

The Beginning

December 17, 2020

It is 6:00 AM in the morning. As I look out of the window, the gradually increasing light outside suggests that the sun is about to rise. As a habit, at this hour, I step out and go for a run at the Mini Forest—a patch of lush green stretch near my home in Bangalore.

However, today's morning is going to be special because I am in a hotel that is on the coast of the Arabian Sea, and as a result, I will get a chance to run on the beach. So, I step out and start walking towards the sea. As I reach the seaside, I am pleased to find a clean, white-sand beach. A perfect place for the a morning run.

Like anyone else who comes to sea from the deep inland, I too am excited like a child. And in my excitement, as I am looking around, I see the beautiful palm trees. They are standing tall at the edge of the beach, lined up in a row for as far as the eye can see. And their branches, oh my! They are swaying in the wind as if they are dancing to the tune of a soft melody. But when I take a closer look, it appears that the palm trees are like sentries standing guard on the beach to stop human beings from littering.

The scenery is so mesmerizing that it can easily qualify for a postcard depicting heaven on earth. And, if that isn't enough, the lovely weather adds itself to the postcard-perfect, beautiful scene in the manner in which a musician sets a tune to beautiful lyrics. It's a perfect setup for a morning beach run.

It is Goa, a tropical paradise situated along the coast of the Arabian Sea. I have come here to write my book. They say, "With the right frame of mind, you can draw a lot of inspiration from the sea."



After seeing around for a while, I get flabbergasted when I gaze up at the sky. Amazing! The sky has this classic blue hue to it, what we refer to as the *sky-blue color*.

Unlike the high tides that occur during a stormy day, today the sea is calm and has low tides, culminating into small waves of seawater, producing the familiar sea sound, and upon hitting the shore, frothing at the edges before losing their existence.

The unending expanse of the sea, the relentless waves, and the mystical sea sound—their cumulative effect makes me feel eternity in the universe. However, on the other hand, when compared, ah, our *lifespan* seems no more than a blip on the radar! No wonder writers are inspired by the sea.

After a while, as my gaze shifts from the shore to the deep sea, I see many large ships anchored around the harbor. And as I was looking at the ships, my thoughts moved from the ships to the crew manning them. I begin to wonder about their life habits when they are on board during a long voyage. I wish I knew how they would be walking for health. I wonder if they would be using a treadmill.

