



FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

"One of life's most painful moments comes when we must admit that we didn't do our homework, that we are not prepared." ~ Merlin Olsen

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The Miracle Morning

Renew thyself completely each day; do it again and again, and forever again. ~ Chinese inscription (cited by Henry David Thoreau in Walden)

You've got to get up every morning with determination if you're going to go to bed with satisfaction. ~ George Lorimer

Your first ritual that you do during the day is the highest leveraged ritual, by far, because it has the effect of setting your mind, and setting the context, for the rest of your day. ~ Eben Pagan

Personal development guru Jim Rohn wrote that in order to get the things you want in life, you must first become the person you need to be. You have to spend time, energy and money on a continuous program of personal development. Ideally, you should have a daily personal development routine that prepares your body and mind for the day, and allows you to grow to become the person you need to be in order to reach your goals.

Usually, the best time to do this is early in the morning when you're fresh and well-rested and the rest of your household is still asleep (so there's no noise, distractions, or needs that have to be met). Doing your personal growth routine early in the morning ensures that it gets done and gets your day off to a great start. Another personal development

guru (Steve Pavlina) wrote, “...the first hour is the rudder of the day.”

I recently finished reading The Miracle Morning: The Not-So-Obvious Secret Guaranteed to Transform Your Life Before 8AM by Hal Elrod. (This is the first book in a [15-book series](#), with one for each major profession; I'm currently reading the one for writers. You can also watch [The Miracle Morning documentary](#).)

Hal has had to go through several terrible ordeals, including being horribly mangled and almost killed in a head-on collision with a drunk driver (and subsequently dumped by his girlfriend), his publisher fleeing the country with his book royalties, and being diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. Through it all, he remained surprisingly grateful, resilient and optimistic.

Elrod begins the book by stating that 95% of people settle for a life of mediocrity and regrets: “...the average person takes life one day at a time, and has no higher purpose beyond merely surviving. Most people just focus on getting through the day, taking the path of least resistance, and pursuing short term, short-lived pleasures along the way, while avoiding any pain or discomfort that might cause them to grow.”

He then identifies the causes of mediocrity and the solutions:

1. Rearview Mirror Syndrome: “We mistakenly believe that who we *were* is who we *are*, thus limiting our true potential in the present, based on the limitations of our past.”
2. Lack of purpose. Elrod lives “every day in alignment with my two life purposes [to become the person I need to be, and to add value to the lives of others]--constantly, consciously aligning my thoughts, words and actions with each purpose....”
3. Isolating incidents: “...mistakenly assuming that each choice we make, and each individual action we take, is only affecting that particular moment, or circumstance....every single thought, choice, and action is determining *who we are becoming*, which will ultimately determine the quality of our lives. As T. Harv Eker [wrote]...‘How you do anything is how you do everything’.” This reminds me of a point that Scott Adams made in How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big: It's helpful to be very good at something such as a sport, because you tend to bring that same level of intensity and excellence into other areas of your life.
4. Lack of accountability. I've heard of several ways to hold yourself accountable. First, you could publicly announce (say, on social media) that you plan to do something by a certain date. But this only works with a major goal, there is no accountability for the daily tasks or weekly milestones that have to get done along the way, perhaps no one will follow up with you to verify that you did in fact do what you said you would, and you may be less likely to reach your goal because your brain will want to take credit for what you say that Future You will do. Second, you could set up an arrangement where you will automatically make a significant payment to an organization that you strongly dislike if you don't reach your goal in

time; this method has similar shortcomings as the first. The approach I like best is to find an accountability partner, but it may be difficult to find such a person as it will probably require daily or weekly contact from someone who knows you well and cares about you. A great book about this is Done and Done: The Power of Accountability Partnering for Reaching Your Goals by Annette Lyon.

5. A mediocre circle of influence. Elrod writes, “Who you spend your time with may be the single most determining factor in the person you become and in your quality of life....One of the most important commitments you will ever make is to proactively and continuously improve your circle of influence. Always seek people who will add value to your life and bring out the best in you. And...be that person for others.” One of my daily affirmations is “I surround myself with positive, successful, helpful people.” Avoid energy vampires, as their toxic attitude is contagious.
6. Lack of personal development. Personal development guru Jim Rohn wrote, “Your level of success will rarely exceed your level of personal development, because success is something you attract by the person you become.” Elrod continues that thought: “...the problem is that most of us aren't investing time each day into developing ourselves into the 'Level 10' people that we need to be....when we fail to make time for personal development, we are forced to make time for pain and struggle.”
7. Lack of urgency. Elrod writes, “...the single most significant cause of mediocrity and unfulfilled potential...is that people have no sense of urgency to improve themselves so they can improve their lives.” Again, one of my daily affirmations is “I seize each day and act with urgency.”

