



Real English Conversations: Discussing Daily Rituals 1

INTRODUCTION

Hi English learners! Lori here, your teacher from [Betteratenglish.com](https://betteratenglish.com). In this episode of Real English Conversations, you'll hear me talking to Kyla, a fellow musician. We met up to talk about a book that we both really like. It's called *Daily Rituals*, and was written by Mason Currey.

But as it turned out, Kyla and I had a lot more to talk about than the book. In fact, we didn't even start talking about the book until several minutes into the conversation. So you'll have to wait until part two for that. In this first part, you'll hear us breaking the ice by talking about guitars and practicing and other things we have in common. This was a normal thing to do because it was the first time we ever spoke to each other.

You'll be hearing a lot of informal American English, including tons of phrasal verbs. I think the best way to really learn phrasal verbs is in context, so I've highlighted most of them for you in the transcript, along with the other vocabulary.

As always, you can find the full transcript, including a bonus vocabulary lesson at betteratenglish.com/transcripts.

OK, let's get this conversation started!

CONVERSATION TRANSCRIPT

Lori: Okay, great. Yeah! It was really, really cool that you– you **stepped up to the plate** and **got in touch** about– about talking about this book.

Kyla: Good. Yeah! It's kind of...it's a– it's a book that I– I've read. I have...I own a copy. And **coming up with** rituals, I'm always looking for better ways to work and better ways to be creative, so it's a...yeah. It's a — when I saw your post, I was like, “Oh! I love that book!” [laughs]

Lori: Oh! Yeah, great! Yeah, at that point, I don't even think I'd read more than, like, a quarter of it, and I was like, "Oh! This is such a cool book! I really want to talk to somebody about it."

Kyla: Excellent.

Lori: So yeah, but before we **get into** that, tell me a little bit more about what you're doing with guitar.

Kyla: Well, I'm a...I was sort of trained as a classical guitarist as a kid and **moved on**, started playing electric in, like, some folk rock band in, you know, like, 15 years ago and just sort of...I've always been listening to **metal** so I think it was sort of natural that I got into playing– into playing metal. Now I play in a really, really **proggy** sort of a death metal band —



a typical metal guitar

Lori: Oh wow.

Kyla: — called *Molt*. And we, after much **strife**, finally released an album a couple of years ago. But yeah, I mean, I'm always– I'm always **striving** to sort of **streamline** how I practice because I've always got, you know — actually, I just quit a job about a month ago to sort of start to...now I'm teaching myself Java and Python, and I'm working on...I'm actually working on writing an app to generate guitar practice exercises.

Lori: Oh!

Kyla: But yeah, so I'm just always– I'm always, you know, looking for ways to work, looking for ways to fit my practice time in the continual **quest** for **speed**. [laughs] I do have to thank you for your little...your post about using a 1-minute timer.

Lori: Oh yeah!

Kyla: I do that every day. That's– [laughs] that's really become– that's really become a part of my– my practice **regimen**.

Lori: Oh, super! I'm glad that was useful.

Kyla: Yeah, that was– that was **extraordinarily** useful. [laughs]

I am freaky strong!



- Lori: Yeah, it's – it's one of the things about playing guitar if you're trying to achieve, yeah, higher than average level of technical mastery is that — you find that unless you're like one of these **freaky** people who seem to be just super, super gifted, it takes an **inordinate** amount of practice.
- Kyla: Yeah. Yeah, it's...and focused, focused practice.
- Lori: Yeah, and not just kind of **going over** the **scales** or the things that you like to do that are easy for you. You have to sort of get into the edges, and push yourself into the areas where you're not comfortable and where you start feeling like you **suck**, basically. [laughs]
- Kyla: Yeah, exactly. [laughs]
- Lori: ...which is not, like, a happy place to be spending a lot of time really. But that's kind of what you have to do, I think.
- Kyla: It is. It really is. You sort of have to accept, like, "Okay, I'm going to suck at this for a while." [laughs] Like, "I'm just going to have **to get used to** that because eventually I will get better at it."
- Lori: Exactly.
- Kyla: I think it is. You really need to be able to– to accept that. And I think, like, I've never...like, I have quite a few friends who are...who play lots of different instruments. And I've just never...like, I've just sort of never really been interested in learning other instruments, and someone **pointed out** once that, like, I've been playing guitar for so long that I probably just couldn't **handle**, like, not being able to play something. [laughs]
- Lori: Oh yeah.
- Kyla: You know, I'll **pick up** a new instrument, and you...and they're like, "You just can't handle that anymore!" [laughs]
- Lori: Yeah, going back to that. That feeling of, like, totally sucking and being a beginner and not knowing how long it's going to take you before you start seeing some results.

Kyla: Yeah, exactly. But it's like, "Well, am I going to **devote** time to this? Or am I going to devote time playing the guitar even better?" [laughs] I think I'll **stick with** the guitar.

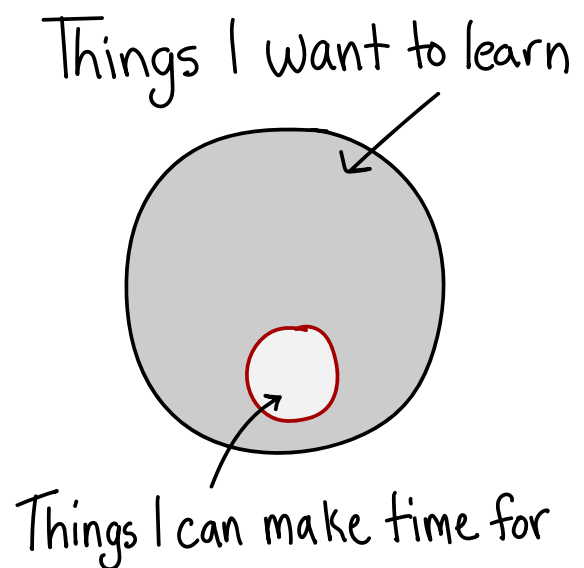
Lori: Yeah. That's one of the most difficult things that I've **run into** now. And really one of the main reasons that I'm not playing guitar at the moment is that, I'm exposed to so many things now that I want to be able to do, like, creative things and fun and interesting things. But they're all things that you don't get good at overnight.

