

THE HERO'S HOUR

How to Conquer the Day



Establishing Consistent Heroism



No matter which way you look at it, there are really only two types of people in the world: morning people and non-morning people. Morning people are those rare breed of individuals who love waking up before dawn and seem to spring out of bed in the morning ready to grab the day by the horns. Non-morning people (evening people maybe?) are those who dread the terrible sound of their alarm clocks and have 15 different alarms set before the time that they actually have to be out of bed, you know who you are. While these tend to be the two extremes of our natural inclinations, everyone seems to agree that they would like to start their day off right and without being stressed out or rushed.

Yet mornings are such a struggle for most people, especially when they are trying to squeeze adequate prayer time and exercise in on top of the things they have to do. If you have kids then you know the struggle of not only getting yourself ready but getting the kids ready without WWIII ensuing before 8 am.

I am not a morning person by nature. I am an “I need my 7-8 hours and I don’t care where they fall”

kind of person. When I was in high school and college that looked like going to bed somewhere between midnight and 2 a.m. and waking up no earlier than 9 a.m. (and only when I had to). I would hit snooze again and again until I was either sprinting out the door or saying “screw it. I’m already late so why rush?” It wasn’t until I had my conversion and tried to be an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ that I knew that something had to change.

There were two key moments that helped me start implementing discipline into my morning routine. The first came when I heard a talk during my missionary formation. Don’t ask me what the talk was about, I couldn’t tell you. All I remember was one line: “A decision to stay up late is a decision not to pray in the morning.”Ouch.... That one stung me a little. How many times have I made well-intentioned resolutions to pray in the mornings only to binge-watch something on Netflix, or playing video games, or just scrolling on my phone the night before and be too tired to do anything the next morning? Maybe this isn’t a struggle for you, but it was for me.

The next moment came when I started reading St. Josemaria Escriva. Here is what he said:

“Conquer yourself each day from the very first moment, getting up on the dot, at a fixed time, without yielding a single minute to laziness. If, with God’s help, you conquer yourself, you will be well ahead for the rest of the day... The heroic minute. It is the time fixed for getting up. Without hesitation: a supernatural reflection and...up! The heroic minute: here you have a mortification that strengthens your will and does no harm to your body.”

What this practically looks like is getting up exactly when you said you were going to and the first thing you do after turning your alarm off is raising your mind and heart to Jesus Christ in prayer. For me, I would turn my alarm off and drop to my knees for 1 minute before moving on with my morning routine.

Before you go on and think that I did this and never wavered let me just say that I SUCKED at this for a long time. To this day I have to put my phone across the room from my bed so I literally can’t turn it off without standing up and crossing the room. If I don’t get up in time my wife will let me know with a not so subtle shove out of the bed to go turn it off. While this still isn’t something that is extraordinarily easy for me (still not a morning person), I have been doing it for about 8 years now and the habit has been formed.

Yet this e-book is not about just the Hero’s Minute that St. Josemaria talked about. This is about the Hero’s Hour. How to build into your day an hour dedicated to your personal growth; physically, spiritually, and mentally. How to construct a daily routine that is centered around Jesus Christ, even when you think you can’t find any more time in the day. Here’s everything we will talk about:

- Protecting your bedtime to protect your prayer time.
- The Hero’s Minute
- The Hero’s Hour Workout
- The Hero’s Hour Prayer Structure (P.L.A.D.)
- The Brain Dump to start the day

Protect Your Bedtime



I think the hardest part about sticking to a morning routine is knowing that the only way to wake up early, and not quit after a day or two, is to go to bed a decent time the night before. This might sound obvious but it's what most people can't or won't do. We justify spending the last hour or two before bed watching Netflix or scrolling through our phones because we're just so "tired" from the day we just had that we don't want to think. Well, one of the best ways that I have found to not think is to sleep.

Crazy idea, I know.

What if bedtime is not an option though? What if it is only 8 p.m. and there's just no way you're going to bed any time soon? Here are a few things that I have learned to implement in my nighttime routine that helps me wind down and ensure that I get to bed at a good time:

Turn off your work brain

Absolutely no work-related things should enter into your last two hours before bed. Turn off your phone, or at least put it on do not disturb, and accept the fact that the beautiful thing about texts and emails is that they will be there in the morning.

