

A decorative border of watercolor flowers in shades of pink, orange, yellow, and blue, with green leaves and stems, framing the central text.

MAKE OVER
YOUR
Morning

Dr. Monique Belton

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Table of Contents

Live Like a Boss Product Disclaimer.....	2
Impact of a Morning Routine.....	3
How to Create Your Perfect Morning	5
Finding Time in Your Busy Morning	7
Get Up Early Enough.....	7
Restructure Your Routine	8
Determining Your Morning Essentials is Crucial	9
It's Not About Cramming More Things Into Less Time	9
It's About Making Smart Choices About Using Your Time.....	9
Find things you can stop doing	10
Teach self-sufficiency to partners and children	10
Your Reality Check.....	10
Come Up With A New Morning Game Plan	12
Start with the good stuff	12
Write down your plan.....	12
Set yourself up for success, but be flexible	13
The Importance of Habits and Routines.....	14
Starting requires willpower.....	14
With time, new habits become routine	14
Be consistent.....	14
Take Time to Review Your Morning Routine Regularly.....	16
Reviewing your routine	16
Important questions	16
Needs change	17

Live Like a Boss Product Disclaimer

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Impact of a Morning Routine

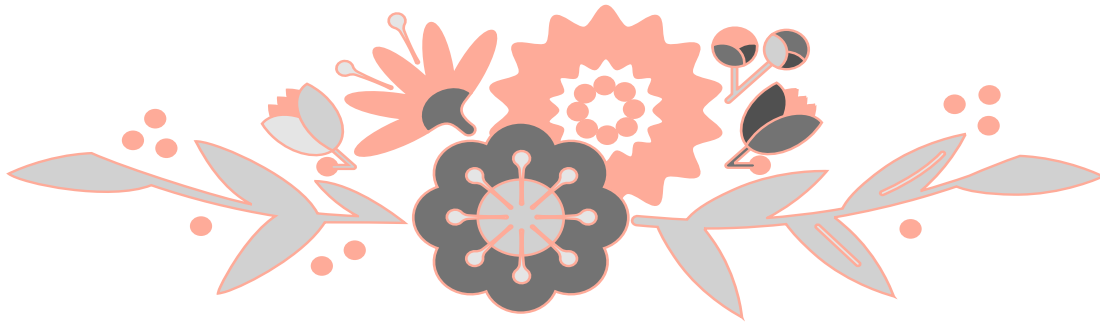
I am beginning to love mornings. Each new day brings new opportunities and it's a chance to start fresh and do better. How you start your day, or more specifically how you spend those first few morning hours has a big impact on the rest of it. Think of it as setting the tone for your entire day. That's why making over your morning is so important. It's about much more than those first few hours.

I'm sure you've experienced this yourself. Let's use the snooze button as an example. You set an early alarm to make sure you have time for exercise, meditation, or simply some much-needed "me time". You have every intention of getting up and doing whatever you're setting out to do when you set the alarm in the first place. Some mornings - hopefully, most mornings - you get up when the alarm chimes and go for that walk, do your meditation exercise, or read a book for twenty minutes. Then, there are those days when you just can't make yourself get up. You hit the snooze button multiple times, or turn the alarm off altogether and go back to sleep.

Think about how the rest of those days went. Did you notice a difference in how you felt? How much did you get done in the mornings when you got up with your first alarm? Were you able to do all the things you set out to do? How did those days compare to the ones when you hit the snooze button over and over again?

If I had to take a guess, I'd say that the mornings when you got up as soon as the alarm went off went a lot smoother. I bet you accomplished what you have planned to do, too. Chances are that sleeping through the snooze button didn't just affect your morning, but the entire rest of your day. You set the tone for how your day is going to go first thing in the morning. That's what the old saying about getting up on the wrong side of the bed is about. Let's make sure we get up on the right side and start our day off in a positive and productive way.

