

Ayurveda

Personal Routines: The Big Picture

The Importance of Personal Routines

According to Ayurveda, Personal Routines are an important part of maintaining balance in our minds and bodies and in preventing disease. For this reason, we'll spend the next three weeks talking about different aspects of routines and how they can be integrated easily into your life. In 2017 the Nobel Peace Prize in medicine was given to 3 scientists for their work on the importance of clock genes (chronobiology) and human health. One of my teachers, Dr. Suhas Kshirsagar has written two books both of which work around the premise of the importance of routines for healing and maintenance of health. Basically, Ayurveda has placed critical emphasis on timing and routines as regards health and wellbeing for centuries and now current scientific research is proving this importance. It's also important to note that medical doctors know and understand the biological routines of our bodies, for example at certain times of the day our platelets are stickier than others and heart attacks occur mostly at this time, and of course the hormones in our bodies are governed by time as well. As you are probably realizing, this is not a far-fetched idea, but one, because of our modern life-styles, to which we generally don't pay any attention. The point of this conversation for all of you is to help you understand and develop some positive routines which will empower your health and wellbeing, as this can make the difference in managing sleep, stress, inflammation and much more.

Before we discuss Personal Routines, I want to mention that it's really important you don't overwhelm yourself with trying to take on too many things at once. My suggestion would be to choose one of the ideas we are going to discuss and see how it works for you. If you find that the routine you chose doesn't fit you well, find another that will work for you. Remember, we are in a no judgment zone here, so this is your opportunity to see what fits you and your lifestyle best. You have 8 weeks with me in this program, so I really want you to develop some routines that fit you well and that I can help you with as regards integration into your life and best fit for your Dosha and the stage of life you are in.

Now, let's dive into the big picture as regards Personal Routines.

Personal Routines: The Big Picture

I'm sure you're wondering what we can cover in this section that you don't know already. From childhood we are taught to brush our teeth twice per day, take a daily shower or bath to cleanse ourselves and so on. Well, Ayurveda asks us to do just a little bit more than these basic personal and daily routines.

The Ayurvedic Personal/Daily Routine protocols encompass the routines about which we are all familiar but also include much more to further health and wellbeing. The premise in Ayurveda is that we are working towards balance in our physical body, the mind, all our senses, and our soul, so taking a daily cleansing shower and brushing our teeth does not quite provide a complete routine to achieve this.

The idea of living a pure lifestyle (known as Sattvic living in Ayurveda) is our goal with the daily, nightly and seasonal routines.

Physical purity is about what we eat and how it is prepared, what we drink and the type of exercise we do.

Purity of lifestyle in Ayurveda means that we have an occupation that does not bring harm to others (or ourselves), that we are kind and pleasant in the way we communicate, and that we live and work in a healthy environment. Here the conversation also turns to being of service to others in some manner, having compassion, speaking one's truth and the truth, and the practice of Yoga and meditation or mindfulness.

Ayurveda suggests that we align ourselves with the rhythms of nature; I'm sure you recall that Ayurveda says that we are all a part of nature, so this is really important for our health and wellbeing.

This means that we arise at or close to sunrise and that we go to bed no later than 10:00 pm at night. Why, because our bodies are like machines which are aligned to sunlight and as such our biological functions are set. Since the invention of artificial light, we have been able to have flexibility as regards this issue, but unfortunately on a cellular level the body still processes according to the rhythm of the sun and as such needs this type of schedule for optimum function of digestion, cell repair and generation and toxin removal. When this rhythm is disrupted it can and will (over time) lead to disease. Think on this for a minute: the liver is critical for the removal of toxins in the body, but did you know it needs us to be in a state of sleep to function optimally and that it is most active between 10:00 pm and 2:00 am at night? We'll go more into the Daily Routines and rhythms next week, but suffice is to say, Ayurveda's suggestions directly correlate with the functions in the body.

Ideally, we need to eat according to the rhythm of nature as well. This means that our largest meal is best eaten in the middle of the day when the sun is at its highest in the sky, a small warm nourishing meal at breakfast with an even smaller nourishing meal in the evening and at least 2, but preferably 3 hours before retiring to bed. Also, carbohydrates will promote sleep so consuming them at night may help if you have sleeping difficulties. Ayurveda also prefers that snacking is limited and that meals are eaten such that you are full enough without feeling stuffed and that you have eaten enough such that you won't need to snack between meals. This allows for optimal digestion.

