Brandy, and the process restarts every time you innovate. The cycle also happens inside each step. North Stars are 'a directional signal, not a destination,' which she says is why Motown artists and top scientists keep working. Mel ties feeling lost to having stopped creating and growing.

EXAMPLES

• The USC drumming-to-the-millisecond drills
For the first two years, students were put in bands and assigned songs from the 1950s onward. They were graded on how exactly they could copy the original: drummers down to the 16th note, Kendall on intonation, phrasing, riffs and runs. The goal wasn't to sound like herself but to learn the building blocks of pop music.

• Amy's 'hey, love'
Producer Amy admits she used to watch the Real Housewives. One controversial but kind cast member called everyone 'love.' Amy found the courage to start doing it, and it made her more open and kind. It's now part of how she talks, a one-sliver North Star. Her body goal is Jennifer Aniston: emulate her yoga and greens, then adapt it into her own version.

• The Rock's boardroom post
Mel admires The Rock's character (generous, humble, for the everyday person) and how he keeps pivoting: tequila, an energy drink, shoes with Under Armour, the XFL. Her moment came from an Instagram photo of him at a big table with his team at Seven Bucks, named for the $7 he had on arriving in LA. She realized he doesn't do it alone. But she admits she has only admired him and hasn't done the research step.

• The framework that arrived a week before Kendall's senior project
Kendall had listed all the skills and qualities she'd gained, but a week before presenting, Chris Sampson told her there was no project yet without explaining how she got there, and gave her this framework. She expected to leave USC with an EP and 25 songs. She still doesn't have them, but says what she learned about herself was worth more.

• Where Mel's sign-off came from
Twelve years earlier, Mel heard principal Linda Cliatt-Wayman describe telling students over a school's loudspeaker that she loved them, believed in them and expected them back the next morning, because hope comes from knowing someone believes in you. Mel emulated it, tried versions of it and innovated it into her 'I love you and I believe in you.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make the three-column breakdown**
  For your North Star, list the skills, character traits and career experiences you want to gain, then pick the first ones to practice daily.
- **Expect detours and stay with the process**
  Kendall's advice: even if your North Star pulls you somewhere unexpected, stay present, grateful and aware, and trust that it's taking you where you need to go.
- **You are the artwork**
  Kendall's closing image is that working on your career and life is chiseling away at the sculpture that is you. North Stars help you shape it, but the art is you.

5 Easy Steps to Make Your Home and Your Mind Clutter-Free

Guest: Dana K. White
Date: 2023-04-17 · Duration: 1:42:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdPeIk8R26o

KEYPOINTS

• Decluttering and organizing are different jobs, and decluttering comes first

Dana White, who writes the blog A Slob Comes Clean and the book How to Manage Your Home Without Losing Your Mind, says she always thought her mess meant she needed to get organized. Organizing, to her, is planning how a space will work for the next ten years with bins and systems. Decluttering is simply getting stuff out, needs no planning, and is what finally changed her house. She thought she was giving up when she 'settled' for it.

• Everyone has a clutter threshold

It's the amount of stuff you personally can keep under control, not an aesthetic preference. It explains why a friend can buy the same things and her house looks like a magazine while yours looks like a thrift store. There's no quiz: if a space keeps getting out of control or your home feels overwhelming, you're over it, so remove more until a daily five-minute pickup restores order.

• Your house is not a project

As a former theater teacher, Dana excels at planned productions with an ending, so she tackled her home over whole weekends or summers, declared it done, and watched it revert. Mel recognized the same pattern of spending six hours staging a laundry room with matching baskets until her son moves one thing.

• Start with the visibility rule

Begin where visitors would see in from your front door, not the pantry or top closet shelf. Visible progress motivates you and your family. Spending all day color-coding a closet nobody sees, while still being embarrassed to open the front door, is the most defeating outcome.

• Steps one to three involve no hard decisions

First, trash, ideally into a black bag so you and your family can't see and retrieve things; if you have to think about it, skip it. Second, easy stuff that already has a home elsewhere, carried there immediately, as much as your hands hold. Third, obvious donations into a box that itself gets donated, not a decorated bin that invites second-guessing.

• Step four: 'Where would I look for it first?' Then take it there now

This is an instinct question, not analysis; the answer is the first drawer you'd open, even if you're not confident. In Dana's family, nail clippers live in a kitchen junk drawer, not the bathroom, because that's where everyone looks. Then take the item there immediately; sorting into piles to deliver later fails when you get distracted, and the piles merge into a bigger mess.

• The follow-up question: 'If I needed this, would it occur to me that I already had one?'

If you can't name where you'd look, ask this. If you wouldn't remember owning it, you'd have done without or bought another, so it goes in the donate box. If the destination is itself full, ask what you're willing to remove to make room.

• Step five: the container concept

Containers are limits, not storage, like the boundary firefighters use to contain a fire. Consolidate like items, put your favorites in first, and let the container make the decision. Shelves, rooms and the house itself are containers too, and its people deserve space first. Her line: 'You can keep anything, but you can't keep everything.'

• Progress, and only progress

Because every item gets a final decision acted on immediately, the space is only ever better, never worse, so you can stop any time. A seven-minute gap in your day is enough to throw away trash. That removes the 'I need a whole free day' excuse.

• Accepting how your brain works is the starting point, not a cop-out

Early readers of her anonymous blog turned out to be poets, artists and theater teachers, which led Dana to see a link between creativity and clutter. She stopped following advice from naturally organized people, whose 'before' photos looked like her dream 'after,' and built a process for someone like her.

EXAMPLES

• The 2009 anonymous blog

Dana wanted to be a writer but put off starting because her house was a disaster. In her first post, on August 24, 2009, she wrote that she'd feel like a fraud if someone saw her house 'on the wrong day,' and that she needed to change routines, not do a 30- or 365-day plan. The practice blog became her career.

• Mel's flannel shirt and jacket

Mel tore open her 18-year-old son Oakley's donation bag to rescue an expensive flannel shirt she'd given him, then spun stories about keeping an outgrown jacket in the basement for Vermont visitors who forget coats. Dana called it the brain spinning out, which is exactly what the two questions are for.

