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## Overhaul Your Morning Routine

**D**on't slug through a morning routine that barely gets you out the door. Maximize your routine for improved work-life productivity. The payoff will be a happier you. More excitement about goals, a better mood, improved health, and finding more meaning in your job can all flow from an optimized morning routine. Experiment with a few tweaks, and keep notes about any positive impacts on yourself. Everyone is different, so don't simply copy an online "do this" formula. Whether it is drinking a glass of water first thing after awakening, avoiding the snooze button, doing 20 pushups, making your bed without fail, or meditation—hundreds of ideas exist. Some will be perfect for you. Start at [www.inc.com](http://www.inc.com) (search "morning routine ideas").



## Is Loneliness a Health Problem?

**C**hronic loneliness can have negative health effects, so CIGNA surveyed 20,000 Americans to gauge the prevalence of this emotion. One in five respondents reported no close relationships at all, and one in four reported having no one with whom they can have a meaningful conversation. Those aged 18-22—despite their proficiency with social media—report being most lonely. Loneliness is a symptom of a larger problem, because those less lonely reported getting more sleep, spending more time with family, not overworking, and getting proper exercise. If loneliness affects you, take action, engage, or get counseling to overcome it.



Source: [www.multivu.com](http://www.multivu.com) (search "health," then "CIGNA loneliness").

## Gardening and Stress Management

**W**hether it is one square foot or half of a backyard, gardening is a known stress reliever. Some vegetables are easy to grow and nearly impossible to flub, like green bush beans. With a few seeds, a tiny garden space can give you a healthy distraction, the surprise of sprouts, a bit of entertainment, some amazement and wonder, a healthy food, a positive experience in a hectic day, a goal to achieve, something to nurture, and something to share—all for a buck! It's spring, go for it.



Resource: [ydr.com](http://ydr.com) [Search "gardening stress"].

## Mind-altering Drugs on the Internet

**T**here is a world of illicit drug selling online. No, not necessarily the dark web, but on open Web sites that offer hallucinogens like Spice/K2, psilocybin mushrooms, "bath salts," and other dangerous substances. Many drugs sold are manufactured compounds with formulas that avoid strict illegal definitions, but they can be even more dangerous. Salvia divinorum, which is illegal in only 29 states, can create a temporary psychosis so disturbing that non-users must be nearby to protect the user from self-harm. If you are a parent, insist on the ability to access your child's electronic devices, know what apps are on phones, track credit card use, and inspect packages that arrive at your home.



# Making Decisions Is a Life Skill

**We** all make decisions, but making decisions is a skill with identifiable steps. Try not to muddle through on decisions, especially big ones. Small decisions, like what color socks to wear, are easy. But big decisions with big consequences can provoke anxiety or dread. There is a way to make big decisions easier and be happier with their result. With your next big decision, rather than ask others what you should do, procrastinate, or make a decision in haste to overcome the angst, try the following:

- 1) Don't delay the process of working on the decision. Dedicate focused time with a deadline for action.
- 2) Make decisions with a drug-free, rested, well-fed, and rational state of mind.
- 3) When making decisions, facts rule. Emotions and your gut feeling come second.
- 4) If neutral experts are available as resources, use them. This includes professional counselors. They can help you stay objective.
- 5) Before weighing options toward a decision, ask, "Do I have all the information to consider a decision?"
- 6) Think, compare, and evaluate options.
- 7) All decisions are associated with some risk. Know these risks before choosing an option in the decision path.
- 8) Make the decision.
- 9) Evaluate the outcome, effects, and consequences after implementing your decision.
- 10) Respond or adjust if possible or needed.



# Should You Get Up Earlier?

**You** may hear time management gurus insist that getting up at 5 a.m. amounts to secret sauce for increasing personal productivity. Proponents of morning solitude argue that this time of day allows you to focus better on key issues, take advantage of your best mental state, and achieve more as you make key decisions before the distractions of the day begin. Author Robin Sharma, a productivity coach, calls this "the 5 a.m. club." Launching yourself before the rest of world awakens may have advantages, but here's a tip—experiment first with getting up 15 minutes earlier than usual. You may discover magic in that small amount of time and get all the benefits of an early riser. If desired, add more time. Decide what you will do with these golden minutes or hours; otherwise, you may find yourself heading back to bed.



# What Happened to Your Great Idea?

**C**hances are good that you had an amazing idea in the past but didn't act on it. Where would you be now if you had? Awareness of the common reasons people don't act on great ideas may empower you the next time your inner genius strikes. New ideas often challenge the status quo and, when examined, feel as if they are outside your comfort zone. To act with determination, decide to overcome

- 1) fear of failure – what you imagine will happen if the idea flops;
- 2) fear of success – apprehension about what will be different if you succeed;
- 3) procrastination – this postpones or avoids the pain of #1 or #2;
- 4) depression and anxiety – these conditions undermine excitement (seek evaluation/treatment if you suspect that they are holding you back); and
- 5) inertia – the tendency to do nothing or have things remain unchanged is its own force for inaction.



# Emotional Stress and Traffic Accidents

**D**oes emotional stress increase

your chances of being in an automobile accident? In fact, some research has shown that certain types of stress increase your risk more than others. The highest likelihood of an automobile accident has been associated with marital separation or divorce, a child leaving home, and a hospitalized partner. Positive stress associated with a large purchase or a raise at work can also increase risk. What's the takeaway? It's awareness for distracted driving. If negative states of emotions linger, consider managing them with professional counseling. It could be a safety issue.

