



Rise and Shine

Start a morning routine in the Year of the Rooster.

By Jennifer Stevens

On January 28th, the Year of the Monkey will come to a close, and a new animal will reign over 2017: the rooster.

Fireworks will sound to scare away evil spirits, doors will be decorated with red for good fortune and Chinese migrant workers will travel across the country for days to be with family members. This is, by far, the most important holiday in China.

The traditions associated with the lunar new year are rooted deeply into the culture, and also in an astrological system dating before Christ. According to legend, the lunar calendar was created by a man named Ta

Nao, a minister of Emperor Huang Ti. Although dates are subject to debate, it seems that the calendar has been used in Asia since 4000 BC.

The calendar is based on 12 animals (from which there are several legends, but again, no consensus) – rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. Each animal has its own temperament; and along with it, an element (metal, wood, earth, water or fire), which provides further insight on both the year and the people born in it. The animals rotate after 12 years, and the elements repeat two times consecutively, taking 60 years to complete a full cycle.

(For example, year one could be a metal rat year, followed by a metal ox year.) This helps astrologers with predictions, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) professionals with diagnoses and even affects wedding and birthing plans.

This year is a fire rooster year, which could mean many things, depending on who you talk to. According to Dr Evan Pinto, licensed acupuncturist and board certified herbalist, the trick is to think about the characteristics associated with the assigned animal. "What are the characteristics of a rooster?" he asks. "They wake up early, they hang out together, they're confident." So it's no surprise that a variety of Chinese zodiac sites are

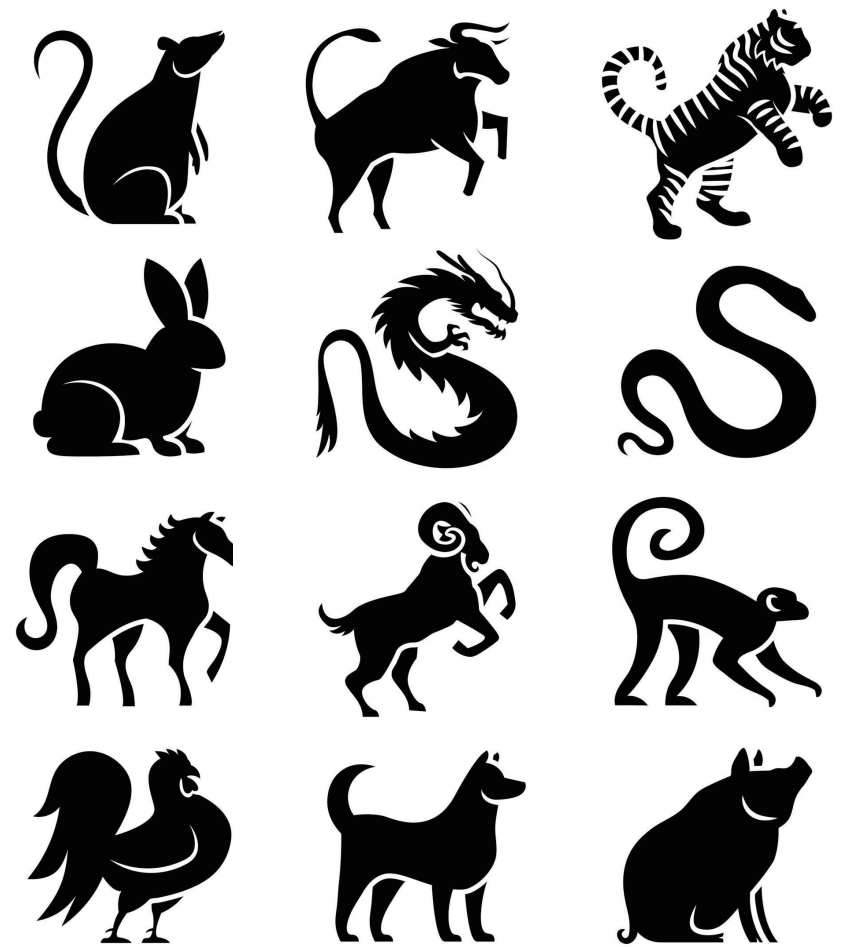
predicting that 2017 will be a successful year, for those who start their day on the right foot.

