

The Power of Habit

The first three weeks of my college experience felt like roughly 3 billion years.

It wasn't that my classes weren't interesting – they were! I loved my friends and my needs were being met just fine. That was the confusing part: My life was nearly perfect, yet I was miserable.

It didn't add up. What was going on?

Then one day, while listening to Jordan Peterson's podcast, it hit me: I had no routine. From the moment I set foot on campus, everything I encountered and attempted to do was uncharted territory, meaning that I had no standard procedure with which to approach even the most fundamental tasks. No wonder I was miserable. I needed a routine, and I needed one soon.

In his [12 Rules for Life](#) book tour, Peterson frequently spoke of the importance of routine and habit in combating chronic anxiety. Waking up at the same time every morning, eating adequately, exercising, and following the same micro-routines every morning are just a few of the Peterson-approved habits to help regulate anxiety and depression.

"Mostly what you want is to have a routine that's disciplined, that's predictable, and... stick to it. You will be way healthier and happier and saner if you do that," Peterson [explains](#) in one of his lectures.

My only problem was that I couldn't develop a daily routine until at least a few weeks had passed at college. Habits only come with time (or so I thought.) So, my anxiety fermented through three long weeks of ill-defined schedules and crucial homework assignments. My mental stress was at a constant breaking-point, and there were many times I just wanted to go

home.

Eventually, my schedule began to regulate itself. Visualizing the course of my day when I woke up helped me to face it, especially when I could differentiate between essential and optional tasks. I was able to foresee free time, giving me the fortitude to work harder when it was time to study.

I had learned the hard way something I should have remembered: habits and routines bring peace and sanity.

It doesn't matter how "new" your situation is. New baby, new job, new spouse, new home – you still need a lifeline of routine to grasp while your lifestyle shifts. This lifeline, I learned, cannot be a variable like sleep cycles, diets, or favorite people. Sleeping patterns, food options, and even friends are all subject to change along with your lifestyle.

Your "lifeline of habit" needs to begin and end with you alone.

For me, this titanium lifeline became my spiritual habits.

The real improvement in my overall mental health only came when I started prioritizing my daily prayer. No matter how big my homework avalanche, how much sleep I'd gotten, or how many parties were starting, carving out small amounts of time in the morning and the evening to pray cleared my head. That's all it took.

I'd practiced this routine while living at home, but at college these 20-odd minutes of prayer each day became much more meaningful. They gave me time away from the hectic demands of life, a few guilt-free minutes of time for myself to reflect and take a deep breath.

If you're going through a turbulent period in your life, I encourage you to practice a similar daily habit. It doesn't have to be prayer – it could be a daily run, morning

reflection, or ten minutes of journaling, drawing, or some other quiet task that you enjoy. My roommate even keeps her cool by playing basketball for just half an hour a day.

Steady daily routines come over time, but you'll go a long way to restoring mental clarity and peace if you make a disciplined effort to reclaim helpful routines and habits.

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