



Morning Rituals for Nomads

It didn't matter if I was staying with a friend in Costa Rica and waking up to the buzz of the locals heading to work. It didn't matter if I was waking up in Rome, Italy staying with another friend stretching my calves before an early stroll to the Coliseum. It didn't matter if I had to walk down seven flights of stairs in the airbnb in Barcelona to run toward the Marina and catch the sun shining across the city.

A routine is king.

Alarm goes off. The morning melody of my iPhone cries to remind me it's time to wake up. My eyelids slowly open to reveal the sun beaming into my room. What was once felt like a dread is now the spark that gets my day going.

My morning routine has shifted over the past two years despite all the traveling in between. It used to be the biggest struggle to maintain. Not having a steady wake up time, adjusting to jet lag, staying awake for red eye flights. The disruption became an issue once the lack of sleep slowed down my productivity and self care.

The drive to develop a routine started out of sheer desperation. My brain flooded with to-dos before I had a chance to make my bed or nourish my body. I often found myself gravitating to my phone to sort through emails without giving it much thought. Checking for any updates from clients or what the latest scoop was in the tech scene. Gmail became the gateway app that quickly led to me checking TikTok and other distracting time suckers. Hours would slip by and my resentment toward the wasted time made me feel even worse. The day escaped me and by the moment the sun went down, I was just starting to catch up.

I hardly had any ground to stand on and was at the whim of someone else's agenda. Whether it was a text, email, DM, I gave away all my power. I wanted it back and it was my responsibility to do so.

Blogs online emphasized the importance of starting off the day on your own terms. However, they failed to mention how it works for nomads with drastically changing schedules. What does it look like to keep your world flowing while your head rests in a different city every few weeks?

Prior to my nomadic lifestyle, I would build a good flow for a few weeks until I needed to fly out of town. Whether it was to visit family or leave for a work trip, my self care went out the window. What good was the perfect routine if I couldn't follow it when I was away from home?

I was ready to give up altogether until my mentor, [Dr. Julie Helmrich](#), invited me to get ahead of the day by planning it in advance. It was important to make sure our four needs were addressed: intellectually, emotionally, physically and spiritually. So that no matter where I was in the world, I could still contain a sense of control during my mornings.

She called it "Getting Above the Line" as a way to keep our lives in check despite whatever else was happening externally. The idea is to focus on taking care of the basic needs to build a strong foundation. Then slowly build on top of that. It is less about what you do and more about why you do it.

This method led me to think about how I could serve these parts of my life in whatever environment I was in. Resourcefulness and creativity is my friend! I learned how to carve out consistency where there wasn't any.

At my homebase in Portland, I start the morning with a leisurely bike ride

around my neighborhood. Though, bringing a bike on a trip is not the kinda luggage I enjoy hauling around. I took this into account when I traveled overseas and planned to bring running shoes instead.

Of course the process of building a sustainable habit started off clunky and constantly interrupted by the never-ending mind chatter.

I should have woken up earlier...damn, I can't believe I missed another meeting...ugh I don't feel like running today

Though slowly after trying it out throughout various countries and time zones, I started to get the rhythm down. Now it's more like a choreographed dance.

My body became more familiar with the movements. Each day was an opportunity to reinforce the training.

Wake up. Brush teeth. Wash face. Make bed. Meditate. Run. Repeat.

Meditating was the hardest part of the ritual to keep up with. To sit with my busy mind came with massive resistance. If it wasn't my racing thoughts, then it was handling the discomfort of sitting in one position for certain periods. Some days I reluctantly skipped it altogether. Other times I would schedule it in different parts of the routine. Turns out I can breathe easier once the bed was made and after I washed my face.

Prioritizing self care is why I still keep up with my rituals. It's the grounding I need to keep in line with my goals. While I may not always have 30-45min to really start my day, I built modified routines. Travel size habits, if you will, that I can take anywhere.

No time to run or go to the gym? I do 10 push-ups and other body weight training. Didn't have a chance to meditate? I write down a few things in my day I'm grateful for in my notes.

Life will include interruptions and developing the self-compassion muscle is a great place to start when we feel like we're not able to keep up. It's all an experiment and you can adjust the parts as you go.

Lately, my wake up time is more flexible due to the nature of my days. Though making my bed is non-negotiable and is the first task to complete once I wake up. Our brain feels satisfied no matter how small the win and damn it's great to have that done.

Bit by bit, you'll find your own dance. Then you can enjoy your travel-size routine anywhere you go.

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