

Adrienne Herbert

Power Hour



How to Focus on
Your Goals and Create
a Life You Love



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By Adrienne Herbert

13-minute read

Synopsis

Power Hour (2020) introduces a way to take charge of your life by devoting the first hour of each day to a goal or passion. In today's busy world, it's easy to procrastinate. Instead of waiting for the perfect time to pursue a goal, you have to *make* time to do it. One hour each day can change your attitude, habits, health, and social connections – and these changes can lead to a more fulfilling and productive life.

Who is it for?

- All those feeling overwhelmed and exhausted
- Productivity hackers
- People looking for motivation

About the author

Adrienne Herbert is the host of the weekly *Power Hour* podcast, which has over 1.5 million downloads to date. Herbert also serves as the Director of Innovation and Performance at Fiit, the UK's top fitness app. A wellness professional and motivational speaker, she has given TEDx talks as well as private talks at businesses such as Apple and WeWork. This is her first book.

What's in it for me? Make the first hour of every day count, and the rest will follow.

A day is a finite amount of time: 24 hours. We often prioritize our work, studies, parenting, and everyday chores, putting off our personal goals and passions until evening. The problem is that, by then, we're too exhausted to get anything done, so we put it off till the next evening.

Carrying around a growing mental list of deferred goals is tiring and deeply discouraging. At some point, you have to ask yourself, *Is this something I care about enough to make time for?*

Because making time is possible. As these blinks explain, all you've got to do is devote the first hour of every day to a specific goal or passion, and you can make your goals a reality.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- why the first hour of the day is the most important;
- how to create your own person board of directors; and
- the difference between *habits* and *power habits*.

With the right mindset, you can take charge of your day and achieve your goals.

If you're like most people, you probably feel that there simply aren't enough hours in the day for personal projects. There's no time to strive toward your dreams. You've got to juggle life's many responsibilities – the appointments, meetings, and other obligations that fill the day. What's more, when a spare moment *does* present itself, most people are good at generating reasons to leave the striving for another day. We're tired. We're distracted. We've got other things to do. But by deferring action, we shirk responsibility for our own happiness and success.

Now, you can't just drop everything and devote each day to learning Italian or training for a marathon. But what if you started with just one hour – the very first hour of your day? Let's call it a Power Hour.

One hour at a time, you can pursue your passions and achieve your goals. And you can start by being open to change.

The key message here is: With the right mindset, you can take charge of your day and achieve your goals.

We each come from unique backgrounds, but the cards we're dealt don't have to determine our futures. Take Maggie Alphonsi, who overcame the physical obstacles caused by her clubfoot to become an English Rugby Union player. She eventually won the World Cup with

the England national team and was named Sportswoman of the Year by the *Sunday Times*. She didn't view her past circumstances as fixed limitations, and neither should you. When you do that, you're telling yourself that because of your social class, gender, ethnicity, or past experiences, you can't be successful in some endeavor.

So instead of considering your creative abilities, skills, and even character as immutable, it's best to abandon this fixed mindset for its opposite: the *growth mindset*. Adopting a growth mindset helps you to see failure as an opportunity to improve, rather than triggering long-term discouragement.

So how can you slip into a more positive mindset on a daily basis? One practical way is to start asking yourself six questions before 6:00 a.m. Here they are: What energy do you want to have today? From whom can you learn? Who can you help? How can you get closer to where you want to be a year from now? What are you most looking forward to today? What are you most grateful for today?

With a growth mindset, you'll view your talents and abilities simply as a starting point.

Make the most of your time and energy by creating powerful habits.

Let's say you're ready for the challenge. You're ready to exchange your fixed mindset for a growth mindset. You've even set your alarm for 5:30 a.m. so you'll have time to answer those six early-morning questions. What's next? Well, it's time to take your shiny new growth mindset and apply it to several fundamental elements of your life, starting with your habits.