Kyla: Yeah.

Lori: You know, it's all things that are incredibly complex that take a lot of time and effort until you're even just kind of **halfway decent**. And I find that as I get older, it's becoming more and more important to really pick and choose what I'm going to focus my time and energy. Because it's just not, you know, it's not like I have unlimited hours a day to devote to drawing and learning to **code** and taking photos and training my dog and doing all these different things I want to do. Plus work...and I have relationships and all those things. So yeah, it's just an interesting thought, I think. But yeah, to **circle back** a little bit to what- what you said in the beginning about you're always looking for, like, routines, things to streamline your- your practicing and I think that's one of the things that kind of drew me to the book, my- myself. And I guess I should probably mention the book we're talking about is — "Daily Rituals" by Mason Currey. I think that was his name. [laughs]

Kyla: Yes. That would be helpful, wouldn't it? [laughs]

The downside of being interested in stuff!



FINAL WORDS

That's all for this first part. I hope you enjoyed it!

In the next part of the conversation, we actually start talking about the book, *Daily Rituals* by Mason Currey. It's a fascinating little book that describes the daily habits and routines of 161 creative people, everyone from Beethoven to Hemingway to Steven King. Some of the routines make a lot of sense, and others are completely crazy!

As always, you can find the transcript and vocabulary lesson for this conversation at betteratenglish.com/transcripts. Until next time, keep 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

to step up to the plate

(Figure of speech.) To voluntarily take action or accept responsibility, even if it feels difficult or challenging

Example: Thanks for *stepping up to the plate* and helping me clean the garage. I really appreciate it!

to get in touch (with) someone

To contact someone

Example: She tried to *get in touch with* him by phone, email and Facebook, but he never answered.

to come up with something

to think of an idea or plan

Kyla is always *coming up with* better ways to practice guitar.

to get into something

To begin talking about or discussing something specific

Example: Before we *get into* discussing the book, tell me about your guitar playing.



FIND A NATIVE ENGLISH TEACHER ONLINE

START TALKING



Find us on
facebook

to move on

To change your ideas or behavior

Example: Kyla started learning classical guitar, but later *moved on* to playing electric.

metal

This is short for *heavy metal*, a genre of hard rock music.

proggy

Prog or *prog rock* is short for *progressive rock*, a genre of rock music. *Proggy* is an adjective to describe this type of music.

strife

Disagreement and conflict. Sometimes means strenuous effort.

Example: After a lot of *strife*, Kyla's band finally released an album.

to strive

To make a (usually great) effort to do something

Example: She *strives* to be a little better at guitar every day.

to streamline

To make something easier, simpler, or more efficient

Example: Kyla wants to *streamline* her guitar practice routine so it will be more efficient.

quest

A (usually) long and difficult search for something

Example: Many learners are on a *quest* to speak English like a native speaker.

speed

Here Kyla is talking about playing fast, technical pieces on her guitar

regimen

A strict system of action designed to produce a result. Often used to describe routines related to diet, exercise, and health

Example: Many world-class musicians follow a strict practice *regimen*.

extraordinarily

From the adjective *extraordinary*. Extremely, exceptional, beyond what is normal or expected.

Example: Doing speaking practice exercises every day has been *extraordinarily* useful. I'm much more fluent now!

freaky

Very rare, odd, or unusual

Example: He has the *freaky* ability to remember every meal he's ever eaten in perfect detail.

inordinate

Unusually large or excessive

Example: To progress from good to truly great usually takes an *inordinate* amount of practice.

to go over something

To review something that you are trying to learn or understand

Example: I need *to go over* my notes before I start writing this article.

to suck at something

To be very bad or unskilled at something (slang, sometimes considered vulgar)

Example: She is good at reading email, but *sucks* at answering. She hardly ever replies.

scales

A musical exercise involving playing a series of notes up and down

Example: All musicians need to practice their *scales*, even if it's boring.

to get used to something

In this context: to learn to be comfortable with something

Example: When she first started jogging it was difficult and painful, but now she's *used to it*.

to point something out

To direct attention to something

Example: My teacher *pointed out* that I say "like" too much. I honestly hadn't noticed!

to (be able to) handle something

To tolerate

Example: If you want to succeed as an author, you need to be able *to handle* rejection.

to pick something up

In this context: to begin learning a new skill

Example: *Picking up* a new instrument is a nice way to try new things.

to devote

To use something (in this case, time) for a specific purpose

Example: Natasha *devotes* an hour a day to exercise.

to stick with something

To persevere or continue to do something (the opposite of "give up")

Example: Instead of picking up a new instrument, I think I'll *stick with* guitar.

to run into

In this context, to encounter something unpleasant

Example: It is hard to stay motivated when you keep *running into* problems.

halfway decent

Informal expression meaning: somewhat good

Example: I'm not great at Photoshop yet, but I'm *halfway decent*. At least I don't suck!

to find

in this context, to discover, learn or realize something through one's experience

Example: These days I *find* it takes longer to learn something than it did when I was younger.

to code

To write code used for computer programs

Example: Claudia is great at *coding*. Some day she will probably work for Google.

to circle back

In this context: to return to an earlier topic. Often used to say "let's talk about this topic in the future."

Example: Can we *circle back* to what you mentioned earlier about Henderson report? I still have some questions.