• The red crayon buckets

Copying a friend's tidy craft area, Dana bought a red bucket, then two more for 700 leftover crayons, then needed more shelves, then concluded she needed a bigger house. The container concept reversed that: fill one bucket with favorites and accept the rest don't fit.

• The watercolor pencils

Mel had a mason jar of watercolor pencils her mother-in-law gave one of the kids about ten Christmases earlier, moved from house to house and never used. By the end of the episode she decided to throw them away.

• The husband's memorabilia shelf

Dana cleared out a space she'd used for kids' out-of-season clothes and gave it to her husband for his 1980s collectibles, telling him to put his favorites in first. He later said it made it easy to see what he loved. She avoids asking 'why do you have that?' because 'why' shuts people down.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **When partners have different thresholds**

  In shared spaces, declutter to the lowest common clutter threshold; keep elaborate systems for your own spaces. Start with your own and neutral stuff, never the other person's. For the messier partner, the daily five-minute pickup with a real timer is the fix; Dana's husband eventually realized she genuinely doesn't notice open cabinets.

- **Four daily routines instead of to-do lists**

  Do the dishes, a five-minute pickup, check bathrooms for clutter (not cleaning) and sweep the kitchen floor to spot what's been dropped. She added one habit at a time, about seven days each. If overwhelmed, just do the dishes.

- **Let emotional items wait**

  The first three steps involve zero emotion, so you can make big visible progress before facing sentimental things. Skip an emotional item rather than letting it stall everything; later you'll have the space for it or be ready to decide.

- **Decluttering cures overbuying**

  The pain of donating something you paid $75 for and never used changes how a $5 bargain looks at a store or garage sale; you start seeing it as future clutter.

The Reason You Procrastinate Is Not What You're Thinking | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-02-20 · Duration: 0:44:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8r_F-xR3Ig

KEYPOINTS

• You aren't 'a procrastinator,' you have a habit of procrastinating

Mel, a self-described former chronic procrastinator who pulled all-nighters in college, says calling yourself a procrastinator turns a behavior into an identity. Procrastination is not a personality trait. It's a broken pattern of behavior you can understand and replace. If yours is chronic, she says that mostly tells you the stress in your life is chronic too.

• Productive procrastination is different from destructive procrastination

A deliberate break, like stepping outside during a hard project to clear your head, is a conscious, helpful kind of delay. The episode focuses on the destructive kind: dozens of small 'micro-procrastinations,' like social media checks that add up to hours each week, and avoiding something big, like a dissertation, an application, sales calls or posting videos.

• Procrastination is about avoiding stress, not the task

Mel draws on Dr. Timothy Pychyl of Carleton University, who has studied procrastination for two decades and describes it as a subconscious desire to feel good right now. You put off the thing that takes brainpower because you're trying to escape stress. The stress may have nothing to do with the task: aging parents, money, a friend's divorce, childhood trauma, or simply how hard you are on yourself.

• The 'stress backpack' makes focused work feel impossible

Concentrated work requires your prefrontal cortex, but if you're carrying a backpack of worry, your brain pushes back: 'You want me to make 15 cold calls when I've been worried about paying my bills all day? Can we watch cat videos?' Two hours later nothing is done and you're more stressed. Mel describes procrastination as the 'freeze' part of fight, flight or freeze.

• 'Comfortable' means familiar, not pleasant

Listener Vidhi says 'feeling shitty has become a comfortable feeling.' Mel says that makes perfect sense: comfortable means you're used to it, not that you like it. Being stuck and knowing what to do but not doing it can become normal. Recognizing that you're in the loop is the first step to breaking it.

• Revenge procrastination at night feeds the cycle

Scrolling for three hours on the couch after a draining day is a way of getting back at your job. An occasional night of it is fine. The problem is when you go to bed stressed about the wasted evening, skip setting up tomorrow, wake up behind, and do it all again.

• Step 1: forgive yourself

It may sound cheesy, but it's backed by research. Mel cites a paper Pychyl co-authored finding that students who forgave themselves for procrastinating on one exam were less likely to procrastinate on the next. Since being hard on yourself is a major source of the stress, she suggests telling yourself something like 'Wow, two hours went by, I must be really stressed. I forgive myself.'

• Step 2: name what's actually stressing you

When you notice the pattern, like unopened bills or a parking ticket that doubled because you missed the deadline, ask what's really bothering you: senior year ending, a sales quota, a spouse who's angry with you, waiting on your dad's test results. Mel says naming it loosens its grip because it pulls the stress out of the backpack where you can see it.

• Step 3: ask what future you wants you to do right now

Picture the version of you who has already finished, like Vidhi's completed portfolio or the Mel who has seen the doctor, and ask what they'd want you to do now. Two glasses of wine into a lost evening, the you who wakes up tomorrow wants you to pack lunch, turn off the screens, read 10 pages and go to bed.

• Then count 5-4-3-2-1 and start for one minute

Mel uses the 5 Second Rule as a starting ritual. Starting is the hard part: once you make the first cold call, write the first sentence or type your name on the application, you usually keep going. The problem isn't your ability, she says. It's that you're caught in a stress-driven cycle that sets off your nervous system.

EXAMPLES

• Vidhi, the illustrator who freezes at her desk

Vidhi can't wait to draw each morning, but once she sits down she's flooded with doubt and excuses, and by the end she's too exhausted for anything. A 'siren' in her head says she's a fake and that 'there are hundreds of much more talented artists.' She says she doesn't even want her drawings to be perfect, and that the doubt is now seeping into her relationships.

• Mel's 'bread basket' and the doctor's appointment

At 54, in the middle of the 75 Hard challenge (no alcohol, two workouts a day), Mel still hadn't booked a hormone appointment about the new belly she calls her 'bread basket.' She has to suck in to zip her pants. She realized the real stress was aging and feeling out of control of her body. She notes that research shows medical appointments and tests are among the things people put off most.

• Her daughters' 'taking a break from life'

Mel watches her daughters swipe so fast she asks what they're doing. 'Nothing. Taking a break from life.' She uses it as an example of micro-procrastination: checking out because your brain and body are already overloaded.

