

————— Join the —————

Morning Club

How to create extraordinary results,
while the rest of the world sleeps.

Hugh Culver

Join the Morning Club—how to create extraordinary results,
while the rest of the world sleeps.

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*Please share this ebook. I wrote it for the benefit of anyone that wants
to create great results in their day. If you know of someone that would
benefit from reading it, please forward it to them. Thanks.*

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Chapter 1

Join the Morning Club

I'm writing this at 6:00AM – and I'm loving it.

For a long time I have been ranting about getting up early to jump start your morning. I rant on to friends, family, and from the main stage, as a speaker. Sometimes my audience will nod politely in agreement, sometimes I get that yeah-right-skinny-guy look, and sometimes they just laugh.

But, I'm convinced that if they joined the Morning Club they would be hooked.

The idea is pretty simple. Get up early (maybe even really early) and get work done work. It could be reading, writing, meditation, walking your dog, or exercise. It doesn't matter - the trick is to do things that won't get done any other time of day.

Maybe this sounds like you?

For many years I was frustrated. I wanted to be productive and to work on special projects, but there didn't seem to be enough time. I would wake up before everyone in my house (I've always been an early riser) and then scramble through a bit of writing, some exercise, maybe update my plan, and reading some blogs. It didn't matter what I did, I always felt rushed, frustrated, and anxious. Not only was I frustrated, my wife was irritated by rushing about and whirling dervish-like energy. Double whammy.

Finally it dawned on me if I wanted to make my mornings productive I needed to employ the same planning discipline I relied on during the day. Decide what I wanted, make a plan, and follow the plan. Leaving it to chance was a recipe for disaster.

So, I joined the Morning Club.

How to join the Morning Club

The Morning Club is open to anyone. It's for people who put a high value on creating their best day possible, every day. Membership is free (unless I come up with a scheme to make millions from this idea.) The best way to join the Morning Club is with a routine.

Doing what ever you feel like won't work—you'll soon be frustrated and, or worse, leave the Club all together. It took me a while to perfect my routine, but now I rely on it every day.

The first change I had to make was to go to bed earlier. You can't "burn the candle at both ends," as my Dad used to say.

I noticed that although I love the quiet of the house after everyone else goes to bed, I was done. I was too tired to read a book (clue: if you are reading the same paragraph three times, you're tired), or write anything that was coherent. The only thing I could do successfully was watch some mindless cop show—a total waste of time.

I started by going to bed by 11:00 PM - that was about an hour earlier than I was used to. It didn't take long for me to realize that 10:30 is a better goal and 10:00 is ideal.

This was a huge shift in my routine. Getting to sleep by 10:00-10:30PM meant that by 5:00AM I was wide awake and raring to go. The extra hour, or two, of sleep was what my mind and body had been craving and the simple shift to hitting the each earlier changed everything.

The trick is to train yourself to sleep when you want to.

Chapter 2

Getting to Sleep

There's lots of advice available on getting more sleep - it's a big problem for many people. My wife has had a terrible time with this for many years. And I've witnessed how hard that can be on someone who loves to help other people and enjoys being fit and active.

In extreme cases you might need medical help, or therapy to improve your sleep patterns. In many cases, some basic changes will help you to get more ZZZZ's. Here are ones I've used with success:

Stop eating after 9:00PM

Eating stimulates your digestive system, including putting your intestinal muscles to work and can keep you awake. To test this try snacking on potato chips, chocolate, or sunflower seeds late at night and notice if you feel more awake. I like to stop eating after 9:00PM and switch to green tea. When I am prepping for a keynote the next day the temptation is to pull out a chocolate bar. I might get a bit more work done, but I always feel sick in the morning. The best plan is to stop eating early, allow the body to go into a natural digestive cycle and get to bed early.

Turn technology off

One study found that 40 percent of American say they rarely get a decent night of sleep during the work week. The percentage who used electronics within an hour of going to bed was 95 percent (this includes the television, video games, cell phone, and computer.) Checking Facebook status updates or the news stimulates brain activity that can disrupt sleep patterns. Not only that, the unnatural light coming from television screens and computer monitors prevents the production of neurotransmitters, needed to control our sleep time. The solution is simple—put down the digital screen and pick up a book.

