

The Vital Five (what + how + minimums)

1) Sleep (foundation)

Goal: predictable, high-quality 7–8 hrs (or steady 90-min cycles).

Why it matters: mood regulation, libido, patience, decision-making.

Minimum effective dose (MED): 7 hrs in a consistent window; if that's not possible, protect your **last 60 minutes** (wind-down: no blue light, hot shower, low lights, boring book).

How to win:

- Same sleep/wake time ± 30 min (even weekends).
- 60-min “land the plane” routine: screens off → warm rinse → dim lights → stretch/reading.
- Room: cool, dark, quiet; white noise if needed.

Troubleshooting:

- Can't fall asleep? 10-minute brain dump + box breathing (4-4-4-4).
- Wake at 3 a.m.? Stay in bed; slow breaths, count 100–0; if after 20 min you're wired, move to a chair and read paper pages.

2) Water (hydration)

Goal: steady hydration to stabilize energy and appetite.

MED: Bodyweight (lbs) $\times 0.5$ in ounces (e.g., 200 lbs → ~100 oz).

How to win:

- Front-load: 16–24 oz upon waking; 8–12 oz before each meal.
- Add a pinch of salt/electrolytes during hot days or heavy training.

Troubleshooting:

- “I hate water.” Use a big bottle with markings; add lemon wedge; sip every 20–30 minutes.

3) Protein (muscle & satiety)

Goal: maintain/repair muscle, stabilize cravings.

MED: ~0.7–1.0 g per lb of **goal** bodyweight (e.g., goal 180 → 125–180 g/day).

How to win:

- Anchor meals around a palm-size protein (eggs/Greek yogurt/chicken/fish/lean beef/cottage cheese).
- Use a quality protein shake when busy; hit **30–40 g** per meal.

Troubleshooting:

- Appetite low in the morning? Start with a shake + handful of berries.
- On the road? Jerky + yogurt + fruit beats skipping.

4) Steps (baseline movement)

Goal: non-exercise movement to keep joints and metabolism “on.”

MED: 7–10k steps/day (or +2k above your current baseline).

How to win:

- 10-minute walks: after each meal; phone in pocket, breathe through nose.
- Park far, stairs only, 5-minute “movement breaks” each hour.

Troubleshooting:

- Desk-bound? Walk during calls; set calendar pings: 11:30, 2:30, 5:30.

5) Sunlight (circadian & mood)

Goal: anchor your body clock; boost mood and sleep quality.

MED: 5–10 minutes morning outdoor light (no sunglasses if safe), plus 5–10 minutes late afternoon.

How to win:

- Step outside within 30 minutes of waking; face the general direction of the sun.
- Get evening dim light; avoid bright overheads 90 minutes before bed.

Troubleshooting:

- Overcast or winter? Still go outside; if impossible, sit by a bright window; consider a 10k-lux light box on dark mornings (not at night).

The Rhythm: a 7-minute daily routine

1. **Wake:** water + sunlight (2–3 min outside)
2. **AM protein:** 30–40 g (breakfast or shake)
3. **Steps:** schedule 2×10-min walks (lunch & after dinner)
4. **PM wind-down (last hour):** screens off → warm rinse → stretch/reading

The Couple “Health Stand-Up” (90 seconds, 2×/week)

- **Check:** “Sleep? Water? Protein? Steps? Sunlight?”
- **One win, one tweak:** “Win: hit steps. Tweak: earlier wind-down.”
- **No fixing unless asked.** End with: “How can I support one thing this week?”

Two-Week Ramp Plan (busy dads edition)

Week 1 (stability first):

- Sleep: lock wake time; add 60-min wind-down 3 nights.
- Water: 16–24 oz upon waking; 8–12 oz before lunch/dinner.
- Steps: +2k above current baseline; one 10-min walk/day.
- Protein: 30–40 g at breakfast daily (shake if needed).
- Sunlight: 5–10 min outside within 30 min of waking.

Week 2 (stack):

- Sleep: wind-down 5 nights; protect room (cool/dark).
 - Water: hit MED daily; add electrolytes on training days.
 - Steps: 7–10k; two 10-min walks/day.
 - Protein: 30–40 g in **two** meals/day.
 - Sunlight: morning + late afternoon 5–10 min.
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Common Obstacles & Simple Fixes

- **Shift work / early routes:** anchor **wake-time routine** (water + light) whenever you rise; use blackout curtains; keep wind-down ritual even if “daytime.”
 - **Evening kid chaos:** do a 10-minute family walk after dinner; it doubles as connection.
 - **Travel:** pack shaker + single-serve protein, electrolyte packets, sleep mask, and earplugs.
 - **Cravings at night:** you’re likely under-protein’d or under-slept—fix those first.
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Mistakes to avoid

- Chasing perfection; miss a day → restart next meal, not next Monday.
 - Treating steps as “exercise only.” It’s your **always-on** baseline.
 - Over-caffeinating to mask poor sleep. Cap caffeine by early afternoon.
 - Turning Vital Five into a new scoreboard with your spouse—share progress, not pressure.
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Quick scripts (to keep it agape)

- **To spouse:** “I’m tightening my Vital Five because you deserve my best. No pressure on you; just letting you know where I’m aiming.”
- **Ask for support:** “Two tiny helps: lights dim after 9 and a 10-minute post-dinner walk—game?”
- **When you miss:** “Rough night; I’m resetting with water and a walk at lunch.”

One-page tracker (simple)

Make five checkboxes per day: **Sleep** / **Water** / **Protein** / **Steps** / **Sun**.
Win the day if you hit **3 of 5**. Win the week at **5 days**. That's it.

For Digital Ease you can use an app like Streaks