• The bills you haven't opened in two months

Mel's example of the steps in action: 'I haven't opened my bills in two months, I must be really nervous about this. I forgive myself.' Then name the stress and face it, rather than letting late fees and penalties pile up.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Replace 'Why can't I just do this?' with better questions**
  Ask instead, 'How am I feeling right now?' and 'What is truly stressing me out?' Mel says these questions point you to the cause instead of reinforcing the belief that something is wrong with you.
- **Act like you believe in yourself before you do**
  Mel's answer to Vidhi's 'How do I learn to believe I'm good enough?' is that belief follows action. Drawing for one minute despite the doubt is acting as if you believe in yourself, and seeing yourself do it consistently is what builds real belief. She links perfectionism to protecting yourself from rejection, often learned in childhood.
- **Share it with someone stuck**
  For a person with huge potential who won't write the music, start the channel or apply to nursing school, Mel suggests sharing the episode 'as a message from their future.' Their problem is the cycle, not laziness.

The Million Dollar Morning Routine: 6 Steps to a Solid Morning Routine | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-02-13 · Duration: 0:47:18
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHjI-ktwiyc

KEYPOINTS

• Act like your future self now
Mel frames the episode around behavioural activation: you become the person you want to be by acting like them in everyday life. Each morning is a clean slate, and she says you should build the routine your future self needs, not the one you currently like.

• Your first decision is the lead domino
'How you set your day up is how it ends up.' If the first domino is procrastination and stress, more of the same follows. A good start (meeting a friend at the gym, arriving prepared) gives you energy and pride. Mel goes as far as calling the morning routine the solution to almost all of life's problems.

• Hitting snooze is procrastinating on your life
For decades Mel's first decision every day was to hit snooze four or five times while staring at the ceiling thinking about her problems. She sees that habit repeated all day: snoozing on the phone call, the networking, the hard conversation, the gym. Given that some people didn't wake up today, she calls snoozing opting out of the day.

• A routine is a set of simple promises, not a Navy SEAL regimen
Mel stresses that routines are boring and repetitive, and that's the point. Keeping small promises to yourself builds discipline, confidence and resilience. For someone with childhood trauma and anxiety, she says, just getting out of bed can be a profound win, and the routine acts as guardrails during grief, depression or anxiety spikes.

• Rule 1: when the alarm rings, count 5-4-3-2-1 and get up
You set the alarm the night before, so it's a promise. After 14 years Mel still counts down every morning because she'd always choose the warm bed with bamboo sheets. If you can't rely on yourself to get up, she asks, how will you handle the hard conversation, the résumé or the second act? Lying in bed usually means scrolling, rumination and riding a wave of cortisol.

• Get up for yourself, not for others
Most of us have always woken up for someone else: a parent yelling, the school bus, work, kids or ageing parents. Mel points out you'd set an alarm an hour early to drive a loved one to the airport, so do it for yourself.

• Rule 2: make your bed
It completes something, so you start the day with a checked box rather than a 'tsunami' you keep seeing all day. Mel does it in hotels and at her parents' homes in Florida and Michigan, because the routine keeps her herself wherever she is. It's also a gift to tonight's you.

• Rule 3: the high five habit
Stacked onto brushing your teeth, look yourself in the eye, decide who you'll be today (peaceful, brave, building momentum) and high-five your reflection like a team breaking a huddle. Mel says she covered the science in an earlier episode with her husband Chris.

• No phone until the routine is done
Checking texts or email hands your attention and intention to others. Mel asks whether you'd let your few hundred Facebook friends into your bathroom while you brush your teeth with no underwear on, because that's effectively what you're doing. Evenings are unpredictable; the morning is the one time you can reliably put yourself first.

• Rule 4: move your body and your mind
Do 10 minutes of brisk walking (walk like you're late) plus at least a minute of mindset practice such as journaling, meditation, prayer or an app. Getting outside early also exposes you to bright light, which resets your circadian rhythm and helps you sleep.

EXAMPLES

• Sleep inertia after snoozing
Mel says that drifting back to sleep starts a new 75–90-minute sleep cycle, so a nine-minute snooze wakes you mid-cycle. She says research suggests the grogginess can last about four hours and eats into the first two hours after waking, when processing speed and alertness peak.

• From $800,000 in debt
Mel says she was about $800,000 in debt 14 years earlier, addicted to excuses, nightly alcohol and complaining, and a chronic all-nighter in college who was always late on deadlines. She credits the routine as the foundation for building her business.

• 10 minutes of power walking
Mel cites a study she attributes to the Journal of the American Medical Association suggesting 10 minutes of power walking a day can add years to your life, while also boosting mood and sleep.

• Tucking in Chris
If her husband is sleeping in, Mel makes just her side of the bed and sometimes tucks the sheet around him as a small act of love.

• The progress principle
Rule 5 draws on Harvard Business School research: people who make progress on something meaningful feel more fulfilled. Mel's examples are spending five minutes on a parents' anniversary photo album, financial-aid paperwork, clearing a bedroom to write a book, or learning how to launch a podcast.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pair this with an evening routine**
  Mel says the morning starts the night before, so set the alarm and wind down in a way that makes rule one easier.
- **Keep it portable**
  These five promises work anywhere, whether at home in Vermont, at a hotel or on her daughter's couch in Southie, so travel doesn't break the chain.
- **Do five minutes on what matters before email**
  Pick one meaningful project and move it forward for five to 15 minutes before letting the world in. Over time those small steps add up.
- **Ignore the 'I'm not a morning person' story**
  Mel's view is that the routine isn't about whether you feel like it. Some mornings will be hard and the negative chatter gets louder the longer you listen, so count down and shut it off.

The #1 Hack for Being More Productive Tomorrow | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-02-06 · Duration: 0:53:45
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCsXE4Dlulg

KEYPOINTS

• Your morning routine begins the night before

Mel says she isn't naturally a morning person. The biggest reason her "million dollar morning" works is that she puts herself to bed with an evening routine that winds down the day and sets up tomorrow. Think of the choices you regret each morning, like the extra drinks, the 1 a.m. drive-through burrito, or oversleeping a class. Tonight's decisions determine who wakes up tomorrow.

