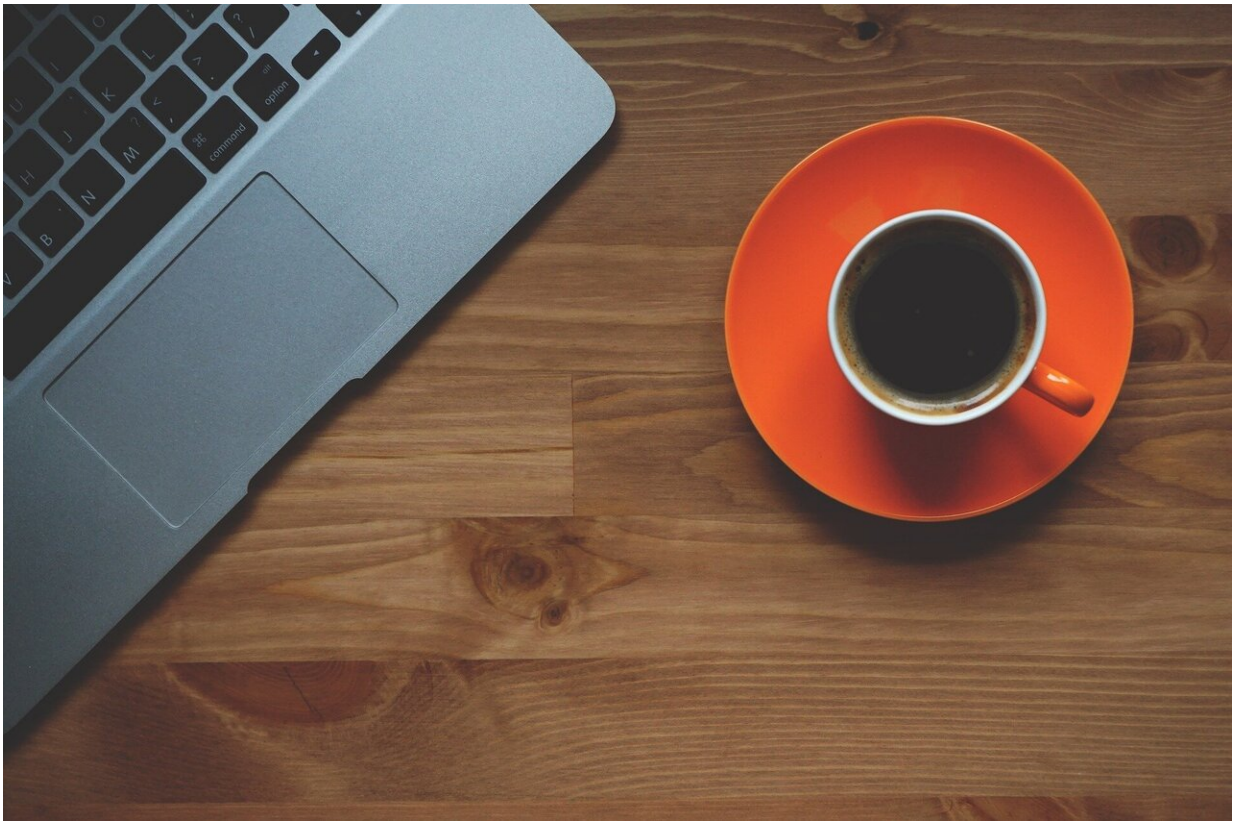


Five tips to get through the day without caffeine

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Whether you prefer a double shot latté in the morning or a cup of black tea in the afternoon, caffeine is a part of the daily routine for many of us. It's not necessarily a bad thing, either. A Starbucks run can be part of

self-care or a way to catch up with friends, but if you're looking to cut back on your coffee budget or caffeine dependence, here are a few tips that may help.

Get moving

Caffeine works as a stimulant to help us feel more alert, but did you know that [physical activity](#) can have the same effect? Don't worry, we're not talking about a full-blown workout first thing in the morning. Simply stretching while you're still in bed will get your blood flowing and signal to your brain that it's time to perk up.

Set an alarm ten minutes earlier tomorrow and take some time to walk around your block. Moving around and breaking your usual routine can help you start your day with less grogginess. Plus, getting [natural light](#) exposure first thing in the morning tells your brain that it's time to wake up, meaning you actually start feeling awake faster!

The polar plunge

This one might be more alluring in the summer, but it's tried and true: starting your day with a cold shower has been linked to increased oxygen intake and [blood flow](#), which improves alertness and focus. A cold morning shower can also have psychological benefits such as feeling more empowered to take on whatever the day throws at you next!

If the cold shower isn't for you, drinking a glass of ice-cold water can have similar benefits. Staying hydrated throughout the day (with icy or room temperature water) also improves cognitive performance, mood and memory.

When you're feeling the urge for a mid-morning pick-me-up, try

snacking on an apple. No, really—the natural sugars and vitamins in an apple are ideal for fueling up without the jolt of caffeine.

Because of the way your body processes complex carbs, the release is slow and steady, meaning you feel awake at a more natural pace. Your blood sugar is also more stabilized, so you don't have to deal with a crash later on. With a healthy dose of fiber, an apple is a great energizer at any time of day.

The team effort

If you're starting to slump mid-day it can be helpful to reach for the phone. Research shows that talking to people we feel connected to, like good friends or [family members](#), can stimulate our brains to make us feel more alert, aware, focused and purposeful.

If you have time between classes or work, make a phone call home part of your routine. Or, if you usually grab coffee with a friend, take that time to go for a walk together and chat about whatever's on your mind.

Long-term change

While these quick fixes may be helpful in the moment, feeling awake really comes down to our habits. Getting seven to nine [hours of sleep](#) per night is a great place to start, but quality matters just as much as quantity. Sleeping in a quiet, dark space and shutting our brains off with relaxing activities before bed helps ensure a more restful night.

One of the most effective ways to start training your brain to wake up quicker and easier is to wake up at the same time every day (or at least within an hour of the same time), even on weekends. When you get into the habit of a standard waking [time](#), you're actually training yourself to

flick on your "awake" switch without much effort. That means if you get the hang of this, you can probably quit the cold showers!

Provided by University of Colorado at Boulder

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