



# RAY EDWARDS

LIVE WITH JOY. LEAD WITH PASSION. PROSPER WITH PURPOSE.

## Five Surprising Productivity Hacks Episode 156

Welcome to episode 156. Remember, you can find all of the show notes, the links, the transcripts, everything you need like that at [RayEdwards.com/156](https://RayEdwards.com/156) for episode 156. By the way, speaking of transcripts, I would like to remind you that our transcripts are actually provided by our good friends at [SuccessTranscripts.com](https://SuccessTranscripts.com). Janette and her team are the trusted solution for you if you need your podcast, sermons, speeches, courses or any other audio transcribed, typed out so that people can read it, because some people prefer reading to listening. That's the service we use and recommend. [SuccessTranscripts.com](https://SuccessTranscripts.com), check them out.

---

Well, I have written quite a bit about productivity and I've done more than a few podcasts on the subject of getting things done. Many of my recommendations are familiar to you and today I'm going to take a departure from my normal recommendations about being productive, including the recommendations you are most accustomed to hearing from me.

On today's show, I will share Five Surprising Productivity Hacks, hacks being shortcuts that make you more productive. These shortcuts you may be shocked to hear coming from me because they are very different from what I normally recommend, but they work!

---

### Tip of the Week

This week's tip, I actually have to give credit where credit is due, I picked up from my friend Pat Flynn. We're in a mastermind group together and recently I was listening to Pat's Smart Passive Income Podcast and heard him talk about two apps that he's been using that really intrigued me. I've been using both of these apps now for a couple of weeks and I've found them to be remarkably helpful with a couple of serious challenges I've been dealing with lately, one of them is being a little stressed out.

I know, I'm not supposed to be stressed. I'm supposed to be the guy who's got it all together, but I'm not that guy! I never claim to be that guy, so sometimes the stress even gets to me. So that's one problem I've been dealing with. The other problem, which probably is related, has been a little bit of trouble with a little monster I call insomnia. Two apps have proven very helpful, I learned about both of them from Pat.

The first app is the **Calm App**. Now, this is a meditation app and I know what you're thinking, probably the same thing I was thinking when I first heard about this. Do we actually need an app for meditating? I mean, people have been meditating for a long time and they didn't need apps. Well, I think the answer is yes, we do need an app for meditating because we're just in that world. That's where we live, the app world. Having tried a number of such meditation apps, this is the only one that consistently helps me guide my brain into a calmer, less fragmented and more anxiety-free state. Now, the way it works is this.

First of all, Calm supplies you with a series of environments or soundscapes that, in and of themselves, have a calming effect. Some of the choices include things like a gentle rain, wind on

a mountain meadow, the ocean, that sort of thing. But the app is much more than just a white noise generator, there are plenty of those, this app also supplies a series of guided meditations that help still your mind and assist you in focusing on the here and now. This is an app that actually helps you with the practice of mindfulness and mindfulness just means being aware of what's happening right now in front of you.

For many of my Christian brothers and sisters right now who are freaking out about what they perceive to be Eastern religious practices, let me assure you that the guided meditations that I have worked through so far in this app have nothing to do with religion of any kind. These meditations are more about being present in this moment and not caught up in thinking about things that are not happening right here, right now. Thinking about things that are not happening right here, right now, that's the source of most of our anxiety and depression.

So I love this app, I have found it to be extremely helpful and calming. I have a much greater percentage of my day that is spent mindfully now than I did before because, previously, my mind was busy racing off to stuff that happened in the past that I can't do anything about or stuff that might or might not happen in the future that I also cannot do anything about. So I upgraded to the premium version, I think it was about ten bucks. It's a year's worth of guided meditations in different areas, different soundscapes. I think it's well worth the small amount of money I invested for the upgrade, so I'm a big fan of the Calm App.

The other app is the one that helps me deal with the insomnia problem. I may do a podcast about better sleep. That may be my next episode, in fact, but I'll tell you about the Sleep Cycle App right now. It's called **Sleep Cycle** and over the past few months, I hinted earlier, I've been wrestling with a little monster I call insomnia. Some nights I was sleeping only one or two hours out of the entire night. Every now and then I just didn't sleep at all; I stayed awake for 24 hours or more. My average night of sleep over the last few months was something like four to four and a half hours per night.