We encounter thousands of decisions each day. To help us navigate all this decision-making, we develop habits. Here's the problem: All too often, these habits neglect long-term goals, and prioritize short-term rewards.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

Here's the key message: Make the most of your time and energy by creating powerful habits.

For better or for worse, habit usually trumps willpower.

Imagine you're planning to attend a pre-work yoga class – but when that 5:30 a.m. alarm goes off, you immediately hit the snooze button, reassuring yourself that you'll attend a different class in the evening. This happens because staying in bed a bit longer is your habit; willpower barely stands a chance.

This is where *powerful habits* come in. A powerful habit is any habit that makes a reliable, positive contribution to your daily life – such as doing yoga at dawn.

Once you put in the time, practice, and initial willpower, wrestling yourself from your blankets before sunrise

will become a non-issue. And the same goes for any other powerful habit you choose to create.

To create a powerful habit, follow these three steps.

Step one. Determine which current habits are useful and which are not. Take some time to jot down what you do in a day. Make it as detailed and honest as possible – every waking hour should be accounted for. Now evaluate your list. Which of these habits makes you a better or healthier person? Which of these takes more time or energy than it gives?

Step two. Adapt or replace current habits with better habits. Before creating an entirely new habit, ask if it could be piggybacked onto an existing good habit. If you already have a 20-minute walk to the subway, why not combine that with listening to an audiobook or calling a loved one?

Step three. Add friction to make it more difficult to resort to your bad habits. For instance, if you check Instagram too often, you could change the settings to require your password every time you open the app.

Everyone can benefit from some form of physical activity each day.

So let's imagine you've made some positive moves. You've adjusted your mindset to a more change-friendly setting. You've shifted your habits so they serve your goals. That's great – but what's next? Well, now it's time for some literal movement: it's time to move your body.

Don't worry. This blink isn't about that dreaded "e" word – exercise – and it doesn't claim that CrossFit bootcamps are the only way to fulfill your potential. There is, however, an undeniable connection between regular physical movement and self-confidence, stress management, and reduced risk of illness.

All activity is good activity. No matter your age or ability, moving your body in some way will have a positive impact on your mind and overall health.

The key message is this: Everyone can benefit from some form of physical activity each day.

Doctors, nutritionists, and psychologists agree that many modern health problems can be traced back to humans' now-widespread sedentary lifestyle. One of the best things you can do to counteract the effects of eternal sitting is to incorporate movement into your Power Hour.

There are three main types of movement, and you can choose or adapt those that are most suitable for you.

The first is low-intensity or low-impact movements. Think yoga or planks. When you hold a pose and your muscles contract, it may become uncomfortable. You might even feel the burn. But by persisting, you send the message to your brain that you can do difficult things. Aside from making your body stronger, you will also

start your day with an empowered sense of control, ready to tackle what comes next.

The second kind of movement is strength training. Weight lifting reinforces your ability to support yourself, even when the going gets tough.

The third and final form of activity is cardiovascular movement. This includes walking, running, and cycling.

With all new movement routines, you should answer the questions of why you want to do it, what works well and what doesn't, and, if you can't stick with it consistently, what's stopping you. If you measure your progress and focus on what you *can* do instead of what you can't, you'll reap the many benefits of regular movement – such as patience, confidence, creativity, and freedom.

Prioritizing sleep is essential.

For most people, engaging in some kind of movement – be it jogging, weightlifting, or doing a few simple yoga poses – isn't the hard part. The hard part is finding *time* to exercise. Again, your Power Hour is the perfect time to get moving – but how are you supposed to muster up the necessary energy if, when your alarm goes off, you feel like you haven't slept a wink?

Here's the tiring truth: Most people either don't get enough sleep, or they sleep poorly.

Not sure whether you're getting enough rest? Well, here are two questions to consider: Would you say you feel refreshed most days after waking up? And do you ever sleep in for at least two hours on the weekends? If you answered no to the first question, and yes to the second, it means you're probably not getting enough sleep.