• Watch out for revenge procrastination

Revenge procrastination is when you resent that work took your whole day, so you get back at it by scrolling for hours, finishing a bottle of wine, or refusing to do anything useful because you deserve to relax. Mel agrees you deserve to relax. Her point is that a few small steps give you time to rest and also hand tomorrow-you a clean slate.

• A chaotic morning is the first domino

Mel argues that starting the day in a rush sets off more stress, more feeling behind and more reacting all day. That's partly why, in her old life, she came home exhausted and wanted wine the minute the kids got on the bus. A calm start does the opposite and builds momentum.

• Rule 1: The 3-2-1 rule

Three hours before bed, stop eating and drinking alcohol. Two hours before bed, stop working so your thoughts and stress can settle and you're less likely to wake at night. One hour before bed, turn off screens, because Mel says the blue light interferes with your brain's ability to shut down. Since she goes to bed early, her family moved dinner earlier. She suggests a countdown alarm or a sticky note on the fridge as a reminder.

• Rule 2: Make tomorrow easier

Mel says her habits used to fail because she relied on willpower and memory. Now she lowers what she calls the "activation energy" the night before, so the morning takes less thinking. Fewer obstacles make you more likely to do things you'd otherwise skip, like exercise.

• Rule 3: Give yourself a clean slate ("flush the toilet")

You wouldn't leave last night's mess in the toilet, so don't leave it in the kitchen, which is where most people go first in the morning. Empty the sink, load the dishwasher, and clear and wipe the counters. It takes about five minutes. Walking into a clean kitchen makes the new day feel like a mental fresh start too.

• Rule 4: Set your alarm on purpose

Most people have kept the same alarm time for years. Mel says to set it for the person you're becoming, and to drop the "fake math" of brushing teeth, packing three lunches and finishing homework in ten minutes. She needs about 90 minutes before helping anyone else, and 30 in a pinch. If you're not sure what you need, set it an hour earlier. Treat setting the alarm as a promise, and waking up as keeping that promise.

• Rule 5: Tuck your phone in before you tuck yourself in

No phone in the bedroom, ever. Charge it in the kitchen, closet or bathroom. If family or work need to reach you, leave the ringer on and tell people to call in an emergency. Mel finds that people only call when it's real, while texts and Snapchats would keep you awake. If the phone is your alarm, having it outside the room forces you out of bed.

• Your attention belongs to you at night

All day, through news, email, Zoom and scrolling, you let the world have access to you. Mel says nothing on your phone will help you sleep; it just stirs you up. She says a third of people check email in the middle of the night. If the phone isn't within reach, you can't reach for it out of habit.

EXAMPLES

• The old Mel's evenings

Mel used to come home, open a bottle of wine, throw dinner together, and slump on the couch with TV and her phone while the counters filled with dishes, backpacks and homework. She kept telling herself she'd tidy up at the next commercial. By 11 she'd finished the wine, left the pans to soak, put off packing lunches, and gone to bed scrolling until almost 1 a.m., annoyed that Chris was already asleep.

• The five-alarm morning

She set alarms for 5:45, 6:00, 6:15, 6:30 and 6:45, and usually got up at the "emergency" 7:15. Then she rushed three kids, yelled, hunted for permission slips, and found the gas tank empty on the way to work just as traffic doubled. She says all those alarms told her subconscious that getting up is hard, life is an obligation, and there's nothing to look forward to.

• Workout clothes on a hotel floor

On day 15 of a six-city business trip, Mel still lays out her exercise clothes on the hotel floor every night, so she isn't hunting in the dark at 6 a.m. for clean tights. Her other set-ups: her water bottle and journal next to the coffee pot, healthy food at the front of the fridge, a dish for her keys, and the kids' lunches, backpacks, cleats and sticks ready by the door.

• The "easier" soaking pan

Leaving pans to soak felt like a shortcut. By morning the suds were gone, the water was cold and greasy, and half the food was still stuck, so it took longer. Mel says seeing that mess first thing would trigger her and send her day downhill.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Routines become automatic

You already lock the door, turn off lights and put the dog away without thinking. Mel says the goal is for these steps to become so automatic that skipping one feels as strange as waking to find the lights left on downstairs. That predictability also signals your brain that it's time to sleep.

- **Borrow from childhood bedtime**

  Mel's parents had a strict routine: bath, footed pajamas, one show or a bit of play, a story, then being tucked in. She says that rhythm made bedtime feel safe and predictable, and adults benefit from the same structure.

- **Small nights add up**

  Mel says she gets worked up because she regrets years of unnecessary stress for herself, her kids and Chris. A better evening makes a better morning, which makes a better day, week, month and year. She says the change comes faster when you support your future self.

The Ultimate Guide to Making New Habits STICK | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-16 · Duration: 1:01:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LN5-RKWPeeI

KEYPOINTS

• Mel is testing these tools on herself in 75 Hard, after quitting it once

For 75 days: no alcohol, a healthy diet (for her, no gluten or dairy), two workouts a day with one outdoors, a gallon of water, a daily progress photo and 10 pages of nonfiction. Miss anything and you restart at day one. Last year she bailed within a week. This time she's six days in, doing it alongside her husband Chris, her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend, and her brother.

• Missing a day doesn't erase your progress, whatever 75 Hard's rules say

Mel stresses that the challenge's restart rule contradicts habit research. Citing Dr. Phillippa Lally at University College London, she says a missed day is just a missed day and the new neural pathways remain. The real danger is the 'what-the-hell effect' Dan Ariely writes about, whose own example is: 'I just had one slice of cake when my goal was no sugar, so what the hell, I'll have a couple more.'

• If you break a promise within hours, check your why

To listener Zoe, who ate birthday cake by noon on New Year's Day after vowing no sweets, Mel says a chronic pattern of quitting fast usually means the goal lacks 'the will.' It isn't personally meaningful, which is about intrinsic motivation, not willpower. Mel's own why: to 'play a bigger game' and break through on personal discipline, test whether dairy or gluten is behind her sinus congestion, and join family members doing it. She hasn't gone 75 days without alcohol since she was 16.

• Stuck? Sign up for something hard

After a breakup, firing, divorce or weight gain, Mel suggests a challenge that pushes you out of your comfort zone: a marathon, an adult beginner swim class at the Y, tango lessons. You can't finish it without changing your habits and systems, and doing so reminds you that you're more powerful than you think.

