

Make Time is not about productivity. It's not about getting more done, finishing your to-dos faster, or outsourcing your life. Instead, it's a framework designed to help you actually create more time in your day for the things you care about, whether that's spending time with your family, learning a language, starting a side business, volunteering, writing a novel, or mastering Mario Kart.

In the twenty-first century, two very powerful forces compete for every minute of your time. The first is what we call the Busy Bandwagon. The Busy Bandwagon is our culture of constant busyness—the overflowing inboxes, stuffed calendars, and endless to-do lists.

After all, everyone else is busy. If you slow down, you'll fall behind and never catch up.

The second force competing for your time is what we call the Infinity Pools. Infinity Pools are apps and other sources of endlessly replenishing content.

Both forces—the Busy Bandwagon and the Infinity Pools—are powerful because they've become our *defaults*.

When we tear ourselves away from the Busy Bandwagon, the Infinity Pools are ready to lure us in. While the Busy Bandwagon defaults to endless tasks, the Infinity Pools default to endless distraction.

Willpower isn't the way out. We've tried to resist the siren song of these forces ourselves, and we know how impossible it can be.

Productivity isn't the solution, either. The faster you run on the hamster wheel, the faster it spins.

Make Time is a framework for choosing what you want to focus on, building the energy to do it, and breaking the default cycle so that you can start being more intentional about the way you live your life. Even if you don't completely control your own schedule—and few of us do—you absolutely can control your attention.

We want to help you set up your own defaults. With new habits and new mindsets, you can stop reacting to the modern world and start actively making time for the people and activities that matter to you. This isn't about saving time. It's about *making* time for what matters.

Over time, you'll build a customized daily system tailored to your unique habits and routines, your unique brain and body, and your unique goals and priorities.

This book includes dozens of tactics for putting Make Time into practice. Some tactics will work for you, but some won't.

Your version of the Make Time system will be totally personalized, and because you built it yourself, you'll trust it, and it will fit into your existing lifestyle.

We'd like you to forget the idea of perfection when it comes to Make Time. Don't even try to do it perfectly—there's no such thing! But there's also no way to screw it up. And you won't have to start over if you "fall off the wagon," because each day is a clean slate.

The goal is not monastic vows but a workable and flexible set of habits.

Instead of thinking of these tactics as "more things you have to do," consider ways to make them part of your normal life.

The best tactics are the ones that fit into your day. They're not something you force yourself to do; they're just something you do. And in most cases, they'll be things you *want* to do.

## Highlight

Plenty of self-help gurus have offered suggestions for setting goals and plenty of productivity experts have created systems for getting things done, but the space between has been neglected. We call the missing piece a Highlight.

### What Will Be The Highlight Of Your Day?

Your Highlight gives each day a focal point. Research shows that the way you experience your days is not determined primarily by what happens *to you*. In fact, you create your own reality by choosing what *you pay attention to*. This might seem obvious, but we think it's a big deal: You can design your time by choosing where you direct your attention. And your daily Highlight is the target of that attention.

Focusing on a daily Highlight stops the tug-of-war between Infinity Pool distractions and the demands of the Busy Bandwagon. It reveals a third path: being intentional and focused about how you spend your time.

### Three Ways To Pick Your Highlight

#### Urgency

The first strategy is all about urgency: What's the most pressing thing I have to do today?

#### Satisfaction

The second Highlight strategy is to think about satisfaction: At the end of the day, which Highlight will bring me the most satisfaction?

Whereas the first strategy is all about what *needs* to get done, this strategy encourages you to focus on what you *want* to get done.

Think about the sense of accomplishments locked inside each potential Highlight.

Look for activities that are not urgent. Instead, consider projects you've been meaning to get around to but haven't quite found the time. These projects are super vulnerable to procrastination, because although they're important, they are not time-sensitive, and that makes them easy to postpone. Use your Highlight to break the "someday" cycle.

## **Joy**

The third strategy focuses on joy: When I reflect on today, what will bring me the most joy?

Not every hour has to be optimized and orchestrated for maximum efficiency. One of our goals with Make Time is to steer you away from the impossible vision of perfectly planned days and toward a life that's more joyful and less reactive. That means doing some things just because you like doing them.

## **Trust Your Gut To Choose The Best Highlight**

### **Choose Your Highlight**

#### **1. Write It Down**

The things you write down are more likely to happen. If you want to make time for your Highlight, start by writing it down.

You can do it at any time, but the evening (before bed) and the morning work best for most people.

#### **2. "Do It Yesterday"**

There are lots of great reasons to repeat your Highlight:

- If you didn't get to your Highlight, it's probably still important. Repeat for a second chance.

- If you started your Highlight but didn't finish it or if your Highlight was part of a bigger project, today is the perfect day to make progress or start a personal sprint. Repeat to build momentum.
- If you're establishing a new skill or routine, you'll need repetition to cement the behavior. Repeat to create a habit.
- If yesterday's Highlight brought you joy or satisfaction, hey, there's nothing wrong with more of that! Repeat to keep the good times rolling.

### **3. Stack Rank Your Life**

1. Make a list of the big things that matter in your life.

We don't just mean at work. This list can include "Friends" or "Family" or "Parenting"; it can include your significant other—or, if you're in the market for a significant other, "Dating." You might list hobbies ("Soccer," "Painting") alongside work. Your big things can be as broad as "Work" or as specific as "Get promoted" or "Apollo project." Other categories to consider are health, finances, and personal growth.

2. Choose the one most important thing.
  - Consider what's most meaningful to you, not what is most urgent.
  - Think about what needs the most effort or work.
  - Follow your heart.
  - Don't sweat it—this list isn't set in stone.
3. Choose the second, third, fourth, and fifth most important things.
4. Rewrite the list in order of priority.
5. Use this list to help you choose Highlights.

### **4. Batch The Little Stuff**

It can be tough to focus on your Highlight when you know there are dozens of non-Highlight tasks piling up.

Bundle up the small tasks and use batch processing to get them all done in one Highlight session. In other words, make a batch of small things your big thing.

These small tasks may not sound like Highlight material—no one wishes they could make time for email—but there’s a surprising satisfaction that comes from catching up. And when you catch up all at once instead of constantly trying to keep your inbox or to-do list empty, you supercharge that feeling of satisfaction.

Just don’t do it every day. This is a once-in-a-while tactic, a way of dealing with the necessary chores and tasks that otherwise invade our days.

## **5. The Might-Do List**

It’s exactly what it sounds like: a list of things you *might* do. Projects sit on your Might-Do List until you decide to make them your Highlight and schedule them on your calendar.

## **7. Run A Personal Sprint**

Whenever you begin a project, your brain is like a computer starting up, loading relevant information, rules, and processes into your working memory. This “boot up” takes time, and you have to redo it to a certain extent every time you pick up the project.

This is why, in our design sprints, teams work on the same project for five days in a row. Information stays in the people’s working memory from one day to the next, allowing them to get deeper and deeper into the challenge. As a result, we can accomplish exponentially more than we could if those same hours were spread across weeks and months.

But this kind of a sprint isn’t just for teams; you can run a “personal sprint” yourself. Whether you’re painting the living room, learning to juggle, or preparing a report for a new client, you’ll do better work and make faster progress if you keep at it for consecutive days. Just choose the same Highlight for several days in a row (breaking it up into steps for each day if you need to) and keep your mental computer running.

