

energy personalities - bears, gazelles and tigers



>> [do you spring out of bed in the morning?]

Or do you roll out and take a few hours to wind up and fully hit your straps? Individual energy levels fluctuate during the day according to sensory input from the environment and our inbuilt body clock (the circadian rhythm). Chronobiology is the study of circadian rhythms and has proven matching daily tasks to energy levels and mood will boost productivity and help you sustain performance throughout the day.

Scientists call the pattern by which our concentration levels vary during the day our concentration curve. Research shows mental and physical performance can vary by as much as 15% depending on the time of day.

what's your energy personality?

Circle the most appropriate answers then refer to the table below to determine what your energy personality is:

- Do you sleep in if you forget to set the alarm clock on weekdays?**
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
- Are you bubbly and chatty when you arrive at work in the morning?**
 - No
 - Sometimes
 - Yes
- Do you do your best work in the afternoon to early evening?**
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
- If you could choose your ideal working hours it would be:**
 - 12:00pm - 7:00pm
 - 9:00am - 5:00pm
 - 6:00am - 2:00pm
- When you go to a party are you:**
 - Usually the last to leave?
 - OK as long as you get to bed within 3 hours of normal sleep time?
 - Agitated and tired if you don't leave before your usual bed time?

Mostly A's	Mostly B's	Mostly C's
Bear	Tiger	Gazelle

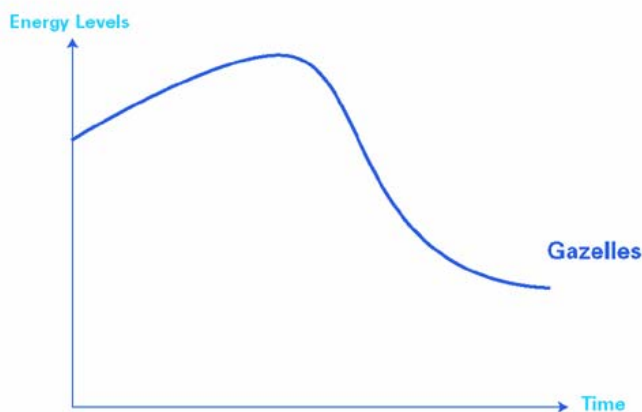
“Research shows mental and physical performance can vary as much as 15% depending on time of day”



on when you have to ... off when you can

gazelles

15 to 20% of people are Gazelles (also known as larks), the type that spring out of bed around 6am and hit the road running, never needing an alarm clock. Gazelles are the bubbly people who bounce into work and put the words 'good' and 'morning' into the same sentence. Gazelles peak around midday and by later afternoon will tend to struggle with energy, concentration and creativity. The Gazelle should avoid high level mental tasks and engage in the necessary routine tasks in the afternoon. Gazelles need to exercise before 6pm to ensure they are rested and ready for bed early, usually around 10pm. Research shows that high achievers often follow this pattern.



do

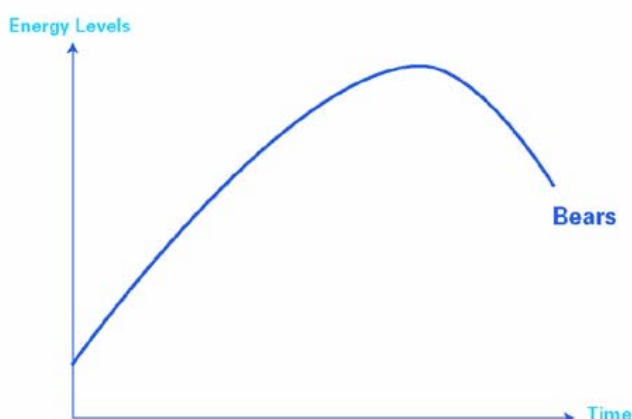
- spend some time outside in the early afternoon and use sunlight to boost your energy if you need to stay up a bit later
- plan to do high level cognitive tasks during the morning

don't

- accept a job with late evening shifts
- exercise within 4 hours of bed time

bears

About 20% of the population are Bears (also called night owls) and function better in the late morning, afternoon or night. Clued up Bears keep their morning tasks simple and are at their most productive around 6pm. Bears like to burn the midnight oil, this can be effective and productive as long as they can still get adequate sleep. Research shows many Bears skip breakfast which provides the brains most vital food (probably due to getting up later at 9 or 10am) and struggle through the morning grogginess.



do

- sleep with curtains open to let the sun wake you up
- walk outside as soon as possible after waking up (don't wear sunglasses if it's not too bright)
- get up at the same time every day and eat breakfast
- keep a pad and pen on the bedside table to write down creative ideas so as not to keep rolling them over in your head into the early hours

don't

- stay up too late on weekends or you'll suffer the effects of 'weekend jetlag'
- start new projects or thinking tasks right before going to bed

tigers

55 to 60% of people are tigers! While many believe that they are either a Gazelle or a Bear, it is possible to manage your energy and sleep patterns to switch between the two as life requires. The energy personality that strikes a balance between the two is called a tiger.

what happens when a bear marries a gazelle?

If you are a morning person and your partner is an evening person, this can pose a few challenges. The Gazelle often feels amorous in the morning and a Bear will be ready to fire up in the evening. The solution? Try scheduling some 'special time' when the concentration curves are closer together at lunch time. What tends to happen in marriages after time is that both personalities tend to blend towards each other and a common ground is found.

performing at your peak

characteristic	gazelles	bears
Use of alarm clock	Never	Need multiple alarms
Most productive	Early to mid morning	Afternoon/early evening
Naps	Rarely	Take regular naps
Favourite exercise time	Morning	Early evening
Mood	Declines slightly over day	Rises substantially over day
Morning behaviour	Chatty	Bearish
Evening behaviour	Out of steam	Full of beans
Caffeine use	Small cups	Large pots
Shift work capacity	Work best on day shifts	Work best on evening shifts
Arousal levels	Early morning	Late evening
Travel	More jet lag	Adapt faster to time changes
Partner report (well matched)	We like an early start	We're the last to go home

best time of the week

- US firm Accountemps surveyed 150 executives and found only 17% of respondents felt at their most productive on Monday's, 51% were most productive on Tuesday's
- The best day to see a doctor or dentists is a Tuesday
- Chef's serve better meals on a Tuesday night as well

productivity tactics

The most obvious 'productivity tactic' is to play to our strengths and use prime time for tasks that require high levels of concentration and use the fuzzy periods to do less mentally challenging activities. The worst thing Gazelles can do to crunch productivity is spend all morning answering and sifting through junk emails. And Bears would be advised against an 8am job interview.

Andrew May

Reference sources:

The Mind Gym, Give Me Time

Body Clock Guide to Better Health