The key message here is: Prioritizing sleep is essential.

Quality sleep is a crucial part of overall health. While you sleep, your body grows new cells and repairs old ones. Your muscles and tissue grow, too. Sleep improves your emotional well-being and restores your brain health, which helps with concentration and decision-making. Insufficient sleep, on the other hand, can have tragic consequences. To take just one example: In the UK, 20 percent of highway accidents are caused by driver fatigue.

So how can you optimize your sleep so that you feel well-rested every day?

It seems obvious, but your bedroom should be calm and relaxing. Consider adding plants, such as ivy, to purify the air naturally. It's worth it to get the best mattress you can afford. And get rid of distractions, such as TVs, laptops, or phones. By using an alarm clock instead of your phone, you can sidestep the urge to check your phone right before bed; most messages can wait until the morning.

If you eat well, your sleep and energy levels will improve as well. Eating highly processed, sugary foods during the day means frequent spikes and crashes in blood sugar. You may get enough sleep, but if your blood sugar is bouncing off the walls you'll feel tired all the time anyway. Foods rich in melatonin, the hormone that makes you feel sleepy at night, could help improve your sleep quality. These include eggs, fish, almonds, and cherries.

Lastly, try to spend some time outside each day when there's still some daylight, which helps regulate your body's circadian rhythm. Take a walk during your lunch break, or even cycle to work.

Our social connections have an impact on who we are, how we feel, and what we do.

Even if you do everything right – adopt a growth mindset, engage in exercise, get enough sleep – it doesn't mean you won't need anyone else's help. Humans are social creatures. It doesn't matter how independent you are. You, like everyone else, need support and encouragement.

How we live and interact with others is just as important to our health as other factors like diet and exercise – if not more so. What does this have to do with an effective Power Hour? You're about to find out.

Here's the key message: Our social connections have an impact on who we are, how we feel, and what we do.

You need support and encouragement to achieve your goals, including those you focus on in your Power Hour. Nobody succeeds alone, even if some people say they do.

Because your network of connections is also your network for advice, support, and criticism, it's a good exercise to try to identify the different roles people play in your community. When faced with a difficult decision, businesses often ask their boards of directors for input. So ask yourself: Who is your board of directors when it comes to support? If you're stumped by this question, no need to worry: you can assemble your board now.

Every member of your board of directors should have some reason why he or she wants you to succeed. Now let's meet the characters.

One board member could be a family member or partner, since that person will be directly affected by your choices. You'll also want a boss or manager who is professionally invested in your career success, and who perhaps would gain financially from the outcome. You might want to run all the options by your mentor, who understands what motivates you and is there to aid in your personal development. Someone younger than you can provide a different perspective, and someone older

than you can impart wisdom from learned experiences. Lastly, if there's a need for practical, specialized information, a financial advisor or lawyer could definitely come in handy. So whom would you cast in these roles from among your current network of social connections?

If some roles are missing, or the people you've chosen aren't ideal for the responsibilities of a support board member, don't be afraid to look outside of your established network.

Issues of time, money, and fear hold people back from pursuing their passions.

Before you jump into creating your very own Power Hour, let's take a step back and talk about the obstacles that stand between us and the pursuit of our passions. Perhaps you already have a clear idea of which values shape your life purpose. That's wonderful, but you might still struggle to make progress. You can have all the motivation in the world – and be ready to channel that into the pursuit of a personal project during your Power Hour – and yet still feel blocked.

Blocked by what? Well, most people either feel that they don't have enough time or money to pursue their passions, or they're held back by fear.

The key message is this: Issues of time, money, and fear hold people back from pursuing their passions.

The best way to overcome these hurdles is to address them directly. So let's start with time.

It's important to remember that there's a difference between having time and *making* time. If you feel busy all the time, why is that? For some, being busy represents an exclusive status of being forever in demand. But perhaps those activities you're too busy for simply aren't very important to you. If something or someone is truly valuable to us, we'll make time for it, or them, no matter how much we have on our plates.