## **Make Time For Your Highlight**

### **8. Schedule Your Highlight**

If you want to make time for your Highlight, start with the calendar.

1. Think about how much time you want for your Highlight.

2. Think about when you want to do your Highlight.
3. Put your Highlight on the calendar.

When you schedule something, you're making a commitment to yourself, sending yourself a tiny message that says: "I'm going to do this." But scheduling your Highlight has another important benefit: It forces you to confront the trade-offs in how you spend your time.

Once you've scheduled your Highlight, that time is taken. You can't schedule any meetings or commit to any other activity. When other things come up, you get to decide whether to schedule them in the remaining time around your Highlight or whether they can wait. You can see your priorities take form right there on your calendar.

## 9. Block Your Calendar

If you start with an empty calendar, you can schedule your Highlight for the ideal time, when your energy is highest and your focus is at its peak. But for most of us, starting the day with a blank calendar is about as likely as finding a thousand-dollar bill on the sidewalk: It certainly *could* happen, but we'd better not count on it. Use daily "do not schedule" blocks to make room for your Highlight.

Play offense, not defense. Don't use your "do not schedule" blocks just to avoid coworkers or get out of meetings. Be very intentional with any time you block.

Don't be greedy. We *did* say you should block your calendar, but you shouldn't fill it up entirely. It's good to leave unblocked space for opportunities, and your coworkers will appreciate your availability.

Take it seriously. If you don't take those commitments seriously, other people won't either.

## 12. Just Say No

The best way to get out of low-priority obligations is never to accept them in the first place.

Are you already fully committed to your Highlight and truly don't have time? "Sorry, I'm really busy with some big projects, and I just don't have the time for anything new."

Could you squeeze in a new project but worry about giving it the proper attention? "Unfortunately, I don't have the time to do a great job on this."

Invited to an activity or event that you know you won't enjoy? "Thanks for the invitation, but I'm not really into softball."

In short, be nice but honest. Over the years, we've heard about many tricky techniques for deflecting requests, making up excuses, or deferring indefinitely, and we've tried some of them. But they don't feel good, and they're not honest. Worse, they just delay the hard decision until a later time, and those half choices can weigh you down, sticking to you like barnacles on the hull of a boat. So ditch the tricks, shed the barnacles, and tell the truth.

Just because you're saying no to this request doesn't mean you can't say yes in the future. Again, say it only if you mean it. "I really appreciate the invitation, and I'd love to hang out another time." Or "It means a lot that you'd ask for my help, and I hope we can work together in the future."

Our friend Kristen Brillantes uses what she calls the Sour Patch Kid method when she says no. Just like the candy, Kristen's answers are sour at first but sweet at the end. For example: "Unfortunately, my team won't be able to participate. But you might ask Team X; they'd be perfect for this kind of event," The key, says Kristen, is to make sure the sweet ending is authentic, not an empty add-on. If she can, she'll offer a connection to another person with capacity or interest for whom the invitation might be a cool opportunity. If not, she offers encouragement or gratitude. Something as simple as a "Thank you for thinking of me; this sounds really fun" goes a long way.

### **13. Design Your Day**

Blocking your calendar and scheduling your Highlight is a great way to start making time. But you can take this proactive, intentional mindset to another level by learning from our sprints and designing your *entire* day.

Yes, it's detailed. Very detailed. He actually blocked time for making coffee and showering!

Being this scheduled might sound annoying: "Where's the freedom and spontaneity, man?" But in reality, a structured day creates freedom. When you don't have a plan, you have to decide constantly what to do next, and you might get distracted thinking about all the things you should or could do. But a completely planned day provides the freedom to focus on the moment. Instead of thinking about *what* to do next, you're free to focus on *how* to do it. You can be in the flow, trusting the plan set out by your past self. When is the best time of day to check email? How long should it take? You can design the answers ahead of time rather than reacting in real time.

### **16. Quit When You're Done**

It can be hard to stop work at the end of the day, because the Busy Bandwagon encourages a “just one more thing” mentality.

Working till exhaustion makes us *more* likely to fall behind by robbing us of the rest we need to prioritize and do our best is running out of gas: No matter how long you keep your foot on the accelerator, if the tank is empty, you aren’t going anywhere. You need to stop and refuel.

## **Laser**

### **Why Infinity Pools Are So Hard To Resist**

All these technologies take advantage of the natural wiring of our brains, which evolved in a world without microchips. We evolved to be distractible because it kept us safe from danger (check the flash in your peripheral vision—it might be a stalking tiger or a falling tree!). We evolved to love mysteries and stories because they helped us learn and communicate. We evolved to love gossip and seek social status because that allowed us to form tight-knit protective tribes. And we evolved to love unpredictable rewards, whether from a blackberry bush or a smartphone notification, because the possibility of those rewards kept us hunting and gathering even when we returned home empty-handed.

Combine the four-plus hours the average person spends on their smartphone with the four-plus hours the average person spends watching television, and distraction is a full-time job.

The best way to defeat distraction is to make it harder to react. By adding a few steps that get in the way of checking Facebook, catching up on the news, or turning on the TV, you can short-circuit the cycle that makes these products so sticky. After just a few days, you’ll have a new set of defaults: You’ll go from distracted to caused, from reactive to intentional, and from overwhelmed to in control. It’s all about creating a little inconvenience. When distraction is hard to access, you don’t have to worry about willpower. You can channel your energy into making time instead of wasting it.

We want to encourage you to look at this a bit differently: as an opportunity to stand out, but in a good way. If you change your priorities, people will notice. Your actions show others what’s important to you. When your friends, your coworkers, and your kids and family see you being intentional with your time, you’ll give *them* permission to question their own “always on” default and step away from their own Infinity Pools. You aren’t just making time for yourself and your own Highlight; you’re also setting a good example for the people around you.

## **Be The Boss Of Your Phone**



## 17. Try A Distraction-Free Phone

Even after you get rid of all the Infinity Pools, a smartphone is *still* a magical device. From maps and driving directions, to music and podcasts, to the calendar and camera, there are plenty of apps that enhance our day-to-day existence without stealing our time.

Of course, a distraction-free phone isn't for everyone. To some, the idea of a smartphone without social media, Web browsers, and email sounds nuts, and we're willing to admit that some people might have better self-control than we do. Maybe you don't constantly feel an overpowering urge to pull your phone out of your pocket. Maybe you're firmly in control of your email and newsfeeds rather than the other way around.

All the same, we believe everybody's paying *some* cognitive cost for the constantly updating information at our fingertips. Maybe you don't have a blatant distraction problem the way we do, but there's a good chance your phone's defaults could be more conducive to focus. So even if you already feel in control of your phone, we encourage you to try going distraction-free as a short experiment. It might not stick, but it will give you a chance to reconsider your defaults.

1. Delete social apps.
2. Delete other Infinity Pools.

Anything with an infinite supply of interesting content should be deleted. This includes games, news apps, and streaming video like YouTube. If you might refresh it obsessively and/or lose hours without meaning to, get rid of it.

3. Delete email and remove your account.

We check email on our phones to catch up, but the result is usually just a reminder that we're falling behind. Remove email from your phone and you'll remove a lot of stress along with it.

4. Remove the Web browser.
5. Keep everything else.

As we mentioned above, there are still lots of amazing apps that are *not* Infinity Pools: ones that make our lives unquestionably more convenient without sucking us into a vortex of distraction. Bottom line: If an app is a tool or if it doesn't make you twitchy, keep it.

