



mattmcwilliams.com

The Little Known Truth About Routines

What words come to mind when you read or hear the word "routine?"

Perhaps words like:

Boring

Depressing

Monotonous

Grind

Life-changing

Wait a minute! What? That last one doesn't fit.

Or does it?

What if I told you that routines can be life-changing? What if I told you that the key to achieving your big breakthrough and finding more joy in life could be found in a routine?

Well, it's true. Routines are powerful and as boring as they may sound at first glance, I'll show you some little known truths about routines that will have you living a "routine life" before you know it.

The definition of insanity

You've undoubtedly heard of the "real definition of insanity." Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

But last year in this post, I offered a different, and I believe more accurate, definition:

A great idea without execution is the definition of insanity.

I then encouraged you to stop reading what I write, nodding your head in agreement, and then going on with your life exactly as it is now.

Instead, I said:

Don't be insane like that. Be insane like Sugar Ray Leonard.

Be insane in your commitment to execution.

Be insanely committed to making things happen.

When you read something here or elsewhere, digest it, think about it, and apply it. Apply it within 72 hours.

Stop thinking about it and do it.

I know, but...

I'd heard for years about the power of journaling. I'd read all of the research on the subject. I even knew about the research from Martin Seligman that says that just journaling about three things for which you are thankful each morning can increase your happiness and productivity by 31%.

I knew all the reasons why I should be journaling, and yet I did it sparingly, missing entire weeks or even months. I knew the power of journaling and writing out my gratitude each day, but I made excuses why I couldn't commit to something like that.

So what did I do?

I made it part of my routine...only I didn't have a routine. OK, so I started a routine. I would, without fail, spend a minute or two listing things for which I am thankful.

Some days I was going through the motions. I'd list the same five or six things I listed the day before. Or they'd be so generic I almost had to laugh. But I kept doing it each day.

And it really does work. Expressing gratitude, whether it be in a journal or a thank you note really does increase my happiness, my energy levels, and my productivity.

My writing routine

The more I practiced little routines, such as journaling at a specific time during the day, the more I saw the value in them.

I realized the energy spark that comes from going through a routine before an important activity. I also noticed how my creative juices flowed when I finished some routines.

One of the most important things I do each day is write. What you are reading now is the byproduct of a routine.

When I first wake up in the morning, I am writing within twenty minutes. That is my most creative time. But what happens in those twenty minutes is important. And for the past year, I've repeated the same routine day after day to set myself up for my best writing.

I go downstairs in our house and then I:

1. Start booting the computer.
2. Boil some water for my tea.
3. Drink twenty ounces of water.
4. Grab my morning snack (usually a handful of nuts or a natural protein bar)
5. Make the tea.
6. Get all of my stuff together at the computer and open WordPress and my blog post outlines.
7. Do a 5-minute workout to get my blood flowing. (You can download my 5-minute workout [here](#))
8. Write.

It's literally the exact same routine every time I sit down to write. The routine, as it progresses, is alerting my mind that it's time to write. And now, when I do sit down to write, I am ready.

Action item: Pick one activity to make a part of your routine today. Perhaps you start with journaling or maybe you develop a coming home routine. Start with one thing, as I did, and add more routines over time.

The little known truth about routines is that they are not boring or depressing. They are far from a grind or monotonous.

They are life-changing.

What routines have you used effectively in your life? What's one that you plan on adding?