Make a list

Thinking and worrying about what you need to get done won't help you get to sleep. Before I head to bed, I make a short list of what I need to do as soon as I wake up. I also jot down any last minute thoughts to get them off my mind. The more I record what I'm thinking about the better my sleep.

When I am traveling (I am on the road for speaking engagements about 45 times a year) I write down both the time and what I need to do so I can stay on track, in whatever time zone I'm in, and be on time to meet my client.

Create a pattern

The Mayo Clinic recommends you create a consistent pattern to reinforce your body's sleep-wake cycle. This ties in with your natural circadian rhythm, which repeats every 24 hours. The more consistent you are, the more your body will fall into a natural routine and prepare itself for sleep. They also recommend that if you don't fall asleep within about 15 minutes, to get up, do something relaxing, and then go back to bed when you are tired. For me, reading a chapter in a novel can be an instant cure for insomnia.

Chapter 3

Welcome to my Morning Club

Your Morning Club will look different from mine - that's a good thing. Everyone should create their own routine that works best for them. It took me about a year to massage my routine into the one I use now. And I love it. Even when I'm travelling for a speaking engagement, and regardless of when I arrive at my hotel, I wake up at 5:00AM and follow a version of my routine.

Here's my Morning Club routine:

5:00 roll out of bed. Drink a tall glass of water and stretch while the water boils for my tea. Make a big mug of D.F. Culver tea (a wicked blend of Dargeeling, Assam, and Ceylon my Dad concocted some 40 years ago—I order it from the same tea house he used).

5:10 open up the project I'm going to work on. This might be a blog post, keynote presentation, a client proposal, or show notes to a podcast. Ideally, it's a project that's already started with a mind map, or draft.

7:00 stand up (see below, this is very important).

7:05 Out the door with my dog, Riley for a fast walk

7:45 Feed Riley, head to basement for 15 minute strength training workout

8:00 Eat, shave, shower and all that stuff. Breakfast with family.

8:45 Out the door to drop one daughter off at school

9:10 In my office. 10 minutes to check email, Facebook, Twitter, Google+

9:20 – 10:30 This is when I do about one half of the hard work for the day. I call it the “hardest 50% in the first 90 minutes. ([Watch my video here](#)) No email, no social media, just client calls, proposals, and work that makes me money.

It's very important that I stick to my plan. At 7:00AM I stand up, regardless of what I'm in the middle of, and head to the door. If I don't, momentum takes over and my routine starts to unravel. It took me a long time to learn how important this is. Keep my promises on the small commitments and the big commitments follow, all day.

Think of this routine as just an example—it's what works for me. Next, I'll walk you through how to create your own Morning Club.

Chapter 4

Create your own Morning Club

The first change I recommend for people wanting to create their own Morning Club is to decide when to go to sleep. Easier said than done, but essential if you want to get up earlier (read my tips on getting sleep, above).

If you aren't sure, I would work backwards from when you want to wake up. I like to wake up at 5:00AM. The world is silent, there is a creative feeling to that time of day that I love digging into. And I know I need six and a half to seven hours of sleep to operate at my best—less than that and I notice it. For me that means in bed and asleep by 10:00-10:30PM.

Next, list what you want to accomplish in your Morning Club. My general rule is to do activities and work that won't get done any other time of day. A great question to ask (I think I heard this first from the late Steven Covey) is “What could I do, that I'm not doing now, that if I did it well and did it consistently would make a significant difference in my day?” For me, that's writing.

I want to write a blog every week, “show notes” every week for my podcast Expert's Enterprise, proposals for my speaking work, email invitations to our events, and articles and ebooks (like this one.) Writing serves my clients and allows me to grow my following and business. So, it's an investment that has a high return for me—I need to make it happen, and on a regular basis.

I learned a long time ago that my sweet spot for writing is first thing in the morning. I can literally get twice as much quality writing done in the morning, compared to any other time of day.