Again, your distraction-free phone can be an experiment; you don't need to commit to it for the rest of your life. Give it twenty-four hours, a week, or even a month. Of course,

there will be times when you sincerely *have to* use your email or a browser, and when that happens, you can temporarily reenable the apps you need for the task at hand. The key thing here is that you're using your phone intentionally—it's not using you. And when you're done, you set the default back to "off."

## **18. Log Out**

When you're done using email, Twitter, Facebook, or whatever, log out. The option is available on every website and also in every app on every smartphone. It might not be obvious, but it's always possible. And next time they ask if you want to "Remember me on this device," don't check the box.

## **19. Nix Notifications**

Notifications are not your friends. They're nonstop attention thieves. Whether or not you try a distraction-free phone, you should at the very least turn off almost all notifications.

By turning off your notifications, you'll teach your phone some manners. You'll transform it from a nonstop blabbering loudmouth into a polite bearer of important news—the kind of friend you'd actually want in your life.

## **20. Clear Your Homescreen**

To slow things down, try making your home screen blank. Move all the icons to the next screen over (and from the second screen to the third and so on). Don't leave anything behind on that first screen except a nice clean view of your beautiful background image.

A blank home screen provides a tiny moment of quiet every time you use your phone. It's an intentional inconvenience, a small pause—a speed bump keeping distraction one step away. If you unlocked your phone reflexively, a blank home screen offers you a moment to ask yourself, "Do I *really* want to be distracted right now?"

## **21. Wear A Wristwatch**

A wristwatch replaces the need to check your phone whenever you want to know the time. And if you're anything like us, a quick time check on your phone often pulls you into an Infinity Pool, especially when there's a notification on the screen. If you wear a watch, you can keep your smartphone out of sight. And when it's out of sight, it's easier to ignore.

## **22. Leave Devices Behind**

Leaving your devices behind is a helpful tactic when you want to make time for an “offline” Highlight like reading to your kids or workmen on a project with your hands. But if leaving your phone at work sounds terrifying (or if you have a legitimate need to use it, like for emergency contact), you can apply the underlying principle of device separation with less extreme methods. Instead of keeping your phone by your side when you get home, put it in a drawer or on a shelf; better still, stow it in your bag and shut your bag in the closet.

## Stay Out Of Infinity Pools

### 23. Skip The Morning Check-In

When you wake up in the morning, whether you slept for five hours or ten, you’ve had a nice long break from the Busy Bandwagon and the Infinity Pools. This is a golden moment. The day is fresh, your brain is rested, and *you have no reason to feel distracted yet*. No news items to stress about, no work emails to stew over.

Savor it. Don’t reach for email, Twitter, Facebook, or the news right away. It’s very tempting to do a check-in first thing in the morning and get the latest updates; after all, *something* in the world always changes overnight. But as soon as you fire up that screen, you start a tug-of-war of attention between the present moment and everything out there on the Internet.

Put it off. The longer you postpone the morning check-in—until 9 a.m., 10 a.m.m or even after lunch—the longer you preserve that feeling of rested calm and the easier it is to get into Laser mode.

### 25. Ignore The News

The whole concept of breaking news runs on a very potent myth: You need to know what’s going on around the world, and you need to know *now*.

We’ve got some breaking news of our own: You don’t need to follow the daily news. True breaking news will find you, and the rest isn’t urgent or just doesn’t matter.

To see what we mean, check out today’s newspaper. Or go to your favorite news website. Look at the top headlines and think critically about each one. Will that headline change any decision you make today? How many of those headlines will become obsolete by tomorrow, next week, or next month?

How many of those headlines are designed to provoke anxiety? “If it bleeds, it leads” is a newsroom cliché, but it’s true. Most news is bad news, and none of us can shrug off the nonstop bombardment of stories about conflict, corruption, crime, and human

suffering without it taking a toll on our mood and our ability to focus. Even once-a-day news is a persistent, anxiety-provoking, outrage-inciting distraction.

## 26. Put Your Toys Away

Reacting to what's in front of you is always easier than doing what you intend. And when they're staring you right in the face, tasks such as checking email, responding to a chat, and reading the news *feel* urgent and important—but they rarely are. If you want to get into Laser mode faster, we recommend putting your toys away.

That means signing out of apps like Twitter and Facebook, closing extra tabs, and turning off email and chat at the end of each day. Like a well-behaved kid, clean up after yourself when you're done. Take it a step further and hide the bookmarks bar in your browser (we know you've got a couple Infinity Pools in there) and configure your browser settings so that your homepage is something unobtrusive (like a clock) rather than something noisy (like a collection of sites you visit frequently).

Think of the two minutes it takes to straighten up after yourself as a small investment in your future ability to be proactive—not reactive—with your time.

## 27. Fly Without Wi-Fi

One of our favorite things about airplanes (apart from the sheer wonder of flying through the air) is the enforced focus. During a flight, there's nowhere to go and nothing to do, and even if there were, the seat belt sign requires you to keep your butt in your chair. The strange parallel universe of an airplane cabin can be the perfect opportunity to read, write, knit, think, or just be bored—in a good way.

But even on an airplane, you have to change a couple of defaults to make time. First, if your seat has a screen, turn it off when you sit down. Second, if your airplane has Wi-Fi, don't pay for it. Make these two choices at the beginning of your flight, fasten your safety belt, and enjoy Laser mode at 35,000 feet.

## 28. Put A Timer On The Internet

The Internet doesn't *have* to be on all the time. That's just the default. When it's time to get into Laser mode, try turning the Internet off. The simplest methods are switching off the Wi-Fi on your laptop and putting your phone in airplane mode. But those methods are also simple to *undo*. It's much more effective to lock yourself out.

You can cut off your Wi-Fi at the source. Just plug your Internet router into a simple vacation timer (the kind you use to trick your would-be thieves by turning on the lights

when you're out of town) and set it to clock off at 6 a.m., 9 p.m., or whatever time you want to get into Laser mode to work on your highlight.

### **30. Watch Out For Time Craters**

Tens of thousands of years ago, a 150-foot-wide chunk of rock smashed into the earth's surface, blasting a crater about a mile in diameter. The crater is thirty times the size of the meteor! It's crazy to think about such a small object making such a big hole.

Or maybe it's not so crazy. After all, the same thing happens in our daily lives. Small distractions create much larger holes in our day.

It's not just Infinity Pools that create time craters. There's also recovery time. A "quick" fifteen-minute burrito lunch might cost an extra three hours of food coma. A late night watching TV might cost you an hour of sleeping in and a whole day of low energy. And there's anticipation. When you don't start your Highlight because you've got a meeting coming up in thirty minutes, that's a time crater, too.

Where are the time craters in your life? That's up to you to figure out. You can't avoid them all, but you can definitely dodge some of them, and every time you do, you'll make time.

### **31. Trade Fake Wins For Real Wins**

Sharing tweets, Facebook updates, and Instagram photos can create time craters, but they're dangerous for another reason: They're fake wins.

Contributing to the conversation on the Internet feels like an accomplishment, and our brains tell us, "We've done some work!" But 99 times out of 100, these contributions are insignificant. And they come at a cost—they take up time and energy you could be using on your Highlight. Fake wins get in the way of focusing on what you really want to do.