So what if you're willing to make time for a particular passion or project, but you don't have enough money to see it through? Financial insecurity is a tough burden, but if money is your only obstacle, you have a few options. You could use your Power Hour to acquire funding, or to create a side hustle that you could turn into a main hustle in six months. Another option is to create a business that matches your life purpose, and use that income to fund your project. Alternatively, it's not always necessary to tie our passions to financial profit; you can also just do it for fun.

Finally, fear can stop us from pursuing our passions and purpose. Fear is an essential emotion; it can't and shouldn't be eliminated. But you can improve your fear response in advance with something called *fear rehearsing*. By rehearsing how to respond to a

frightening situation, you can minimize the paralyzing effect of sudden anxiety, remain calm, and take control of the situation.

Commit to a Power Hour each day to reclaim your time and create the life you want to live.

Okay, so now that you've got an understanding of the mental, physical, emotional, and social factors that will contribute to your success, it's time to plan your very first Power Hour.

How many hours are in a week? 168.

And guess how many hours remain each week after sleeping eight hours a night and working from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday? 67.

Even if we subtract commuting time and a few hours for mindless television vegging, we still end up with over fifty hours of time available each week. So if you had an extra hour in your day, what would you do with it?

The key message here is: Commit to a Power Hour each day to reclaim your time and create the life you want to live.

When establishing a Power Hour, two things are non-negotiable: It has to be the very first hour of your day, and it has to be early, preferably before 6:00 a.m. Why? When the rest of the world is sleeping, there are fewer distractions and temptations.

When setting a goal for your Power Hour, follow these five rules.

First, your goal should be as specific as possible. Ask "Why?" five times until your answers are thorough and precise.

Second, pick an exact deadline – like, say, July 16th at 5:00 p.m.

Third, tell someone who wants you to succeed about your plans, and explain why, of all people, you chose to tell him or her.

Fourth, evaluate your process and progress every so often. What's working? What's not? Feel free to ask someone else for constructive feedback.

And fifth, ask for help. Asking the right person at the right time for guidance will accelerate your progress and maximize your learning.

A Power Hour can be entirely devoted to one goal, or combined with other goals. For example, you could combine fitness goals with reading by listening to an audiobook during your morning jog. Once you feel that you've reached a goal – whether it's after one Power Hour, a week of Power Hours, or even six months of them – go back through these five rules to figure out how you'll spend your coming Power Hours.

You can't get lost time back. But by committing to one hour a day, you can make the most of your future, pursue your passions, and create a life you love.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

You've seen how taking back the first hour of your day is about more than just being productive; it's about putting aside time exclusively devoted to making positive changes in your life. By adopting a growth mindset, you open the door to improving your useful habits and replacing the non-useful ones. By changing your attitude, you can improve your sleep routine and nutrition, and incorporate more movement into your life. Once you realize the importance of social connections, of finding a life purpose and a passion, you can design one or more Power Hours to achieve your goals.

Actionable advice: **Schedule time for spontaneity.**

The busier the schedule, the less forgiving it is toward unplanned meetings. If you're scheduled from 6:00 a.m. until midnight each day, what will you do when a long-lost cousin pops up in town and wants to meet up? And what if some friends decide to see an art exhibition on its last day in the gallery? By scheduling blocks of *white space* in your calendar each week – that is, time when nothing can be scheduled – you can make sure you don't miss out on the random experiences life has to offer.

Got feedback?

We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to remember@blinkist.com with *Power Hour* as the subject line, and share your thoughts!

What to read next: *My Morning Routine*, by Benjamin Spall and Michael Xander

If you're interested in building on your Power Hour and giving your entire morning routine a makeover, Benjamin Spall and Michael Xander have just the recipe. *My Morning Routine* helps you make the most of your morning by creating a helpful structure and maximizing sleep quality.