Here are suggested activities for you:

- writing in your journal
- writing a blog
- working on your next book (or your first one)
- completing a client proposal
- reading an inspirational quotation, poetry, or book
- exercise for fitness or fun

- mind mapping a new video project
- catching up on more creative work, like: water color, playing your guitar, graphic design, or writing poetry
- walking your dog (my dog, Riley, and I log at least 45 minutes a day of exercise together)
- meditation or yoga

You can mix and match, do a combination of activities, change the activities—what ever. The trick is to plan ahead and plan for activities that you won't get done any other time of day.

Chapter 5

How to be uber-productive at the Club

The last thing you want to do when joining a new club is to quit for the wrong reasons. So, I've put together a list for you of tricks I use to get the most from my visits, and be uber-productive every morning:

1. Create a routine

It might take a few weeks to perfect this, but a routine you repeat is much, much better than some ad hoc bunch of activities. I am always changing the actual work I'm doing, but I don't change the basic timing, or routine. The more predictable your routine is, the easier it is to keep it.

2. Make a list the night before

This only take two minutes, but it's essential. Just before you head to bed, make a quick list of what you will do in the morning. If you want to write your blog, write it down. If you want to read a chapter of *"How to Win Friends and Influence People"*, write it down. I know my brain needs instructions in the morning, and just before going to bed is the time to record those.

3. Set time milestones

When I get engaged in a writing project, or I'm walking with my dog, it's easy for me to get carried away and lose track of time. Not good. I feel the most successful when I hit a home run on my plans. So I note the timing for each task (see Welcome to my Morning Club, above.) When I'm on the road for speaking engagements, my routine is usually shorter and I'm dealing with a time zone change, so I also note the timing of each step in my routine. My rule is to move onto what's next on the list, regardless of where I'm at in the current task (see below.)

4. Stick to your list

If you plan to switch from writing, or reading (or whatever) at 7:00AM, DO IT. Don't wait even another minute. Procrastination loves to find a crack in your armour and expand it. If the time is up for my writing, I stop and move on. It's all a part of creating success for my whole day. And it works.

Nailing my morning routine gives me a positive outlook on the day and reminds me that a little hard work and lots of discipline pays off.

5. Reward yourself

All successful habits include a reward. It could be a virtual pat on the back, recording on a calendar, or just a moment to thank yourself all can register a positive reward. When I head back to my house from my walk or workout for breakfast on time, having successfully completed my Morning Club routine I feel fantastic. I like to review the morning, thank myself for sticking to my plan, and appreciate how great I feel having kick started my day the way I did. It doesn't take much, but that moment of gratitude is a huge part of why I'm still a member of the Morning Club.

Chapter 6

My 15 minute hotel room workout

Hat tip to fitness expert Craig Ballatyne for this one - I call it my 15 minute hotel room workout, and it's awesome. The idea is to squeeze in a solid, heart-pumping workout in only 15 minutes.

When I'm at home there's usually lots of time to enjoy an hour on the trail, or interval training on my surfski, but not when I'm on the road. My morning is when I do my final preparation for my keynote presentation and that's precious time I need for last minute changes and to rehearse. So time is limited for exercise, but I need something physical to energize my body for the day.

I used to always pack my running/gym gear and try to get to the hotel gym or head out for a run. But, more often than naught I would arrive on a late flight, be bushed from a long day of work and travel and not have the time or energy for a proper workout. The 15 minute hotel room workout is the perfect solution if you want to enjoy some exercise, don't have a lot of time, and don't know what the hotel will have for a fitness centre. Here's how it works.

The last thing I do, before heading to the shower, is set the countdown timer on my watch for 15 minutes. My plan is to get the maximum workout possible, in only 15 minutes and only using what's available in my hotel room. Each set (I usually do three sets) depends on what's available, but typically looks like this:

- 20 step-ups onto a foot stool or chair (10 leading with each leg).
- standing side stretch with arms stretched out over head
- 20 inverted push-ups (my feet are on a chair)
- 10 squats, or step forward into squat, alternating on each side
- forward bend - hold for 30 seconds
- side plank - 30 seconds each side (body rigid, like a plank, balanced on side of feet and one elbow, hold)
- back bend - hold for 30 seconds
- 10 burpees (stand with hands stretched above your head, drop to a crouch position, then hop into a plank, push up, and spring to feet again.)