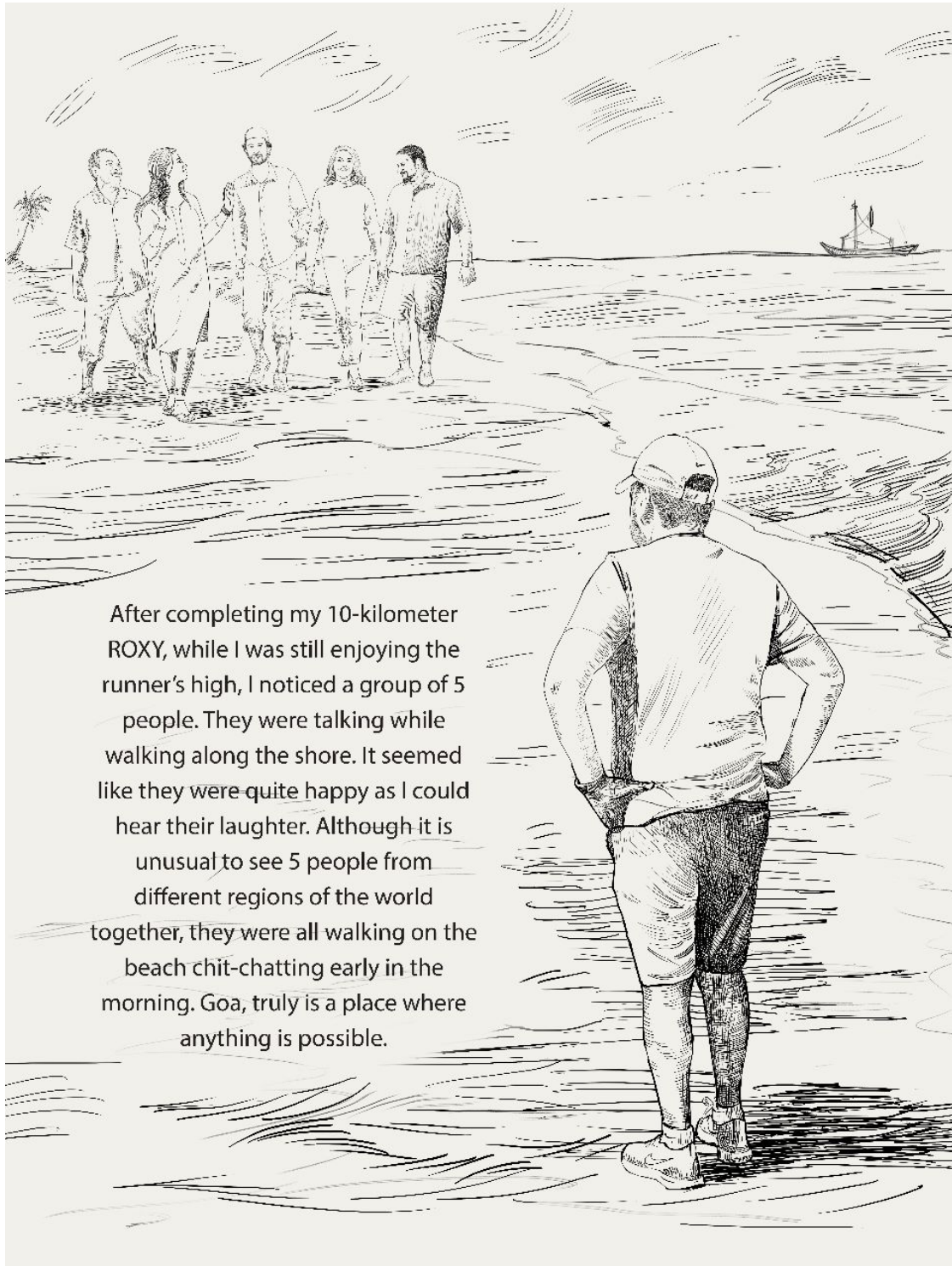
As my thoughts settle down and I begin to enjoy the beach, I develop a desire to run. I think the temptation to run is natural because, one, I love to run on a beach, and two, it is a white-sand, clean beach with a shore that is very shallow, almost like a flat surface, sloping very gradually into the sea. I started running in the manner I often do; I call it *Roxy*.

Now, what is *Roxy* that I am so excited about? And then, what is *Woxy*? Alright, here is the introduction to my favorite aerobic activities.

Roxy is a type of running where your focus is on breathing, not speed. During *Roxy*, you run at a fast enough speed that makes you breathless while you make a conscious effort to inhale deeply and exhale fully. This way, during *Roxy*, you channel your effort into maximizing deep breathing at your best running speed.

However, during *Woxy*, instead of running, we do brisk walking while keeping the focus on breathing. In addition, there are a few other steps that need to be followed during *Woxy*. I will explain them in detail in Chapter 4.

Running on the beach is very special to me because it has always been a humbling experience during which even nonstop running for ten kilometers seems like a minuscule effort. The tireless, endless oceanic tides have always inspired me to run more. Besides, whenever I run on a beach, the sound of sea waves makes me go on and on until I get the runner's high.



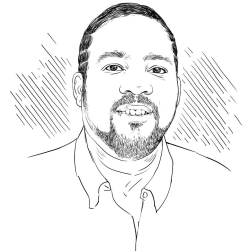
After completing my 10-kilometer ROXY, while I was still enjoying the runner's high, I noticed a group of 5 people. They were talking while walking along the shore. It seemed like they were quite happy as I could hear their laughter. Although it is unusual to see 5 people from different regions of the world together, they were all walking on the beach chit-chatting early in the morning. Goa, truly is a place where anything is possible.

As I was getting increasingly curious, I decided to say hello.



"Hello, friends! I am Dr. Deepak Tibrewal. I am a medical doctor from Bangalore."

"Hello, Dr. Tibrewal! I am Roberto, a businessman from Argentina."



"Hello, Roberto! Nice to meet you."

"Hello, Dr. Tibrewal! I am Jane, a teacher from Florida, USA."



