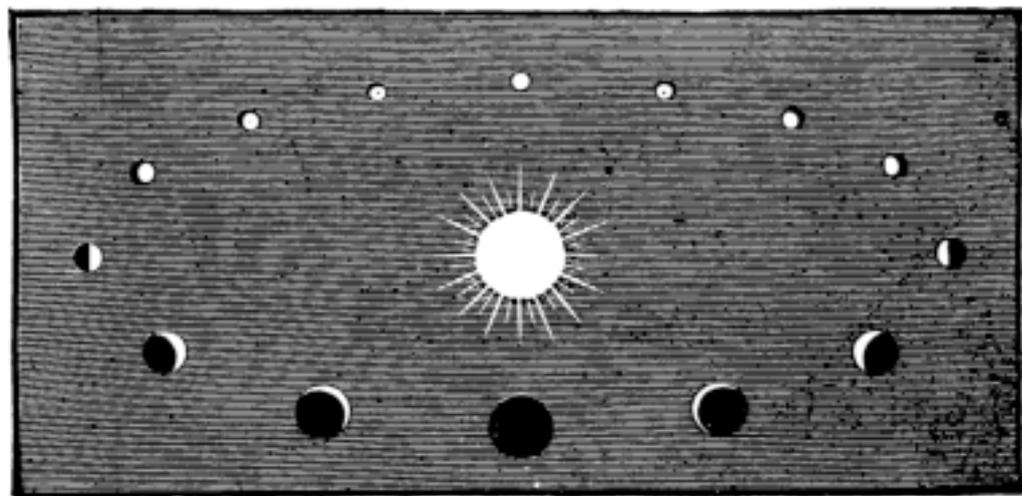# Routine

Ian Dennis Miller

introduction

An activity is *routine* when it is performed daily. More or less. Taken together, all this book's activities are known as: Routine. Routine should become nameless by its invisibility as it dissolves into the structure of life.

Each routine has enough particularity that it is worth writing down. It is too easy to forget some of the finer details of routine activities - and the feeling of forgetting can be frustrating. Life is too short to deal with the friction of recalling trivial steps involved in everyday activity. The routine can provide contentment by settling mundane questions so no more time is wasted revisiting stale thoughts.

The general structure of this document describes one particular life out of many. With some modifications, these routines might be adapted to work with other lives.

overview

These routines are organized into a loose hierarchy:

1. **personal**: the body and mind are the seat of agency, which is fundamental to achieving anything

2. **estate**: the estate supports the home

3. **home**: the home supports personal, family, and professional endeavours

4. **away**: it is occasionally necessary to venture away from home

5. **professional**: become essential to the world

Share this book!

☐ Give Routine to **friends and family**.

☐ Read Routine with **house mates** and partners.

☐ Form a Routine study group.

☐ Gift Routine to **students** and graduates.

☐ Moving to a **new country**? Learn about Routine.

What is your #**Routine**?

Chapter 1

personal

Agency is the practice of free will. The body and mind are the seat of agency. There are a variety of personal routines that prepare the body and mind for optimal performance.

1.1   wellness

The body and mind need regular attention. Wellness generally refers to peak operation. Some attention must be paid to each facet of wellness, because ignoring one to an extreme degree can result in the failure of the whole system.

When any major personal routine has been neglected, it could prevent even simple public activities like walking to the store. Some routines, like hygiene, might be difficult to neglect. Other routines, like sleep, may be easier to conceal in public when neglected but are nevertheless essential for peak operation. One of the key criteria for personal readiness is whether that person is able to leave their home.

Figure 1.1: list of key health experts

☐ **family physician**: learns your individual medical history and keeps records.

☐ **optometrist**: monitors your eyes for changes and provide glasses as necessary.

☐ **specialists**: referred to for acute situations.

☐ **dentist**: keeps your teeth clean and watches for problems.

☐ **health clinics**: provide special services and perform certain tests.

Figure 1.2: making a doctor's appointment

1. determine the **purpose** of your appointment in 2 or 3 words.

2. open your **calendar** so it is ready for scheduling.

3. locate your **doctor's phone number** and dial it on the phone.

