Toolbox Talks | How to Upgrade Your Morning Routine

A good start to a productive, successful day depends on your morning habits and rituals. Here's how to make your morning routine healthy, inspiring, and best of all, easy — using triggers and habit chaining to kick-start an amazing day.

Ask yourself: When you open your eyes in the morning what do you usually do in the first few minutes. Do you go back to sleep, then reach for your phone and jump out of bed because you're already late? You probably start each day with a few of these: use the restroom, brush your teeth, wash your face, take a shower, get dressed. Think about it, do you mix up the order? Probably not very often. And you're usually on autopilot.

Triggers and Habit Chaining

Each one of these long-standing habits is a trigger that cues the next behavior. A trigger tells your brain to automatically start the next thing in your ritual.[1] By using the power of a long-standing established habit and then adding a tiny, new step to it, you can build a new habit that lasts. This method is called "habit chaining." In its simplest sense, you attach a new habit to an already established one. Willpower and motivation are often not enough to create new habits. The best way is to identify your established triggers and chain new habits onto them.

Add a Tiny Healthy Habit

Think back to your typical morning routine and add a tiny new habit. The tiny habit could be:
• a few mindful breaths
• setting a priority for the day
• a moment of gratitude
• one push-up

Once your tiny habit gets chained to your established triggers, it's easier to expand. So maybe the one push-up turns into five over time. But the beauty of it is, every time you wash your face, the urge to hit that push-up next will start to become a habit.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How do I not get discouraged from missing days in my routine?
Setbacks don't have to be all negative! Sometimes a minor setback can motivate us to try harder for our achievements.

Discussion Questions:

• What is one change you want to incorporate into your morning routine?

• How will you keep yourself accountable for these changes?

[1]The automatic component of habit in health behavior: habit as cue-contingent automaticity, Health Psychology, 2010 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20658824