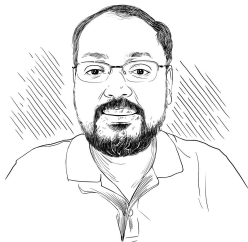
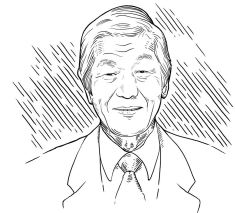
"Hello, Jane! It's a pleasure to meet you."

“Hello, Dr. Tibrewal! I am Abdul, a civil engineer from Abu Dhabi, UAE.”



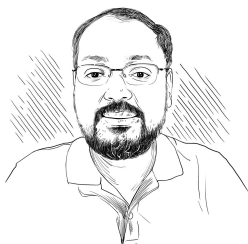
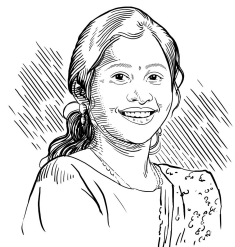
“Hello, Abdul! Nice to meet you.”

“Hello, Dr. Tibrewal! I am Suzuki, a lawyer from Okinawa, Japan.”



“Hello, Suzuki! It’s good to meet you.”

“Hello, Dr. Tibrewal! I am Maya, a software engineer from Mumbai, India.”



“Hello, Maya! It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

What a diverse group this is.

I can't stop wondering why five people from such diverse backgrounds have stepped out together for a morning walk. A myriad of questions flood my mind, but primarily, how they must have met and what they are doing here. I am thinking to myself: There must be something common driving them. I am curious to find out what it is. As we keep talking, it transpires that all of them have health issues. In order to find a long-lasting, alternative solution, they have come to attend a health retreat in Goa. As we continue our conversation, Roberto asks,



"Doctor, I was watching you run. Your running style seems so different—nothing like what I have seen before. It looked quite effortless."



"Yes, Roberto! I call it *Roxy*. It is a form of mindful running where your focus is on breathing, not speed. During *Roxy*, you run at a fast enough speed that makes you breathless while you make a conscious effort to inhale deeply and exhale fully. This way, during *Roxy*, you channel your effort into maximizing deep breathing at your best running speed. That said, Roberto, from the depth of your observation, it seems like you also run."



"Yes, Dr. Tibrewal, I used to run earlier."



"What is your specialty, Dr. Tibrewal?"



"I am a medical doctor. After studying modern medicine (MBBS) in India, I studied homeopathy at an NHS hospital in London. As a medical consultant, I treat children who suffer from respiratory tract allergies and autism. And, when it comes to my adult patients, a lot of them are those who suffer from chronic issues like nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), also known as fatty liver, diabetes mellitus (DM), polycystic ovarian disease (PCOD), allergies, obesity, joint pains, etc. Beside helping sick people, I also work with people to help prevent illnesses from developing and give advice on promoting longevity."



"Preventive care and longevity—that sounds very interesting!"



"Yes, Jane, it is a wonderful branch of medicine. Here, first, I advise people to update their existing *beliefs and habits* to the latest science-based version and then follow them. These updated *beliefs and habits* prevent, or at the very least delay, the onset of many diseases and slow down aging. Besides, when you practice preventive care, you are proactive in your approach. Remarkably, most people enjoy this journey because it is filled with positivity and hopefulness, and that keeps them

motivated. I think those of us who understand the difference between *healthspan* and *lifespan* are the ones who are the most motivated to actively pursue preventive care."



"What is the difference between *healthspan* and *lifespan*, Dr. Tibrewal?"



"*Lifespan* is the total number of years you live, and *healthspan* is how many of those years are relatively disease-free. In fact, invariably, when I ask people, "Do you wish to live for 80 years? It is no surprise that most of them say only if most of those years are relatively disease-free."



"You must be familiar with Dr. David Sinclair, then? He also works in the field of longevity."



"You are right, Jane. I do know about Dr. David Sinclair's work on DNA repair and longevity. As a matter of fact, I follow him quite seriously. He is a professor at the Department of Genetics at Harvard Medical School. I have even read *Lifespan*, the wonderful book he has written."



"We all want to live disease-free for as long as possible, don't we, Dr. Tibrewal?"