I want to guide you through the process of making over your morning. As we've already established, this is an important task and a good thing to work on and pay attention to. Not only will you enjoy your mornings more even if the alarm goes off much earlier than you'd like, but it will also make the entire rest of your day go much smoother. Stay tuned for more articles and helpful advice on how to make the most of your mornings.



How to Create Your Perfect Morning

Here is my question for you this morning. What's most important to you? What is the one thing you really want to do daily that would make a big difference, but you just can't seem to find the time for? You need to write this one major priority down and date it. This will change over time.

If you are not already using a dedicated journal, use our [free "Makeover Your Morning" daily planner and Journal pages](#) to help you get started. There are several pages to choose from. For this exercise, I recommend the "Morning Make Over Worksheet" worksheet. Print seven, one for each day of the next week. Each day, work to identify one thing you'd like to improve about your morning.

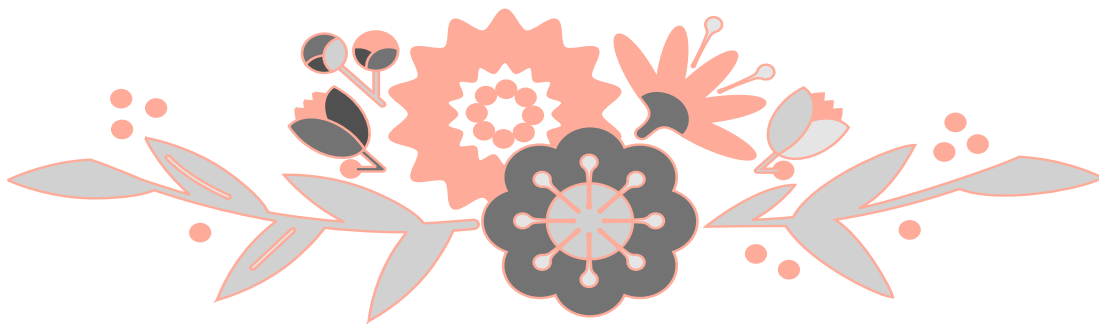
What good habits do you want to cultivate that would make a real impact on your life? Think about this for a moment. It could be in any area of your life from exercise and healthy eating to self-improvement or getting ahead in business or at your job. It could be working on your relationship with your kids, finding time for creative pursuits, or getting in the habit of reading every morning. Put this information into it in the morning section.

Once you've figured out what you want to work on, what you want to improve, and what's important to you, we'll think about how you can make it part of your morning routine. Sit back and imagine your perfect morning. It isn't stressed or rushed. Most importantly it's a day when you have time for everything on your list. Maybe it means having time for a long shower. Maybe it's going for a run before breakfast. Maybe it's having a few minutes to connect with your spouse over coffee or maybe it's carving out an hour first thing in the morning to work on your side-business.

That's a lot of "maybes" but the key is to start with what's most important to you and think about how you could fit it into your morning routine. Remember, you're just dreaming and imagining at this point. We'll work on figuring out where to find the time to fit it in and how to make it all work out later on. For now, I simply want you to paint a vivid picture of what your new morning could look like.

I want you to become very clear on what you want that perfect morning to look like. Part of this process is figuring out what's working well and what could be better. Be sure to fill out the [worksheet](#) to help refine exactly the things you'd like to change.

Why is this so important? Because you can't make any meaningful changes until you know what your weak points are. You need to know what's working and what's not before you can pick a route and figure out how you'll get there. That's what today's task is all about. It's figuring out what you want to improve. Don't stop until you have it figured out and firmly pictured in your mind.



Finding Time in Your Busy Morning

Mornings are busy and they can be quite chaotic. If you have a young family and plenty of people to get ready and out the door, you know this firsthand. The good news is that it doesn't have to be that way, no matter how busy you think you are first thing in the day. Earlier, I [asked you to journal](#) about all the issues you had with your morning. If you haven't done that yet, I encourage you to take a moment to do so before moving on to today's focus of solving those issues.