4. say **your name**: "Hi. My name is *Your Name.*"

5. say your **doctor's name**: "My physician is Dr. *whatever.*"

6. say your **purpose**: "I would like to make an appointment to talk about *whatever.*"

1.1.1   health

It is important to maintain health, both in body and in mind. There are many experts whose advice is necessary for staying healthy. You must obtain each of the doctors in Figure 1.1 and keep their contact information in a useful spot so that they can be contacted when required. A script for making a doctor's appointment is presented in Figure 1.2

Heathcare systems present a moderate amount of com-

plexity, ultimately requiring lots of reading and information finding in order to make good decisions. Despite its complexity, it is absolutely critical to fully engage with your healthcare system. Be sure your health identification card[1] is not expired so that there will not be an issue using it in an unplanned situation.

Many countries provide a national or regional insurance program or health system. Private health insurance might cover anything the national system does not provide, which could include: dental, sport/physical rehabilitation, eye care, and travel coverage.

1.1.2 fitness

It is important to be physically active on a daily basis. I've found that yoga is a great workout that requires little equipment and space.

I think about human fitness in terms of several bodily systems that can be intentionally stressed a little bit in order to strengthen them. Muscles can be exerted and grown, but they can also be stretched to relax them. Tendons are under constant tension, but they can be stretched over time to gain flexibility which can help with unexpected injury. Bones require good nutrition, but care should be taken to reduce repetitive impacts when exercising. Joints can be harmed by chronically poor form or from injury. Because joints cause pain in later life, extra care should be taken to maintain joint health.

Figure 1.3: basic hygiene

- ☐ **fingernails**: not too long, no dirt

- ☐ **toes**: monitor for ingrown nails

- ☐ **teeth**: feels smooth, no bad breath

- ☐ **skin**: smooth, not dirty, not oily

- ☐ **odors**: fragrance, not sweaty

- ☐ **clothes**: fresh, unworn

- ☐ **hair**: not oily, not tangled

1.1.3   hygiene

It is important to keep one's body clean and sufficiently groomed. I emphasize "sufficiency" because hygiene can become intertwined with vanity which could be problematic. Figure 1.3 presents the minimum amount of grooming required for society to not marginalize you.

After showering but before drying off, wipe excess water off your body with your hand. I like to use a medium-size towel after the shower. I send the towel through the laundry weekly.

Feet are an important part of hygiene. Shoes, a human invention, are an essential technology for daily living. However, it is unnatural to keep one's feet confined inside sweaty, dark shoes all day long. Toes and feet are especially vulnerable to infections so wash daily and take off shoes indoors.

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[1]Countries with standardized health systems frequently use health ID cards as part of their system.

1.1.4   sleep

Predictable sleep facilitates sleep quality. The room should be dark without blinking lights. There should not be frequent noise that interrupts sleep, but if there is, a noise generator should be used to cancel these sounds.

A sleep mask can help immensely when the bedroom isn't totally dark or when sleeping during the day. The mask must pull tightly against the face to block out all light without exerting any pressure on the eyes. I recommend getting a mask with padded sides and an elastic band.

Human sleep patterns generally track the movement of the sun via the circadian rhythm. Mimicking the daily sunlight pattern by controlling the sleeping environment can contribute to better sleep. Travel between time zones can interfere with sleep but small amounts of the sleep hormone Melatonin can make it faster to adjust in your new time zone.

When taking an afternoon siesta, always set an alarm for the amount of time you wish to sleep. A good rule of thumb is to sleep in 45-minute or 90-minute intervals. It is best to wake up the first time the alarm rings, but a single "snooze" is okay. In the morning, especially when there is another person sleeping in the same bed, it is important to wake up with the very first alarm.

1.1.5   sexuality

Sex is the way to make babies. It's better to intentionally **not** make babies until the specific time when you decide you do want babies. Once you've settled your routine, maybe it's time to intentionally make babies.

Despite what you may have heard, it is not trivial to

Figure 1.4: how to make a baby

1. use **ovulation detection kit**

2. **intercourse** every 48 hours during ovulation

3. wait a few days then use **pregnancy detection kit**

4. **repeat** from step 1 until pregnancy

make a baby on demand. It can be hard or impossible for some couples to have a baby, so realize how lucky it is if you do become pregnant. There is a basic pregnancy algorithm (see Figure 1.4) that vastly increases the chances of getting pregnant when you want.

A variety of health problems can develop with sexual organs - particularly cancers - requiring regular screenings. Sexuality is more than just babies and responsibility - but I leave that as an exercise for the reader.

1.2   daily

We usually segment our lives into days separated by periods of sleep. From day to day, some things happen regularly, and these regular occurrences form a daily "pattern" that we become familiar with.

