



038 Real English Conversations – Discussing Daily Rituals part 3

Introduction

Hi English learners! Lori here, your teacher from Betteratenglish.com. In this episode of Real English Conversations, you'll hear part 3 of my conversation with Kyla. We are talking about the book *Daily Rituals* by Mason Currey. In this part we talk about the routines and practices that many creative people have in common.

Now before you listen I have to warn you: this is a particularly challenging conversation. Here is why: because both Kyla and I read the book, we have a lot of shared information in our heads. When speakers have a lot of shared information, they often leave out details. They know that the other person already knows the information, so they don't have to say it.

If only one of us had read the book, this conversation would have been very different. We would have had to do a lot more explaining, and mention a lot more specific details.

What does all that mean for you? As you are listening, don't worry too much if some things are unclear, or if you feel that you are missing information. To help you out, I have marked the particularly challenging parts in colored text in the transcript. And at the end of the transcript, I've included a short quote from the book so you can read the part we are talking about.

If you want to read along as you listen, you can download the full transcript, including a bonus vocabulary lesson at betteratenglish.com/transcripts.

After the conversation I'll be back with five questions you can use for speaking practice.

OK, let's get on with the conversation!

Conversation transcript

Kyla: That's right, exactly. And the amount...it seems a real **recurring** theme in the book is three hours. The amount of people that did, that worked for three hours a day that got all their...even – even the ones that didn't have jobs that had their time completely open, a lot of them seemed to work for three hours. And the rest of the time would be, you know, visiting and going for long walks and...



walking for creativity

Lori: Yeah, that was —

Kyla: ...having **luxurious** dinners.

Lori: That was another really **striking** one — the role of walking.

Kyla: Yes.

Lori: Because you had these people, like you say, they would work their **stretch** of – of three or four hours. I think– I think Beethoven is an example of this. He would– he would work, get up in the morning, drink his coffee. I think he was the one who counted the [coffee] **beans**. [laughs]

Kyla: He counted the beans! Yeah. [laughs]

Lori: How many was it in each cup?

Kyla: 60 or something?

Lori: Yeah.

Kyla: Was it 60? [laughs]

Lori: That sounds right. Yeah, he measured up precisely 60 beans for his coffee and would work. And then he would take these long, **vigorous** walks **armed with** note paper to **jot down** ideas, I guess. And I think it was also Beethoven who would, during his work periods when he would feel **stuck**, he would get up and go walk outside for a little bit and found that, kind of, unlocked his creativity.

Kyla: Right. And he'd **get back to** it.



Beethoven
used 60 beans per cup

- Lori: Yeah, but I...have you ever noticed that yourself when you're out walking? That you'd get these great ideas and...
- Kyla: Oh yeah. Yeah, for sure. And I've kept...in the past, I've – I've always had a notebook. And yeah, you do, when you're **out and about**. And I don't know, something about the rhythm of walking, I think, can make your brain really start **generating** ideas.
- Lori: Yeah, it's really interesting. And I'm sure there's some kind of **physiological** reason for that and, like, psychological reason why that happens that...I mean– I mean, I'm sure that scientists who **know what they're doing** could somehow measure it. I don't know what it is but I found that myself when, especially I think when I was studying math for some reason and would be stuck on a problem, I would get up and go out and walk in the forest... just...back when I lived in Sweden, and often the – when I wasn't even thinking about it – the possible solution would then **occur to me**, and then I'd go back and **more often than not**, it was– it was actually right.
- Kyla: Right. Yeah, something –
- Lori: Interesting.
- Kyla: – something about our, I don't know, I guess like, sleep; things kind of **chug** around in your brain while you're sleeping. And maybe the same sort of thing happens with– with a walk.
- Lori: Yeah, really interesting. So that, that was also a common theme? The walking?
- Kyla: Yeah.
- Lori: Were there any other things?
- Kyla: There were. There were quite a few. There was...there seem to also be two **camps** of...there were the– the people with, like, “The **poor** diet, too much alcohol and not enough sleep.”

Lori: Yeah, the **Bohemians**. [laughs]
Kyla: [laughs] ...and then there was—
and then there was the like,
“Never socialized. Always went to
bed at 9 o’clock...” [laughs] and
I was like, “Isn’t there a **middle
ground?**”

Lori: Yeah.

Kyla: I think there — I think there were
some middle grounds with those
two...

Lori: Yeah, and I guess what I

Kyla: ...extremes.