The first few hours in the morning set the tone for the entire rest of the day. Do you want that to be rushed, frantic, and feeling like you're constantly running and trying to catch up? Or do you want it to be calm, collected, productive, and with a feeling that you're in control? It's up to you and it's all about embracing two simple concepts.

Get Up Early Enough

It's tempting to hit the snooze button and catch a few more minutes of sleep, isn't it? It's even hard to set the alarm early enough that you have plenty of time for everything you want and need to get done. I get it. If you're not a morning person, moving up the alarm by 30 minutes to carve out a little extra time can be tough. Trust me though, after the first few mornings it's not nearly as hard as you think and something you'll quickly get used to.

Getting up early enough and avoiding the snooze button at all costs is the key to an unrushed morning. Here's the problem with cutting time too short, or worse hitting the snooze button a few times. *It gets you behind from the very start.* You have to rush to make it out the door in time and any little problem or speed bump along the way turns into a huge problem. Not being able to find the car keys is suddenly a major crisis because it could cause you to be late for work and the kids to be tardy at school. Remember, your morning sets the tone for the rest of your day. If you start it chasing lost time and lost items, that's likely how you'll spend the rest of your morning.

Getting up early enough, on the other hand, puts you ahead of the game. You're in control. You can take care of everything that needs doing and still have time for the important things you want to work on. In short, getting up early enough sets you up for an amazing, productive day.

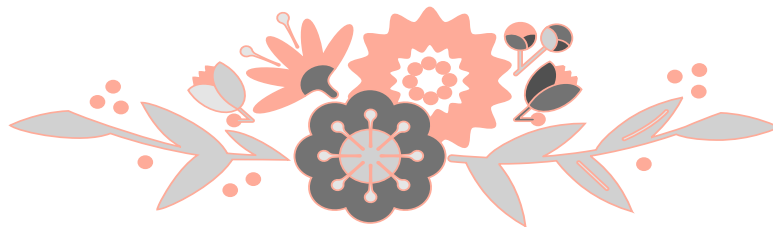
Restructure Your Routine

Before we wrap this up, spend a little time thinking about your current morning routine and where you're spending time. Look for things you can change and tweak to find more time for the things you really want to do. For example, if you want an extra 20 minutes in the morning to meditate, look at what you could take care of ahead of time, eliminate, or delegate to make that time. If you spend a lot of time getting breakfast for everyone, get in the habit of setting the breakfast table the night before.

Get your spouse to get the coffee ready, so all you have to do in the morning is push a button. If your children are older, start to teach your kids to make their own breakfasts and take the dirty dishes to the sink, rinse them, and put them in the dishwasher. Don't expect perfection, they will get better as you give them more experience.

Make sure clothes are set out the night before (including yours), and that book bags, purses, briefcases, and car keys have a designated spot, and that there where they need to be before you turn in for the night. Small changes like this to your morning routine can make a big difference.

I challenge you to come up with a few small tweaks that will save you at least 30 minutes in the morning. If you already have a journal, this is a great idea to explore there. You can also use my handy journaling worksheet ["Small Changes Brainstorming Page"](#) to collect your thoughts.



Determining Your Morning Essentials is Crucial

Last week we talked about finding the time in your busy morning to do the things that are important to you. Today I want you to think about what you should and what you shouldn't be doing in those first few hours of the day. That's an important idea to ponder. So often we get stuck in a rut or a routine and do things because that's what we've always done. We do it without really thinking about whether or not it's the best use of our time.

It's Not About Cramming More Things Into Less Time

Making over your morning isn't about figuring out how to cram more tasks into fewer hours. When you read books and articles on productivity and time management, that's often the main message and gist of it. While it can help in the short term, it isn't a good long-term strategy for meaningful change. Very soon you'll hit the limit of how much faster and how much more efficient you can get.

Shift your thinking and don't try to add to what you do in the morning. If you want 15 minutes for bible study, meditation, or exercise, don't just think about getting up 15 minutes earlier, or shaving 15 minutes off your morning routine by showering faster, getting dressed in record time, and rushing through breakfast. In other words, don't add to your already lengthy list of things that need to get done. You'll only feel more rushed and stressed if you do.