1.2.1   regular days

A lot of smart people have emphasized regularity in a daily schedule like the one in Figure 1.5. That's a nice thought. In practice, there are lots of reasons - social, professional, personal - we stay up late. With some self-discipline it is possible to not stray too far from a regular schedule. In

Figure 1.5: daily allotment of time

- ☐ **6am**: wake
- ☐ **6am-8:30am**: home routines
- ☐ **8:30am-10am**: personal routines and tasks
- ☐ **10am-5pm**: professional routines and tasks
- ☐ **5pm-6pm**: personal routines and tasks
- ☐ **6pm-8pm**: home and estate routines
- ☐ **8pm-9pm**: relax
- ☐ **9pm**: bedtime
- ☐ **10pm**: sleep

Figure 1.6: essential "busy day" checklist

- ☐ **breakfast** (AM)
- ☐ **pants** (AM)
- ☐ **inbox** (AM)
- ☐ **dishes** (PM)
- ☐ **laundry** (PM)
- ☐ **garbage** (PM)
- ☐ **email** (PM)
- ☐ **teeth** (PM)

particular, a regular schedule benefits sleep hygiene. It's also possible to have fun while keeping a regular schedule by staying out late on specific days and resuming regularity the very next day.

1.2.2 busy days

By the end of a regular the day, every routine has probably received a little attention. However, on busy days it can be difficult to take a moment to think clearly. There are a few essential routines in Figure 1.6 that will permit "scraping by" for **a few days** until there is time to regroup.

If you are regularly experiencing "busy days" then your

"regular" is your "busy" and - critically - *your "busy" is prob-ably unsustainable.* Too many busy days is a warning flag for you to reconsider whether your life is balanced. There are periods of justifiable "busy-ness" but too much can unnecessarily burden the people in your life and lead to "burnout" in your own life.

1.2.3   routine

Routine should be useful. Routine itself should be revisited periodically. Some parts of the routine could feel tedious so those parts might not be necessary. *Friction*, or the bored feeling of unnecessary work, is a sign that a routine should be examined. When routine becomes ritual - action for its own sake instead of a useful goal - then it is time to eliminate the ritual. Routine should only ever be useful.

1.2.4   steady state

Steady state is achieved when routine is effortless and complete.   Steady state is the laziest, lowest-energy way of being. Any deviation from steady state is immediately obvious. Routine reduces friction, so unnecessary effort is often a sign that steady state is disturbed.   The effort-savings achieved at steady state yield surplus for noticing and correcting issues with routine. Friction increases as the distance from steady state increases. It takes less energy to return to steady state than it does to leave it entirely.

Stasis is unattainable because the environment is constantly shifting and routine must gradually adapt to the changes. Steady state is never stasis and stasis is not desirable, anyway. Steady state is - by its definition - incomplete because improvement is an essential part of steady state.

1.3   balance

Balance is spending enough time so as to not neglect any important routine. There are uncountably-many ways to relate to the world and each requires a unique strategy for balance. This section could not possibly be comprehensive. The examples provided herein are merely for consideration; they are not prescriptive.

1.3.1   family and friends

The individual is connected to others through heritage, marriage, and friendship. It is important to grow and maintain these connections. There are certain times when these connections should be emphasized.

family tree

It can provide context to understand one's heritage. To whatever extent it is possible, obtain the family tree documents from each of your parents to form the current generation family tree. A family tree is a special document that can be represented many ways: drawn as a branching network, listed out as a long printed scroll, bound with entries like a dictionary, and more.

address book

It is important to have a single location for storing the names, contact information, birthdays, and relationships for important people. Since this information tends to change slowly, it is even possible to manage the task with a pencil and paper. Most people tend to have fewer than 300 contacts to track with an address book.

Figure 1.7: methods of correspondence

☐ **chat**: encrypted text chat, and SMS as a fallback.

☐ **mail**: write and receive letters with mail via national postal system.

☐ **email**: write and receive digital letters with email.

☐ **video**: chat with a peer-to-peer client.

Some online services provide automatic address book facilities, which may be useful so long as you also create a working offline backup. An online address book sync service can be useful for maintaining contact information on more than one mobile device.

annual contact

Each year, send a family letter to everyone with a current photo and a brief update. Apart from maintaining the connection, this is also an opportunity to ensure your contact information is current. The task of printing and mailing postcards can be outsourced to a third party or it can be done by hand at a lower cost. When any card is returned, you should follow up by some other means to understand what happened. Any changes to address information should be reflected in the address book.