Morning routines have recently gained a lot of traction in the media, with testimonials from the likes of Oprah, spiritual leaders and even accounts of certain historical figures. Things like drinking lemon water, repeating affirmations, meditating, eating a healthy breakfast and practicing yoga have been essential components to many celebrity routines, varying in order and in time commitment. Benjamin Franklin was said to wake up early every morning for a cold "air bath," believing the frigid air would encourage creativity. For 30 minutes each day, he would sit in his

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chamber, fully naked, reading novels and writing down his thoughts.

Thankfully, holistic psychologist at the Body & Soul Medical Clinics, Bibiana Rueda Bueno, says it doesn't have to be this complicated. "The whole point of a morning routine is to set up your day and connect yourself to your priorities. It doesn't matter if it's smoking a cigarette and screaming, 'I'm fantastic, I feel fantastic!' If it works for you and makes you feel



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Good to Know

Dr. Evan Pinto says that as a TCM practitioner, it's near impossible to give general recommendations, even when it comes to morning routines. Instead, he provides a list of activities based on your element. Don't know what your element is? Schedule a consultation. Wechat: TCMDrEvanPinto

1. Water: 壬 Taijiquan/gym workout
2. Wood: 甲 Stretching/yin yoga
3. Fire: 丙 Meditation/qigong
4. Earth: 土 Warm, nourishing breakfast
5. Metal: 金 Spicy breakfast



good, that's what you do." However, Rueda Bueno also warns that most people already have a morning routine, whether they know it or not—and most times it's negative. "If you wake up, look in the mirror and say, 'I look terrible today,' you're already setting yourself up for negativity. Or, if you're a mom, and you're chasing your kids out of the house and are always late. If you hit the snooze button. Your morning routine is already established."

But we can change; and the Year of the Rooster is the perfect time to do it, according to Pinto. "It's easier to bring health into your life during a fire year," he says. He also states that the morning may be the best time to do it. "In the morning, it's the rise of the Yang - warmth and energy. It's the beginning of the nourishing time, according to Daoism."

What does this mean, exactly? In TCM, the day is broken into Yin and Yang. Yang energy is heat and Yin is

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cool/rest. In order to digest, we need heat to break apart the molecules. To go into more detail, there is an organ clock that represents the time of day when 12 different organs are functioning optimally, with the most energy. From 5-7am, it's the large intestine, making it the best time to have a bowel movement. The stomach is working best between 7am and 9am, which is why breakfast should be the largest meal of the day, says Pinto. And from 9-11am the spleen (the organ that extracts nutrients from food, transforming it into energy) is working its best, and is supported by drinking a cup of warming tea.

"What was initially intended is not so practical anymore," says Pinto, "but TCM is always adaptable. The way our modern lives are structured, people don't have time to do what is nec-

essarily healthy, but we need to make our health a priority." Pinto suggests that part of the answer is making time for ourselves in the morning.

"I call it selfful time," says Rueda Bueno. "The word selfish sounds so negative, and it shouldn't be. We have to make time for ourselves, and the morning is the best time for it. Routines come out of pleasure. I ask my patients, 'Can you do it?' then, 'Do you want to do it?' Having to and wanting to come from different energies." She goes on to explain that humans are connected to desires, and with today's fast-paced lifestyle, it's important to remember what makes us happy. "Your morning routine could be simply taking a hot shower while saying positive affirmations: I am beautiful enough, I am smart enough, lovable enough. Routines shouldn't be a duty; they should provide pleasure."

Health and wellness coach Kimberly Ashton agrees, often urging her cli-

ents to adopt morning routines. "We are creatures of habit," she says. "When we introduce a healthy morning routine, we rewire something in our brains and our outlooks shift. We start looking out for ourselves—doing something good for ourselves."

Ashton recommends starting the day with a large glass of water and having a healthy breakfast, if nothing else. "You could dry brush, there's oil pulling," she says, "stretching, deep breathing, meditation, gratitude diaries. Find what works for you and create a habit. Consistency is what's important."

Whether it's an hour-long routine consisting of meditation, exercise, journaling and making breakfast, or waking up five minutes earlier to say three positive things about yourself, the consensus is that it will be beneficial - both for your physical health and mental health. By having a routine, you're making time for yourself, setting the tone for the day and, in turn, becoming more like a rooster. **SF**

Good to Know

If starting a morning routine still feels overwhelming, download these apps to make it a bit easier. For more information on what they do and how they work, read our follow-up article on shfamily.com.



Headspace



7 Minute Workout



Wunderlist



Pocket Yoga



Spotify