Elrod includes a chapter of increasing your wake-up-motivation-level, which includes these recommendations:

- Set your intentions before going to bed. I've been tracking this in my daily habit tracker, but I struggle to differentiate one day from the next.
- Move your alarm clock across the room, so you can't hit the snooze button (and thus start your day in a cloud of negative energy and send a message to your subconscious that it's OK to resist living your life).
- Wash your face. I find that the cold water helps me perk up.
- Drink a full glass of water. I try to drink as much as I can, as I need to rehydrate after eight hours of sleep.
- Get dressed in your workout clothes (if exercise is part of your morning routine). I often exercise later in the day due to my schedule, but one of the first things I do every morning is a series of stretches and mobility movements.

Elrod wanted to know how the most successful people start their day, so he researched their habits and discovered six (which he calls SAVERS) that many of them had in common, something that entrepreneur and self-made multimillionaire Eben Pagan calls a *personal success ritual*. This is the core of the book.

S is for silence, which is about creating an optimum state of mind: “Silence is one of the best ways to immediately reduce stress, while increasing your self-awareness and gaining the clarity that will allow you to maintain your focus on your goals [and] priorities....” Silence could include Thinking Time, meditation (or some other form of mindfulness) or prayer. Elrod writes, “Study after study shows that meditation can be more effective than *medication*. Studies link regular meditation to improvements in metabolism, blood pressure, brain activity, and other bodily functions. It can alleviate stress and pain, promote sleep, enhance focus and concentration, and even increase lifespan.” This is something that I struggle with, as when I do try to meditate, I’m often interrupted, and I don’t seem to get much out of it. I’m reading several books about it, however.

A is for affirmations, which “allow you to design and then develop the mindset (thoughts, beliefs, focus) that you need to take any area of your life to the next level....Your self-talk has dramatic influence on your level of success in every aspect of your life....when you actively design and write out your affirmations to be in alignment with what you want to accomplish and who you need to be to accomplish it—and commit to repeating them daily (ideally *out loud*)--they immediately make an impression on your subconscious mind.... You can use affirmations to start programming yourself to be confident and successful in everything you do, simply by repeatedly telling yourself who you want to be, what you want to accomplish and how you are going to accomplish it. With enough repetition, your subconscious mind will begin to believe what you tell it, act upon it, and eventually manifest it in your reality.”

I have found that repeating my affirmations (I use an app called “I Am”) first thing in the morning helps keep me focused by reminding me of the tasks I need to do each day in order to reach my long-term goals. I try to avoid phrasing my affirmations in such a way that they are really *aspirations*—things I’m shooting for that haven’t come true yet—though I do see the potential of a “fake it ‘til you make it” approach. So most of my affirmations are about things I need to do each day, such as “I take a long walk every day.” Reciting the affirmation reminds me that I need to do that, and since I do it every day, my brain believes it, which reinforces it into a habit. Be sure to revise your affirmations as your life and goals change.

V is for visualization, which “refers to the practice of seeking to generate positive results in your outer world by using your imagination to create mental pictures of specific behaviors and outcomes occurring in your life.” I’ve heard of serious athletes doing this, but frankly, I can’t get into it and don’t think it’s a good use of my time. Some people create vision boards, which is “a poster board on which you post images of what you want to have, who you want to become, what you want to do, where you want to live, etc.” But as one psychologist wrote, “Vision boards are for dreaming, [action boards](#) are for achieving.” What I plan to do instead is fill my office with art, artifacts and mementos that inspire and speak to me.

E is for exercise. Elrod writes, “When you exercise for even a few minutes every morning [you can spend as little as one to 20 minutes on it] it significantly boosts your energy, enhances your health, improves self-confidence and emotional well-being, and enables you to think better and concentrate longer.” Exercise gets your blood flowing and oxygenates your blood, so your brain can think better. It also boosts your mood for up to 12 hours (so you'll be able to enjoy more of that benefit if you exercise early). And if you exercise outside first thing in the morning, you'll get exposure to early morning sunlight, which will synch your internal clock (which is not completely accurate) and help you sleep better that night.

After I play pickleball for a couple of hours, shower and drink my nutrition shake, I am physically and mentally primed to focus and do my best Deep Work. Exercise is an investment in your long-term health, for as Robin Sharma wrote, “If you don't make time for exercise, you'll probably have to make time for illness.”