No screen time

Try to avoid gluing your eyes to a TV or phone screen for at least an hour or so before you start winding down. If you're married and you and your spouse can only find time to watch something after your kids go down then maybe consider buying Blue Light glasses to help your eyes out a bit and limit yourself to only one episode of something.

Read a good book

Find a good fiction book that you don't really have to think through. Something like the Lord of the Rings or C.S. Lewis tend to be my go-to reads. The point is to teach yourself how to re-create yourself without melting your brain with social media and awful television.

Pray

Hopefully, you are getting your prayer in the morning, more on that below, but your day should always begin and end with prayer. Say evening or night prayer with your spouse, or on your own. Read a spiritual book by one of the saints. Or spend time reading through a book of scripture that you haven't read in a while.

Examination of Conscience

This goes with prayer but it is done right before bed. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you examine your day. Think back on it and call to mind all of the good things and blessings that happened. Thank God for each one. Then go back and think about all of the times you fell short or sinned. Beg God for mercy and repent on the spot. If necessary, make a reminder to schedule a confession asap if you know the sin was grave. The point of this is to always be seeking growth and forgiveness so you can go to bed with a clean conscience before God and strive for holiness again tomorrow.

Set a bedtime and stick to it!

Finally, set a time when you will be in bed no matter what. If your goal is to get up at 6 a.m. you need to set a time when you can go to bed and wake up without feeling like total garbage. For me, I get up at 5 a.m. so I need to be in bed no later than 9:30 p.m. or the next day isn't going to feel terribly fun. There will obviously be some things that happen that are outside of your control and if you absolutely can't make your bedtime it is not the end of the world. Kids, friends, and family, can definitely throw a wrench in the whole bedtime thing at times, but those are the exceptions. The rule is set: go to bed! A decision to stay up late is a decision not to pray.

The Hero's Minute



We already touched on this briefly but let's reread what St. Josemaria said because it is beautifully difficult:

"Conquer yourself each day from the very first moment, getting up on the dot, at a fixed time, without yielding a single minute to laziness. If, with God's help, you conquer yourself, you will be well ahead for the rest of the day... The heroic minute. It is the time fixed for getting up. Without hesitation: a supernatural reflection and...up! The heroic minute: here you have a mortification that strengthens your will and does no harm to your body."

The point of the Hero's minute is stated from the first two words: "conquer yourself". The biggest theme we emphasize at Hypuro Flt is self-mastery for self-gift. Man only finds himself through a sincere gift of self (GS 24). If the goal is a self gift then your goal must be to have full possession of yourself in order that you have something to give. You can't give what you don't have.

The Hero's minute is a first step that you take in order to begin every single day with a small win. What I will do is set my alarm on my phone and put it across the room from my bed. It forces me to stand up, walk across the room, turn off my alarm, and then I drop to my knees in a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. Is this the most eloquent and alert prayer of my day? Nope. Not even close. But it is arguably one of the most powerful ones.

The Hero's Hour Workout

As much as I want everyone to dedicate an hour a day to their physical fitness, I am also a parent who understands that some days this is extremely difficult. Life gets crazy and I get that. Yet a little exercise is better than no exercise. The Hero's Hour workout is not meant to be a whole hour. Realistically this workout is going to be somewhere around 20-30 minutes and your prayer time will be another 20-30 minutes (hence the hour). Ideally these things happen in the morning before the kids are awake and/or before you have to go off to work. However, if you need to do your exercise in the morning and prayer during your lunch break (or visa versa), then that works too! The goal is to simply make sure you are getting both of them in consistently.

While exercise is something you don't have to do every day (you should definitely have rest days). Prayer is something you should never go without. The type of exercise that is the most beneficial for a 20-30 minute workout, in my opinion, is interval training. This gets you the most bang for your buck with both cardio and strength training.

Interval training is not necessary H.I.I.T. (High-intensity interval training) because interval training doesn't necessarily have to be high intensity where you are trying to get as many reps in as possible. If you want to do a day or two of HIIT during the week that is totally fine, but I wouldn't recommend doing it every day. Your body isn't designed for that kind of wear and tear in the long run.

Below are just a few examples of workouts you can do at home within 20-30 minutes.