It's About Making Smart Choices About Using Your Time

Instead, what you should be thinking about is the best use of your time in the morning. Compare your perfect morning with your current morning routine. What aren't you doing on your ideal morning? If you can start by

cutting things out, finding time to do what's important to you becomes much easier.

Find things you can stop doing

There are two great ways to find things you can stop doing. The first is to look for busy work. This is something you do out of habit that doesn't necessarily need doing every day. Maybe it's checking your email first thing in the morning or playing around on Facebook for half an hour while you drink your coffee. If that's how you choose to spend your time, that's perfectly fine, but if you're doing it out of habit it may be time to rethink it.

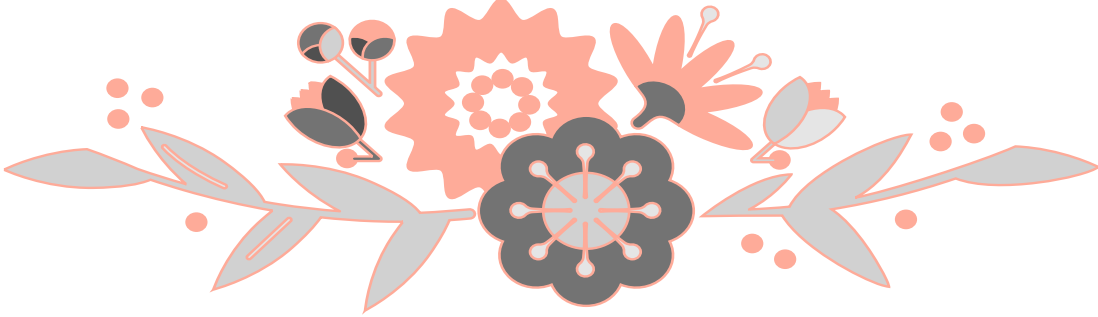
Teach self-sufficiency to partners and children

The second way to quickly earn back time is to see if you're doing things for others that they can do themselves. Kids are the perfect example. We start out fixing their breakfast, making their lunch, cleaning up after them, picking out their clothes, and making sure their backpack is packed and ready to do. When they are very small, we have to do these things for them, but all too often we continue to do them long after they're capable of doing things on their own. The same goes for things we do for our spouses or partners. Maybe there was a time when you had less to do in the morning and it made sense to take on the majority of morning chores. Did things change and if so, is it time to lighten your load and get help from your partner? A few small changes may be all it takes to make the time in your busy morning for what's important to you.

Your Reality Check

Take a moment to list in your journal all the things you currently do in the morning and take note of which of those you can either stop doing, or schedule for another time, or delegate to another person. As you go through your morning, make sure to add the things you might have forgotten to include. You might be surprised how much time you find. If

you'd like, you can use our handy [worksheet "Morning Reality Check"](#) to organize your two lists.



Come Up With A New Morning Game Plan

Now that you have a pretty good idea of what you want to do in the morning, what you don't want to or need to do, and where to find the extra time needed, it's time to put it all together in a new morning game plan.

Start with the good stuff

The best place to start is with the new set of tasks that are most important to you. Figure out a preliminary time during which you want to get them accomplished. If your goal is to go for a run in the morning, you may decide to do that first thing before getting a shower and having breakfast. If your goal is to meditate each morning, you may decide it would work best after you've had a cup of coffee. If your goal is to find some time for reading or your favorite hobby in the morning, you could carve out some time before everyone else gets up and while you enjoy that first coffee. The same goes for wanting time in the morning to work on your business or learn something new.

Then, work the rest of your morning chores around these new plans. It may take some shuffling around and mixing up your current routine, but with a little creative thinking and a bit of flexibility, I'm sure you can come up with a working plan.