Lori: — what I got from that was that, everyone has to, kind of, find what
works for them. That just because being super regular like— like, we can
think about a simple thing like your daily rhythm of when you get up
and when you go to bed. Like for me, I know for sure, **beyond a shadow
of a doubt**, I’m best when I first get up in the morning after I’ve had my
coffee and preferably before the rest of the **house is up**. Like, if I can get
up at 4:30–5:00 a.m. and have, like, two or three hours to myself — that’s
when I can get more done in those two or three hours than I can in the
whole —

Kyla: Than the whole rest of the day.

Lori: — yes. And the interesting thing is, is that no matter how hard I try, I have
tried to **re-engineer** that to be able to do it later in the day and I just
can’t do it. But then other people are best at night, you know. You have
the people who were better after dinner and, like, before bed they would
get down and do their work and it’s —

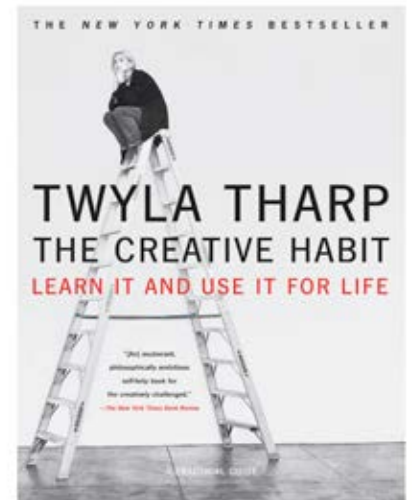
Kyla: Yeah, they’d wait for everyone to go to sleep; and so in some cases too,
yeah.

Lori: Yeah, really interesting.



Artists enjoying the Bohemian lifestyle

Kyla: Yeah. And that early– that early morning thing was very– was very common theme and so was the, yeah, the two extremes of the day. Yeah, the other...another common theme was sort of having– having a place like almost...and actually I don't know if...because they — Twyla Tharp is in this book as well. She's a choreographer...



Lori: Right, right.

Kyla: ...and she — she has written a book called *The Creative Habit*, which —

Lori: I've read that one as well, but it was a while ago.

Kyla: Yeah, and she – and she talked...I think she mentions it in– in *Daily Rituals*, and it's a theme that a lot of people have, and she talks about it a lot in her book is, having that...like a specific space where the only thing that happens in that space is your creative work.

Lori: Right.

[Note: the next part marked in blue is confusing because the speakers leave out information. [At the end of this transcript is some extra information to help you understand](#)]

Kyla: And so, there are quite a few. Like, I think someone had, like, a cave or a stone hut or something. [laughs]

Lori: Oh my god. [laughs] Yeah, you're right. It was something like out in a garden somewhere?

Kyla: Yeah. And like, no one, like, even like the– like the...because of course, you know, so many of them had **servants** and it was like, “How did you have servants?!” [laughs]

Lori: [laughs] It was a different **time**.



- Kyla: **Clearly**, that's what I'm missing. [laughs]
- Lori: [laughs] Yeah, it would all, all **fall into place** if only I had servants.
- Kyla: [laughs] That's great. But yeah, like, he'd have...like, I think the cook who brings him his lunch would have to take a back trail so it's not... [laughs]
- Lori: Oh, right. [laughs]
- Kyla: But there seems to be a real theme of, yeah, and it's a sort of, same thing with getting up in the morning before everyone else, like, having that time and space that's completely- completely yours, that has no outside sort of influence in that and that that's the work- the workplace.

Final words

That's all for this time. I hope you enjoyed the conversation! If you have been following along since part one of this conversation, I think you will notice that the listening is getting easier. Some of the grammar and vocabulary is repeating, so it is probably more familiar to you now.

Discussion questions

You can use the topic of daily routines to practice your English speaking. For example, here are some questions you can use to start discussions with your speaking partner or your teacher or tutor.

1. Do you have a special time of day when you are at your best? When is it and how do you feel?
2. Do you have any routines around your work or studies? What are they?
3. How long can you work productively before you need a break?
4. Do you work best in a special place, or can you be productive anywhere?
5. What do you do when your creativity is blocked or you have no motivation?

Make sure to download the transcript and vocabulary lesson so you can read along to check your understanding. The transcript also has notes about the language we use in the conversation, and explains a lot of the vocabulary. You can find it at betteratenglish.com/transcripts.

Better@ English

Until next time, keep on practicing your English. In fact, you can practice right now by leaving me a voice message or writing something on the [Better at English Facebook page](#). You can find all the ways to get in touch at betteratenglish.com/contact. Bye for now!