R is for reading, which “is the fast track to transforming any area of your life. It is one of the most immediate methods for acquiring the knowledge, ideas and strategies you need to achieve Level 10 success in any area of your life....With an almost infinite amount of books available on every topic, there are no limits to the knowledge you can gain through daily reading.” Mark Twain wrote, “A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't read.” Elrod says that if you don't read, you're “missing out on the unlimited supply of knowledge, boundless growth and life changing ideas [you] could gain from some of the most brilliant, successful individuals in the world.” My favorite part of my morning personal success ritual is reading books about personal development for at least half an hour. If you'd like more advice and tips about reading, see [Financial Preparedness Issue #9: Books](#).

S is for scribing (or writing), which you can use to capture ideas, express gratitude, think things through and gain clarity, or keep a record of your life so you can review it at a later date and see your progress, discover insights or learn lessons. Some people write a fair amount in a journal. What little I do write fits easily in my daily planner.

Elrod concludes the book with chapters on a 7-minute Miracle Morning (for mornings when you're pressed for time), customizing your Miracle Morning, habits, a 30-day “Habit Mastery” strategy, a 30-day Life Transformation Challenge, and The Email That Will Change Your Life.

Finally, I want to leave you with this thought: If you're like me, you spent your years of formal schooling (primarily in government schools) learning about such useful information as fifth declension Latin nouns, the atomic weights of atoms, the phyla of the animal kingdom, and how to square dance (in PE class). How much time did you spend learning about habits?

Elrod writes, “There's no class offered in school called *Habit Mastery*. There should be. Such a course would probably be more important to your success and overall quality of life than *all of the other courses combined*....Considering that our habits create our life, there is arguably no single skill that is more important for you to learn and master than

controlling your habits. You must identify, implement and maintain the habits necessary for creating the results you want in life, while learning how to let go of any negative habits which are holding you back from achieving your true potential....If you don't control your habits, your habits will control you.”

What You Should Be Doing Now

1. If you don't have a daily personal success ritual, read *The Miracle Morning* (and/or watch the documentary) and devote some time to developing and implementing one ASAP.
2. Documentary to watch: [The Booksellers](#) on Amazon Prime Video.

Question For You

If you have a morning personal success ritual, what do you do? [Let me know!](#)

Your Answers

Last week I asked what you put in your nutrition shake. One reader replied:

"[Whey protein](#) (28g), 7 amino acids (criticals only), [collagen](#), flax seed, chia seed, [kale](#), [spinach](#), [strawberry](#), [blueberry](#), [raspberry](#), [50 superfoods concentrate](#), avocado, banana, Vitamin C, B complex, salmon oil, Vitamin D3, ginkgo, magnesium, turmeric, [peanut butter powder](#) (no fat), algae from Hawaii, local honey, red beet (every other day), [açai berry juice](#) 50% cut with [Pom pomegranate juice](#) to equal total above to 700 ml. I am 70 years old, take no medication, weigh 160 lbs., exercise 3 hours daily (weights, pickleball, brisk walking), meditation twice per day (part of morning ritual and evening before bed). So far, so good.”

One thing I forgot to mention in last week's issue about superfoods and nutrition shakes: With so many different foods and supplements in my shake, how do I know that I'm getting enough (or not too much) of each vitamin, mineral, etc.? I'm a spreadsheet poet, so I created a spreadsheet and just entered the numbers from each nutrition label (I also include other food I eat daily). The spreadsheet sums the numbers and I compare them to the amount recommended by Dr. Mercola or some other credible/knowledgeable expert (but NOT the recommended daily allowance from the federal government).

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I would love to hear from you! I thrive on feedback from readers. If you have any comments, suggestions, insight/wisdom, or you'd like to share a link to a great article, please [email me](#).

Generally, I don't have time to answer questions about your specific situation, but if you have a general question that I think other readers also have, [let me know](#) and I will

provide an answer in a future issue.

Feel free to forward this to a friend. If you would like to subscribe (it's free!) or unsubscribe, [email me](#) with either “subscribe” or “unsubscribe” in the subject line.

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Investments carry risk, are not guaranteed, and do fluctuate in value, and you can lose your entire investment. Past performance is not indicative of future performance. You should not invest in something you don't understand, or put all of your eggs in one basket.

Before starting a new diet or exercise regimen, you should consult with a doctor, nutritionist, dietician, or personal trainer.

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