Tabata - 25 minutes

Dynamic Warmup - 4.5 minutes

Exercise	Duration	Coaching Tips
Lunge to Reach	30 seconds	Focus on controlling your breathing and going slow
Stepping Side	30 seconds	
Overhead Reach		
Arm Circles	30 seconds	

Repeat 3 times

Circuit 1 - 12-20 minutes

Exercise	Reps	Duration	Coaching Tips
Jump Lunges	AMRAP	40 sec/fast 20 sec rest	Rest for 20 seconds between exercises. I want you to go as hard as you can but if you start losing form then slow down.
Push Ups	AMRAP	40 sec/fast 20 sec rest	
Power Sit Ups	AMRAP	40 sec/fast 20 sec rest	Modification for this exercise would be to do bicycles.
Pulsing Squats	AMRAP	40 sec/fast 20 sec rest	

Repeat 3-5 times

Take 30-60 seconds between rounds and repeat 3-5 times.

Cardio - 20 minutes

Avoid walking if possible. The below pattern is just to give you an idea of how to break a run up into intervals, if you can't run then have the same format with power walking, biking, elliptical, etc. You don't have to memorize the pattern. Remember a jog is something that you can maintain over an extended period of time. A run is something that is more aggressive but that you can go back into a jog from. For a true sprint, you should have to walk afterward. 20 minutes might be too long for you at the moment, that's ok. Build yourself up to the 20 minute mark.

Cardio Circuit

Run 120 sec	Jog 60 sec	Run 120 sec	Jog 60 sec	Run 90 sec	Jog 60 sec	Run 90 sec	Jog 60 sec	Run 90 sec
Jog 60 sec	Run 60 sec	Jog 60 sec	Run 45 sec	Jog 60 sec	Run 45 sec	Jog 90 sec	Sprint 30 sec	

Leg Core EMOM - 12 - 20 minutes

Dynamic Warmup - 4.5 minutes

Exercise	Duration	Coaching Tips
Bodyweight Squat	30 seconds	Focus on controlling your breathing and going slow. Trying to lower your depth every round.
Glute Bridge	30 seconds	Go slow and controlled, you are still warming up.
Jumping Jacks	30 seconds	You know you are warmed up if you start to break a light sweat.
Repeat 3 times		

Dynamic Warmup - 4.5 minutes

Exercise	Reps	Duration	Coaching Tips
D.B. Squat to Press	15	Medium Tempo	This is an EMOM so you will need a timer. You have 1 minute to complete the given number of reps. The faster you complete the reps, the longer the break you get. If you don't complete the reps move onto the next exercise with no break.
D.B. Hip Swings or Sumo Squats	20	Fast Tempo	Keep your back straight and don't squat if you are doing swings! Your knees should have a slight bend to them but your butt should not get closer to the ground at any point. If you feel this in your arms you aren't flexing your glutes right.
Wall Sits	40 seconds	Static Hold	Knees directly over the ankles and femur is parallel with the ground.
Deadbugs	12 (total)	Medium Tempo	Take a 30-60 second break and repeat 3-5 times.



The Hero's Hour

Prayer Structure (P.L.A.D.)

It might sound weird to have a prayer “structure” or “method” but this is something that saints and mystics have been teaching for centuries. The idea is not to pigeonhole you into only praying one way, but rather to give you a foundation to fall back on when prayer is dry and you get tired. The method below (P.L.A.D) is the method that I have been using for years now and it has definitely helped me in those periods when prayer is as dry as chewing sawdust and/or I’m so sleepy that I don’t remember going from my bed to my prayer corner in my home.

This method is also great for those on a tighter schedule like me. I have used this method when I only have 15 minutes for personal prayer and when I have an hour for it. Each part of the prayer can be as long or as short as you need it to be.

Praise

Begin your prayer with a time of praise and thanksgiving. Spending time reflecting on your life (good, bad, and ugly) and thanking God for the people, situations, and things in your life that he is using to help form and mold you into the saint you were meant to be. Address God as who he is (Lord you are my rock, my fortress, you are good and holy, you are my savior, etc.), the Psalms are a great place for this and you might even begin by praying the liturgy of the hours to help calm and focus your mind on God.

