



Day Crafting

The Body-clock Workbook



**Designing days and
harnessing the power
of your chronobiology**

By **Bruce Stanley**

- The extraordinary benefits of scheduling
- The *when-to-do* list and the power of your chrono-profile
- Designing remarkable days and memorable moments
- *See inside for more ...*

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power of your chronobiology**

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Day Crafting – The Introductory Workbook is the first book from the Apprentice Series and is a pre-requisite for *this* workbook.

Coming soon in the Apprentice Series:

Day Crafting: The Productivity Workbook

Day Crafting: The Self-care Workbook

Day Crafting: The Change Workbook

The Body-clock Workbook

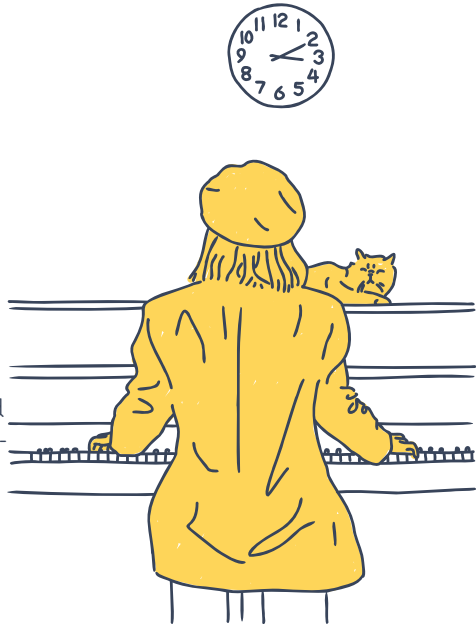
This book is about designing our days to optimise our energy – and for meaning; to add to the positive story that forms a good life.

Many of our days repeat a problem in that we're living on someone else's time. The vast majority of us are functioning outside of our optimum schedule and energy rhythms. This workbook helps you learn about your own unique timing and energy rhythm and shows you how to shape your days around it.

Once we're aware of our chronotype and our own optimum timings for types of tasks, we can consider *when-to-do* not just *to-do*. Days designed this way see more done with less effort and the quality of what we're doing improves and with experience we can mitigate for the times when we're forced to go against our body-clock. We can even spot opportunities to optimise timings involving others and their chronotypes for better outcomes.

Chronotype is about way more than just your sleep timings. Many of our hormones, and therefore the behaviour that those hormones help or hinder, are triggered by the same internal clock. Imagine scheduling the day's tasks to match your energy levels relevant to those tasks.

All of this individual and detailed understanding will allow you to reshape your days. The workbook will broaden the concept of designed days to explore *blueprints* for a range of situations and most significantly how to have a *Remarkable Day*. Our lives are the days we will remember forever and part of our overall satisfaction with life is our ability to create, capture and recall memorable moments. This workbook will show you how.



In the craftspeople's workshop are plans and sketches, doodles and measurements to give some shape to the project on the working surface.

The day in front of you is your project to shape and hone towards the outcomes you value. This is your daily process of showing up and using your Day Crafting skills.

A **blueprint** is what comes out of your *design thinking* to efficiently guide your *craft practice*.

Day Crafter's Blueprints

Many of our days are on automatic, they are habitual. They don't demand much conscious attention – it's a workday so I do this, followed by this ... or it's a weekend day so I do this, followed by this. These days are following a design, albeit an nonconscious one.

What's the problem? It's efficient and doesn't require thinking about. The problem is that these days are increasingly optimised for the elephant, the automatic, nonconscious brain which is concerned with your survival but *not* your flourishing, growth, happiness or even comfort-zone-challenging adventure.

Day Crafting gently disrupts this pattern by bringing wise and skilled intention into our days – in part or in whole.

A blueprint is an intentional design for a whole day.



A blueprint can be a loose sketch or a detailed plan, it can be for just one specific day, such as a special occasion, or more typically it can be a blueprint for a *type* of day we repeat more often such as a standard workday or a weekend day.

The purpose of a blueprint is to wrestle some control back from our habitual, automatic selves; to deliberately structure our days, even in subtle ways, to improve a range of possible outcomes. Whatever they are, if you design the day better, you can expect to have better outcomes, with more skill and less energy use.

It may be your mindset, that you don't feel you have control over your days, or that any plans you make are so susceptible to disruption as to make the exercise a waste of time. But blueprints can accommodate both of these challenges – if you're ready to begin experimenting.

Remember, Day Crafting starts with small changes. You're looking first for where you *can* make a change even if it is only subtle.


