



## Advice for the Home Team Toolbox by Dr. Debi Warner

Dear Dr. Debi,  
How do we get enough  
time for projects with days  
still so short? Any ideas??  
Signed, Clock Watcher

Dear Daylong Dreamer,  
Pretty soon the clocks  
will change back to their lovely  
summer schedule. While daylight  
is longer even now than it was in

December, it will seem to take a nice bright jump when the clocks change. But as bright as this will look, some personal preparation can help you retain your energy when the big bump happens.

The Spring's time change means you jump your clock forward one hour. This sacrifice of losing an hour on the clock will put us more in line with the evening sunlight that cheers us at the end of our busy day. Suddenly it will seem like baseball season – just because the sun is shining and birds sing.

But – that loss of an hour needs to be planned for yourself so that it does not just rob you of sleep on that first Monday morning. There are more hapless car accidents on that Monday than any other day of the year, excluding awful weather conditions. Robbing folks of an hour's sleep hurts their coordination, attention, reaction times, and problem solving skills.

You don't want to have your safety jeopardized on your projects, just as you are thrilled to have more access to them in the added sunlight. Without preparation, it can take a week to recover from the robbery of that hour's sleep. So, deal with this on both ends – your sleep pattern and your project plans.

Sleep patterns are a delicate matter. Our bodies and brains get accustomed to our typical times for settling down and also for waking. Simply saying you will hop in bed an hour earlier on the night before the time change can actually cause sleep stress and prevent you from falling asleep as nicely as usual, and lead to poor rest all night.

Each of us has a variety of sleep time lengths. The total times are often segmented in 45 minute to 2 hour intervals. So, your short night's sleep might be 6½ hours, but you can also get a nice longer rest in 8 hours, with a very long sleep of 9½ also suiting you well. Try noticing your best sleep times and you will have a very good measuring tool for your sleep toolbox.

Once you know your segment interval, you can plan waking and sleeping times that suit you well. It is like knowing where the perforations are to cleanly tear off the edge of your sleep. Are your intervals 45 minutes? 75 minutes?

90 minutes? Even 2 hours? Just a little clock watching will reveal this. You can see this evidence when you might have occasional insomnia – to recall the various times you saw the clock during the night. These will likely correspond to your lighter sleep moments that reveal your personal intervals.

Waking at the 'perforation' of sleep will feel more natural than disturbed sleep. You tend to be more alert and can perform better than if you are awoken mid-segment in your sleep. You can use this information to plan your adjustment to the new time zone.

So, to prepare, you can start your adjusting on Friday, by going to bed at your usual weeknight – but not late weekend – time. Then be sure to get up Saturday morning on the earlier side of your OK morning times. Be sure to have a nice busy Saturday with good healthy physical exertion, and you will be ready for bed Saturday night at your regular weekday time – not your usual late weekend indulgence. You will be able to sleep your middle length night's sleep on Saturday night, but don't go for the long night's sleep. You don't want to push your Sunday activity to a later hour.

Get up reasonably and refreshingly early on Sunday, based on your good sleep segments, and make sure you have an active day. This Saturday and the Sunday of time change are great days for the busy physical work of moving materials, organizing, hoisting, setting staging, and clearing a site for your project. Your physical involvement will produce visible results, feel satisfying, and reward you as you prepare your way for the project you delight in.

Now when it comes to Sunday night, time out your moderate length of sleep. Count it backward from your good Monday wake up time. Stay away from caffeine on Sunday after 3 pm. Settle down your physical work by about 5 pm and eat on the early side on Sunday evening. You will be giving your body many signals for shifting its rhythms and will be ready to hit the hay at your predetermined bedtime Sunday night. Be sure to do your usual routines. If this includes certain TV programs, record them ahead so you can have it your way.

Other folks at home may not get into this plan, and their sleep segments may indeed be quite different than yours, so this is a solo plan, needing tolerance for variety among the players on your team. Just like working out at the gym, each has their own routine and yet there is a comfort in encouraging each other on. Communicate your action and rest times so that folks will be able to accommodate you, and be careful of theirs. Each of us will bear the result of the choices we make in preparation and adjustment to the time change, so give a wide berth for each one's sleep and wake plans.

Sweet dreams and Happy Home Team!

Dr. Debi

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*Dr. Debi Warner is the Founder of Renovation Psychology® radio host, and author of the book, Putting the Home Team to Work, available now online at RenovationPsychology.com. Dr. Debi provides advice for greater domestic harmony to folks who are renovating their home – for True Home Improvement. This column is offered for enjoyment and enhancement and is not intended to replace your personal medical care. Photo by Bob Jenks, St. Johnsbury, Vt.*

*Dr. Debi has a consultation practice, from her studio in Littleton, NH, with house calls all over the East coast.*

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