Listen

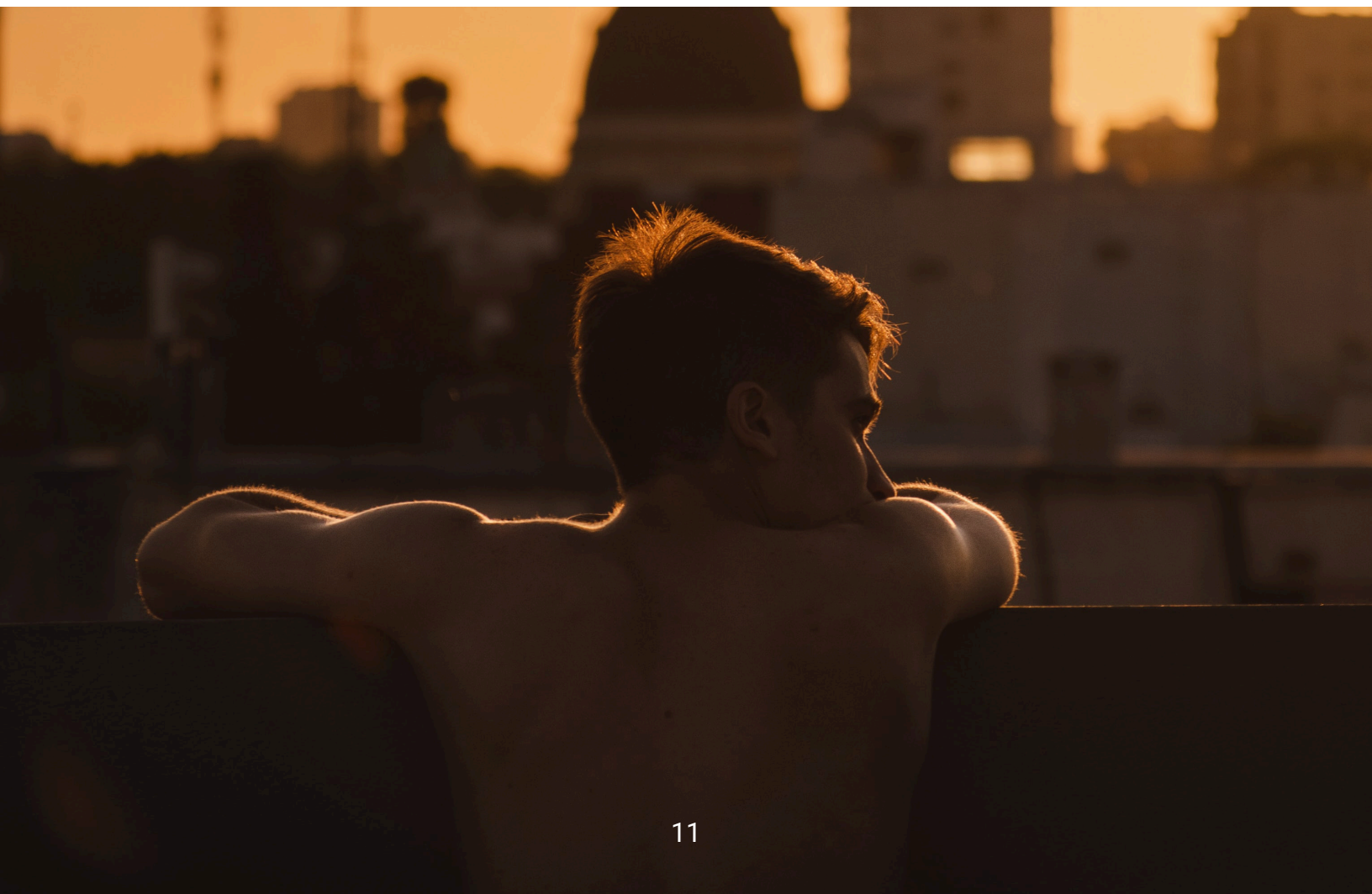
This is the time where you invite the Holy Spirit to teach you in the classroom of silence. Open your Bible and carefully read through a passage. Don’t rush. There will be times when things definitely pop out at you and you’re like “Wow, God is definitely speaking to me in this word.” But there will also be times when you read a whole chapter and you say something like “What the heck was I supposed to get out of that?” Either way, have a dialogue with God. His written word is where he wants to speak to us. Listen to him and allow him to conform your heart and mind to his image and likeness.

Ask

Ask for whatever grace you need to live out whatever you think he is calling you to do from your time of listening. This is also where I will turn to our Blessed Mother and ask her to pray for me and my family. I will ask her to intercede on my behalf and pray for certain people or situations in my life that are in need of her prayers.