Pick which blueprints inspire you to design and craft:



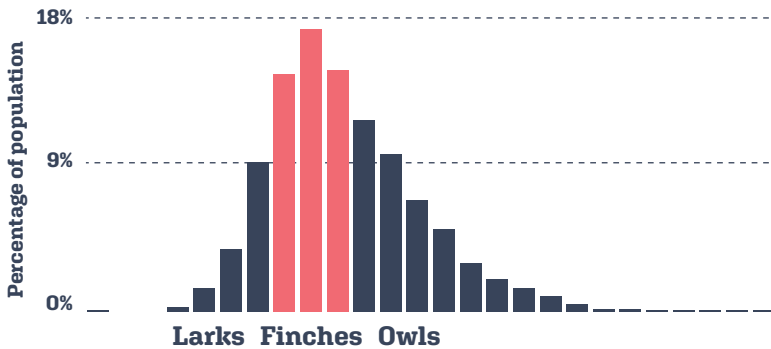
- A happy day, maximising pleasure, flow and meaning.
- A Remarkable Day, see later in this workbook.
- Superhero day, doing something amazing in secret.
- Productive day, get the most done.
- A replenishing day to restore energy.
- A day to create what you think is missing in your life.
- A generous day in service to something else.
- A day to undertake a project, start to finish: make jam, bake bread, carve a spoon, paint a picture, climb a hill.
- A fantasy / fiction day from a book, film or story.
- A standard deep-work-maximising day.
- A cyber-detox day, no social media, emails or web.
- A fast day.
- A slow day.
- A retreat day.
- A first aid day for emergencies.
- A quadrant 2 day to do the enjoyable stuff you don't *have* to do and rarely get around to doing. *See previous page.*
- A quadrant 3 day to burn through the have-to-do stuff.
- A reward day for doing the quadrant 3 day.
- A *someday, today* day. Do something you've been putting off.
- A grit / perspective / humour / mindset recovery day.
- A vision-quest day to clarify purpose.
- A day at the edge of your comfort zone.
- A day for doing something you've never done before.
- A day for going somewhere you've never been before.
- A day for connecting with nature.
- A day your eight year old self would have approved of.
- A day to design all of these blueprints you're picking.

Day Crafting Time


Does this clock story matter? What's the problem? So what if my watch says it is midday a long time before the sun actually gets to its highest point? It *isn't* a problem for a *proportion* of the population. To explain, I need to introduce *one more clock*.

There is a much more important clock that you and the energy systems of your body, and it's optimal functioning, follow and that is your **body-clock**, also known as your chronotype or biological clock, or your circadian rhythm. Your body-clock is set to *sun* time. 

Body-clocks vary between individuals a great deal – compare the extremes of the early-rising **larks** with the late-rising **owls**. Social time is a compromise; it is like democracy, the majority, the middle chronotypes, stamp their preferences on social time even if the majority is *less than half* of the population.



Most of us aren't living our days by our body-clock's optimum rhythm

What time it is matters practically in two ways. Firstly knowing your individual **chrono-profile** will help you know *when* the best time is during the day for various activities. Each chronotype has its own chronorhythm. You'll learn to think as much about *when* you do something as *what* you do. 

Secondly, what time it is really matters for many of us who *aren't* in the middle body-clock group (for whom social time is just right, *Goldilocks* time). Even if you're just on the edge, and aren't an extreme chronotype, the added hour's offset by DST during the summer months can tip you over into problem territory.

Yesterday I was clever, so I
wanted to change the world.
Today I am wise, so I am
changing myself.

Rumi

How we spend our days is, of
course, how we spend our lives.

Annie Dillard

What a wonderful day. I've
never seen this one before.

Maya Angelou

Tomorrow's life is too late.
Live today.

Marcus Valerius Martialis

Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow
has not yet come. We have only
today. Let us begin.

Mother Theresa

Create your chrono-profile with the Energy Review tool

Which are the critical energy rhythms for you? This day reconstruction method is a tried and tested tool to enable you to graph and learn about *your* energy rhythms. You possibly have a degree of understanding already and you could estimate the final graph based on what you know about yourself – but this tool isn't arduous to use and returns a lot of value, and often some surprises.

You can track more or less than three metrics but you only need to measure the energy rhythms that are relevant to you. There is an example on the opposite page with the results graphed, with 16 waking hours across the X axes and energy level on the Y axes.



Tool: Energy Review

If I'm not sure about my energy rhythms or *when* to schedule critical activities, (or which activities are energy raising or lowering), I want to understand my rhythms better, so I can clarify my chrono-profile, and more wisely schedule my days.