Like time craters, fake wins come in all shapes and sizes. Updating a spreadsheet is a fake win if it helps you procrastinate on the harder but more meaningful project you chose as your Highlight. Cleaning the kitchen is a fake win if it burns up time you intended to spend with your kids. And email inboxes are a never-ending source of fake wins. Checking mail *always* feels like an accomplishment even when there's nothing new. "Good," says your brain. "I'm on top of things!"

Your Highlight is the real win.

### **33. Becomes A Fair-Weather Fan**

How much time does it take to be a sports fan? Well, how much have you got? These days you can watch every game your favorite team plays in the preseason, regular season, and playoffs as well as every game *every other* team plays, all from the comfort of your living room. There is a year-round limitless supply of news, rumors, trades, draft picks, blogs, and projections. It doesn't stop. You probably could spend twenty-four hours a day staying up to date and *still* not be up to date.

Sports fandom doesn't just take time; it takes emotional energy. When your team loses, it sucks—it might bum you out and lower your energy for hours or even days. Even when your team wins, the euphoria creates a time crater as you get sucked into watching highlights and reading follow-up analysis.

Sports have a powerful grip on us. They satisfy an innate tribal urge. We grow up watching local teams with our parents, families, and friends. We discuss sports with colleagues and strangers. Each game and season has an unpredictable story line, but (unlike real life) they all finish with clear-cut win-or-lose outcomes that we find deeply gratifying.

We're not asking you to give it all up. We simply suggest that you step over to the dark side by becoming a fair-weather fan. Watch games only on special occasions, like when your team is in the playoffs. Stop reading the news when they're losing. You can still love your team yet spend your time on something else.

## **Slow Your Inbox**

A 2014 study by the University of British Columbia found that when people checked their email just three times a day (instead of as often as they wanted), they reported remarkably lower stress. Maybe more surprising, checking less often made the participants *better* at email. During the week when they checked three times a day, people answered roughly the same number of messages, but they did so 20 percent faster. Checking email less often measurably *made time*.

### **34. Deal With Email At The End Of The Day**

Instead of checking your email first thing in the morning and then getting sucked in and reacting to other people's priorities, deal with email at the end of the day. That way, you can use your prime hours for your Highlight and other important work. You'll probably have a little less energy at the end of the day, but that is actually a good thing when it comes to email: You'll be less tempted to overcommit by saying yes to every incoming request and less likely to bang out a multipage manifesto when a simple reply would do.

### **35. Schedule Email Time**

To help establish a new end-of-day email routine, try putting it on your calendar. Yes, we want you to literally add “email time” to your calendar. When you know you’ve got time set aside later, it’s easier to avoid wasting time on email now. And if you schedule your email time before a firm commitment such as a meeting or leaving the office, you’ll get an additional boost: When email time is done, it’s done. Do as much as you can in the allotted time, then move on.

### **36. Empty Your Inbox Once A Week**

We like the clarity of an empty inbox, but we don’t like the daily time commitment. You can still skim your inbox for messages that *really* require a faster response, but respond only to those. For other urgent issues, you can ask your friends and family to contact you via text or phone. And for nonurgent ones, your colleagues (and everyone else) can learn to sit right and wait for a reply.

### **39. Reset Expectations**

Of course, when you limit your email time or increase your response time, you may need to manage the expectations of your colleagues and others. You could say something like this:

*“I’m slow to respond because I need to prioritize some important projects, but if your message is urgent, send me a text.”*

Some work—such as sales and customer support—really does require fast responses. But in most jobs, any repetitional damage you might suffer by being slow (probably less than you think) will be more than compensated for by the increase in time for your most meaningful work.

### **41. Vacation Off The Grid**

You can *choose* to go off the grid. It can be hard, because most workplaces have an implicit (and crazy) expectation that you’ll check email during your time off. But even if it’s hard, it is usually possible.

And it’s worth the effort. Laser mode matters when you’re on vacation. More, maybe, because vacation time is so limited and precious. It’s the perfect time to delete your work email app and leave your laptop behind. You can—and should—go off the grid anywhere and take a real vacation.

## **Make TV A “Sometimes Treat”**

TV, we love you. You give us the experience of traveling through time and space to experience other people's lives. And when our brains are totally exhausted, you help us relax and recharge. But this step in Make Time is about taking control of our attention. Americans watch 4.3 hours of television every day—*4.3 hours per day!* That number is astonishing. Sorry, TV, but we've gotta say it: You take too much damn time.

As we see it, all that TV time is a gold mine: a large pile of perfectly good hours just lying there, ready to be reclaimed. As usual, all you have to do is change your default.

This change isn't easy. Everyday television is a powerful default, and if your viewing habits are stuck on autopilot, you're not alone. We all grew up with television, so we don't always notice how much space it takes up in our lives.

#### **43. Don't Watch The News**

If you make only one change to your viewing habits, cut the news. TV news is incredibly inefficient; it's an endless loop of talking heads, repetitive stories, advertisements, and empty sound bites. Rather than summarizing the most important events of the day, most TV news offers up anxiety-provoking stories handpicked to keep you agitated and turned in.

#### **44. Put Your TV In The Corner**

Living rooms often are arranged around the television to make watching the default activity.

Instead, rearrange the furniture so that looking at the television is a bit awkward and inconvenient. This way, the default activity becomes conversation.

#### **45. Ditch Your TV For A Projector**

Next time you're in the market for a television, consider buying a projector and a fold-up projection screen instead. It's a cheaper way to get a big cinematic display. It's also a pain in the ass to set up every time you want to watch. This hassle is, of course, a good thing, because it switches the default to off. You'll want to bring out the projector only for special occasions. And when you do, the viewing experience will be giant and awesome! It's the best of both worlds: a great viewing experience sometimes and more free time the rest of the time.

#### **47. If You Love Something, Set It Free**



You don't have to give up television, but if you find it hard to reduce your hours, you might want to get extreme and try going cold turkey for a month. When the month is up, think about everything you did when that extra time and decide how much of it you want to give back to your TV.

## **Find Flow**

### **48. Shut The Door**

If your Highlight requires focused work, do yourself a favor and shut the door. If you don't have a room with a door, look for one you can camp out in for a few hours. And if you can't find one, put on headphones—even if you don't actually put on any music.

Headphones and closed doors signal to everyone else that you shouldn't be interrupted, and they send a signal to you, too.

### **49. Invent A Deadline**

Nothing's better for focus than a deadline. When someone else is waiting expectantly for results, it's a *lot* easier to get into Laser mode.

The trouble is that deadlines are usually for things we dread (like doing taxes), not for things we *want* to do (like practicing the ukulele). But this is an easy problem to solve. You can invent a deadline.

Register for a 5K run. Invite your friends over for a homemade pasta dinner before you've learned how to make it. Sign up to exhibit at an art show before you've painted the pictures. Or you can simply tell a friend what your Highlight is today and ask them to hold you accountable for getting it done.

### **50. Explode Your Highlight**

When you're not sure where to start, try breaking your Highlight into a list of small, easy-to-do bits.

### **52. Set A Visible Timer**

Time is invisible. But it doesn't have to be.

We'd like to introduce you to the Time Timer.

The Time Timer is a special clock designed for children. You set an interval from one to sixty minutes, and a red disk slowly disappears as time elapses. When it gets to zero, the timer beeps.

If you use the Time Timer when you're getting into Laser mode, you'll feel an instant, visceral sense of urgency in a totally good way. By showing you that time is elapsing, the Time Timer will get you to focus on the task at hand.