1.3.2   correspondence

When you live in a different city than your friends and family, it is important to maintain correspondence with people you wish to stay close to. Despite the impression that technology makes it easy to stay in touch, in practice it takes dedication and strategy to actually correspond well.

The choice of medium is particularly important - several are listed in Figure 1.7 - because the wrong choice can result in your correspondence never being seen. The intended recipient largely determines which medium should be chosen.

privacy

The ability to choose which thoughts to make public - and which to keep private - is an invaluable freedom that permits us to refine our thinking before spreading it widely. By thinking before speaking, we increase the likelihood that our public words will withstand the test of time. Privacy is therefore essential.

Privacy needs must be regularly attended to, particularly when technology is concerned. The capabilities of technology must be analyzed for privacy consequences. New technologies, whether you are the owner and controller or not, may create records that could compromise privacy in some way. It is important to think about the informational consequences of your actions and whether that information compromises your privacy.

In public spaces, there is no reasonable expectation of privacy. Many countries are specific about enumerating rights to privacy. Privacy must be actively engaged in order to benefit from the right of privacy.

encryption

Encryption should be used when both parties can do so competently, in which case it should be used always. It is important that both parties have a solid understanding of what encryption is and how to use it. In practice, I have found it is not possible to urge another party to adopt

Figure 1.8: encryption technologies

☐ **VPN**: encrypt all Internet traffic

☐ **HTTPS**: private web traffic

☐ **PGP and GPG**: private email

☐ **SSH**: secure UNIX shell

encryption practices; they must make the choice themselves. This is a lesson that is slowly being learned one catastrophe at a time.

I urge you, the reader, to be ahead of the curve on the topic of encryption. Several foundational encryption technologies are listed in Figure 1.8.

1.3.3 sustainability

It's not very easy to quantify the sustainability of somebody's lifestyle. I know how many bags of garbage I dispose of per month and how many kWh of electricity used at home but a complete accounting of all consumption - broadly defined - is difficult. Nevertheless, I have an intuition about my consumption and waste and I am not convinced the routine I describe in this book is sustainable.

Phrased differently, if everybody on Earth lived as I do I think it might cause a global catastrophe of some sort,

which leads me to two conclusions:

1. we've got to figure out how we can all survive without causing catastrophe.

2. if you use it, at least be sure it's worth it.
   I promise you I'm trying.

Because many sustainability issues are not the immediate result of individual choices, I urge vigilance in individual choices and civic engagement for broader issues.

1.3.4   nature

Humans are of the natural world and I've found it's restorative to reconnect with nature. At various times in my life I've had easier and harder access to the outdoors and I find I'm happier with it. Camping and hiking are personal hobbies of mine that enable me to escape the constructed environment of my routines.

Without the ability to step away, it's not possible to gain a separate perspective. The subjective experience of time is changed when the environment is changed. A day lived in nature is radically different from a day lived in the home. It is important to experience the contrast between nature and constructed reality in order to achieve balance.

1.3.5   learning

Primary and secondary education is the minimum required for literacy. Literacy is a fundamental requirement for free thought and active participation in society. Categorically, illiteracy creates a separate class of human functioning and capabilities. Nobody who is illiterate is able to read *The*

Routine. It is critically important to be literate.

Undergraduate education is very valuable but not essential. In some cases, technical or associate training could provide greater value. I made important lifelong friendships during my undergraduate experience. In my estimation, the ultimate goal of an undergraduate education is to learn how to teach yourself. Once you are "unchained" by way of self-education, you enter the domain of knowledge.

Continuing education is critical to someone who self-educates. Advanced degrees can elevate a capable student to the highest forms of functioning. Other forms of education remain relevant throughout life. Stay mentally active.

1.3.6   curiosity

It is important to have love for the world and to find interest in things that others undervalue. Fascinations, artworks, projects, ventures, expeditions, obsessions, and voyages provide balance. All professionals begin as amateurs.

Falling in love with a random subject could lead to a fortunate tangent that becomes a major life focus. It is important to be receptive to these serendipitous opportunities while maintaining one major focus. Remain curious.

1.3.7   spirituality

There is a shared commonality among all humans. From this shared experience and similarity arises the human spirit. While the specific practice of spirituality can vary, in general these practices tend to gather individuals toward a collective outcome.

There is often a mystical component to spirituality that, by its inclusion, makes some portion of that spirituality

unobservable or even impossible to experience. Other spiritual practices are heavily focused on the experience, including physical and mental preparations, individual and social rituals, trials, feats, demonstrations, the ingestion of foods, and virtually anything available to the human situation.