What is it:

A Design Notes page divided into half-hour* periods to note the day's activities, energy levels (1 – 10), on whichever energy metrics I'm measuring – and an optional column to note whether the activity was energy *raising*, *lowering* or *maintaining*.

Use it to:

Keep a note ideally *during* the day so that your scores for the columns are more reliable. You could set a reoccurring alarm every hour to remind you. Once completed the figures should help you understand the relationship between underlying energy rhythms and related activities. You may find better timings for critical activities or work out how to mitigate for low energy if timings are out of your control. You can use this tool multiple times: for clarity, better averages and for different metrics, to build up more understanding.

**If you're short on motivation, divide the day into four or five and rate each part from lowest to highest energy.*

If you're part of a team it is very interesting to compare results and reassess the ideal times for team activities [see page 56].

Energy rhythms across different days

Do you have the same energy profile on workdays as on rest days? Are you as productive (or sociable, or creative ...) on Fridays as you are on a Tuesdays? Is your sleep duration the same every night? Is your energy rhythm the same for each of your days across a week? *Your body-clock wants it to be.*

Most people would say, thinking about this, that they do have a different energy profile on different days of the week. In a number of working-life surveys, Tuesday comes out as the most 'productive' day and Friday the least.

There may be days during your week when you feel more creative or focused or sociable – but this will be more to do with how our underlying chronorhythms are pulled and stressed by the shape of our weeks rather than our body-clocks actually changing.

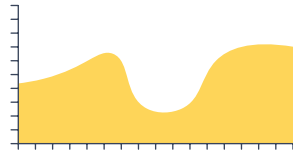
We can stretch our reserves and overspend energy types over a number of days but this usually needs to be balanced out. For example, many people don't get enough sleep on work nights and come Friday evening, fall asleep early and sleep long into Saturday and Sunday mornings leading to a kind of jet-lag where sleep on Sunday nights is problematic and we don't feel refreshed on Monday mornings.



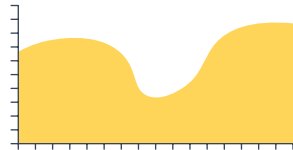
If you spend from your reserves, Prepare ahead to make time to restore your energy and re-harmonise with your chronorhythms.

Are you often tired and rarely fully refreshed; or over-busy or close to burnout? These can be complex problems to solve with multiple causes but where they are chronorhythm problems under your control they are obviously worth some Day Crafting experiments – see opposite. If you need more space, use your Design Notes.

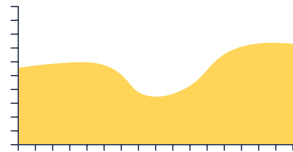
Monday



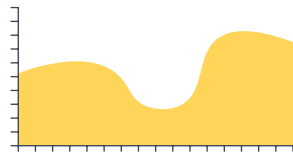
Tuesday



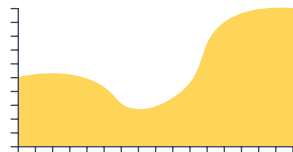
Wednesday



Thursday



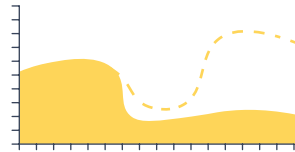
Friday



What can destabilise your energy rhythms?

Through Day Crafting you can schedule the activities in your days to harmonise with their relevant energy rhythms. You're doing what you can to work with your chrono-profile to maximise your energy for optimum results, (or productivity, or wellbeing) but something happens and your energy plummets. The energy rhythm of the day should have followed the dashed line in this illustration but instead it feels as if the energy has slipped away and can't be recovered – or so it seems.

What went wrong?



So, what went wrong? What happened at around midday in this person's day to send their energy plummeting? It could be lots of things and varies between individuals and their vulnerabilities and the cause may come from outside of us, such as an accident or illness or the effects of an unexpected erratic day. Or it could be self-inflicted, for example: a prolonged energy slump after a too big, mistimed, carb rich meal or being hijacked by the elephant reacting to an insult, or bad news, or a perceived status or territory challenge, that he would have avoided if he hadn't checked his social media during lunch.

Pivot points

In Day Crafting, if you find that you're vulnerable to a particular kind of destabilising event, that effects your energy – we call these **pivot points** where the day can pivot in a different direction. If these events happen regularly enough to be a problem – you may want to *Prepare* to counter them. If you have a strategy in place ahead of a potential pivot point, you can mitigate its effects and not suffer the energy loss. Don't eat the big meal, don't check for replies to that thread on social media if you're vulnerable to your elephant's reaction.