Dedicate

St. Paul tells us that he “thanks God always” (1 Thessalonians) and that we should “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5). By this, he doesn’t mean that he is constantly walking around praying Our Father’s and Hail Mary’s. He means that the very manner in which he lives and speaks is a prayer to God through his baptism into Christ Jesus. At the end of your personal prayer dedicate your day to someone or something that is in need of your prayers. This will make every thing you do that day a prayer to God on their behalf. This can be truly meritorious and it can also hold you accountable to not sin because you know that you have offered everything that you do that day to God on their behalf.



The Brain Dump



There is a book that I highly recommend that you read. It is called *Getting Things Done* by David Allen. This book has helped me stay organized and mentally sane when my work and life get overwhelmingly busy. I won't go into everything he talks about but I will mention one of the fastest and easiest ways that can help you start your day off right: the brain dump.

One of the things that causes the most stress in my life is when I try to keep everything I need to do in my head. I spend so much time and energy trying not to forget stuff that it manifests itself in mental and physical fatigue and hypertension. The brain dump is a way to get rid of that. While this might not be something you do every time you do a Hero's Hour, it is something I would recommend doing at least 2-3 times a week.


The first thing you will need is a timer (your phone works). Set a timer for 2 minutes. Once the timer begins, write down everything you know you need to do. When I say everything, I mean everything. Whether it is work, family, school, side projects, friends, you need to write it down and get it out of your head. If you can't think of anything else and there are still 30-45 seconds left, keep thinking until the time is up. If you are still writing after the 2 minutes are up, finish the last note that you were writing when the timer went off and stop.

The point of this is to get the most important stuff down and at the top of your list. Here's the next bit of the brain dump. If anything on your list takes less than 2 minutes to get done, do it immediately. Don't put it off until later. Do it now! Everything else that will take more than two minutes gets sorted on a to-do list or placed in your calendar to tackle when you can.

This has helped my stress levels and my mental health tremendously, but only when I stick to it. There have been times since learning this skill when I went weeks without doing it and I felt the stress levels rising. The second I do it again I feel like a huge burden has been taken off my shoulders and I can breathe again.

Like I said, is this something you have to do every day during the Hero's Hour? No. But it is something you should be doing at least a few times a week. Remember, your mental health is just as important as your spiritual and physical health.

The Hero's Hour



There it is! The most important hour of your day every day: The Hero's Hour. Ideally this is how you can start your day every day. It might require you to wake up an extra hour early but that shouldn't be as scary once we have conquered our bedtime and protect it at all cost (barring those rare important exceptions that we mentioned). If needed you can totally break this apart and have exercise at one time and prayer at another. The only one that cannot and should NOT be moved is the Hero's Minute. That's how we start the day off on the right foot.

Remember that you were made to be in relationship with God. He loved you into existence and wants nothing more than for you to know him now and in eternity. If you have to pick something to sacrifice from all of this, it can never be prayer. Prayer needs to be your lifeblood. Prayer is not how you grow your relationship with God, it is your relationship with God. Prayer is where we recharge and rest in the most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Prayer is life. Prayer is our hope and our home.

The Hero's Hour is by no means easy, that's why the word hero is in there. A hero is someone who goes above and beyond what is expected of them. In the Church, very few people are talking about your need to stay physically fit, but you should. In this world, especially the secular world, no one is expecting you to spend 30 minutes in prayer every day, but you must. We aren't calling you to implement this lifestyle because it is easy. We are inviting you to enter into it to become a hero, to become a saint.

Will it be easy? No. Nothing beautiful ever is.



This is a resource to help drive your days with purpose, direction, and a spiritual energy that can only come from time spent with the Lord. If you're reading this know that we at Hypuro Fit have been praying for you and will continue to pray for you on your journey of health and service.

To learn more about what we do and our unique approach you can check out HypuroFit.com or swing on over to Amazon.com pick up a copy of our book, *The Journey to Self Gift* that details our foundational thought and methodology.

If you're feeling motivated to really dive more deeply into a life of fitness and need direction to help get you started, we offer personalized training to guide and instruct you while keeping you accountable to your goals all through a deeply holistic Catholic lens. You can visit HypuroFit.com/coaching to learn more.