For some, spirituality is the highest mode of human functioning. Spirituality may be the whole point of existence. Large portions of the day might be dedicated to its practice. For others, spirituality serves as a backdrop for life, present in all things but rarely the focus of activity.

1.3.8   morality

People tend to be nice to one another - with notable exceptions. The boundaries of permissible behavior are loosely called morals. Here are a few principles for consideration.

purpose

Find purpose in life. Live life with purpose.

self-knowledge

The only person you can possibly know everything about is yourself, and in all likelihood even then you will not know everything. Only you can know whether you are doing everything required to fulfill the necessities of routine for yourself. You are the only person who must be convinced of your commitment to yourself.

responsibility

The ultimate responsibility for acting rightly lies in the hands of the individual, themselves. Do not *needlessly* prioritize your responsibilities above the responsibilities of others, but do so when necessary.

harm reduction

To the extent that existence is suffering, act to reduce suffering and harm.

   If you can strive to act rightly in all moments, then you know it is possible for others to strive. If you know you can stumble and fail to always act rightly, then you know others can stumble. If you have experienced caring, forgiveness, and generosity in moments when you have struggled, then you know how others might benefit. Therefore, always do your best, expect that others are at least trying, and be tolerant of the shortcomings you observe in the world.

knowing wrong

In any decision, acting rightly is choosing to not act wrongly. To know the right action is to know the wrong action. Many people know both right and wrong but usually choose "right."

optimism

As a principle for building a civilization, cynicism manifests poor scaling properties; optimism is better. Do not overestimate how often others will choose to act wrongly. When you cynically protect yourself from all harms, at the expense of all cooperation, you do not merely harm your own ability to

Figure 1.9: basic wardrobe listing

- □ 14x underpants ("boxer briefs")
- □ 7x under shirts
- □ 14x pairs white athletic socks
- □ 3x pairs beige socks
- □ 3x pairs brown socks
- □ 3x pairs black socks
- □ 3x pants (beige, blue, gray)
- □ 14x button-down collar shirts
- □ 2x sport coats (beige, blue)
- □ 7x t-shirts
- □ 3x shorts (beige, blue, gray)

cooperate but you also harm everybody else's cooperation too.

1.4 outfit

An outfit consists of the items that are worn on the body for adapting to social and environmental climates. Costumes could be included among outfits - and often social outfits are costumes. To pioneers and explorers, an outfitter provided suitable gear for a specific job. To the extent that we ought to routinely explore the reaches of our experience, we should have suitable outfits too.

1.4.1 clothes

Clothing varies all across the world. The list in Figure 1.9 describes a week's worth of clothing for a North American adult male. This wardrobe is intended to last about one week before laundry becomes essential. An assumption of this wardrobe is that the wearer encounters a mix

of casual and business casual events throughout the week. Additional socks, underpants, and t-shirts support multiple sweaty workouts each week.

1.4.2   storage

Clothes must be stored in such a manner that they can be easily accessed at any time. When clothes are beneath piles, perhaps in boxes with lids, then they may as well not exist because they probably won't be worn any time soon. A piece of furniture called a wardrobe or dresser might provide useful storage space. A specific strategy must be chosen for clothing storage: drawers, cabinets, closets, and other furniture will work.

For my particular situation, I store my clothes in a closet with hangers. I suggest purchasing a single type of hangar[2] in bulk and use only that kind. I use one kind of shirt hanger and one kind of pants hanger. When using uniform hangars, all shirts will hang at the same height. It is surprisingly pleasing to visually scan the whole rack to make decisions when the hangars are identical.

Other forms of clothing storage will be suited to different circumstances, both in terms of need (volume required) and affordances (volume available in the home).

1.4.3   outerwear

The regional climate and the time of year will determine what sort of outerwear is appropriate. When in doubt, spend some time at a public space to observe what other people are wearing at various times of year. Where I live,

---

[2]Hangars tend to accumulate into a mixture of sizes and colors, so simply dispose of these piecemeal acquisitions.

there are three basic modes of outerwear based on temperature: cold (-35c to 5c), cool (5c-15c), and nice (15c-25c).

A specialized coat is needed for each season. When it is cold, fluffy insulating coats provide protection against low temperatures. When it is cool, a lighter jacket that stashes easily in a bag will be valuable for its portability. When it is nice, it's possible the rain is your only consideration, so an extremely light waterproof jacket works well.