Write down your plan

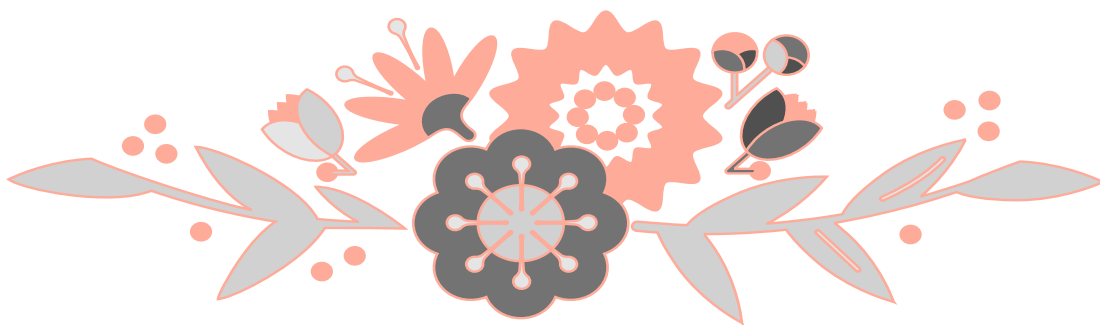
Making over your morning and turning it into a new routine isn't something that comes naturally to most of us. It takes a little while to get into the groove of things. We'll look at this in a little more detail next week. For right now, my suggestion is that you write your new morning game plan down. It's easy to forget what you're planning to do. Writing your new daily routine down will not only give you a reference to refer back to, but also solidify your new plan in your mind.

If you'd like, you could use [my planning pages](#) to help brainstorm the best way to organize your morning schedule. I recommend using the "Morning Planner" page to help prioritize what's important and the "Morning Schedule" page to organize your plan. Each day, start with fresh pages and think over what went well and what you need to change. The more you refine and perfect, the closer you can get to that perfect morning.

Set yourself up for success, but be flexible

Put the journal pages or notebook where you jotted down your new plan on your night table or somewhere else where you'll see it first thing in the morning. It will serve as a reminder of what you're intending to do and do differently in the morning now.

Even though you've written your plan down, it's important to realize it's not written in stone. The well-laid-out plans don't always work when put into action. Adjust it and make changes as needed until you come up with a new morning game plan that works well for you and the rest of your family. Once you have that, it's time to make it the new routine... something we'll talk more about next week.



The Importance of Habits and Routines

With your new morning game plan figured out, it's time to not only put it into action but make it your new morning routine. Why is this important?

Because you want to make sure your new plan happens every morning without fail and turning it into a routine is the best way to make sure that happens.

Starting requires willpower

Before something becomes a habit or a routine, it takes a lot of willpower to make things happen. That's energy that you will need for other things throughout your morning and the rest of a very busy day. Yes, it will take some willpower, mental energy, and drive at first to create the new morning habits, but once they are set, it will become automatic, like brushing your teeth before bed.

A big part of helping this new routine become a habit you can stick to is taking the time to write down your successes and also parts of your morning that need more thought to figure out. I have several lovely planner pages that can help you do just that. Go [download yours](#) today! Journaling is one of the best ways to turn a new schedule into a habit.

With time, new habits become routine

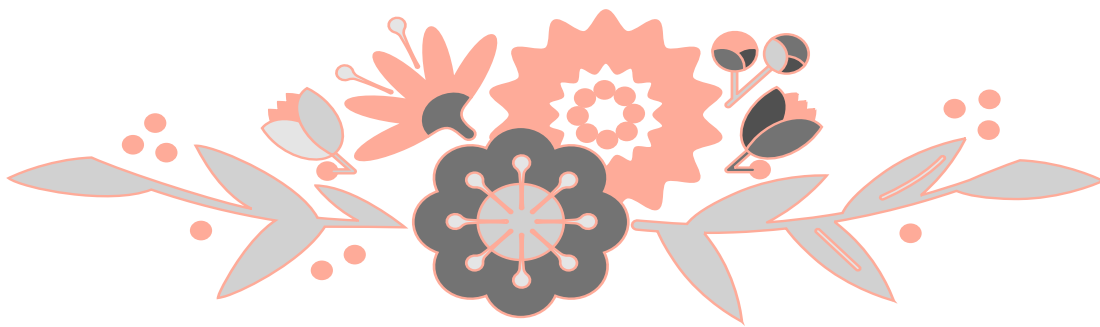
Once you come up with a good working morning routine, stick to it for a few weeks. That's the best way to turn it into a strong habit. Before long, it will feel like the new normal and you no longer have to remind yourself to do each thing along the way. It will have become a habit and a routine you'll follow automatically.

