

# Getting through the day

How the right routine can make your life better



People do their morning exercise in Shanghai, China.

<sup>1</sup> What does the word *routine* make you think of? For many of us, it may be an image of doing the same thing day after day – the boredom of repeating the same actions over and over again. However, the reality is that  
<sup>5</sup> a carefully planned routine can support mental health, improve creativity and increase the quality of your work.

A routine can also bring a sense of order to daily life and provide a sense of place and purpose – we know where we are and what we have to do next. In 2010, 33 miners  
<sup>10</sup> were trapped in a mine in Chile after part of the roof fell in. When they realized there was no way out, team leader Luis Urzúa set up a work and eating schedule for them. Experts agreed that Urzúa's **encouragement** to keep to a routine was a key factor in keeping the miners  
<sup>15</sup> alive and well until their rescue – 69 days later.

But routines aren't just <sup>2</sup>**helpful** for <sup>3</sup>**survival**. Artists from painter Joan Miró to author Adele Parks have said that a work routine is the key to <sup>4</sup>**creativity** and success. If you don't have to think constantly about  
<sup>20</sup> what to do every day, your mind is free to think about big ideas.

However, when developing a routine, it's important to set up the right sort of routine. Researchers in the US concluded that people who wake up to an alarm, quickly  
<sup>25</sup> shower and eat and then rush off to work are missing out on the best <sup>5</sup>**creative** thinking time of the day.

Science journalist Anne Murphy Paul writes that the best approach is to 'set the alarm a few minutes early and lie awake in bed, following our thoughts where they  
<sup>30</sup> lead'. This gives your mind time and space to be creative when you aren't thinking about anything else or rushing to the next thing.

It would be <sup>6</sup>**unnecessary**, though, for all of us to have the same routine – especially in the workplace. Simon  
<sup>35</sup> Slade, CEO of a digital marketing training company in New Zealand, says that his employees 'have complete control over their personal schedules'. He judges his employees not on the time they put in, but on the work they produce. 'This means the input of hours and how  
<sup>40</sup> an employee organizes them doesn't really matter to me, as long as they are continuing to improve and producing excellent work.' You might think this encourages  
<sup>45</sup> **laziness**, but researchers in Germany found that workers who set their own schedule actually work more hours than those whose routine is set by the company.

While some routines may lead to boredom, a carefully – and personally – chosen one not only allows space for creativity and increases productivity, it can also increase comfort and happiness. So, ask yourself: is my  
<sup>50</sup> daily routine working for me? If not, it may be time to **rethink** it.