

Rise and Shine! A Two-Minute Ritual to Combat the SAD Season

More than a few ill winds attack our sense of control and well-being nowadays. Add to that, 'tis the season of SAD—seasonal affective disorder—in the northern hemisphere. Just dragging yourself out of bed can be a struggle that starts your day in a decidedly downbeat mode. But here's a 90-second morning ritual that can help you rise and shine and gladly greet each day.

Alright! Here's the ritual.

When the fog of your dreamworld starts to lift and you realize you're waking up, keep your eyes closed and listen to the first 90 seconds of the following spectacular piece of music:

Maurice Ravel, "Daphnis et Chloé," *Lever du jour*, L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Ansermet, 1965

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZG6gJsroTQ>

I would use headphones for this. It starts softly, but it builds tremendously. And you don't want to wake up the household or have your partner throw something at you if they're still trying to sleep!

Keep your eyes closed as the music starts. You'll hear the beginnings of nature rustling and bubbling in the Earth below you. Feel that verve rise up from the earth and start to fill your body with energy. Breathe extremely slowly and deeply. The music has lots of quick, rippling activity and you almost shouldn't hear all the micro-motion or pay attention to it. Instead, imagine all that micro-energy is awakening your blood cells. Feel that energy coursing through your bloodstream and into all your cells. And as you slowly breathe, let your body osmotically *absorb* the music's life force.



You'll hear the music growing louder with Earth's predawn reawakening. Keep your eyes closed, but start to sit up. When you hear the big cadence (at approx. 1:15), open your eyes and imagine you're seeing precisely what the title means—Daybreak!

Why Call This a Ritual?

Our contemporary society prizes habits...to the point that we lose ourselves in robotic busy-ness. For large chunks of time, we dispense with living our lives and simply sleepwalk through life instead. "Busy" eats time and obliterates contact with your Being.

Ritual is what your Being uses to connect you to greater depths of experience. But what passes for ritual nowadays is merely perfunctory, obligatory, memorized movement. Religions around the world are full of rituals, but most congregants simply go through the motions: they don't expend the care and concentration to imbue those rituals with any depth of meaning.

It is depth of meaning that transforms any experience into peak moments—the building blocks of Being, presence and lasting happiness.

What we remember of the arc of our lives is typically a handful of peak moments. Quite often, most of those seemingly peak moments are more about the collective experiences of the groups we belong to rather than our individual lives. Those group moments are good, but they belong more to history than to our individual growth...and the experience of our individual life.

Art, literature, music, consciousness, gratitude, love—these are the foods, or fuels, that help deepen our individual experiences and, in truth, gives us our lives.

About the music: While the exercise/ritual only needs the first 90 seconds of this movement, the entire seven minutes grows even more expansive and powerful. It embodies the relentless determination of nature to survive anything and everything. That's what it can feed to you. Also, it's a musical gem of human civilization and worthy of our attention.

If you think "classical music" isn't your thing, try the various selections I use in my posts. I believe the exercises, journeys or rituals connected to them can unlock some of the secrets of how to listen to great music and enrich your Being with the experience.

About the photo: This is a view from the porch of my friend's house in the Aveyron département of France—the agricultural heartland. Rolling hillsides burst with vineyards that tumble down toward a river nestled in the valley below. In the summertime, the earth is so lush and verdant that it seems almost unbelievable—as if it were a movie set. But it's most definitely real, and the life-joy of nature fills you with each breath you take.