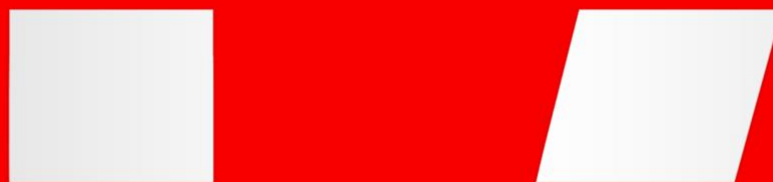


HABITS

THAT WILL

TRANSFORM
YOUR LIFE



SMALL TWEAKS TO CREATE BIG
RESULTS

HUNTER CARSON

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17 Habits That Will Transform Your Life

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Success in life is the result of the regular, habitual actions we take. Once a habit is developed, it takes the guesswork out of acting. You don't have to think about your habits because they are integral to your routine.

This guide comes from 17 key habits I use in my own life. These habits are by no means anything new. However, I have found that these key habits, or tweaks to my daily life, if you will, have resulted in positive transformations in my life—physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and financially. By implementing most or all these habits, I have become:

- Fitter
- Healthier
- More focused
- Less stressed
- More energetic
- Wealthier
- Able to achieve my goals quicker
- Happier with my quality of life daily

You don't have to adopt all these habits at once. Even if you only pick a couple to start with, I can guarantee that you will see profound impacts in your life after consistently sticking with them.

#1 Wake Up Early Every Day

Ben Franklin famously stated: “Early to bed, early to rise makes a man [or woman] healthy, wealthy, and wise.” There is much truth to that statement. For me, waking up early really does help me to be healthy, wealthy, and wise. Waking up early is also a great way for me to demonstrate willpower, as well as start off with a psychological win for the day. Just knowing that I am up and operating earlier than most people is inspiring.

Waking up early also gets my momentum going because I almost always do some form of personal development like exercising or reading. Doing these activities before the distractions and interruptions of the day creates a calmer, more focused flow. Plus, nothing instills self-discipline better than waking up early every day!

Look at your own morning ritual. What time do you get up now? Could you push that back by 15 minutes? Half an hour? An hour? More? You could then use that early rising time to incorporate some of the habits listed below, like exercising, planning your day, meditating, reading, working on another goal, or even getting your workday started earlier.

#2 Exercise or Move First Thing in the Morning

Exercising first thing in the morning boosts your energy throughout the day, improves sleep quality, and gets your metabolism cranking early. Exercise also pumps up endorphins and decreases stress, which leaves you feeling great. Our minds tend to follow how our bodies feel. Exercising helps your body feel good (at least after it’s over), and that will help your mind feel good as well!

My choice of exercise is usually lifting weights, but I incorporate running, swimming, biking, and stretching into my exercise routine as well. I strive to exercise for a minimum of 30 minutes per day, and ideally around 45-60 minutes.

How could you incorporate exercise into your morning routine? What type or types of exercise would you prefer? How much time could you commit to exercising every weekday? Even something as simple as doing yoga for 10 minutes or going for a 15-minute walk is beneficial. If you loathe exercising or have not been successful in the past, start small and incorporate a pleasurable activity into your new routine. For example, create a playlist of your favorite music, listen to a podcast or audiobook you enjoy, or focus on how exercising will make you healthier!

#3 Use Affirmations

Other than physical exercise, using affirmations is one of the quickest and most efficient ways to boost energy. An affirmation is a sentence that you repeat, out loud, about an empowering belief you want to create. The first few times you do it, it may seem awkward and weird, but over time you become more accustomed to it and even come to enjoy doing them. Our brains are constantly tuning into the stories we tell ourselves. Repeat something enough (even if it's not true) and our brains start to believe it. Affirmations are a great way—possibly the only way—to eradicate limiting beliefs and condition more empowering ones.

Some affirmations I use are:

- “I can achieve any goal or dream I desire if I put in the work.”
- “Problems are opportunities for me to grow and develop; I am looking forward to the opportunities problems will bring me today.”
- “God wants me to live from my heart and use my talents to help serve others.”

Brainstorm a list of affirmations to incorporate into your day. Think of some limiting beliefs and create an affirmation for the opposite, empowering belief. For example, a limiting belief could be, “I am not a morning person; getting up early is hard for me.” An affirmation you could create is, “Waking up early is becoming easier and easier for me, day by day. I am turning into a morning person!” I find it helpful to use these formats for creating affirmations:

- I am _____.
- I will _____.
- I let go of _____.