"If we invest in health, we can prevent many diseases from happening, such as diabetes, osteoarthritis, etc., to name a few."

I am pleasantly surprised that Roberto is talking about investing in health. Because, when it comes to health, most people are reactive. They act only when they fall ill. However, on the contrary, pursuing health is a better way of life because it results in a longer healthspan and lifespan. Hence, I respond to him with the following words:



"Yes, my friend, if we follow certain rules and practice certain habits daily, we can prevent many illnesses. Science says human beings can live up to 150 years if only we follow certain rules and practice certain habits."



"Can you tell us more about these *beliefs and habits*, Dr. Tibrewal?"



"Yes, why not? I'll be more than happy to share. Thanks for asking, Maya. It all began many years ago, during a period of my life when I went through a very rough patch. It was a time during which life tested me thoroughly, causing enormous physical, mental, and emotional pain. It was so overwhelming that I could not keep my wits intact; I lost all control and became very undisciplined. I found refuge in recreational eating and excessive smoking. Even though my alcohol intake was

relatively low, the outcome was terrible. I put on a lot of weight gradually, and one day my blood pressure shot up to an alarming level.

What followed next was that I was put on several tablets for blood pressure. In addition, I was advised to stop smoking, walk regularly, and eat healthily.

I did all of that.

My blood pressure began to settle down, and a general sense of wellbeing followed.

However, I could feel that even though these measures reduced my blood pressure and body weight, they seemed inadequate in restoring my health fully. I was not at ease with the constant feeling that, to become healthy again, I had to do more than just take the tablets. My curious, research-oriented nature came to my rescue as it started to guide me in my quest to find out the secrets of eternal health.

It is no surprise that they say, “Luck favors those who try.” When I began the quest to regain my health, it led me to an incessant search, i.e., for weeks and months I read and listened to the leading scientists like David Sinclair. As a result, when I discovered the health secrets of Mother Nature, I updated my outdated beliefs, changed my habits, and started applying them to myself. As a consequence of those applications over a period of time, I am a healthy person today.

Out of gratitude, I want to share with the world the issues that I discovered with my old *beliefs and habits* and how updating them has transformed my health.

This journey has been quite fascinating, with more ups than downs because, as I began to follow them, I started to become truly healthy. I lost a lot of weight and, better yet, I could reduce my blood pressure medication. There is an anecdote related to this that I wish to share with you. I still remember what my doctor said to me: “You can never reduce these blood pressure medications because you are suffering from malignant hypertension.”

Ever since then, every day, I follow these health-restoring *habits*. Amazingly enough, even though updating these *beliefs and habits* appear to be very simple tweaks to our daily routine, they have an unbelievable impact on our health. Now I understand why small changes bring big results when applied consistently. In addition, we must also follow the maxims of this book—one at a time—while updating and implementing these *beliefs and habits*.

Do you want to know more?”



“Yes, please!”

I am surprised that all of them have responded with a “yes” as one, because my question was directed towards Maya, as she was the one who had asked me about the *beliefs and habits*!



“Ok, friends, let us begin!”

“In my clinic, I explain how to identify and update existing *beliefs and habits* to my patients using my own example. I take them through a day in my life, explaining to them very briefly how and why I do what I do. This method

makes the entire process simple and easy for everyone to understand. I think I should use the same method to explain it to you as well. What do you say?"



"As you deem fit, Dr. Tibrewal."



"First, we will analyze our existing behavior, then we will follow it up with the important behavioral changes we need to make, and thereafter, we will begin with the *habits* such as rising early in the morning, Woxy, etc.

If we address these behavioral bottlenecks before starting with our *beliefs and habits*, it will help us to continue despite the lack of results.

To help further in achieving our objective, I have numbered these *habits* so that you can pick any one of them based on what is important for you and work on it. This simple process will make the entire exercise easy and effective.

Let me begin with the first behavior: the concept of how to recognize and use your cookies to fuel motivation.

H1: Your cookies

To get a head start, count your existing cookies.

Once you start learning how to update and apply these *habits*, you may realize that you are already following a few of them. And when you do, count them as the first few cookies in the jar. For example:

- You already have the habit of going for a morning walk.
- You are already giving due importance to maintaining quality relationships.

