

Wakey wakey, snooze abusers. While you were sleeping, the early birds were being promoted. Time to control your body clock... Rise and shine says Ali Harris

# POWER SECRETS OF MORNING PEOPLE

**I**N MY ideal world, every day would be a doona day – until 10am, at least. I wish I was one of those chirpsters who skips off to work having already polished off a 5km run and a bowl of porridge. But I'm hitting snooze five times before slumping into the office on a second double-espresso. I've spent my entire life wondering what it would be like to be one of *them* – how much more I'd get done, how I might make it to the gym occasionally.

And morning people have a rep for being success stories, don't they? When she was British PM, Margaret Thatcher famously functioned on four hours' sleep and Anna Wintour rises at 5am for a game of tennis and a professional blow-dry before daily fashion domination. We all know an overachieving early bird.

It'd be easy to believe these women are either superhuman or lying, but perhaps they just lucked out on ancestors. Back in the Stone Age, naturally early-wakers focused on the food gathering, while owl-types stood guard into the night. It was only when we evolved to tending animals and harvesting crops that morning people, good for farmers' 4am starts, became thought of as more industrious. Now, say Michael

Smolensky and Lynne Lamberg, authors of *The Body Clock Guide To Better Health*, a few thousand years on just one in 10 of us is an early type.

So how do they do it? Well, the spring in their step comes down to a master clock in the brain that regulates circadian rhythm and syncs the body's schedule to the 24-hour day. A morning person runs slightly

*'The job-life-family JUGGLE is pushing many of us out of sync as we fight the INNER CLOCK'*

fast, which makes them sleepier later in the day. The evening person runs a bit slow. "About 50 per cent of a person's chronotype [the attribute that reflects when we are alert and prefer to be active] is inherent," says sleep expert Dr Chris Idzikowski.

Researchers at the UK's University of Surrey believe they have isolated the clock-regulating gene – known as Period 3. The longer it is, the more likely you are to prefer mornings, not evenings.

A Harvard University-linked study found female circadian rhythms run an average six minutes faster than a male's and that more than one in three of us run especially fast.

The 2012 job-life-family juggle is pushing many of us out of sync as we fight the inner clock, working late instead of having an early night.

It might also explain why women have insomnia 50 per cent more than men. As we age, our clocks wind up quicker still: by our 50s, we're largely getting up early, however much we slept in as youngsters.

It's not all to be blamed on biology, though. UK psychology professor Cary Cooper pinpoints personality as a driving factor: "Someone achievement-orientated is more likely to get up early than someone passive and laid-back."

Just look at Condoleezza Rice, the former US Secretary of State. She gets up at 4.30am every day to work out but admits it isn't easy: "I'm not an automaton. I don't wake up thinking, 'Yeah, let's go!' I have to push myself."

Studies have drawn correlations between chronotype and personality, showing evening people to be creative, intelligent but often neurotic, whereas morning people are generally more agreeable, optimistic, conscientious and satisfied with life. The *Harvard*



'I, like, spring out of bed every day, y'know'

#### ATTENTION, INSOMNIACS!

Research says one in three of us struggles to fall asleep. Lavender and whale song not working!

Grazia's resident insomniac Noelle Faulkner reviewed a new light-based sleep aid, the **NightWave Sleep Assistant** (\$79.95, [www.nightwave.com.au](http://www.nightwave.com.au)), which uses light pulses to regulate breathing and relax the nervous system...

"I'm sick of dosing up on meds to just get some sleep, then having next-day dope-overs. I pointed the calming blue light onto my bedroom ceiling and the glow made me focus on conscious breathing, and cleared my overactive mind. I fell asleep amazingly fast. Midnight zen achieved three out of four nights."

*Business Review* published research showing morning people get better grades in school, then go to better colleges, which leads to better job opportunities. They also "anticipate problems and try to minimise them", a useful trait in the workplace.

But, fellow snoozers, here's the good news flash: we can change! "Only a small number of extreme people find it very hard to adjust to one chronotype or the other," says Dr Christine Bundy, a lecturer in psychology and medicine at the UK's University of Manchester.

"The most common example [of adaptive ability] is women who have children or are shift workers. Mentally, you can make a decision to change – you just need to have a strong motivation to do it."

#### MORNING, SUNSHINE!

##### REBOOT YOUR CLOCK

It's not just how much sleep, but also the number of complete sleep cycles. Each one lasts an average of 90 minutes, which includes 20 of deep sleep. The body prefers to naturally wake after multiples of 90 minutes, so set your alarm to go off in seven and a half hours or nine hours. Throwing open the curtains to natural light also drags you out from under the covers.

##### APPRECIATE EXTRA TIME

"Get used to going to bed at the new time – if you have to be up at 5am every day, then don't lie in until 10am at the weekend, no matter how tempting," says Dr Bundy. Once you get into the pattern, it will reinforce itself. Mentally map out what you're going to do with the extra time.

##### EAT YOURSELF TO SLEEP

Yoga expert Anandi has these tips: "Never go to bed on a full or empty stomach. Eat a lighter, low-carb dinner as it's easier to digest. Turkey, brown rice, avocados and bananas contain tryptophan, which encourages better sleep." Meditate before bed, too. "Half an hour is the equivalent of four hours' sleep. These lifestyle adjustments will all help you become a morning person." Here's hoping. *Om...*