Where I live, when it is hot - above 25c - just do whatever you can to stay comfortable, like wear a bathing suit and go to the pool.

Hats are a useful piece of outerwear in all seasons. Thick knitted hats can boost your core temperature significantly when it is cold outside. A wide-brimmed hat can keep the sun out of your face and off your neck when it is hot. In particularly dry and hot climates (35c and above) a trick is to put ice in the top of your hat, which melts and evaporates to cool your head while evaporating before you get wet.

Gloves are essential in cold weather or while moving quickly, as on a bike or while skiing. Sunglasses are useful for seeing clearly when it is bright; they can protect your eyes against some forms of sun damage.

1.4.4   footwear

Figure 1.10 lists the types of footwear I rely upon. Improper footwear can make any reasonable task miserable or even impossible. It is necessary to have footwear for all sorts of situations. When something breaks with your footwear, it usually needs to be fixed immediately.

Shoes are worth spending some money on once you are old enough that your feet have stopped growing. For daily wear, I recommend purchasing shoes, sandals, and boots

Figure 1.10: types of footwear

☐ **shoes**: everyday use, minimally water resistant

☐ **sandals**: everyday, breathable, dirty

☐ **formal shoes**: brown and black, often shiny requiring polish

☐ **hiking boots**: laces above the ankle, good tread, waterproof

☐ **snow boots**: mid-calf, thick insulation, very soft tread

☐ **ice cleats**: attaches to shoes or boots, metal cleats

that can be repaired.[3] In the long-run, disposable shoes end up costing more and they require extra work to replace them more often.

1.4.5   complete outfits

In practice, clothes and shoes are combined in predictable ways. Especially when packing for travel, it is useful to think about these combinations of clothing in order to plan out which items to pack. The kinds of outfits somebody will need on a routine basis will largely be determined by the types of activities they engage in, which might be influenced by profession.

casual outfit

A casual outfit, listed in Figure 1.11, is good for practically any informal gathering or for doing work around the home. It can become even more casual by switching the shirt for

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[3]Most shoes purchased from a large store cannot be repaired.

Figure 1.11: casual outfit

☐ white socks   ☐ button shirt with collar

☐ white under shirt
                                 ☐ boxer briefs
☐ belt

☐ beige shorts or pants   ☐ footwear

Figure 1.12: business casual outfit

☐ beige or brown socks   ☐ button shirt with collar

☐ white under shirt   ☐ boxer briefs

☐ belt   ☐ brown shoes

☐ beige or blue pants   ☐ blue blazer

a t-shirt or, in the summer, ditching the shirt altogether.
Casual can be pretty casual - depending on where you are.

business casual outfit

Business casual is appropriate for professional settings, includ-
ing offices, school, government, many religious services, and
any situation in which you want to publicly demonstrate
your respectfulness. See Figure 1.12 for an example Busi-
ness casual outfit.

   "Business casual" will depend on your region and decade.
Right now, a blue slim cut blazer is practically all that's
required - but a few casual or semi-formal elements won't
hurt. Blue jeans were cool when I lived in the Bay Area ...
but I don't know anymore.

Figure 1.13: formal outfit

☐ black socks   ☐ underwear

☐ suit pants   ☐ black shoes

☐ suit coat   ☐ belt

☐ white shirt   ☐ tie

☐ undershirt   ☐ bling

formal outfit

Formal attire, seen in Figure 1.13 is used for weddings, funerals, fancy entertainment, fancy meals, and some fancy events. A tie and a suit with matching pants and jacket will make things formal. Extra bling - watches, rings, pins - signify excitement for the event. When the evening involves socializing with people you haven't met before, tactfully unique bling can be a conversation starter.

Formal can be upped to *black tie* by switching the suit for a tuxedo. I keep a tuxedo around but I wear it very infrequently. Usually, the event will indicate whether it is black tie. It would be unusual to just show up dressed more formally than everybody else - unless you are hosting.

1.5   civics

None of us stands alone. Together, humans have raised a civilization elevating us above the anarchy of animals. Each individual has the responsibility to engage in civic processes.

1.5.1   democracy

Government by democratic consent is one of the principles underlying many political systems, both locally and globally. Voting is a crucial action that takes place in democracies. Although many countries permit voting to be a choice, you should not regard it as such. For all engaged citizens, voting is essentially mandatory.

Democracy is best learned by practice. In a democracy, it is important for citizens to have sufficient knowledge about the functions and processes of government. Robert's Rules of Order provide an excellent framework for constructing your own small democracy, like a club or group.