I don't care what anybody tells you, that just is not enough sleep to keep your brain healthy, it just isn't. Science has demonstrated that when we sleep for seven to eight hours a night there's a washing of the cerebral spinal fluid that goes through our brain and over our spine that cleanses, calms, helps restore health to and, yes, causes new cells and connections to grow in our brains. We need seven to eight hours of sleep a night and I was not getting it. So that became my goal, a quest to get seven to eight hours of sleep per night.

I did all the usual recommended stuff. I've got a sleep routine. I avoided screens before going to bed, you know like iPads, TVs and things like that. I did all that, but this app has been one the most helpful things I've put into play. Here's how it works, it monitors the depth of your sleep by using the accelerometer in you iPhone. The theory is the app detects how much you are moving in your bed at night. If you're moving a lot, then you're either awake or you're in what's called light sleep. If you're in deep sound sleep, then you won't be moving at all.

Sleep Cycle takes your target wakeup time and watches you carefully to see when you are in light sleep and only then, only when you're in light sleep will it give a soft, gentle alarm to wake you from that light sleep. Waking you when you're in light sleep leaves you feeling refreshed, alert and energetic, this has been very helpful to me. I use the app a lot. I use it every night, in fact. It's increased my overall sleep time to an average of almost six and a half hours per night, so I'm very close to my goal of seven to eight hours of sleep per night. I've had a couple of seven hour nights.

The beautiful thing about it is it has stat tracking, so I can look at my history in the app and see exactly what my average sleep time is, what my best night has been, what my worst night has been. It's a fantastic little app and, again, it's very inexpensive. I did upgrade to the version that includes a few bonus extras like the Power Nap Application, which helps you take a restorative nap in the afternoon, if you need to, not one that will mess up your sleep cycle that night.

So this is a great app, I recommend it. It's called Sleep Cycle and if you have any trouble at all sleeping or you just want better quality sleep, you want to wake up more refreshed and energized, I highly recommend that you give this app a try. I think you will like it a lot.

---

## **Spiritual Foundations**

The topic of repentance seems to keep coming up in my life a lot. You might be able to misinterpret that and say well, Ray, what have you been up to that you need to repent so much? Well, it's not exactly like that, I just seem to keep hearing people talking about repentance. I need to repent, Ray. I must repent from my ways. I've been doing bad habit number one, bad habit number two, bad habit number three. I'm not working hard enough. I'm sinful. I just hear all kinds of talk from believers and nonbelievers about the need for repentance. I'd like to talk with you for a moment or two about what it means to actually repent.

Most of us, especially Christians, think that repentance is an act of contrition. It's an act of feeling sorry or guilty or bad about something we've done and then groveling and apologizing until we feel debased enough that we believe we're off the hook with God. Now, we wouldn't put it that way, we'd find much better, more flowery theological language with which to express it, but that's really what's going on inside most people when they think of repentance. They think if I can just feel bad enough then, eventually, God will let me off the hook for whatever it is I feel I did that was wrong.

Well, Jesus has already paid the price for all of our sins, so that's done. We don't have anything more to do in that area of paying for our sins, we can't. We can't add to His work, it's finished. So this view of repentance that's been circulated in the church and in the world is a distorted, twisted view of what it really means to repent. The Greek word used in the Bible and translated as repent is the word 'metanoya', which means to change your mind. The idea is that you change the way you think.

When Jesus calls us to repent He's not calling us to grovel, He's calling us to change our way of thinking to match His way of thinking. We repent from our old way of thinking and we repent to the new creation way of thinking. So get that. We're not just repenting from something, we're repenting to something. That's a key distinction.

So how does repentance happen, how do we actually repent? Now, this used to puzzle me. If I really want to repent, do I do it by getting on my knees and begging God's forgiveness? I don't think that's right because He has already forgiven us. We're already forgiven. If we've accepted the gift of redemption, of salvation through the Blood of Christ, we're forgiven entirely. We're made righteous through Christ, so we'd be begging God to forgive us for something He has already forgiven.

That doesn't seem to make any sense, so how do I repent? Do I do it by going and making amends to the people I may have harmed? That could be part of the act of repentance. But overall, I think what's more important is not singular acts, rather the change in my way of thinking.

Anytime we get a greater revelation of the Grace of Jesus Christ, of just how forgiven we are, of how important we are to Him, of how much of a sacrifice He has made on our behalf, our thinking will automatically change. Let me give you an illustration.

When you discover somebody who has done something wonderful for you, they've given you a great gift or done you a tremendous favor, said something wonderful about you that resulted in you getting a job or a promotion or a new client, something that goes beyond all your expectations of anything they ever might have done for you, aren't you delighted? Isn't it true that you feel a rush of gratitude toward that person, maybe even a love, a companionship or an affection that you never felt before? Isn't that true? Haven't you experienced that?

