



Follow Your Dream

While You Follow
the Military!™

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Energy 101

3 in a series

Wordcount: 770

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Any good scientific research starts with a baseline. Let's get a baseline before you make any energy changes. That way any changes that occur in your energy level will be more obvious later.

So, open your journal and answer these questions. (We'll be using your journal as a tool all through these Follow Your Dream exercises. It's a good idea to capture it all in one place.)

- How do you feel when you get up in the morning — raring to go or dragging out of bed. A good hint might be how many times you hit that snooze button before you get up. Or are you one of those who wakes up at the same time without an alarm, ready to get up and get going?
- Do you hit a slump in energy during the day? When does it occur?
- Do you have lots of energy for activities in the evening, or are you drawn to simply sit mesmerized in front of the television?
- What time do you get up in the morning and go to bed at night? Does that change on weekends?
- Do you have the energy to go out in the evening during the week?

Okay, now you are ready to make changes. Have you heard that if you do something new for 21 days it becomes a new habit? I don't trust that, so I go for 30. Here's the idea. Commit to trying these changes for 30 days. Just 30 days. If they don't work, you can go right back to your old habits and forget this. But at the end of 30 days, answer those questions above again and see if things have changed.

To help remind you to do this for 30 days, use your calendar system. Any time I want to change a habit, I use my calendar system. For example, when I read that I needed to be eating a minimum of 2 fruits and 3 vegetables daily to help protect myself from cancer, I sat down at one time and on each daily to-do list for the next 30 days I wrote: 2F/3V. That way, each day as I checked off my list, I was reminded that I needed to be doing that. At first I'd forget, but seeing it each day eventually got me to do it. And now, I no longer need to write it in. It's a new habit. Try that for each of the new energy habits we'll discuss.

• Water. The first place doctors look when they hear someone is exhausted is to see if they are dehydrated. Water is essential to energy. It helps your organs work right — and, oh yes, it helps your skin look good. You've heard that "8 glasses a day" guideline. The idea is that you need the same number of ounces of water a day as half your weight. So, if you weigh 140, you need 70 ounces which would be a bit more than 8 glasses that are 8 ounces each. But here are some caveats. If you drink coffee, tea, soda or alcohol, you will have to add one more glass for each one of those. They are dehydrators. And you should add one 14 ounce glass of water for each hour of exercise.

Sound hard? It's really not. I found a beautiful glass that I like that is MY glass. It holds 24 ounces. I know that I have to drink 3 of those a day. I made a commitment to myself that I won't have a cup of coffee in the morning until I have water first. When I have a glass of wine, I have a glass of water with it. And I carry a bottle of water with me everywhere — in the car, when I walk, in meetings, when I'm waiting in a doctor's office. I did do the 30 days calendar trick first, of course. It worked. It's become a habit.

One last thought on the water thing. I heard a doctor describe it this way: Adding water to your body is as essential as putting oil in your car. It helps lubricate your joints, it helps carry oxygen to your brain, it helps with blood transmission (in fact, dehydration is often a factor in strokes). More reasons to keep at it (and maybe an analogy that will work for the guys reading this who are skeptical.)

Drinking more water is one easy change that will increase your energy. Get started on it today. Next week we'll cover some more ways to boost your energy every day.

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Kathie Hightower and Holly Scherer lead workshops and are the authors of *Help! I'm a Military Spouse — I Want a Life Too!*
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