In many situations, the energy is still there and with practice you can *avoid* the pivot point or *recover* more quickly.

Unexpected **positive pivot points** can also *raise* our energy but we need to be intentional about maximising the benefit. If something goes well, *celebrate it; feel the pride*. If you're complimented, *don't disqualify it*. If you get good news, *savour it*. A satisfied and contented elephant can effortlessly *lift* our energy if we let it.

30 ways to strengthen your circadian rhythm

We can go further than simply recognise that we have rhythms associated with our chronotype, we can make changes to our day to strengthen the rhythms, ranging from good maintenance (energy-in) to good management of the energy during the day, including *effective* (not *passive*) rest to replenish the energy used.

Why strengthen your circadian rhythm? Would you like to boost your immune system, increase your learning capacity, improve your mood and the overall Quality of your Inner Life, make better decisions, be more creative, more productive, generally more marvellous – and still feel you had energy to spare at the end?

Some of the following suggestions are easier than others but they're all doable or worth experimenting with.

1. **Sleep duration.** Make sure you're generously getting enough sleep.
2. **Sleep in time with your chronotype.** Evidence that you're getting this right could include waking up naturally without an alarm clock and going to bed when you're tired.
3. **Stick to a sleep schedule.** Keep to a regular routine every day, no late nights over the weekend.
4. **Ignore DST** by moving your sleep an hour later so it stays on sun time, *this is probably impractical for most of us.*
5. **Have an end of day shut down routine.** Be preparing to sleep an hour or more ahead of time, less TV, less blue light, less stress, more comfort.
6. **Sleep environment.** Have a cool, dark, distraction free bedroom. Don't allow your sleep to be disrupted unnecessarily, by pets for example.
7. **Don't keep watching.** Turn the screens off. Don't artificially prolong the day once you're ready to sleep.
8. **Avoid caffeine.** Don't take caffeine (tea, coffee, dark chocolate) in the latter section of the day before you're due to sleep, seven to eight hours.

How to create a Blueprint

When are you going to make time to *Prepare*; to create your blueprints? Yes, I'm still emphasising Preparation! If you bypass this stage the rest isn't going to happen in any satisfactory way. There are two techniques in The Introductory Workbook under '*Honing Intention practice*' that can help you stick to the practice.



I set aside a couple of slots in my weeks to do Preparation. It can feel like a drag because deep down in my elephant I just want to get to the good stuff, the making – but the good stuff goes a lot better if I've Prepared the resources I may need: materials and other people. And Prepared myself – am I physically, cognitively and emotionally ready for the task or activity?

The list of tools and techniques for preparing blueprints and schedules could become unwieldy especially as the blueprints become more specialised. I've selected the following ten general and independent tips for hard-working blueprints; for the kinds of days we have regularly – use what you find useful. The tips are about the scaffolding rather than the detail for any specific day.

Towards the end of this workbook we will explore blueprints for *Remarkable Days* and *memorable moments* which may be less regular – and the Productivity and Self-care Workbooks both explore blueprints in further detail from their respective angles.

Each of these ideas are explored in some depth over the coming pages but my intention is that once you have internalised the ideas, *this* reference list will be enough to remind you.

1. **Clarify the objectives and the type of day**
2. **Maintenance, balance and Connection**
3. **When-to-do and your chrono-profile**
4. **Create some ripple benefits**
5. **Deep Work and Effective Rest**
6. **Transitions, context shifting and task batching**
7. **Build in breaks**
8. **Bridge the low energy trough**
9. **Finishing (or not finishing) tasks**
10. **Buffer time and other mitigations**

With all of the steps and considerations described so far, it's about here in the process that the rest of the prototype blueprint can fill in – to the degree of detail you need, anywhere between a rough sketch and a tight schedule.

There are just a couple of further ideas to consider.

9 Finishing (or not finishing) tasks It is very satisfying (and good for Meaningful Progress) to complete tasks in a day. If you have a big project spanning many days you can chunk it down into smaller parts and if you only have one hour available on a specific day, try to match the sub-task to the time and enjoy the satisfaction (and ripple benefits to QIL) of finishing. For example, renovating and redecorating a house is a mammoth task but it can be broken down into smaller tasks that can be completed in a set period of time.

If you've never noticed the satisfaction of task completion, try to give it some attention and boost the QIL glow by allowing yourself a moment to celebrate and feel the pride. The satisfaction you may get from finishing an overarching goal in your life, in one moment of one day, is nothing to the cumulative satisfaction you can enjoy from completing the milestones and sub tasks you break it down into that form the daily practice of Day Crafting.