It will take a lot less effort and mental pep-talk to get things done... even if your new routine includes a 30-minute run, or getting up at the crack of dawn to work on your most important business task for an hour.

Be consistent

Watch out for moments when you slip back into your old habits and routines. It's going to happen. The key is to catch it early and get back on track as quickly as possible. For example, let's say you've been doing well with waking up 30 minutes earlier and going for a run before you start your day. Then one day you oversleep and can't make it out there. Or the weather turns too bad, you get sick or hurt, or something else pops up that keeps you from going on that run. That's life. It happens. What's important is what you decide to do the next morning.

Your most important job whenever life gets in the way of your new morning routine is to get back on track as quickly as possible. Do what you can as soon as you notice the disruption. If the weather is bad, do a quick workout at home, or head to the gym to run on the treadmill. If you overslept, try to squeeze in a few minutes of meditation or doing something to grow your business before you get back to the rest of your day. Most importantly get back on track with your regular morning routine as soon as possible. Get back into your new habits the next morning if at all possible. Actively remind yourself to get back on track for a few days until your routine is firmly back in place. You'll be glad you did when you start to see the results you've been hoping for.



Take Time to Review Your Morning Routine Regularly

Creating routines and habits for your mornings is a great thing. Routines allow you to do what you need to do to move ahead without having to spend a lot of energy and time thinking about it. That's a good thing. It's can also be a dangerous thing when you continue to focus on the wrong things and are in the habit of doing things that don't help you reach your goals.

Reviewing your routine

When we get into a routine, it's hard to stop and ask ourselves if it's working as well as it could be. Even more importantly, with a routine and a set of habits firmly established, it's easy to keep going even when the circumstances change. That's why it's important to take some time every now and again to review our routine and habits, including the new morning routine.

Set aside a little time every few weeks, or even months to review your routine. Put it on the calendar and make sure you do it. It won't take long and it will be a very valuable exercise in the long run. Our lives and circumstances change. Our routines should change with it. Just because something has served us well over the past few weeks and months, doesn't mean it will continue to do so. This brings up a good point...

Important questions

When you sit down to review your morning routine (or any routine or habit you've been working on for that matter), ask yourself this:

Is it working? Is it working really well?

This is where keeping a simple journal can make things much easier. As you work and adapt your routine, you can make a note of what's helping you succeed, and what's turned into a waste of time. If you haven't grabbed your own set of journal pages, [be sure to get your set!](#)

After reviewing your routine, you should have a good idea if it's working or not. If it is, simply carry on. If it isn't, it may be time to make some changes and tweak it until you find something that works well for you at that particular point in time.

Another way to look at it is to find what you love and what you hate about the new morning routine. Change it accordingly until you get as close as possible to loving everything about it and still getting the results you want.

Needs change

Remember, this morning routine will change and evolve over time as you, your circumstances, and the people in your life change and evolve. Embrace the changes and look at them as an indication that you're making progress.

Keep tweaking and improving your morning routine and don't be afraid to mix up your goals for it. Maybe you started out by making exercise a priority first thing in the day. As time goes by and you become more fit and make time for it later in the day, your focus may shift to meditation, or learning a new language. Keep evolving, keep changing, and keep using those precious first few hours of each day to establish some positive change in yourself and those around you.

