

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR DAY ...

Whether you tend to work late or wake early, learning to pay attention to your own mental clock can help you make better use of your time. Here's how to get started

CRITICAL HOURS

1:30 p.m.

Schedule routine tasks rather than crucial work at this hour to avoid errors when your body's temperature dips and your mind settles into its afternoon lull

5 p.m.

Exercising at this time of day risks fewer injuries than first thing in the morning, when hand-eye coordination isn't at its peak, and leaves sufficient time for the body to cool down before bed



Morning Person

Early risers' creativity generally peaks early in the wake cycle, before distractions can impede the brain's imaginative focus. By late afternoon concentration tends to flag. Individual preferences vary widely, but research shows that high achievers often follow these patterns

Hourly Key

LOW CONCENTRATION During these periods, characterized by mental lulls, the body's biological clock shifts from one stage of focused activity to another

CREATIVITY Before the brain is flooded with the day's stimuli, this morning interval serves as an ideal window for brainstorming and open-ended thinking

Weekly Planning

We each have our own personal brain clock, but mental rhythms affect everyone's performance

MONDAY

9 A.M. Consider an alternate time for appointments. Chronobiology experts say some doctors and other professionals may not be at their sharpest at the start of the workweek, having slept in on the weekend



TUESDAY

6 P.M. Great time to eat out. Given that many chefs take Monday off, they're at their freshest and most creative on Tuesday nights. A bonus: fewer tourists dine out midweek, so there's less crowding



WEDNESDAY

1:30 P.M. Ideal time for a midweek nap. Research shows that 90 min. of rest completes a full sleep cycle. If you're short on time, try 20 min. of shut-eye for a quick mental recharge



... AND BEST USE OF THE NIGHT

Many of us are either morning people or night owls, but most individuals shift at times from one category to the other or embody some characteristics of both

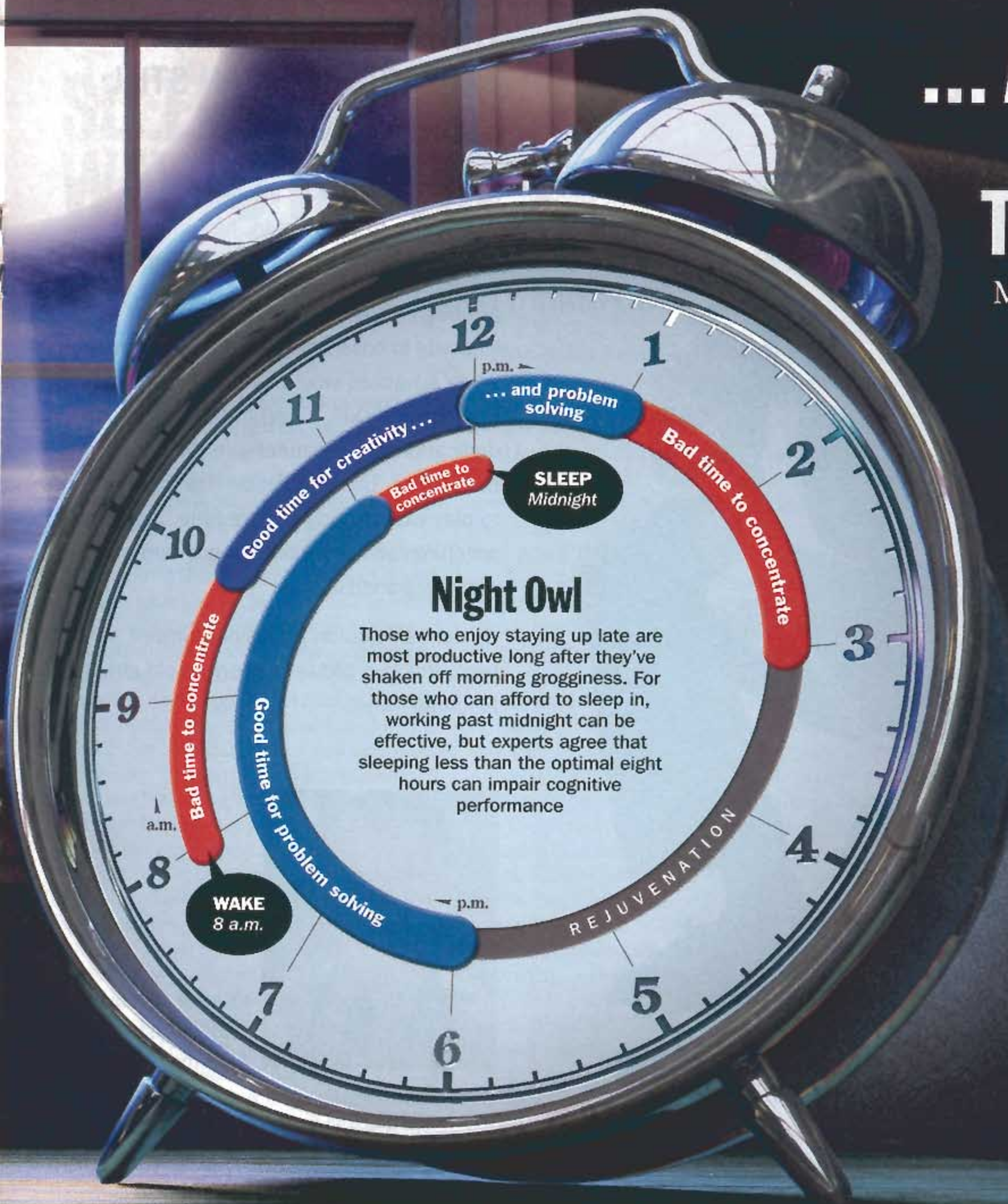
CRITICAL HOURS

9 a.m.

People who enjoy staying up late often skip breakfast in their groggy morning rush. But research shows it provides the day's most vital brain food

Midnight

Avoid late-night snacks and alcohol, since digestion prevents quality rest. If you start work early, opt for quiet relaxation at this hour to prepare for restorative sleep



Night Owl

Those who enjoy staying up late are most productive long after they've shaken off morning grogginess. For those who can afford to sleep in, working past midnight can be effective, but experts agree that sleeping less than the optimal eight hours can impair cognitive performance

PROBLEM SOLVING When the brain is warmed up, alert and highly active, concentration is at its peak for activities ranging from analysis to memorization

REJUVENATION To stay sharp, experts suggest refreshing the mind with daily exercise and brain-building activities like reading, artistic exploration and puzzle solving

Sources: Martin Moore-Ede, *Circadian Technologies*; Michael Smolensky, *Chronobiology International*; Michael Hewitt, Canyon Ranch Health Resort; *The Best Time to Do Everything*, by Michael Kaplan

TIME Graphic by Lon Tweeten. Text by Jeremy Caplan

THURSDAY

8 A.M. Good time for morning meditation or prayer. In the early morning you wake with a clear mind, uncluttered by the complexity and stress of the day. Late in the week, mind clearing is particularly helpful



FRIDAY

10 A.M. Best time to buy fresh fish, which can be excellent brain food. Fish deliveries tend to arrive twice a week; fish for the weekend rush is often stocked Friday morning



SATURDAY

9 A.M. Waking each day at the same time is ideal, but if you need extra rest, sleep late on Saturday rather than Sunday. That way the work week won't start with Monday-morning blues



SUNDAY

1 P.M. Tough time for football players from the West Coast to face East Coast opponents. Athletes try to adjust, but 10 a.m. Pacific time may arrive before hand-eye coordination peaks