When saying your affirmations, crank up the intensity! Say them with passion! I find playing upbeat music in the background to make the process even more effective. Even if you just say them for 5 minutes a day, you will start to see a tremendous shift in your energy and beliefs. Everyone has at least 5 minutes to devote to this, no matter how busy you are!

#4 Journal and Use Questions to Set Your Focus

Journaling is effective because it slows your mind down. We can't write as fast as we think, and therefore we are forced to become clearer about what we are thinking. Journaling is also a great way to look at the facts. You can see your thoughts in black and white, rather than just having them churn around in your head. Most often, we make problems, stressors, or thoughts bigger in our heads than they are.

I use journaling primarily to set my focus for the day. However, if I am feeling abnormally stressed or trying to think of a solution to a problem, I start journaling to see what comes up. Some of the questions I journal on each day are the following:

- What am I grateful for today?
- What would make today great?
- What outcomes do I want to achieve today?
- How would I act today if it were my last day here on Earth?
- If I can only work 2 hours today, what is the most important task to complete?
- How can I be (insert desired positive emotion here) today?

Are there any questions that you want to journal? What are some regular questions you could journal on to set your daily focus? Feel free to copy the questions I use. Or perhaps you would prefer more of a freeform journaling practice! In that case, simply write down the thoughts, stresses, or things going on in your life to gain some clarity about them.

#5 Review Your Goals Daily

What we continually focus on, we tend to get. As with the journaling practice, when you see your goals written down in black and white (or any color you choose), it's easier to get them conditioned in your brain. Our brains have what is called a Reticular Activating System (RAS), which filters various pieces of information based on what you find important. A common example used to demonstrate this is what happens when you decide to buy a certain car: inevitably, you start seeing that car all over the place! That happens because you have told your brain, "Hey, I would like this. This is important to me." And voila, your brain realizes that it's important to you—so any time information regarding the car comes to you via your senses, your brain makes you aware of it.

I focus on my goals daily as a reminder of what I am currently aiming for in life and to adjust resources to make them a reality. When reviewing my goals, I pay particular attention to my short-term 90-day goals and long-term 12-month+ goals. That way, I'm primed to think about my immediate work and the bigger picture.

If you don't have a list of goals (either short-term or long-term), start by drafting those first. Use the SMART format to set your goals. A SMART goal is one that is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Based. Write your goals down or look at them daily—ideally in the morning. Keep repeating your goals to activate your RAS so it will get to work on helping you achieve those goals quicker!

#6 Plan Out Your Days/Weeks and Your Daily/Weekly Priorities

One of my favorite quotes regarding planning comes from Dwight Eisenhower: “I find all plans useless but planning to be indispensable.” This is my view as well. Even though my days rarely go the way I plan them, the art of planning is critical to helping me prioritize what needs to get done and filtering the innumerable demands that come my way. It’s also a great reminder of what my goals are and what actions I need to take to stay on track.

I spend 10-15 minutes planning each day, and an hour on Mondays planning the week. I start by briefly reviewing my goals or vision in the various areas of my life. I then “dump” all my daily or weekly to-dos into a master list, including both proactive and reactive items. Proactive items don’t necessarily have to get done but would move me forward on my goals (these are important but not urgent items). Reactive items are things I need to do to manage the demands of others and my businesses (mostly urgent items). After that, I categorize or organize my list into various categories and estimate the duration of each task. Finally, I prioritize the order they need to be done in and highlight the top 3-5 items that must get done.

What format could you use to plan your day and create daily or weekly priorities? Do you have a planner or other system to use to keep track of everything? I recently started using an Excel file as my planner, because my other planners were getting too cluttered and it’s much easier to move items around. Try out various planning systems until you find what works for you!

#7 Practice Meditation/Mindfulness

When they hear the words “meditation” or “mindfulness,” some people think of monks out in the middle of the woods, sitting in the full lotus position. Others (including me) view meditation/mindfulness as an exercise that benefits your brain, attention span, and focus. You could even include visualization in this habit as well!

My goal for my meditation habit is increasing awareness: paying attention to my thoughts and controlling them in ways that serve me. I do this for about 15 minutes per day, although the time is subject to change depending on what the day calls for. I either focus on my breath, things I am grateful for, or use the time to visualize.