Vocabulary

recurring

Happening (occurring) repeatedly. The phrase *a recurring theme* is a very frequent fixed phrase people use to talk about ideas or other things that repeat in a book, film, etc.

luxurious

If something is **luxurious**, it gives you a lot of pleasure. It is often said about things that are expensive and not truly necessary. For example, you can eat a normal meal of simple food and get all the nourishment you need. Or you can have a long, *luxurious* meal with very delicious food that gives you a lot of pleasure.

striking

easy to notice

stretch

In this context, a *stretch* is an unbroken period of time

beans

Kyla and Lori are talking about coffee beans. They leave out (omit) the word coffee because they both know what kind of beans are relevant. (The coffee beans in the story about Beethoven that both of them have read). Speakers often leave things out that are shared knowledge.

vigorous

with a lot of energy

to be armed with

to have or do something that helps you complete a task or achieve a goal

 FIND A NATIVE ENGLISH TEACHER ONLINE **START TALKING**



Find us on
facebook

to jot down

to quickly write something, usually a note, because you don't want to forget it

to feel stuck

feeling like you can't continue something because it's too difficult or because you don't have any ideas or inspiration

to get back to something

to begin doing something again after you stopped for a period of time

to be out and about

to outside your house doing everyday activities like shopping, visiting, errands, and socializing.

to generate

to create or produce something, or to cause something to happen

physiological

related to living organisms and their functions

to occur to someone

If an idea occurs to you, it means that you started thinking about it suddenly or unexpectedly

more often than not

fixed phrase meaning *usually*

to know what one is doing

If you know what you're doing, you have the skills and knowledge you need to do something successfully. Fixed phrases like *He knows what he's doing*, or *They know what they're doing* are good to learn as chunks because they are so frequent.

to chug

In this context, to chug means to move around. It refers to the sound and motion of an old-fashioned steam locomotive (train). *To chug* can also mean to drink very fast with big gulps.

I guess, maybe (hedging in English)

This conversation has many examples of *hedging* in English. This is because Lori and Kyla are talking about what they *remember* from the book. They both know that their memories are not perfect, and this shows in their language. Words and phrases like *I guess, I think, maybe, probably, kind of, and sort of* are all ways of showing that a speaker is not 100% certain. They are aware that they could be wrong.

Hedging is extremely common in English. It very important for politeness, so it is worth spending time learning and practicing language for hedging.

camp

In this context, a camp is a group of people who believe certain things. It is usually used to describe the people on different sides of controversial issues (like politics).

poor

In this context, poor means *bad or not good*.

Bohemian

In this context, bohemian does NOT refer to people from Czech region of Bohemia. Here, bohemian refers to artists, writers, musicians who live a non-standard lifestyle. In the 1800s many creative artists were living bohemian lifestyles. You can read more about Bohemianism here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohemianism>

middle ground

the middle point or compromise between two extremes

beyond a shadow of a doubt

A fixed phrase that means you are certain that something is true

before the rest of the house is up

Here the word *house* refers to the *people in the house*, not the house itself. When people are awake and out of bed in the morning, you can say that they are *up*.

to re-engineer

To engineer something means to build or design something. If you re-engineer something, you try to improve the original design.

servants

In this context, a servant is someone who works in a person's home doing household tasks like cooking and cleaning

time

In this context, time *refers* to an *age* or *era*, a long period of time when customs and culture were different than they are today

clearly

Words like clearly, obviously, or evidently show that you think something is very easy to notice or understand

to fall into place

a fixed phrase meaning that things naturally happen the way that you want them to

The blue text – speakers leaving out shared information

In the blue part of the conversation transcript above, Lori and Kyla are leaving out a lot of information. That is because they both remember reading about this particular person in the book. Here is some of the information that YOU are missing.

The person they are talking about is the composer **Gustav Mahler** (1860–1911). Here is a quote from the book that explains what Kyla and Lori were talking about:

Mahler “woke at 6:00 or 6:30 A.M. and immediately rang for the cook to prepare his breakfast: freshly ground coffee, milk, diet bread, butter and jam, which the cook carried to Mahler’s stone composing hut in the woods. (Mahler could not bear to see or speak to anyone before settling down to work in the morning, so the cook had to take a steep, slippery path to the hut rather than the main walkway, in order not to risk running into him.)” Source: Currey, M. Daily rituals: how artists work. Knopf, (2013).