• Be an 'outie' organizer, not an 'innie'

Her friend Amy's terms: 'innie' organizers keep everything in their heads, while 'outie' organizers put cues out in the world. Since a habit runs on a cue, a behavior and a reward, the trick is to place the cue outside your head. Mel tells listener Ann, who can't stay consistent, that she isn't the problem. Relying on memory and willpower is.

• System 1: make it visible, deciding for your future self

Mel cites Harvard Business School research that we make better decisions when deciding for our future selves. Setting things up the night before also reduces decision fatigue and lowers activation energy, the effort needed to start. Labeled phone alarms count too. She cites research in which twice as many people who received quit-smoking messages quit over six months.

• System 2: get temptations out of sight

Put alcohol in the basement, don't stock the cheese, keep the phone out of the bedroom. Mel argues you wouldn't leave cocaine on the nightstand of someone recovering from addiction, and claims phone dependence is comparable. If kids or roommates need the milk or alcohol, push it to the back or into a cupboard. Making something just slightly less convenient is enough.

• System 3: you can only know you're on track if you track

Mel cites Dr. Benjamin Harkin of the University of Sheffield, whose meta-analysis of 138 studies with nearly 200,000 people, published in Psychological Bulletin, found that monitoring progress increases goal success. Recording it physically or reporting it publicly helps even more. Streaks, like Snapchat or BeReal, tap the same urge not to break a chain.

• System 4: plan, including 'if-then' backups

Mel cites UT Austin research that specific implementation plans make behavior change more likely, and work by Columbia's Heidi Grant Halvorson showing if-then planning raised exercise success from 39% to 91%. Look at your schedule, weather and fridge. 'If it rains, then…', 'If I'm invited to dinner, then I'll offer to bring something gluten-free.'

• System 5: do it in the morning

Mel calls morning action 'the keys to the kingdom': willpower, processing speed and focus are highest in roughly the first four hours, and it's the time you control before kids and work take over. Parents of toddlers may need to wake, and so sleep, half an hour earlier. Getting the phone out of the bedroom, a puppy or an early-rising partner can help.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's visible cues

The challenge list is taped to her bathroom mirror. Her water bottle and nonfiction book sit by the coffee maker overnight. The beverage fridge holds kombucha, non-alcoholic beer and spirits, and seltzers instead of beer and wine. Her workout clothes are on the floor by the bed, 'a giant middle finger to myself' on 37-degree rainy Vermont mornings.

• Google's lidded M&M bowls

When Google offices moved M&Ms from open bowls to bowls with lids, Mel says employees ate three million fewer over a year. She uses it as proof that a tiny bit of friction works, and of decision fatigue.

• The 75 sticky notes

Mel borrowed her daughter's system: a grid of 75 sticky notes numbered on the wall, with one pulled off each evening for a satisfying hit of completion. Mel, 54, prefers paper on the mirror or fridge because she forgets apps.

• Chris's 45-minute walk in horizontal rain

On December 21, driving from New York to Boston for a party with old friends, Chris still owed his outdoor workout. Despite fog and 40-degree horizontal rain, they went to his brother's house, and he walked 45 minutes at 7:30 p.m. in borrowed cotton sweatpants before they went to the party late. Mel calls it integrity and the most attracted to him she's been in 26 years.

• The whole-milk moment and the Jack Ryan stretch

Mel admits she rummaged through the fridge for whole milk and was grateful there was none, so she drank the plant-based creamer. On day four, with no plan for her second workout, she offered to 'stretch' while watching Jack Ryan. Chris put his hands

on his hips and sent her to the treadmill.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Supersize it with community**
  Do it with others: daily check-in texts, Peloton high-fives, a Facebook group. Chris leads a worldwide WhatsApp group for 75 Hard. A woman in Iran posting from her morning walk helped Mel stop complaining about Vermont rain.
- **After a slip, savor it, then reset**
  Mel's advice to Zoe: enjoy the cake, shake it off with a walk around the house, recognize the what-the-hell effect and go straight back to your promise. With tracking, you'll see the gap and can get back on it the next day.
- **Do tomorrow's setup tonight**
  Before bed: lay out clothes, put the water and book where you'll see them, move the phone to another room, and set labeled alarms for vitamins, runs or project time.

The Ultimate Toolkit for CREATING New Habits: The Science Made Easy | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-12 · Duration: 1:05:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPMvfxjbvw4

KEYPOINTS

• Fast change comes from identity; the goal takes longer

Listener Sarah asked whether sudden, rapid change is possible or a dangerous myth. Mel's answer: yes, but the quick change is in how you see yourself. Train daily for a first marathon and within days you see yourself as a runner, long before race day. Habits start as things you do, and over time become evidence of who you are.

• A habit is something so automatic there's no drama

Brushing your teeth, checking your shoulder when reversing, turning when you hear your name. Mel's husband Chris is 'Mr. Habit': he rolls out of bed, dresses, meditates, hits the gym, walks the dog and journals without a fight. Her goal is to make any new behavior as effortless as her morning coffee, which she never debates on a rainy day.

• Every habit has three parts: cue, behavior, reward

Mel credits the framework to Dr. Ann Graybiel at MIT and Dr. Wendy Wood at USC, whom she calls the 'grandmothers' of habit research. She says Wood finds almost nobody actually applies it, for two reasons: we get emotional and opinionated about what we 'should' do, and we overcomplicate it. Willpower and brute force, she argues, never make a behavior automatic.

• You learn habits the way a puppy learns to sit

Mel recorded right after a training session with her Australian Shepherd YOLO and puppy Homie. To teach 'sit', you need a cue (the word or a raised fist), the behavior (guiding the dog's rear to the floor) and a reward (a Milk Bone). Trainer Caroline Edgar of Grateful Dogs, pulled upstairs onto the show, agreed it's the same science — and joked that clients ask if it works on husbands.

• Six kinds of cues are already running your life

Sound (the Netflix intro that settles you on the couch); time of day (morning coffee, 6 p.m. wine); location (why your routine falls apart at your mother's house or on vacation); emotional state (boredom triggering snacking, frustration triggering Mel snapping at her kids); the people around you (try staying organized with slob roommates); and things in your environment, like a sticky note.