There are several meditation apps that are great for someone new to the practice, such as Headspace or Calm. I would advise downloading one and trying it for a few weeks to see how it works for you. You probably won’t notice much of a difference for the first 7-10 days but stick with it! Over time, you will see noticeable improvements, especially if you practice every day.

#8 Connect with God Via Prayer, a Devotional, or Informational Content

I believe we are spiritual beings having a human experience. Our true nature, deep down, is a spiritual one. Yet this nature is often neglected in the West—and it craves nourishment. We are so focused on jobs, goals, health, being a parent, finances, family, and friends that we rarely connect with this part of ourselves. Make connecting with your spirituality on a regular basis a priority.

I alternate the medium for this one a lot. I often pray, complete a devotional, or watch parts of a sermon. Connecting with my spirituality early in the day helps me focus on what is important in life and to not be so consumed by worldly things. It's also a great spiritual anchor for the day.

What can you do to connect with God or your spirituality? What vehicle would you like to try: praying, reading the Bible, doing a devotional, listening to a sermon, or something else? How much time can you commit to doing this daily?

#9 Drink Lots of Water

Most of us today live in a dehydrated state. Water is life! Often when you feel tired or hungry, you are dehydrated. There are many health benefits to staying hydrated and it's especially important to drink lots of water early in the day. It's amazing how much more energy I have just from drinking plenty of water in the mornings.

I aim to drink at least 32 ounces of water on my morning commute to the gym or at the gym, and then several more glasses over the next couple of hours. I do my best to always have a glass or bottle of water near me for easy access.

Do you need to drink more water on a regular basis? If so, how much? What systems or routines could you put in place to stay hydrated more often?

#10 Eat a Low Carb Breakfast

Everyone's body is different, but I have found that eating a high protein, healthy-fat rich breakfast with limited carbs creates the best energy. When I eat a heavy carb meal (especially early in the mornings), I often feel lethargic. Think of food as fuel and energy! Your first meal of the day will probably be the most important fuel you'll be putting in your body for the day.

Avocados, eggs, and Greek yogurt work well for me. I do my best to stay away from processed foods and carbs. I also have a protein shake and fresh squeezed juice after exercising.

How energizing is your breakfast? Do you feel tired after eating breakfast (or other meals)? Consider adopting a high protein, healthy fat, and low carb breakfast and see how you feel.

#11 Read for a Minimum of 30 Minutes Per Day (Audio or Visual)

Reading is food for your brain. Just as we need physical food to fuel our body and give it the energy to thrive, reading is fuel for our minds. You eat every day because you need energy every day. The same is true for reading: you need to fuel up your mind daily! There are so many insights, ideas, and breakthroughs you can get from reading (especially nonfiction, personal development books) that you will never come across in your day-to-day life.

I read nonfiction for at least 30 minutes per day. When I am pressed for time, I listen to audiobooks or even informational podcasts while I am driving or exercising to get my daily learning in. I am also a voracious note taker and find that taking notes helps me retain what I'm learning.

Is there a specific amount of time that you can commit to learning or reading each day? When would you incorporate it into your schedule? What is the first book you will read or listen to?

#12 Use Do Not Disturb Mode

We live in a world full of distractions. Various companies and people are competing for our attention and are able to reach us quicker than ever before. If you are anything like me, your phone spends much of the day ringing, dinging, and sending you notifications. Each message, call, or email feels urgent: I need to respond quickly or else more problems will ensue. This is a huge strain on productivity.

However, many notifications that feel urgent aren't—it's the interruption and our perceptions that make it seem that way. I have recently started using the Do Not Disturb mode on my iPhone, and my productivity has skyrocketed. With Do Not Disturb on, I have far fewer distractions and am able to better focus on my work. Regular distractions kill your productivity by constantly pulling your focus in different directions. Do Not Disturb mode eliminates the problem!

Could you experiment with Do Not Disturb mode? At what point during the day could you use it? Try using it for an hour at first—you'll find that the world doesn't come to an end even you don't instantly respond to every notification. Build up to using Do Not Disturb mode for the entire workday and see how much more productive you can be.

#13 Set Boundaries Around the Areas of Your Life

The purpose of a boundary is to indicate or limit something. Setting boundaries creates intention, priority, and focus. Without boundaries, we inevitably fall prey to the unpredictable demands on our life. What if the roads didn't have any boundaries? Chaos would ensue! Don't let your life be chaotic because you don't have clearly defined boundaries for work, play, and relationships.