### **53. Avoid The Lure Of Fancy Tools**

Unless you're a carpenter, a mechanic, or a surgeon, choosing the perfect tool is usually a distraction, yet another way to stay busy instead of doing the work you want to be doing.

And unlike checking Facebook—which everyone knows isn't productive—researching and messing with fancy tools *feels* like work. But it usually isn't.

Plus, it's easier to get into Laser mode when you adopt simple tools that are readily available. That way, when something breaks, or your battery dies, or you forget your gadget at home, you won't miss a beat.

### **54. Start On Paper**

Paper improves focus, because you can't waste time picking the perfect font or searching the Web instead of working on your Highlight. Paper is less intimidating, too —while most software is designed to guide you through a series of steps that will lead to a finished product, paper allows you to find your own way to a cohesive idea. And paper opens up possibilities, because whereas Word is designed for lines of text and PowerPoint is designed for graphs and bullet points, on paper, you can anything at all.

Next time you're struggling to get into Laser mode, put away your computer or tablet and pick up a pen.

### **Stay In The Zone**

Getting into Laser mode is only half the battle—you have to stay in the zone and maintain attention on your Highlight. Focus is hard work, and it's inevitable that you'll be tempted by distraction.

### **55. Make A “Random Question” List**

Instead of reacting to every twitch, write your questions on a piece of paper. Then you can stay in Laser mode, secure in the knowledge that those pressing topics have been captured for future research.

## **56. Notice One Breath**

Pay attention to the physical sensations of a single breath:

1. Breathe in through your nose. Notice the air filling up your chest.
2. Breathe out through your mouth. Notice the body softening.

You can repeat this if you like, but one breath really can be enough to reset your attention. Paying attention to your body shuts up the noise in your brain.

## **57. Be Bored**

When you're deprived of distraction, you may feel bored—but boredom is actually a good thing. Boredom give your mind a chance to wander, and wandering often leads you to interesting places. In separate studies, researchers at Penn State and the University of Central Lancashire found that bored test subjects were better at creative problem solving than were their nonbored peers. So next time you are feeling understimulated for a few minutes, just sit there. You're bored? Lucky you!

## **58. Be Stuck**

Being stuck is a tiny bit different from being bored. When you're bored, you don't have anything to do, but when you're stuck, you know exactly what you *want* to do—your brain just isn't sure how to proceed. Maybe you don't know what to write next, or where to begin on a new project.

The easy road out of Stucksville is to do something else. Check your phone. Dash off an email. Turn on the TV. These things are easy, but they cut into the time you've made for your Highlight. Instead, just be stuck. Don't give up. Stare at the blank screen, or switch to paper, or walk around, but keep your focus on the project at hand. Even when your conscious mind feels frustrated, some quiet part of your brain is processing and making progress. Eventually, you *will* get unstuck, and then you'll be glad you didn't give up.

## **59. Take A Day Off**

If you've tried these techniques and you still don't have Laser mode in you, don't beat yourself up. You might need a rest day. Energy—especially creative energy—can fluctuate, and sometimes you need time to replenish it. Most of us can't take the day off work whenever we want, but you *can* give yourself permission to take it easy. Try taking real breaks throughout the day and switching to a joyful Highlight that'll help you recharge.

## 60. Go All In

We believe in rest, but there is an alternative.

*You Know the antidote to exhaustion is not necessarily rest... The antidote to exhaustion is wholeheartedness.*  
—Brother David Steindl-Rast

Wholeheartedness is complete commitment, holding nothing back. It's letting go of caution and allowing yourself to care about your work, a relationship, a project, anything. Throwing yourself into the moment with enthusiasm and sincerity.

We believe wholeheartedness is fundamental to everything this book is about: presence, attention, and making time for what matters.

Of course, both physical rest and mental rest are extremely important. But if you're feeling worn out and unable to focus, Brother David says you don't always need to take a break. Sometimes, if you go all in and embrace the current task with wild abandon, you may find it becomes easier to focus. You may find the energy is *already there*.

Wholeheartedness is not easy. It's especially difficult when you're reacting to Infinity Pools or the Busy Bandwagon. And if you're used to "playing it cool," it may take some practice before you can let your guard down and let yourself be enthusiastic again.

But perhaps the biggest obstacle is when your heart isn't *really* in the current task. If you choose exciting ways to spend your time, being wholehearted isn't so hard.

## Energize

If you can increase your energy every day, you'll turn moments that might otherwise be lost to mental and physical fatigue into usable time for your Highlights.

If you have energy, it's easier to maintain your focus and priorities and avoid resting to distractions and demands. With a full battery, you have the power to be present, think clearly, and spend your time on what matters, not default to what's right in front of you.

To get the energy you need to maintain a focused, high-performing brain, you've got to take care of your body.

The defaults of today's world assume that the brain is the one driving the bus, but that's not really how it works. When you don't take care of your body, your brain can't do its job. If you've ever felt sluggish and uninspired after a big lunch or invigorated and clearheaded after exercising, you know what we mean. If you want energy for your brain, you need to take care of your body.

But how? There are approximately a kajillion scientific studies, books, blog posts, and talk-show guests out there already to tell you how to increase your energy. Frankly, it can be pretty confusing. Should you get more sleep or train yourself to sleep less? Is aerobic exercise best? Or strength training? And when the scientific consensus inevitably changes—like when it shifted from warning against eating fat to recommending it—what should you do?

Eventually, we realized that 99 percent of what you need to know about increasing your energy is right there in human history. All you need to do is travel back in time to check it out.

Prehistoric humans ate a variety of foods and often waited all day (or longer) for a proper meal. Constant movement was the norm. Walking, running, and carrying were interspersed with brief bouts of more intense effort. Yet there was plenty of time for leisure and family: Anthropologists estimate that ancient humans “worked” only thirty hours a week. They lived and worked in tight-knit communities in which face-to-face communication was the only option. And of course they got plenty of sleep, going to bed when it was dark and rising with the sun.

We're the descendants of those ancient humans, but our species hasn't evolved nearly as fast as the world around us has. That means we're still wired for a lifestyle of constant movement, varied but relatively sparse diets, ample quiet, plenty of face-to-face time, and restful sleep that's aligned with the rhythm of the day.

## **The Modern Lifestyle Is An Accident**

*Homo sapiens* appeared in Africa round 200,000 years ago. For the next 188,000 years, everybody had the same job title—hunter-gatherer. Then, around 12,000 years ago, humans began farming, and most of us stopped our nomadic ways to settle down in villages and towns.

We kept moving forward. Over the centuries, we switched from wood to fossil fuel. We mastered steam and electricity. Then, during the last couple of centuries, things went bonkers. We created factories. We developed the television and then became obsessed with it, changing our sleep schedules to fit in daily TV time. We invented the home

computer, the Internet, and the smartphone. Each time, we wrapped our lives around the new invention. Each time, there was no going back.

Today's world is not a utopia planned out by geniuses. It's been shaped very accidentally by the technologies that have stuck over the last few centuries, decades, and years. We're built for one world, but we live in another.

## **Act Like A Caveman To Build Energy**

### 1. Keep It Moving

Our bodies and brains perform best when we're in motion. Just a twenty- to thirty-minute session can make the brain work better, reduce stress, improve your mood, *and* make it easier to sleep well, providing more energy for the next day—a pretty sweet positive feedback loop.

### 2. Eat Real Food

Nowadays, we're surrounded by invented and manufactured foods.