1.5.2   citizenship

In order to be a good citizen, you must understand your government. You must know all levels of government - that is, which offices exist - and you must know who currently occupies those offices as well as their contact information.

In healthy political systems, you are expected to contact your representatives to express your agreement or disagreement about upcoming votes and current events. It is easiest to gain experience contacting government over issues that you casually care for so that you will be able to respond appropriately when a serious issue arises.

Citizenship also includes active involvement in public forums - both listening to what is said and speaking out as well. Newspapers, online forums, special interest groups, radio, blogs, and other types of forums provide spaces for political discourse.

The ultimate form of participatory citizenship is to draft legislation and work within the system to get it passed. In

Figure 1.14: list of key celebrations

☐ **weddings**   ☐ **child births**

☐ **graduations**   ☐ **reunions**

☐ **religious milestones**   ☐ **birthdays**

partnership with public servants, including elected representatives, the crafting and passage of new legislation enacts lasting change within a democracy.

1.5.3   leadership

An important principle of self-governance is the separation between offices and the people who momentarily occupy those offices.

Political leaders have sway over public money and public opinion, so leaders therefore have immense responsibility. When in a position of leadership, it is critically important to act rightly in order to serve as an outward demonstration to others that goodness is possible. When a leader acts as a coward, or with corruption, or to violate trust, this results in great harm to everybody. Any victims of harm will be suspicious of the perpetrator simply as a matter of self-preservation. Bad leaders are destructive to civilization, itself.

1.6   celebrations

It is important to celebrate. In some sense, each day is an opportunity for celebration. In practice, some days - like the ones listed in Figure 1.14 - are more special than others.

Some celebrations are designed to involve many people from many families and cities. Celebrations may take place over the course of several days. It's different everywhere, which is part of the fun.

1.6.1   formal occasions

Formal occasions require formal clothing, as discussed in the outfits section. It may also be appropriate to write a personal card for the occasion. Over time, I have come to prefer blank cards or personal stationery[4] for expressing sentiments.

Formal events frequently follow a schedule and there may be a designated person who tries to ensure everybody follows it. An itinerary might be included with the invitation, so it is important to make a note of these details. You should arrive promptly or even a little early for formal events.

Formal events could be an opportunity to show off subtle knowledge about local culture. The position of silverware, the sequence of behaviors, and a variety of other signals could take on special significance depending upon the audience. Depending on your goals, it may be important to learn these cues. Perhaps most important of all: mute your cellphone.

Ultimately, it is easy enough to get along at any formal event: be gracious to your hosts, the other guests, and the staff.

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[4]Stationery with your family name on it is pretty classy. Don't skimp on the cardstock or ink, either. I recommend offset printing from an actual printing press.

Figure 1.15: key principles for spirits

☐ **planning**:   forethought
and research about spirits

☐ **set**: how you feel

☐ **setting**: the environment

☐ **moderation**: appropriate
amounts

☐ **water**:   adequate hydra-
tion

☐ **time**: duration and sched-
ules

1.6.2   birthdays

Each person is born one day and many cultures celebrate
that day every year. If you know it is somebody's birthday,
you can almost always bring them happiness by mentioning
it. In some cultures, it is nice to make a note about some-
body's birthday even if you do not know them very well.
There may be customs regarding gift giving.

In particular, it is important to celebrate one's own birth-
day. The years are marked as a progression of birthdays -
and you only get so many. Some years, this special day
could be an opportunity for reflection. It is ultimately up
to you.

1.6.3   spirits

Among all the foods, some foods are euphemistically called
"spirits" and they can be quite advanced to consume. Spir-
its are so-called because they make the person who con-
sumes the spirits feel different, as if a new spirit is within
them. Basic guidelines for the use of spirits are listed in
Figure 1.15.

Celebrations might be one time when spirits are con-

Figure 1.16: important filing categories

☐ **notes**   ☐ **government**

☐ **memories**   ☐ **bank**

☐ **identity**   ☐ **health**

sumed. Spiritual practices might involve the consumption of spirits. Even some kinds of work are traditionally paired with spirits.

Spirits are usually restricted by age so that children may not consume them. In some jurisdictions, laws prohibit all people from consuming spirits with special provisions for specific spirits.

1.7   artifacts

> "All that you touch and all that you see
> is all your life will ever be."   (Pink Floyd)

As you live your life, there will be little things you collect along the way. Maybe they are tokens from celebrations or maybe they are little gifts you cherish. You might make something one day that you want to keep for a little while. Special things like this need special attention or else they can become a burden instead of a source of joy.