I have created several boundaries for the various areas of my life, and I do my best to stick to them. Some examples of my boundaries are:

- Stopping work around 6 p.m. on 80% of workdays
- Going on a weekly date with my wife
- Not working on Sundays
- Doing my morning routine daily
- Using Fridays to work on important but not urgent things in my life and businesses
- Taking at least one workday off per month to do whatever I want.

What boundaries could you incorporate into your daily or weekly routine? Think through the major areas of your life (health, emotions, relationships, career, finances, spirituality, self care, personal development, etc.) and brainstorm any boundaries you would benefit. What reminders could you set so you will stick by them?

#14 Listen to Informational Podcasts while Driving or Commuting

Why not combine learning with driving? It's amazing how much time we spend driving on a weekly basis, even if you generally work from home like I do. I can cover hours of content per week just by incorporating this habit into my life. You could also listen to podcasts while cooking, doing chores, or exercising. The benefit of doing this is that it won't require you to take any extra time out of your day—you are already doing these activities.

I listen to podcasts when I'm driving (alone), eating, cooking, and cleaning the dishes. I typically listen to topics in real estate, business, entrepreneurship, and any new skills I am trying to learn.

What activities in your daily life could you combine with listening to podcasts? What podcasts would you listen to? If you're committed, search for a few and download several episodes so you are ready to roll.

#15 Track Your Personal (and Business) Expenses and Income

Awareness of your financial situation and spending is vital if you want to change it. The first step to change is always awareness. Tracking your expenses gives you insight into your spending patterns, and seeing those habits shows you how to improve your income or decrease your expenses. You can't manage what you don't measure!

For personal expenses and income, I use the Mint app. You can sync all your bank accounts and credit cards to categorize each transaction. After a few months, Mint starts to recognize your regular expenses and automatically categorizes them, making it even easier to use. I review expenses and income monthly.

How in tune are you with your spending and income? Could you benefit by keeping track of it more closely? If so, think of strategies that will help you gain awareness of your spending and income. If you are married, be sure to include your spouse on this!

#16 Take at Least One Workday Off Per Month to Do Whatever You Want

It's amazing how much energy, new ideas, and productivity I get when I take a weekday off. It seems counterintuitive, but every time I take a weekday off, I ask myself why I don't take more time off from work. This habit works well for me because it creates space and time for me to think and just be. I know that there is nothing else on the agenda and I can step outside the day-to-day minutiae.

I schedule at least one workday off per month on a Monday or Friday, so I have an extra long weekend. Sometimes I schedule out what I want to do for that day, and other times I keep my day completely open to see how it unfolds .

Would it be possible for you to take one workday off per month? What activities would you like to do on your day off? Would it be a structured day, completely open, or a combination of both?

#17 Reflect on Your Goals: What Has Gone Great, What You Can Improve On, and What You Have Learned

Imagine a plane taking off for its destination and never checking the map or coordinating with air traffic control. It would never get to its destination! The same is true for life: if you don't check in, you won't get where you want to go. Measure your progress, celebrate your wins, capture what you learn, and create new strategies to help you reach your goals.

I reflect on my goals and progress on both a weekly and monthly basis. First, I look at the past week or month and think about what went well. I then review my goals to see if I am still on track or need to create a new plan. I also think of what I can improve on and what I have learned.

How can you reflect on your goals, what you've accomplished, what you can improve on, and what you have learned? Where would you put this information so it's easily accessible? How often would you reflect in this way?

Final Thoughts

After reading over these life-changing habits, I hope you are inspired to act! Again, you don't need to try to incorporate all these habits at the same time. Instead, pick 1-3 to focus on for 30 days. After you have incorporated those new habits into your schedule, feel free to add more. I suggest starting with the habits that sound most appealing, or, if you have a limited amount of time, add some that only require a few minutes per day.

Always remember that your success in life is a result of your regular habits. If you'd like help implementing some of these habits or want to take your life or income to the next level, reach out to me! Having someone else to hold you accountable is over half the battle of achieving your goals.

I also created the [Life Transformation Workbook](#) as a guide to implementing positive changes in your life, gaining clarity on what your ideal life would look like, and creating a plan to make it happen.

I wish you the best and hope to meet with you one day!

To Transforming Your Life,

Hunter Carson
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