

## 042 – Make the most of your motivation - a conversation with Dr. BJ Fogg part 2 (of 2)

### Introduction

Hi English learners! Lori here, your teacher from Betteratenglish.com. Last week I shared the first part of a cool conversation I had with Dr. BJ Fogg, all about making the most of your motivation. Today you'll be hearing part two, the final part of this conversation. If you missed the first part, make sure to go back and listen to part one before you listen to part two.

At the end of part one, BJ was telling me about his goal to get better at writing neatly on a whiteboard. He knew that he needed to practice a lot if he wanted to improve, so he wanted to make it as easy as possible to practice every day. In this part of the conversation, you'll hear what he did to change his environment to make practicing easy, even on days when his motivation is low. You'll also hear about how his practice routine is working for him.

As always, you can find the full transcript of this conversation, including a bonus vocabulary lesson at [betteratenglish.com/transcripts](https://betteratenglish.com/transcripts).

Are you ready for the conversation? Let's go!

### Conversation transcript

BJ: One of the habits I'm doing right now is, I'm practicing whiteboarding. I'm practicing with markers writing on a whiteboard. You know, like teachers do.

Lori: Right.

BJ: And I want my handwriting to get much, much better and so, I'm practicing every day. But anyway, what I did was I went out



**Writing neatly on a whiteboard takes practice**

and I got some marker paper, I got **a bunch of** markers, I got different whiteboards so I have whiteboards in different parts of my house. I have the marker paper, I have markers, I have a marker in my bathroom, one in my son's room, I have a whole set in my office, I have a whole set in my other office. In other words, I made it really, really easy to practice writing with markers by getting all the materials and **getting everything set up**. And I did that when I was in a period of high motivation. So now, it's really easy just to pick up a marker and practice. I don't have to be super motivated.

Lori: Right. And— and you can tell yourself that, you know, “You have all your materials. It's all easy right **at hand**.” You could even tell yourself, “I'm just going to write one sentence. That's all I feel like doing right now and —

BJ: Yeah. In fact, just before your call, that's what I did. I was sitting down and I was going to read but I was like, “No, no. I'm just going to, like, get out the marker board and write one sentence.” And I ended up filling up the entire marker board because I thought, “Oh, this is kind of fun. I'm going to keep going.”

Lori: Yeah —

BJ: And then, you called.

Lori: Have— have you — oh, I'm sorry to interrupt your practice...

[laughs]

BJ: [crosstalk]

No, I was expecting your call.

Lori: ...while you were **on a roll**. But yeah, and I guess...how's your writing? Has it been improving? It must be improving.

BJ: **Oh my gosh**, it's so much better.

Lori: And that —

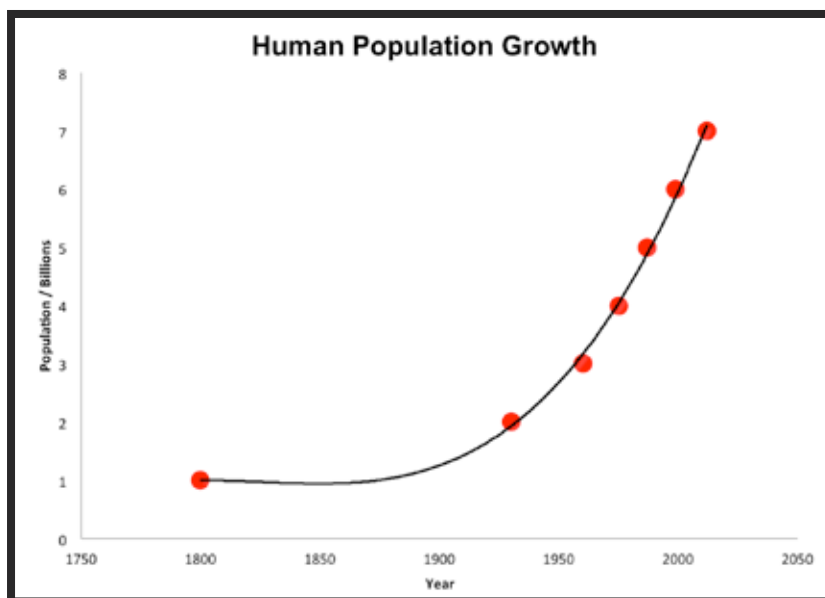
BJ: Yeah.