Anytime we get a glimpse of the magnitude of what Jesus has done for us we have an immediate change of heart. Thus, anytime we read about Jesus in the Bible, anytime we hear an anointed worship or preaching, repentance is happening automatically. It has nothing to do with groveling or begging. It has nothing to do with feeling debased. It has everything to do with being transformed by the changing of our minds and that happens through all these means that I've just mentioned, anointed preaching, anointed worship music, reading stories about Jesus in the Bible about His forgiveness, reading anointed books that interpret and relate the Grace of the Gospel accurately.

Now, not everyone is in favor of this Gospel of Grace, but that's what Paul called it. The Apostle Paul called it the Gospel of Grace and so we must remember that. It's the Gospel of Grace we need to be hearing and we need to hear it every day. In fact, on my habit list, I have a list of habits that I cultivate every single day and one of the top habits I have is listen to a Grace message every day. When I do that, when I hear the message of Grace, repentance is automatically happening. I highly recommend repenting every day in the way that I have just described.

---

## **Feature Presentation**

All right, we get down to productivity now. We come to the Five Surprising Productivity Hacks that I promised I would share with you. You've heard from me all of the standard productivity recommendations, use context-based lists, read the book *GTD*, block out the time for specific activities, etc., to paraphrase the King of Siam. Well, today, I present some counterintuitive but highly effective productivity hacks.

You may be surprised to hear some of these coming from me, but I've been experimenting with different practices of late in all areas of my life and I've found that each of these practices, these recommendations that I'm going to make to you, have helped me be more productive in real terms; in other words, getting useful stuff done that I want to accomplish. So let's get right to the Five Surprising Productivity Hacks.

### 1. Read Fiction

That's right, read made-up stories. Reading fiction feeds the need inside of us for inspiring stories that let us see ourselves and our reality in new and in more hopeful ways. Anytime we read great fiction, we invariably put ourselves in the place of the protagonist of the story. If you and I have read *The Lord of the Rings*, we've both been at the edge of the Cracks of Doom with the ring in our hands making the decision about whether or not to toss it to its ultimate destruction. That's an experience we've had. We get to see the world through the protagonist's eyes and experience the trials, the tribulations and the triumphs right along with them.

Science suggests that our brains often have trouble distinguishing between vividly-imagined events and events that actually happened. So when we're caught up in an imaginative story, it's as if we were actually having the experience ourselves. That results in real character growth, real and valuable experiences. Our brain doesn't know whether they're real or not, but this also points out the danger in reading the wrong kind of fiction. Make sure you're reading fiction that is uplifting that leads you filled with hope and inspiration. Reading fiction that is depressing or leaves you with a world view that is less than hopeful is very effective, but in the wrong direction.

## 2. Goof off More

Now, this one has proven difficult for me personally. I have, at some point in my past, internalized the idea that goofing is somehow sinful or wrong or, at the very least, a waste. Now, by goofing off I mean doing things that are of no particular value only because it's what we feel like doing. Clearly, my beliefs about this from the past are false. I denounce those beliefs. I don't cling to them at all.

God created us with a sense of curiosity, a need to seek pleasure and avoid pain, a desire for diversity, adventure and variety. All of these are encompassed, I believe, in the act of goofing off. I think the very fact that we call it 'goofing off' is indicative of how we think of it in a derogative way. The problem, I think, that most of us face is not that we don't know how to goof off or that we don't want to goof off, we've forgotten how to do it well.

In days gone by, goofing off might have meant reading a great piece of literature because you had rest from the work of the farm or the ranch or whatever your very physical endeavor might have been in years gone by. You might have goofed off by going to a performance of great music or by hiking in the mountains or going fishing or hunting or any of the other extraordinary, adventurous and exciting activities that happened in the real world in days gone by, before we could immerse ourselves in our screens, our phones, our artificial environments.

In our modern, largely artificial world, we often goof off by watching television, going to the mall or picking from a round-robin list of fast-food restaurants at which we will choose our dinner tonight instead of cooking it ourselves. I recommend goofing off, but I recommend you do it in a bigger scale, on a grander scale than you've ever thought possible before.

Get creative about your goofing off and see if the renewed vigor, energy and interest doesn't make your life more creative and productive. So go for a hike, go hunting, go camping, go fishing, learn to fly a plane, take a plane ride, go for a ride in a hot air balloon, go horseback riding if you've never done that before, if you haven't done it in a long time. Do something to goof off, something that has no apparent practical value, but which renews your spirit. That is productivity, indeed.