### 3. Optimize Caffeine

All right, we know: Coffee shops were few and far between in prehistoric times. But while we're on the subject of your brain and body, it's crucial to talk about caffeine, because it's such an easy place to make improvements to your energy level.

### 4. Go Off The Grid

Quiet was the norm, and humans evolved to not only tolerate silence but use it for the productive thought or focused work. Today's constant noise and distractions are a disaster for your energy and your attention span.

### 5. Make It Personal

Today, our interactions are mostly screen to screen, but you can kick it old school by finding the people who charge your battery and getting together in person. It's an easy Paleolithic mood boost.

### 6. Sleep In A Cave

Sleep quality is more important than quantity, and our world is full of barriers—from screens to schedules to caffeine—to getting good sleep.

## Keep It Moving

### 61. Exercise Every Day (But Don't Be A Hero)

Moving your body is the best way to charge your battery. But you don't need lengthy complicated workouts. Our philosophy is simple:

Exercise for about twenty minutes...

Research shows that the most important cognitive, health, and mood benefits of exercise can be attained in just twenty minutes.

...every day...

The energy and mood boosts from exercise last about a day, so to feel good every day, get some exercise every day. As an added bonus, daily habits are easier to keep than sometimes habits.

...(and give yourself partial credit).

Don't stress about perfection. If you manage to exercise only four out of seven days this week, hey, four is better than three! If you don't feel up for a twentyish-minute workout today, get out there for ten. Sometimes a ten-minute walk or run or swim will turn into twenty or longer because it feels so great—you won't want to stop once you start moving. Other times, it'll just be ten minutes, and that's cool, too. It's better than zero, and you still get an energy boost.

Plus, the simple act of putting on your workout gear and getting out there will strengthen the habit, making it easier to motivate yourself for longer workouts in the future.

### 62. Pound The Pavement

We were born to walk. In the history of human evolution, the ability to walk upright actually came before our big, thinking brains. But in the modern world, we default to motorized transportation. Most of us can get wherever we need to go by car, bus, or train, and by making it so easy *not* to walk, this default robs us of a great opportunity to energize.

To put it in technical terms, walking is really, really darned good for you. Reports from Harvard and the Mayo Clinic show that walking helps you lose weight, avoid heart disease, reduce the risk of cancer, lower blood pressure, strengthen bones, and improve your mood through the release of painkilling endorphins. Walking is practically a wonder drug.

And walking helps make time you can use to think, daydream, or meditate. You can listen to podcasts or audiobooks while you walk. You can even talk on the phone.

A daily walk doesn't have to be "one more thing to do." Next time you drive somewhere with a big parking lot, skip the search for the perfect spot and park far away. If you change the default from "ride when possible" to "walk when possible," you'll see opportunities everywhere.

### **63. Inconvenience Yourself**

We think choosing inconvenience is a great way to find opportunities for exercise outside the gym. You just have to be willing to reset your default from "convenient" to "energizing," like this:

#### **1. Cook Dinner**

Carrying groceries, moving around the kitchen, lifting, chopping, stirring—it all requires moving your body. For some, cooking is meditative; it's a great way to make time for thinking or reflecting. For others, it's genuinely enjoyable and an excuse to spend face time with friends and family. Plus, the food you'll make at home is probably healthier than restaurant food and therefore more energizing.

#### **2. Take The Stairs**

### **64. Squeeze In A Super Short Workout**

In high-intensity interval training—or, as we call it, a "super short workout"—you complete a series of brief but intense moves. You can choose body weight exercises such as push-ups, pull-ups, and squats. You can sprint. You can lift weights. And you can finish a proper workout in as little as five or ten minutes.

The best part is that super short workouts are truly energizing. And it's not just a time-saving substitute for "real" exercise. In fact, there's evidence that high-intensity exercise is better overall than the longer medium-intensity workouts we all think are necessary. Summarizing several new scientific studies, the *New York Times* says: "Seven minutes or so of relatively punishing training may produce greater gains than an hour or more of gentler exercise"

## **Eat Real Food**

### **65. Eat Like A Hunter-Gatherer**

Eating real food—in other words, nonprocessed ingredients, such as plants, nuts, fish, and meat—made a huge difference in our energy levels. After all, the human body evolved to eat real food, so it's not surprising that your engine performs better when you give it the expected fuel.



## **66. Central Park Your Plate**

One simple technique to keep meals light and energizing is to put salad on your plate first, then add everything else around it. It's just like Central Park in New York City: You're reserving a big piece of territory for greens before you develop around the perimeter. More salad means less heavy food and, most likely, greater energy after eating.

## **67. Stay Hungry**

The modern default is to eat constantly: three meals a day plus snacks to keep you from getting too hungry.

The point is that just because we can eat all the time, that doesn't mean we *should*. Even though we're lucky enough to live in a world of abundant food, our bodies are evolved to survive and thrive in a world where food was scarce.

Intermittent fasting has become a big of a fad, but there are lots of reasons to try it beyond the endorsements of Beyoncé and Benedict Cumberbatch. Food tastes better when you're hungry, and there are some great health benefits from fasting: cardiovascular fitness, longevity, muscle development, and maybe even reduced cancer risk.

But when it comes to energizing and making time, one benefit tops them all: Fasting (to a point) makes your mind clear and your brain sharp, which is great for staying focused on your priorities.

## **68. Snack Like A Toddler**

When it comes to snacking, I think two things are important: choosing high-quality snacks and snacking when your body and brain need it, not just for something to do.

To keep your battery charged, pretend you're a toddler or, more accurately, the parent of a toddler. If you find yourself hungry and snack less, seek out real food (e.g., bananas or nuts) instead of junk food (candy or chips). You wouldn't give your three-year-old a pack of Twizzlers to tide him over until lunch, and you should treat yourself with the same care.

## **69. Go On The Dark Chocolate Plan**

Sugar causes sugar highs, and sugar highs cause sugar crashes. Most people know that avoiding sugary treats is a great way to keep your energy up, but let's face it, it can be pretty hard to stop eating desserts.

So don't stop. Instead, switch your default. Allow yourself to have dessert as long as it's dark chocolate.

Dark chocolate has way less sugar than most other treats, so you'll get less of a crash. Many studies suggest that dark chocolate even has health benefits. And because it's rich and delicious, you won't have to eat as much to satisfy your craving. In short, dark chocolate is freaking awesome and you should have it more often.

## Optimize Caffeine

It's easy to get stuck in a default caffeine habit—like drinking yourself a coffee each time you take a stretch break at work. Caffeine is a (mildly) addictive drug, so even small unintentional behaviors like drinking a cup just to have a reason to get up from your desk can quickly become chemically reinforced habits.

To the brain, caffeine molecules look a lot like a molecule called *adenosine*, whose job is to tell the brain to slow down and feel sleepy or groggy. Adenosine is helpful in the evening as you get ready for bed. But when adenosine makes us sleepy in the morning or afternoon, we usually reach for caffeine.

When caffeine shows up, the caffeine binds to the receptors where the adenosine is supposed to go. The adenosine is left to just float around, and as a result, the brain doesn't get the sleepy signal.

What's interesting in this is that caffeine doesn't technically give you an energy boost; instead, it blocks you from having an energy dip caused by adenosine-induced sleepiness. But once the caffeine wears off, all that adenosine is still hanging around, ready to pounce. If you don't recaffeinate, you crash. And over time, your body adjusts to more and more caffeine by producing more and more adenosine to compensate. This is why, if you normally drink lots of caffeine, you probably feel extra groggy and headachy when you don't have it.