But in some circumstances you may want to ignore everything I've just said about finishing ...

The reason it is good to complete tasks, especially at the end of a workday, (other than making Meaningful Progress), is to close cognitive loops that would otherwise be open in your mind and distract you from whatever you may be doing away from work. This is us, our friends and partners, distracted in the evening, caught up with an open work loop; something our elephant is worrying about and can't mentally put down. But this very phenomenon is good for creative problem solving.

Famous writers such as Ernest Hemingway and Roald Dahl were both proponents of deliberately leaving sentences unfinished, right in the middle of a flowing section of writing because it meant they could jump right back in and continue the next day without any effort to remember where they left off previously. Dahl said in an interview, 'I never come back to a blank page'. It even works either side of a break. If you're not taking breaks strictly by the clock, you may be tempted to carry on another ten minutes so that you finish the sub-task in front of you. But leaving the loop open is

worth experimenting with if you find it difficult to refocus after a break. With the loop open, you can take the break and when you're back to the working surface, you don't have to ask yourself, 'what was I doing before I stopped?'

The same beneficial phenomenon happens in most multi-stage creative or problem solving processes: the problem is thought about from every conceivable angle and the unsolved question, like a seed, is well planted in the mind – the loop is open. Gestation continues in the nonconscious and the worrying that distracts us from the rest of life, in this case is working away below the surface on solving the problem. Eureka.

Generally try to structure the activities in your blueprint so you can close your loops and bank the Meaningful Progress but for creative problems and to refocus after breaks, try the opposite.

Think of an example of a big multi-day project

How can you break it down into self-contained chunks that can each be finished? Practise defining the chunks clearly.



Next, can you introduce milestones *during* the overall process and *rewards* for meeting those milestones?

Every now and again, break all the rules

The most extraordinary breakthroughs in the craftsperson's work can come when things happen outside of normal patterns. If you know how to balance most of your days in harmony with your chrono-profile, then once in a while you can deliberately step out of the routine.

- Swap clock time blueprints for event time, or visa versa.
- Welcome uncertain, erratic days as great teachers.
- Experience different environments for routine activities.
- Experience different timings for routine activities.
- Get out of your comfort zone, be inconvenienced or bored.
- Live the blueprint of a different chronotype or identity.

Tear up the blueprints that no longer work for you, that don't inspire you, that aren't tingling or fizzing and strengthening your desired identity. Drop the blueprints that aren't making the products or outcomes you want to be making.

You're a craftsperson. In order to expand your practice and your understanding of your materials you have to experiment and Play.

Day Crafting is about the *skilled use of time* but what assumptions are you making about what that means? Maybe in order to get to where you want to get with your practice you need to walk an indirect path – *follow the labyrinth opposite, mindfully, with a pen or your finger. What does it teach you?*

Your habitual elephant and rider may resist rule breaking; not many of us relish being outside our comfort zones, but these days happen to us nevertheless. Maybe that one day at a festival which was kinda fun. Or the day you dreaded but *had to do* that actually turned out amazing. Or the erratic day that *happened to you* but you're proud-for-life of how you handled it.



How many days have you lived? How many can you remember as remarkable?

Days benefiting from blueprints come in all shapes and sizes but if you consider no other purpose for a blueprint, consider blueprints to maximise **positive memorable Moments** because these days become the highlights of the story of who you are.



Propitious Days

You might feel that it would enhance your day if the date you chose for it was meaningful in some way. Examples include birthdays, the first of the month, the new moon, the solar equinox or solstices, the first day of spring, bank holidays, anniversaries, the first day of each business quarter etc. And there are of course the milestones you create yourself during longer projects.

Or you can get creative. What about doing something special on your 15,000 day (just over age 41) if you haven't arrived yet. Or look at the days listed at daysoftheyear.com for inspiration. The day I'm writing this is: Random Act of Kindness Day as well as Introduce A Girl to Engineering Day. Tomorrow includes: No One Eats Alone Day and Eat Ice Cream for Breakfast Day. If nothing else, these could fire-up your imagination if you were stuck for ideas.

How often are your days as they could be?

Day Crafting is a set of practices and tools to help you make a good life one day at a time.

For makers of energized days

"I came to Day Crafting at a point of transition and transformation. It has empowered me to craft my days to maintain balance in the chaos. I can be fulfilled *and* manage my tendency to feel overwhelmed when I am not in control. And most importantly, I am able to notice and savour the moments of joy and happiness that had previously gotten lost in my constant doing."



Emily Denham
Senior NHS Service Manager

#PersonalDevelopment
#MemorableMoments

#Chronotype
#Scheduling



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