## 3. Watch Television

What? Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself. No problem. You see, intentional television watching can indeed be a source of productivity. How? Well, let's say that you are stuck for creative ideas on a project you're working on. Trying to squeeze creativity out of your brain is of no use, I assure you, it will not work. Sometimes my best ideas come to me when I'm watching an engrossing and interesting program on television. I don't just mean stuff on the Discovery Channel. I'm not just talking about educational documentary Ken Burns' kinds of programs that you can feel proud bragging to your friends about. I mean things that are simply exciting or enjoyable to watch.

Perhaps you're a fan of the show 'The Back List' or maybe you like 'The Walking Dead'. Whatever your television choice of programming, it doesn't matter if you enjoy watching it and it's a diversion for your conscious mind. I think it allows our subconscious to work on things that we find difficult to think of directly. It's a way of engaging what some people call your 'sleeping mind' to work on a problem and your sleeping mind is much more powerful and expansive and resourceful than your waking mind, quite frequently.

Now, I don't recommend that you spend all of your time watching television, I think that would be a poor choice, but I think selectively and intelligently watching television for the reasons I have described can be a good idea. One trick is keep a notepad and pen handy or your iPhone or iPad so you can capture those ideas when they come to you while you're watching television because, I promise, if you decide you will simply remember it, that the idea is so good there's no way you'll forget it, you be disappointed. Trust me, write it down.

#### 4. Multi-task

Again, I'm driving some of my listener's nuts right now by the way I've contradicted myself. I've said many times in the past, almost as if it were Gospel truth, that multitasking is not really possible. It's true, scientific evidence does show that we don't really multitask, but, in fact, we rapidly switch from one task to another and that, generally, this makes us less efficient at all the tasks that we're trying to do at the same time. However, when what we're searching for is more creativity it can be helpful to multitask or task switch, whatever you want to call it.

Regardless of what we refer to it as, I sometimes find that the additional stimulus is helpful in keeping me more focused on what I'm actually working on. I know that sounds weird, but it's been true for me so I'm sharing it with you. Don't accept it from me as true, just try it and see if it works for you. Sometimes when I'm working on a project I may be happily typing away while listening to a podcast or even while watching a TV show or a movie on one screen and writing on another screen.

Sounds crazy, it will not work for everybody. I know plenty of people who tell me they just can't do that, but sometimes it's the only way I can work. It doesn't work for me most of time, but sometimes my information-loving brain just needs, in the words of Johnny Number 5, "more input!" Try it. See if it works for you.

#### 5. Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel

Look, it's popular in modern productivity circles to talk about how important it is for us to take time off, to schedule free days, to end our workday at a certain time no matter how early it is, no matter how important the task we're working on, to limit the number of hours we work because we are only productive for a few hours anyway each day.

This is all true and it's all good and I recommend all of it and I practice all of it, but sometimes not. Sometimes, for brief seasons, what is needed for us to be most productive is to put our shoulder to the wheel, to work the extra hours, to burn the midnight oil, to put in more effort than anyone else is willing to put in so we might end up getting results that no one else is able to get. Sometimes we just need to work harder. Not always and not as a lifestyle, but sometimes.

Those are my Five Surprising Productivity Hacks. To recap—

- Read Fiction
- Goof off More
- Watch Television
- Multitask like crazy
- Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel and Work Harder

So what about you? What are some unconventional and surprising productivity hacks that go against the grain of modern schools of productivity but you find to be very effective for you.

---

### **What to Do Next**

I would love to have you share those ideas and I would love for you to do it by going to [RayEdwards.com/156](http://RayEdwards.com/156). That's where you'll find the notes for this show and your opportunity to comment, to share. By the way, if you'd like to help us out, if you'd like to spread the word about the show, here's the best thing you can do for us. Subscribe to the show in iTunes, give us a star rating and write up a review. It helps expose the show to more people, more entrepreneurs like you and I can find out about it and be helped. I hope you'll do that for us, I appreciate it in advance.

Until next time, may God continue to bless you and may He keep on doing for you more than you can ask or even possibly imagine. See you next time!

Remember, transcripts of the show are available with each episode, courtesy of our friends at [SuccessTranscripts.com](http://SuccessTranscripts.com), a great solution if you need audios or videos of podcasts, sermons, seminars, interviews, workshop, books and more, transcribed into text.