By the time I've gone through three sets, I feel great—my heart is pumping, my muscles are awake, and I'm ready for the day. I'm not getting the aerobic workout that I get from 45 to 60 minutes in the hotel gym, or a run, but I feel fit—I'm wide awake, and full of energy for the day.

In only 15 minutes I got everything I need and I'm on time with my Morning Club routine. Awesome!

Chapter 7

Maybe I'm just insane

Maybe you think I'm a bit insane (that's another club, actually.) Some people have complained my Morning Club advice is making our sleep deprived society worse off. Really? I would argue if you are sleep deprived you have a different problem and it's time you had start experimenting with new routines. And soon.

The Morning Club isn't for everyone. I'm sure some people simply can't get up earlier. Great, this isn't for them. But, if you are still reading this, then I'm guessing it could be for you.

My Morning Club (you can join anytime) accomplishes three goals that are important to me:

1. gets work done that I literally cannot get done any other time of day
2. provides consistent exercise (not just when I feel like it)
3. build willpower

I am convinced that the most successful people (however you want to measure "success") have strong willpower. They say "No" to opportunities that don't meet their goals, they constantly review their goals and measure their success, they choose who they associate with (and who they don't), and they are disciplined about their time.

That's all about willpower.

Why we need more willpower muscle

The recent research on willpower is fascinating. We now know that willpower, our ability to resist temptations, stick to our plans, and overcome procrastination can be learned. In fact, willpower is like a muscle.

Researchers have discovered something amazing about willpower and our ability to create more willpower. We can manufacture it.

When subjects in one experiment were given a free pass to a gym and invited to use it as often as they wanted, something remarkable happened. Not only did they start to exercise more (most of the subjects went from no

exercise to three times a week), they drank less alcohol, smoked less, ate better, and slept better. What?!?

It turns out that if you strengthen willpower in one area of life (like joining the Morning Club) you strengthen it in other areas of your life.

In another experiment, subjects (who were selected because they were obese) were asked to simply record everything they ate over a two week period. Again, the results were amazing. Not only did they eat less food and eat better food, they also watched less TV, spent less money, smoked less, drank less, and slept better. And they weren't asked to make any of those changes!

Joining the Morning Club is about results, but it's also about willpower. I am convinced that my morning routine is pivotal to setting me up for success for the day. I feel better about myself and my ability to keep promises with myself, and I feel ready to make good decisions.

Best of all, I get control

My Morning Club (you are ready to join, aren't you?) puts me in control. Sure, it's regimented, and bit crazy, but it works. When I arrive at my office I feel fantastic. I have finished a big piece of work that will add value to my followers and clients and I have kept a series of small promises with myself.

A feeling of control is a major determining factor for good health. The more you feel you are successful at making good decisions and keeping commitments the more likely you are to enjoy good health. Conversely, breaking promises, allowing others to make decisions for you, procrastinating, and negative self-talk is poison to your health and success.

My Morning Club is all about determining what is best for me and my success and committing to that routine every day. I get the obvious benefits of regular exercise and my writing practice, but I also get a sense of control. That's huge.

Chapter 8

What's next

I know my Morning Club has changed my life. I am more productive (consistently) and I'm in charge of my day. It's a no wonder I recommend the Morning Club to anyone that wants to create more real results and a richer life.

Now, what about you?

I'm impressed that you are here, on this page. That tells me something about you - you value learning and seeking new, better solutions to old problems. That's what the Morning Club is all about.

And I know what I'm recommending is not easy for everyone. You might have to get to bed earlier. Or be more disciplined about your morning routine. And it might take a while for the new routine to settle in and become a habit.

Hang in there.

The pay off you can experience from a new discipline can be fantastic - even life changing. It has been for me.

Are you ready to join the Morning Club?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugh". The letters are cursive and slanted to the right.

BONUS MATERIALS

If you are really keen on joining the Morning Club, here are some resources that will help you get that membership.

My Friday 15 routine for planning your week (video).

My blog about joining the Morning Club.

My Time Freedom Formula on-line, 7-day transformational training program

My book *Give me a Break - the art of making time work for you.*

Kelly McGonigal's excellent book *The Willpower Instinct*

My book Go with the Flow – *the secret of matching work to energy and get more done, more easily.*