- Wake up without caffeine (in other words, get out of bed, eat breakfast, and start the day without any coffee).
- Have the first cup between 9:30 and 10:30 a.m.
- Have the last cup between 1:30 and 2:30 p.m.

Every person processes and reacts to caffeine in a slightly different way, depending on metabolism, body size, tolerance, and even DNA.

We recommend experimenting with the following tactics and, as with all the tactics in this book, taking notes to track your results.

### **70. Wake Up *Before* You Caffeinate**

In the morning, your body naturally produces lots of cortisol, a hormone that helps you wake up. When cortisol is high, caffeine doesn't do much for you (except temporarily relieving your caffeine addiction symptoms). For most folks, cortisol is highest between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., so for ideal morning energy, experiment with having that first cup of coffee at 9:30 a.m.

### **71. Caffeinate *Before* You Crash**

The tricky thing about caffeine is that if you wait to drink it until you get tired, it's too late: the adenosine has already hooked up to with your brain, and it's hard to shake the lethargy. We'll repeat that because it's a crucial detail: *If you wait until you get tired, it's too late.* Instead, think about when your energy regularly dips—for most of us, it's after lunch—and have coffee thirty minutes beforehand.

### **72. Take A Caffeine Nap**

One slightly complicated but high-yield way to take advantage of caffeine mechanics is to wait till you get tired, drink some caffeine, then immediately take a fifteen-minute nap. The caffeine takes a while to be absorbed into your bloodstream and reach the brain. During your light sleep, the brain clears out the adenosine. When you wake up, the receptors are clear and the caffeine has just shown up. You're fresh, recharged, and ready to go. Studies have shown that caffeine naps improve cognitive and memory performance more than coffee or a nap alone does.

### **73. Maintain Altitude With Green Tea**

To keep a steady energy level throughout the day, try replenishing high doses of caffeine (such as a giant cup of brewed coffee) with more frequent low doses. Green tea is a great option. The easiest and cheapest way to run this experiment is to buy a box of green tea bags and try substituting two or three cups of tea for every cup of coffee you'd normally have. This keeps your energy level more consistent and steady throughout the day, avoiding the energy peaks and valleys you get from something super caffeinated like coffee.

### **74. Turbo Your Highlight**

Life is a lot like the video game Mario Kart: You've got to use your turbo boosts strategically. Try to time your caffeine intake so that you're wired right when you start your Highlight.

## 75. Learn You Last Call

The half-life of caffeine is five to six hours. So if the average person has a coffee at 4 p.m., half the caffeine is out of the bloodstream by 9 or 10 p.m., but the other half is still around. The upshot is that at least *some* caffeine is blocking at least *some* adenosine receptors for many hours after you have caffeine and very possibly interfering with your sleep and in turn the next day's energy.

You've got to experiment to figure out your own unique "Last Call for Caffeine," but if you have trouble sleeping, your last call might be earlier than you think. Experiment with cutting yourself off earlier and earlier and note if and when it becomes easier to fall asleep.

## Get Off The Grid

### 77. Get Woodsy

Since 1982, the Japanese government has been encouraging a practice called *shinrin-yoku*, which can be translated as "forest bathing" or, more simply, "taking in the forest atmosphere." Studies on *shinrin-yoku* show that even brief exposure to a forest lowers stress, heart rate, and blood pressure. And it's not just in Japan; a 2008 University of Michigan study compared the cognitive performance of people who had just taken a walk in the city with that of people who had just taken a walk in a park. The nature walkers did 20 percent better.

So a little exposure to nature can make you measurably calmer and sharper. How does this work? The best explanation we could find comes from Cal Newport in *Deep Work*:

*When walking through nature, you're freed from having to direct your attention, as there are few challenges to navigate (like crowded street crossings), and experience enough interesting stimuli to keep your mind sufficiently occupied to avoid the need to actively aim your attention. This state allows your directed attention resources time to replenish.*

In other words, the forest recharges the battery in your brain. Heck, you don't even need a forest; the benefits seem to start with any natural surroundings. Just experiment with spending a few minutes in a park and take note of what it does for your mental energy. If you can't get to the park, stop outside for a breath of fresh air. Even if you just crack a

window, we predict you'll feel better. Our hunter-gatherer bodies feel more alive outdoors.

## 78. Trick Yourself Into Meditating

The benefits of meditation are well documented. It reduces stress. It increases happiness. It recharges your brain and boosts focus. But there are problems. Meditation is difficult, and you might feel a little silly doing it.

But meditation is nothing to be ashamed of. Meditation is just a breather for your brain.

Meditation is rest for your brain. But here's the crazy thing: Meditation is also *exercise* for your brain.

The effects of meditation look a lot like the effects of exercise. Studies show that meditation increases working memory and the ability to maintain focus. Meditation even makes parts of the brain thicker and stronger, just as exercise builds muscle.

We also recognize that finding the time to stop everything you're doing to sit and notice your thoughts is quite difficult when you've got a million things to do. But the energy, focus, and mental calm you get out of it can actually *help you make time* to get those things done. So here's our meditation advice:

1. We're not even gonna try to tell you *how* you should meditate. We're not the experts—but your smartphone is. To get started, use a guided meditation app.
2. Aim low. Even a three-minute session can increase your energy. Ten minutes is awesome.
3. You don't have to sit in the lotus position. Try guided meditation while riding the bus, lying down, walking, running, or even eating.
4. If the word *meditation* feels uncomfortable to you, just call it something else. Try "quiet time," "resting," "pausing," "taking a break," or "doing a Headspace."

## 79. Leave Your Headphones At Home

If you put on headphones every time you work, walk, exercise, or commute, your brain never gets any quiet. Even an album you've listened to a million times still creates a bit of mental work. Your music, podcast, or audiobook prevents boredom, but boredom creates space for thinking and focus.

Just listen to the sounds of traffic, or the clack of your keyboard, or your footsteps on the pavement. Resist the itch to fill the blank space.

An occasional headphone vacation for a day or just an hour is an easy way to put some quiet in your day and give your brain a moment to recharge.

## **80. Take Real Breaks**

It's awfully tempting to check Twitter, Facebook, or another Infinity Pool app as a break from work. But these kinds of breaks don't renew or relax your brain. For one thing, when you see a troubling news story or an envy-inducing photo from a friend, you feel more stressed, not less. And if you work at a desk, Infinity Pool breaks keep you glued to your chair and away from energy-giving activities like moving around and talking to other people.

Instead, try to take breaks without screens: Gaze out the window (it's good for your eyes), go for a walk (it's good for your mind and body), grab a snack (it's good for your energy if you're hungry), or talk to someone (it's usually good for your mood unless you talk to a jerk).

If your default break is to check an Infinity Pool, you'll have to change your habits.

## **Make It Personal**

### **81. Spend Time With Your Tribe**

All of us, even the most introverted, have a hardwired need for human connection. Humans evolved to thrive in tight-knit communities.

But today face-to-face time can be hard to come by. It's a cruel irony of modern life that we're surrounded by people yet more isolated than ever. This is a big deal, especially if you consider the findings from Harvard's 75-year Study of Adult Development: People with strong relationships are more likely to live long, healthy, fulfilling lives.