Besides, after updating your *beliefs and habits*, every time you are able to follow a new habit correctly, add it to your cookie jar. At the outset, this appears to be a trivial exercise. However, the compounding effect of small gains has a phenomenal long-term impact. You can only realize it when you exercise this habit. You can do that at any time of the day by writing small notes.

These are your initial cookies. Collect them and start enjoying the journey. Needless to say, as they fill up your jar, they fuel your motivation to go on.

Now, let us reflect on how to get through the period of disappointment.

H2: The period of disappointment

Do not try to measure the result in haste because there is a period of disappointment for most people.

It is in our nature to feel happy when we get results, but the happiness vanishes the moment we start measuring the results. This disappointment due to a poor result can break your resolve and demotivate you from continuing.

A better strategy is to not look for gains in haste and, when they start to happen, not quantify them. Instead, you should be happy that the desired gains are small in the beginning, because gradual change is healthy as it allows tissues to adapt. Besides, when you are happy with the gradual change, it will keep you motivated to continue.

A classic example is seen when we attempt to lose weight. When we start pursuing a weight loss goal, some people lose only inches in the beginning, but if they remain satisfied with that and continue, eventually, even the grams on the scale will start reducing.

Now, let us look at how writing small details about our activities has a big impact.

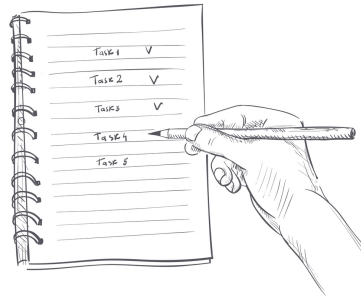
H3: Write notes and collect data

In the beginning, if you make note of your body parameters, it will become easy for you to accurately assess progress. We can make note of the following:

- Body weight
- Chest circumference
- Abdomen circumference at the naval
- Waist circumference
- Hip circumference
- Thigh circumference
- Blood pressure
- HbA1c, blood lipids, blood urea, and nitrogen

All these will be valuable data points to look back on after some time to evaluate progress. Friends, other than its usefulness, you should also know these interesting facts about data:

- 'Anything that can be measured can be improved.'
- W. Edwards Deming, an American statistician and management theorist, once said, "In God we trust, all others must bring data". However, I have a rather different take on this. To me, God can do without it, but if you want to make success a habit, look at data.
- Even after knowing this, we are not able to develop the habit of collecting data because, as humans, even though we are curious and result-oriented, process following is not in our nature.
- Although process following has developed in some societies where generations have gone through the industrial revolution necessitating them to follow the 9-to-5 job culture, in most other societies, process following is still almost non-existent.
- Due to a reduction in neuroplasticity, after seven years of age, it takes some repetition to learn a new habit. Therefore, like developing any other habit, even developing the habit of collecting data will require discipline and repetition.
- To collect data, please use a small notebook and a pencil."



“Why should we use a notebook and pencil for collecting data? Is there any particular reason, Dr. Tibrewal?” asked Maya.



“Maya, I can think of many reasons for using paper and pencil to take notes:

- The first and foremost being their handiness and ease of use. You can carry them anywhere in your pocket or in a small bag, and it is very simple to use them: open, write, and close.
- In the beginning, when you start the practice of writing notes, small mistakes will happen. If you use a notebook and a pencil because you know you can erase and rewrite, you will attempt to write more freely. After all, it is a process of self-examination, and for most people, it is hard in the beginning!
- Next, when you erase a mistake in writing and subsequently rewrite it correctly, you develop the habit of accepting your mistakes and making an effort to correct them. It seems unimportant when viewed casually, but on second thought, you may realize how transformational this could be in the long run. Doesn't that seem like a good habit to cement, Maya?
- Besides, the mechanical effect of erasing and rewriting using paper and pencil will have a strong impact on our habit formation. Because while writing, the brain will register the sensation of the hand's skin and small muscles, along with the emotions associated with making and correcting mistakes. In comparison, deleting and typing on a computer will not have such an effect.



“Jane, do you agree with Dr. Tibrewal?”



“Yes, Abdul, I do. I even think using a notebook initially may be a useful idea. Because it is a lot easier, we can carry it in our pocket or in a gym bag to make a quick note. And I also believe that, if it is not easy, it is unlikely to stick and develop as a habit.”