• You can't remove old triggers, so replace the behavior

If you pour wine at 6 p.m., 6 p.m. isn't going anywhere; your alarm will always ring and someone cooking will always make you hungry. Mel's point is to anticipate the trigger and change your response to it, while proactively adding new cues that make good behaviors obvious.

• The reward is what locks the habit in — and it must come fast

A dog needs a treat within seconds; Mel says research suggests humans should reward themselves within about two minutes. The dog sits not because of the word but because the word makes it think of the Milk Bone; the reward provides dopamine and forms the habit loop. Some habits have built-in rewards (clean teeth, static-free laundry, the thrill of a purchase); for others, like exercise, you have to add one.

• Self-punishment works against you

Caroline explained that punished dogs develop 'learned helplessness' — they stop offering behaviors — or become fearful and aggressive, like a kid who stops raising their hand after being mocked. Mel calls that a description of humans: berating yourself after every attempt kills the desire to try. Reward small attempts instead.

• The 21-day rule is a myth

Mel cites Phillippa Lally's study at University College London, published in the European Journal of Social Psychology, which found habits took between 18 and 254 days to become automatic. Missing a day didn't materially affect the process. Context explains the spread: supportive people, strong rewards, motivation and fun put you near the 18-day end.

EXAMPLES

• The 5:30 a.m. workout and the breakfast burrito

In 2019, as a new TV talk-show host due at the CBS Broadcast Center by 7 a.m. and working until 7 p.m., Mel needed to exercise at 5:30 a.m. Her cues: book the class the night before (the reminder text) and lay out her workout clothes on the floor 'like a giant middle finger from future Mel'. Her reward: coffee from a minimalist café and a homemade chorizo-and-cheese breakfast burrito. Within four or five mornings the alarm made her think 'burrito time', not 'workout'.

• Mr. Noodle and the sticky note

Mel's cat pees in an upstairs bathroom corner when he's upset, so she stuck a note on the door — 'keep the door closed' — as an environmental cue to build a new habit in everyone else.

• YOLO's barking

Mel is training YOLO to stay quiet when visitors arrive, but when he's overwhelmed he barks anyway. Caroline explained that emotional states can block access to skills a pet has learned — just as emotions derail people.

• Mel's 2 p.m. chocolate and other everyday loops

Mel has a small piece of chocolate around 2 p.m. every day. Texting a friend a photo and getting a reply, or laughing at a funny video, delivers the same quick dopamine hit — which is why you keep scrolling.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Pick your 'Milk Bone' before you start

Instead of agonizing over why you can't just journal or quit bread, design the cue and choose a reward you genuinely look forward to, to enjoy within two minutes of finishing.

- **Make it social**
  Mel suggests exercising with a friend: you'll wake up thinking about seeing them, not the walk. Similarly, surrounding yourself with savers makes a money habit easier than hanging out with big spenders.
- **After a lapse, don't restart from zero**
  If you planned 10 minutes of morning light and missed three days, the 15 you already did still count. Mel says the all-or-nothing, 'Navy SEAL' standard is what turns people into chronic quitters.

Feel like quitting? Me too. Before you give up, listen to this. | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-09 · Duration: 0:39:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYfkwF9gvPg

KEYPOINTS

• Unhappiness is the gap between expectation and reality

Mel recorded this episode in real time after freezing behind the mic. She had planned to teach the science of habits, a topic she knows by heart, but her mind went blank and she cried. A rough end to 2022, with big plans for the first week of January going sideways, meant the new year felt nothing like a clean slate. Her formula: you feel unhappy when your expectations for how things should be don't match how things are.

• The 'fresh start effect' doesn't always show up

Mel acknowledges research on the fresh start effect, the clean-slate motivation people feel at New Year's or a birthday. This year she felt the opposite: piles of unfinished business from last year still needing to be shoveled. She suspects many listeners feel the same and wants them to know that's normal.

• An 'F-it moment' is a trigger plus a wave of uncomfortable emotion

When you push to change anything, such as health, organization or a bigger goal, some small, silly thing will eventually set off a flood of emotion. You'll want to say 'forget it' and quit. Mel defines the F-it moment as an inability, in that moment, to tolerate uncomfortable feelings, so you numb out, check out or throw in the towel. One small F-it can quickly snowball into a big one.

• F-it moments are a sign you're growing

Mel's reframe is that these moments happen precisely because you're expanding your capacity for new behavior. Shedding old patterns stored in your nervous system sends shock waves through you. Handled well, the moments help you grow, and they pass. 'Life doesn't always give you what you want, but it gives you what you need.'

• Most unhealthy habits are a way to escape uncomfortable feelings

Coaching listener Liza, Mel explains that most addictions and unhealthy habits are triggered by negative emotional states and our inability to tolerate them. Alcohol, for example, becomes a way to numb something scary, such as sadness or a loss of control. Finding the core feeling underneath matters more than the specific slip.

• One slip doesn't erase your progress

Mel says research shows that whether you had three days or 300 days of progress before the slip, it remains in your neural pathways and nervous system. You aren't starting at zero. Beating yourself up is what actually saps motivation, so her first rule is not to make yourself wrong.

• Wring the towel out instead of throwing it in

Mel's image: when emotion rises, picture a towel soaking it up. Breathe, wring the towel out, shake it off and continue. Recognizing 'this is an F-it moment' is the skill, whether you're seven days into quitting dairy and furious at your family or about to end a relationship to avoid a hard conversation.

• Tell people what's going on, with a heads-up

Mel noticed that in her own spiral she kept talking it through with her team, husband and daughter. Her tip is to ask first: 'I'm going through something; do you have capacity for me to vent for a minute?' That way people know it isn't about them and won't get dragged into their own F-it moment.

• You deserve more help than you're willing to ask for

Help might be meetings, a friend who texts you daily to check on your commitment, or a medical screening you've been avoiding. Mel argues that seeking help is a sign of strength and seriousness, not weakness.