Even in the twenty-first century, you have a tribe. If you work in an office, you have colleagues. In your family, you might have siblings, parents, kids, and/or a significant other. And you have friends. Sure, those people might annoy you or frustrate you sometimes, but more often than not, spending time with them is energizing.

When we say "spending time," we mean having real conversations with your voice, not just commenting on posts, clicking hearts and thumbs-ups, or sending emails, texts, photos, emojis, and animated GIFs. Screen-based communication is efficient, but that's part of the problem: It's so easy that it often displaces higher-value real-life conversations.

Not every person lifts our spirits, of course, but we all know a *few* people who give us energy *most* times we talk to them.

This conversation might be a meal with your family or a phone call to your brother. It can be with an old friend or someone you just met. The time and place don't really matter as long as you use your voice. Even if it's only once a week, reach out to friends whom you admire, who inspire you, who make you laugh, who let you be yourself. Spending time with interesting, high-energy people is one of the best—and most enjoyable—ways to recharge your battery.

## **82. Eat Without Screens**

When you eat without screens, you hit three of our five Energize principles at once. You're less likely to mindlessly shovel unhealthy food in your mouth, you're more likely to have an energizing face-to-face conversation with another human, and you're creating space in your day to give your brain a rest from its constant busyness. And all this while doing something you have to do anyway!

## **Sleep In A Cave**

### **83. Make Your Bedroom A Bed Room**

If you want to improve your sleep, keep the phone out of your bedroom—at all times. And don't stop there. Remove *all* electronic devices to transform your bedroom into a true sanctuary for sleep. No TVs, no iPads. No Kindles with backlights. In other words: Make your bedroom a bed room.

Television is particularly dangerous because of the time involved. You lose sleep while you're watching, and you keep losing sleep after you shut it off and wait for your stimulated brain to transition into sleep mode.

Reading in bed is a wonderful alternative, but paper books or magazines are best. A Kindle is okay, too, because it's not loaded with apps and other distractions; just make sure to turn off the bright white backlight.

It can be thought to keep devices out of the bedroom, but it's easier to change your environment than to rely on willpower to change your behavior.

There's probably one device you'll need to keep in your bedroom: an alarm clock. Choose a simple model with a screen that's not too bright. If possible, put your alarm clock on a dresser or shelf across the room. This will keep the light away from your eyes, and it'll help you wake up: When the alarm sounds, you'll have no choice but to get out of bed, stretch your legs, and switch it off. We think that's a better way to start your day than snuggling with your smartphone.

## 84. Fake The Sunset

Between our screens and our lightbulbs, we're simulating daylight right up until we climb into bed. It's as though we're telling our brains, "It's day, it's day, it's day, it's day— WHOA, IT'S NIGHT, GO TO BED." No wonder we have trouble sleeping.

1. Starting when you eat dinner or a few hours before your ideal bedtime, turn down the lights in your home. Switch off bright overhead lights. Instead, use dim table or side lamps. For bonus points, light candles at the dinner table.
2. Turn on your phone, computer, or TV's "night mode." These features shift screen colors from blue to red and orange. Instead of looking at a bright sky, it's like sitting around a campfire.
3. When you go to bed, kick all devices out of the room.
4. If sunlight or streetlight is still sneaking into your bedroom, try a simple sleep mask over your eyes. Yes, you will feel and look a little silly, but they work.

If you often feel lethargic or low-energy in the morning, try faking the sunrise, too. In recent years, automatic "dawn simulator" lights have become smaller and cheaper thanks to improved LED technology. Before the alarm sounds, a bright light gradually turns on, simulating a perfectly timed sunrise and tricking your brain into waking up. If you combine that with turning down the lights in the evening, it's the next best thing to living in a cave.

## 85. Sneak A Nap

Napping makes you smarter. Seriously. Lots of studies show that napping improves alertness and cognitive performance in the afternoon.

You don't even have to fall asleep. Just lying down and resting for ten to twenty minutes can be a great way to recharge. Even if you only nap on the weekend, you'll benefit.

## 86. Don't Jet-Lag Yourself

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, we fall behind on sleep. We have a busy week, an ill-timed flight, or some stress or worrying that keeps us up at night, and we find ourselves with that all too familiar feeling of being overtired.

Sleeping late on weekends is basically like giving yourself jet lag: It confuses your internal clock and makes it even harder to bounce back from the original deficit. So just



as you would when traveling to a different time zone, she recommends resting the temptation to oversleep and trying to stick as closely as possible to your regular schedule.

“Sleep debt” is a real thing, and it’s bad news for your health, wellness, and ability to focus. But one Saturday of sleeping until noon—glorious as that is—won’t do much to pay off your debt. Instead, you need to chip away at it, using the tactics in this chapter to help you catch up by sleeping well in day-by-day installments. So to keep your battery charged, keep that alarm set to the same time every day whether it’s a weekday, weekend, or holiday.

## **87. Put On Your Own Oxygen Mask First**

On airplanes, they tell you to put on your own mask before assisting other passengers. The rationale is that if the cabin pressure drops, everybody will need oxygen. But if you pass out while trying to help someone...well, that isn’t very helpful, is it?

A newborn baby is kind of like a loss of cabin pressure, and if you don’t take care of yourself (at least a little), you can’t be a great caretaker. That means you need to maximize your energy by eating as well as you can and making the most of whatever sleep you can get. You’ve got to find a way to take little breaks and maintain your sanity. In other words, you should put on your own oxygen mask first.

Even if you’re caring for someone other than a newborn, this advice is important to keep in mind. The everyday needs of another person, especially someone you love, can consume a tremendous amount of emotional and physical energy. Again, we know the idea of trying some of these tactics—going for a walk, taking quiet time alone, or getting in a workout—might seem selfish. But remember, the tactics in this section are all meant to give you the energy to make time for the things that matter. If you’re caring for a loved one, what could matter more?

## **Reflect**

### **Fine-Tune Your Days With The Scientific Method**

1. OBSERVE what’s going on.
2. GUESS why things are happening the way they are.
3. EXPERIMENT to test your hypothesis.
4. MEASURE the results and decide whether you were right.

The tactics in this book are eighty-seven experiments for testing these hypothesis. But only you can test them on *you*.

### **Take Notes To Track Your Results (And Keep You Honest)**

As you experiment with the system, it's important to remember that some tactics will work right away but some will require patience and perseverance. Sometimes it takes trial-and-error to make a tactic fit in your life. If you fail at first, don't be hard on yourself. Give it time and use the notes to track and tweak your approach. Remember that perfection is not the goal. This isn't about building up to doing all the tactics all the time or even doing some of the tactics all the time. You'll have off days and off weeks, and that's fine. You can restart your experiments at any time, and you can do as much or as little as fits in your life.

We also recommend setting recurring reminders on your phone to help reinforce your new Make Time habits. This is as simple as saying "Hey Siri, every morning at 9 a.m., remind me to choose a Highlight" and "Every evening at 9 p.m., remind me to take notes on my day."

Reflecting on your day may become a permanent habit, but even if you just do it for the first couple of weeks, that's fine. The Make Time notes shouldn't feel like (yet another) obligation in your life; it's just a way to learn about yourself and fine-tune the systems to work best for you.

### **Small Shifts Create Big Results**

If you reduce a few distractions, increase your physical and mental energy just a bit, and focus your attention on one bright spot, a blah day can become extraordinary. It doesn't require an empty calendar—just sixty to ninety minutes of attention on something special. The goal is to make time for what matters, find more balance, and enjoy today a little more.