1.7.1   files

A filing system - which is described in the chapter on professional topics - should be used to provide some space for personal files. Within the personal filing space, there should be 26 separator cards labeled A-Z. You might want to quickly

look at the professional filing section to learn more about this now.

Personal artifacts can be sorted into a few key folders. Some example categories are listed in Figure 1.16. Example artifacts might include health records, government documents, bank records, important letters, important receipts, memories, notes, photographs, and whatever other papers require filing.

1.7.2   archive

The archive exists to collect old files that are no longer active enough to keep in the filing system. Files should be periodically rotated out to the archive when the containing folder has become unmanageable. Another good time for rotation occurs during fiscal new years. Rotating folders to the archive is also a good trigger for generating new folder labels in case any labels include the year on the sticker.

The archive can be helpful for managing tax documents, which could otherwise take up lots of filing space. Tax documents should be kept for seven years but it is unusual to need to make frequent reference to those files. Therefore, only one tax year needs be on file, but the remaining six years should be available in the archive.

The archive could be a simple box that is kept in storage. It should be waterproof and it should have a lid so that it will survive basic water damage. Commonly, letter-sized filing boxes can be found at office supply stores. The archive does not need to be special; it could be a separate section of the filing system. What is important about the archive is that it is separate from the active filing section.

1.7.3   memories

In order to hang on to little keepsakes for a few years, I have been using a special file folder called "memories" that I rotate every so often. I put all sorts of things into the memories folder including pictures, table placards, programs, tickets, passes, notes, drawings, and other little things that would evoke a memory in me. Not everything is a flat piece of paper so this folder tends to bulge a little.

When I perform a rotation, I print out a new label that includes the current date. I file the old memories folder in the archive and I put the fresh memories folder in its place in my personal files.

1.8   legacy

Legacy is the lasting impression that remains after you are dead. For some, "legacy" invokes images of a time after death; things like tombstones, philanthropy, and the naming of roads. For others, it is a call to action - in the present moment - to actively shape this legacy.

There are some routines that specifically involve legacy - both yours and others.

1.8.1   blog

A personal blog is a collected life story, a profile, and more. The blog can serve as a platform for self-publishing, no matter your preferred medium - be it visual, musical, written, or otherwise. While most blogs use the written word as their principle communication device, some have no words at all.

A blog must be easy to publish to. I explored many technically sophisticated blogs and I concluded that simple

is better. Any technical barriers to blogging activity ought to be reduced as much as possible. I discuss the details of blogging at greater length in the professional chapter.

There should be a permanent, memorable URL for accessing the blog. Adopting the long view, it is not obvious how to ensure your words will be available a century from now. It is unlikely that a URL will continue working for so long; the domain name costs money to renew and for all we know, we will not use domain names a century from now. Always keep this impermanence in mind.

1.8.2   memoirs

I enjoy recalling some of the fun and exciting adventures I've had with friends and family. I've often thought: I'd like to write that story down so I will always remember it. Some of the details tend to be lost with time. Reading memoirs you've written many years ago reminds you about parts of the story you forgot.

The classic mode for written memories is to think of them as sentences and put the words in a book. Writing memoirs proceeds as a professional writing task. A different, intimate memoir - a journal or diary - could autobiographically annotate every day of your life. Casual memoirs exist as well, perhaps taking the form of scrap books.

A blog could serve to collect these memoirs.

1.8.3   remembrance

It is important to remember the people who lived before. Any family member who is deceased should be actively remembered. Ancestors - particularly parents, grandparents, and anybody who loved you as a parent - should be honored.

Also honor the important people in your life who have acted at key moments. Among close friends, extend honor to their parents and families - living or not - as well.

In some countries, there is a special holiday for remembering people. Religious services often fulfill the need for remembrance. Key announcements or actions on special days commemorate celebrated individuals. Visiting grave sites, placing flowers, and pausing to think are forms of remembrance. The dates of births and deaths are especially important.

1.8.4   children

Children are the ultimate legacy. Under normal circumstances, they continue to live after you are dead. I have come to literally think of children in terms of "afterlife." You can get a preview of your own afterlife; you will see it in your children.

The world you and I have helped construct is the world children are born into. The decisions of parents affect their children, for better and for worse. It is plain to see the inter-generational transfer of both healthy and toxic idiosyncrasies.