EXAMPLES

• 200 unmailed holiday cards set off Mel's spiral

On day four of the 75 Hard challenge (no alcohol for 75 days, a gallon of water daily, two workouts a day, and she added no gluten), Mel woke to a stack of 200 holiday cards still in plastic since early December. It was the first time in three years the family had agreed on a photo. She berated herself: how could she teach habits if she couldn't mail cards? Then she found her ADHD prescription had run out, and her house looked like the Macy's parade had marched through after two weeks with all three kids home.

• What Chris said when she tried to quit

Mel told her team she couldn't record and told Chris and her daughter she was dropping 75 Hard. They said yes, she could. Chris told her she needed a breakthrough by doing something hard for longer than the 30 to 45 days she'd managed before, and that feeling 'F-it' four days in was good because it was pushing her buttons. She went straight to bed, and the next morning had done her workout, half her water and her 10 pages of fiction.

• Liza's slip after about 300 sober days

Liza, who wants to become a health coach, had gone roughly 300 days without drinking. After a parade, a party where everyone was drinking, guilt over snacking, and an unsettling morning at church when a woman fainted (which stirred fears of being alone after her husband dies), she got through the party sober. Back home, she drank champagne bought for her husband's birthday while watching a Lifetime movie.

• Mel's blunt prescription: 90 meetings in 90 days

Mel suggested Liza attend 90 meetings in 90 days and go as a student of discomfort. When Liza hedged ('that's what my friend did'), Mel pushed back that she heard wiggle room, not commitment. Liza admitted drinking had been a coping mechanism since about age 16. Mel's three rules for her: don't make yourself wrong, go to the meetings with an open mind, and stop making yourself wrong.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask 'do I want this, or do I just feel uncomfortable?'**
  When a trigger hits, name the feeling and ask whether you actually want the drink, the snack or the exit, or just want the discomfort to stop. The question alone makes the driver conscious.
- **Keep an exciting alternative on hand**
  For anyone cutting alcohol, Mel recommends always having a non-alcoholic wine, beer, spirit or kombucha you like, so you can raise a glass and feel included without breaking your promise to yourself.
- **When you slip, show up tomorrow**
  If you say 'not today,' come back the next day knowing your progress is intact. Mel's closing line: say 'F-it, let's keep going.'

Goal Setting Toolkit: How to Set the Right Goals For You AND Achieve Them | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-05 · Duration: 0:57:30
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDmzLZnghcg

KEYPOINTS

• A goal is an outcome that won't happen unless you do something different

Mel builds the episode on the definition from Dr. Elliot Berkman, co-director of the University of Oregon's Center for Translational Neuroscience. Getting six-pack abs or getting out of debt qualifies; watching the series you're hooked on (Gangs of London, in her house) doesn't, because it takes no effort. Goals naturally involve friction, so expect some resistance.

• Having goals measurably improves daily life

Mel cites research that goals make you happier, dampen negative emotions (University of Wisconsin work suggests even fear and depression), give a sense of purpose, and make life feel easier. She opens by calling herself one of the 81% of people who abandon resolutions.

• Every goal needs a will and a way

In Berkman's research, the 'will' is the motivational why: why does this matter, why change, why now? The 'way' is the informational how: how will it unfold, what skills does it need, what's the plan? Mel notes they rely on different brain systems: the how on executive function in the prefrontal cortex, the why on dopamine reward circuits. New behaviours are rarely as rewarding as old ones like Netflix, so you need both.

• If you don't know what you want, dream bigger, then scale down

Mel's research-backed prompts: let yourself dream big and shrink it into small goals; think about your death, since nobody wishes for more days at work; get quiet, as mindful people set better goals; and look for 'want-to' or self-concordant goals (from Carleton University research) rather than obligations like doing a Whole30 because everyone else is.

• State your goals in the third person

Citing Cornell research, Mel has listeners say their goals aloud using their own name, as in 'Mel would really love to spend more time gardening this year.' She says it sounds more authoritative, as if it's already happening.

• Mistake one: a how with no why

Pressure triggers an inner rebel. Mel joined Dry January from FOMO in past years, lasted two or three days, and then started sneaking drinks and lying about it.

• Mistakes two and three: too many goals, or goals outside the sweet spot

Mel says (her opinion, not a study) the most common mistake is stacking Dry January, Whole30, Spanish, a job change and volunteering into one month, so stick to one to three goals. Then aim for the Goldilocks zone. Dreams are big and open-ended; goals must be small, specific and timed. She cites Florida State, BJ Fogg's Stanford habit work, UC Riverside on keeping some ambition, and a German study showing that missing a too-high goal hurts self-esteem.

• Mistake four: too vague; ask how you'll know you've succeeded

Columbia's Dr. Heidi Grant Halvorson suggests one question: when will you know you've succeeded? It made Mel realise her gardening goal was really to grow dahlias for the first time and cut a bouquet for a vase by her sink.

• Mistake five: skipping a high-low range

Mel cites a Florida State finding that a goal of losing two to four pounds is easier to hit than three pounds. Ranges feel more achievable while still stretching you.

• Pursuit matters more than arrival

Working toward goals creates the happiness; achieving them gives a brief high and then you climb back down the mountain. Mel calls the belief that you'll finally be happy once you get the job or lose the weight the 'arrival fallacy,' and points to Olympians and movie stars who struggle after their biggest wins.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's three goals, refined live

She starts with 'garden more,' 'stop drinking for a while' and 'journal every morning.' By the end they are: grow one to 10 dahlias from seed; no drinks on 75 of 90 days, ambitious given Valentine's Day and a big late-January gathering, but not the year that would feel like a punishment; and journal five to seven days a week.

• Her real why for going alcohol-free

Even one beer to signal that work is over was making her tired and hurting her sleep. She wants to see what removing alcohol does for her focus, downtime, brain fog and menopause symptoms.

• The coffee-card study

In research Mel credits to the University of Chicago, customers with a 12-stamp card that already had two stamps filled finished faster than those with a blank 10-stamp card, despite needing the same 10 purchases. Mel calls the effect 'incremental illusion': early progress motivates.

• Daughter Sawyer's rut

Working remotely for over a year and a half, never at the office or holiday parties, Sawyer felt every day was the same. Mel's prescription: goals break up the monotony and give you something to look forward to.