In Ayurveda cold beverages are not considered at all helpful to the body, and this includes water. Ayurveda suggests that room temperature water is best consumed and also not in large quantities with meals. This has to do with the all-important Agni (digestive fire), which we will discuss when we go through the Six Tastes and the importance of food and how it's digested. In fact, warm water, according to Ayurveda, supports and is very good for digestion, so drinking warm water is suggested. If water is used with a meal, then small sips throughout the meal are recommended.

Even exercise is given special attention in Ayurveda as regards our Personal Routines. The type of exercise would be Dosha specific as regards recommendations, but time of day for the most vigorous exercise would be the Kapha time of day which is from 6-10:00 am. However, it is important to eat after you've exercised so if you are ravenous before exercise then rather do a walk and save your main exercise for later in the day.

Personal Routines and Dosha Balance

Let's talk about the relationship of Doshas and Personal Routines.:

Vata Dosha predominance: If you are Vata dominant as a Dosha then the most important part about this Ayurvedic topic is to stick with a routine. As we know, Vata Dosha individuals have a tendency to change their

minds and very often. So, it makes it difficult for this Dosha type to stick to any routine, no matter how logical it is. However, of all the Doshas it is really important for a Vata Dosha individual to create a workable routine and stick with it. As I've already mentioned, Vata Dosha individuals need to make sure that they do not deplete themselves by over-exercising, so setting limits on your exercise routines and also sticking to an exercise routine is very helpful. Staying up late is another very depleting routine for this Dosha type so having a good bedtime routine is really important. Also, cold water and beverages are never recommended for Vata Dosha individuals, so if you can create a workable routine and stick with it and also drink warm rather than cold beverages, you would be making a great start to empowering your wellbeing.

Pitta Dosha predominance: If you are a Pitta dominant Dosha then your main concern is to 'cool down.' This may mean that you are not in competition with others or yourself, and that you relax and find joy in the routines. As Pitta Dosha individuals can be very intense, detailed and organized, the routines can take on an intensity that is not healthy. Pitta Dosha individuals would benefit from adding in some calming activities to the daily routine as generally Pitta Dosha individuals will easily follow the routines purely because it's their nature to do so. As with the Vata Dosha individuals make sure that exercise is not overdone and it's also important that Pitta Dosha individuals never exercise during the heat of the day. This will bring too much heat to the Pitta Dosha and can eventually cause imbalance. So, to empower wellbeing within the construct of the routines, Pitta Dosha individuals would be best served with a 'go with the flow' attitude.

Kapha Dosha predominance: If you are a Kapha dominant Dosha your main goal is for activity and variation – to prevent from getting stuck in a rut. This Dosha type truly benefits from spicing it up every day and variation is the key. As I've already mentioned, Kapha Dosha individuals do not like change, so variation and activity go against Kapha Dosha individuals basic psycho-physiological makeup. However, if a Kapha Dosha individual maps out a routine for a week which includes different activities every day, then sticking to this and enjoying it will be much easier to do. Anything cold and heavy is not recommended for this Dosha type, so rigorous and heat producing would be greatly beneficial when it comes to exercise. Rising at the Ayurvedic suggested hour is also important as this is the Kapha time of day. So, as a Kapha Dosha in the Kapha time of day, it is very easy to feel heavy and lethargic so routinely rising with the sun is very helpful. Also, exercising at this time of day, to mitigate the Kapha effects of the time of day and the Dosha is very beneficial and empowering.

That's all I'm going to cover this week as this concept can be quite daunting to most people. As leaders you already have many time demands placed on you, so I don't want to bring overwhelm or shut you down as regards these techniques. As a reminder, we are all unique individuals so no matter whether two different people are of the same Dosha dominance, they will have slightly different experiences and reactions to the big picture ideas here. So, remember to be kind to yourself and figure out what works for you so that you can create life-long sustainable, healthy habits to empower your wellbeing and success.