“Abdul, Jane, initially you may use your smartphone, especially when you are outside your home. But once you are back in your saddle (at work or at home), please enjoy the benefits of using paper and pencil.”

Before concluding today's lesson, let us ponder the differences between pleasure and happiness and their respective roles in our lives. Thereafter, we will very briefly touch upon the important time points of the day.

H4: Pleasure vs. Happiness

To do that, let us reflect on our perpetual preoccupation—the desire to feel nice. As human beings, we want to be in a constant state of feeling nice. As a result, we keep pursuing it unabatedly by engaging in activities such as eating, drinking, smoking, reading, walking, etc.

Roberto, even though these activities make us feel nice, there are important differences in their operation and their effect on our well-being. To understand that, let me begin by dividing the sensation of feeling nice into two technical categories: pleasure and happiness.

Let me talk about pleasure first.

- The neurotransmitter dopamine mediates the pleasure sensation.
- Pleasure is easy to get.
- It is short-lived.
- It is produced by consuming physical materials, which are invariably detrimental to health.
- It stops as soon as we finish the act; hence, we need to keep repeating it. As a result, it has a tendency to develop into an addiction.
- Examples: eating, drinking, smoking, etc.

Happiness, on the other hand, works differently.

- It is mediated by the neurotransmitter serotonin.
- It tends to last longer. The effect continues even after we stop the activity that triggers it. This happens because it is produced during events and activities that have a sense of continuum.
- Examples: planting, reading, exercising, etc. We continue to feel happy even after we stop reading a book or even after we have finished planting a sapling as part of a reforestation drive."



"Dr. Tibrewal, why should we prefer happiness over pleasure?"



"Roberto, when we indulge in pleasure-seeking activities, we often end up becoming addicted to them and invariably suffer for them. For example: eating ice cream daily can cause diabetes, and smoking cigarettes has been linked to lung cancer.

On the other hand, there is no such thing as an addiction to happiness. Rather, they are called habits. For example: 'reading habit', 'exercising habit', etc. Besides, most activities that make us happy also make us healthy.

In order to keep enjoying good health, along with following the updated *beliefs and habits*, you must also strike a balance between pleasure and happiness in your life. You can do that by remembering to perform at least one activity every day that brings happiness, such as reading a good book, performing an aerobic activity, talking to a friend, etc.

Friends, it is no surprise to find that a healthy way of life is primarily driven by happiness.

At the end of our session today, let me share a few pointers about the sessions that you will be attending from tomorrow onwards.

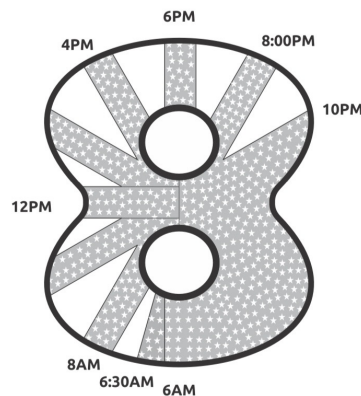
Dr. Tibrewal's Clock

There are eight time points on the 24-hour timeline depicted on Dr. Tibrewal's clock. I have listed the *beliefs and habits* that need to be followed at each of these time points. You will be learning them in the next eight sessions, which are spread over eight mornings.

These are indicative time points. You can make adjustments to them (except for 06:00 a.m. and 06:00 p.m.) according to your own convenience.

The time points are:

- 06:00 AM
- 06:30 AM
- 08:00 AM
- 12:00 PM
- 04:00 PM
- 06:00 PM
- 08:00 PM
- 10:00 PM



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Friends, after updating, if you follow the updated *beliefs and habits*, they will help you to improve your chances of preventing and, if needed, helping in the treatment of illnesses like nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), also known as fatty liver, obesity, diabetes mellitus (DM), polycystic ovarian disease (PCOS), dementia, and even cancer.”

Today, we have stopped at this point, as they don't want to be late for their health retreat session. I too realized that it was getting late. The sun has gotten quite a bit higher in the sky. My friends have left with a promise that they will come back at the same time tomorrow to continue.

I am very happy and excited because, somewhere deep down in my mind, I am sure that, like so many of my patients, they too will be able to transform their health.