• Telling the right person helps

Mel says new Ohio State studies found that sharing a goal with someone you admire raises commitment and performance, contradicting a widely reported 2009 study suggesting that telling people backfires.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Watch for perfectionism disguised as ambition

Mel says it shows up as setting a goal and quitting before you start, analysing endlessly, or avoiding situations where you might fail. Vowing to exercise two hours a day, every day, is her example of failing before you begin.

- **Make the first milestone trivially easy**

  Count steps already taken (Chris gave Mel a dahlia book for the holidays), then do something small like a search or five minutes of journaling.

- **Start the moment you finish listening**

  Mel cites a University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine study finding that starting right away produced the most change, so don't wait for Monday.

- **Re-run this process every quarter**

  Mel suggests revisiting it whenever you feel stuck, such as before graduation, after a divorce, or when you need to reinvent yourself.

The biggest MISTAKE you’re making with MOTIVATION | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-10 · Duration: 0:50:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVA3MPaq6ns

KEYPOINTS

• 'Motivation is garbage' if you treat it as a feeling

Mel's counterintuitive opening is that motivation, understood as a feeling, comes and goes, and it won't be there when a task is hard, scary or solitary. Most people wait to feel motivated and then act. She says it works the other way: you act, and motivation follows. She still calls motivation essential. Her point is that waiting for the feeling is a trap.

• The skill that matters is acting when you don't feel like it

Mel says you already know what to do, whether it's the gym, speaking up at work or ordering the salad instead of the cheeseburger, and if you don't, you can Google it. Knowing just makes you smarter. Her 'hundred million dollar skill' is making yourself get out of bed, apply for the job or face what you're avoiding.

• No one is coming to rescue you

Mel's second takeaway comes from her lowest point. She wanted someone to show up and fix things, but no one was going to pay the bills, fix the restaurants or make her look for a job. Your dreams are your responsibility, and she argues you're capable of acting on them.

• There's a five-second window of hesitation

Mel noticed that the moment you start thinking about doing something instead of doing it, your mind fills with excuses, anxiety and overwhelm. She describes a 'bias toward thinking' (hesitating) versus a 'bias toward action' (moving regardless of how you feel). Counting 5-4-3-2-1 is her tool for moving from the first to the second.

• Why counting works, as Mel explains it

After years of what she calls research and conversations with neurologists, psychologists and habit experts, Mel describes the countdown as metacognition, a 'cheat code' for deliberately switching gears. In habit terms, she says, it's a 'starting ritual' that interrupts an old pattern so you can replace it, swapping the evening glass of wine for a mocktail or the snooze button for standing up. Counting also takes focus, and she says it engages the prefrontal cortex.

• Starting requires activation energy

Mel says your brain's job is to keep you alive, so it resists change. You'll always have to push yourself, and starting something new is the hardest part. Counting backwards is itself an action, a 'Trojan horse' that gets you moving. Her example: it's 3 p.m., raining, you skipped your morning run. Count down, and at 'one' walk to the closet and put on your running shoes.

• Change comes from small decisions repeated over time

'You're one decision away from a different life,' Mel says, but she's clear the rule works over time, not overnight. Quick fixes don't stick, so you have to keep repeating it. She expects you to fail and mess up, and says what matters is showing up again the next morning.

• It applies far beyond getting out of bed

Mel says people use the rule to make sales calls, reach out to executives, lose weight and stay sober. She shares a listener, Kyle, who said it helped him stay sober for three and a half years, even after learning his grandmother's cancer had returned. She jokes that if you teach it to your kids, they'll use it on you.

EXAMPLES

• $800,000 in debt by 2008

Chris and his best friend opened a 40-seat pizza place that was a hit, then expanded using the Robbinses' life savings, a home equity line and cash advances on credit cards. Location two was in the wrong place, location three was too expensive, and then the 2008 crash hit. Mel, 41 with three kids under 10, lost her job. They were $800,000 in debt, Chris hadn't been paid in six months, the mortgage was months behind, and they pulled their daughter from a $125 soccer program. Mel was drinking heavily and screaming at Chris.

• The rocket launch

A week before their first bankruptcy proceeding, Mel gave herself a pep talk in front of the TV, possibly after four bourbon Manhattans, she admits. She saw a rocket launch countdown in a commercial and decided to launch herself out of bed the next morning. When the alarm went off and she reached for the snooze button, she counted 5-4-3-2-1 and stood up. By day three it clicked. She went on to use it to stop yelling at Chris, go for a run in February, call friends to say she needed a job, and call her parents for help.

• Chris uses it on the business

Chris used the countdown to renegotiate leases with landlords, tell investors the truth, restructure the business and lay off people he cared about. Over the next couple of years, the couple used it to get their marriage back on track and their drinking under control. Mel took a $25-an-hour local radio job. Chris eventually left the restaurant business, got sober and became a yoga instructor.

• A '21-minute panic attack' on the TEDx stage

In 2010 a college friend got Mel a speaking slot in San Francisco. She accepted mainly for two free plane tickets and two nights at the St. Regis, since she and Chris hadn't had a vacation in four years. It turned out to be the first TEDx event. She had a stress rash by minute one, forgot her ending, mentioned the five-second rule almost as an afterthought, and gave out her email address. Two years later, emails from strangers using the rule started arriving.

• A self-published book that went global

Despite dyslexia and ADHD, Mel self-published The 5 Second Rule. She says it became the most successful self-published audiobook ever, led to six Audible projects, and the hardcover has been translated into 41 languages and sold over a million copies. Her point is that you're not too old or too unqualified.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Mel's five-day wake-up challenge**

  For five mornings, when the alarm goes off, count 5-4-3-2-1, throw off the sheets at 'one,' stand up and walk toward the bathroom. If you naturally spring out of bed, set the alarm 30 minutes earlier so you feel the resistance. Mel says pushing through morning resistance builds the same muscle you'll use everywhere else.

- **Use the countdown at the moment you hesitate**

  Whenever you catch yourself talking yourself out of something, whether a call, a workout, speaking up or a hard conversation, count down and move before your brain 'kills' the impulse. Mel's own rule is to move within five seconds of the instinct to act.

- **Use it to interrupt bad habits too**

  When you notice yourself spiraling into worry, self-criticism or reaching for a drink, count backwards to break the pattern, then do the healthier thing you've planned in advance.