Lori: Because I can imagine when you start seeing that your efforts are **pay-ing off**, that that makes it more likely that you're going to pick up those pens and do your practicing.

BJ: Yeah, and I– I think there are some behaviors or skills where it becomes clear pretty quickly — your progress. And then there are some, at least **outcomes**, where it's harder to measure like, “Wow, am I really reducing my stress? Am I really getting healthier? Am I really...,” you know, **where-as** the whiteboarding — and then, I practice guitar every day...

Lori: Oh! Cool.

BJ: ...and– and other things. Yeah, but in those two cases, it's very clear that you're getting better. It's just **obvious** that you're getting better. And the writing is one that I may have other people join me in because...and then take pictures before and after because it's– it's quite **dramatic**.



**There's been a dramatic increase!**

Lori: I...yeah, I can imagine if you practice. I mean, I haven't practiced writing really since I was a kid; and learning to write and then, you know, you get your hand style and you think that that's sort of what you're **stuck with** for the rest of your life.

[laughs]

BJ: And part of it is changing; changing like your style is. You know, because my normal style doesn't work very well on a whiteboard so I have, sort of...it's almost like having, well, in some ways, speaking a different language because you **shift into a different gear**. So, I speak Spanish and French, and I know when I speak those languages, I go into a different gear. It's just different. And when I'm writing on a whiteboard, it's not like I'm writing in a notebook. It's just...I'm drawing in a different— different movements and different ways of thinking, well, about the letters and the spacing of the letters. And on the whiteboard, I'm trying to get things very straight, up and down just like you might try to get an accent, like, you know, an accent right and you're really focusing. I think there's probably a lot in common about learning languages and practicing other skills.

Lori: There really is. I notice when I hear people talking about health and fitness, you could almost substitute...you know, just substitute some of the nouns and verbs and it would all...like the principles are all— all the same or often quite the same.

Yeah, time is almost up. I only have one final thing I would like to ask you and...

BJ: Okay.

Lori: ...that is — sometimes I notice when I'm working with learners, they tend to **beat themselves up** when they feel like they're not motivated or they're not able to do hard things and I want... you know, ever since I saw or learned about the motivation wave, I thought, "Oh, that's one thing I really want people to know, that it's normal that your motivation is going to **fluctuate**." And could you just confirm that for me?

[laughs]

BJ: Yeah, you know, there are times...there might be a day when all I do is write one word with my marker. But that's okay because I'm still keeping



**Football players are intimidating**

the practice alive. So I think about it, I learned this a long time ago as a student...is I'm working on a very big paper that really is **intimidating** and it's hard that I worked on it every day — I write at least one sentence. And I...the next day I can go back and erase the sentence if I want to. But I always write at least one sentence. And if that's all I get done, it's like, "Great! I did my sentence for the day." And what happens is a lot like what we talked about, I write a sentence like, "Oh! I **might as well** write the next one...Oh! The next one...the next one." Now later, you've got all of the paper done. But the **key** is, you cannot — on those days when you're stressed or busy with other things or just somehow not motivated to do that behavior, just do a little, tiny bit and **congratulate** yourself for doing that little, tiny bit and **move on**.

Lori: Right, right. Oh, that is— that is such great **advice**.

BJ: As long as you keep taking those small steps, you'll get there. Once you stop taking the steps, you don't only just stop, you slide backwards. There's no way to stay still. You're either moving forward or you're sliding backward.

Lori: Right, exactly. Well, BJ, thank you so much. And I know you've got another interview scheduled in the next minute but I just really...I'm so, so, so happy that you— that you took.. and wanted to take the time and let me...

BJ: Well...

Lori: ...**pick your brain** a little bit.

BJ: Well, you are welcome. And helping people learn languages is really important work. I mean, when you learn a language, you're able to connect with people you wouldn't otherwise, you're able to do things you couldn't otherwise, travel, experience — it just opens up a different world. And so I think it's a wonderful thing to be helping people do.

Lori: Yeah. Oh, thank you so much.

## Final words

That brings us to the end of this two part conversation with Dr. BJ Fogg. I hope you enjoyed listening to it as much as I did recording it!

You've learned about the motivation wave, that it's totally normal for motivation to go up and down over time. You've also learned that when motivation is low, we can only do easy things. When motivation is high, that's when we can do hard things. To find out more, I encourage you to watch [the video of BJ's talk](#) that I've linked to in the transcript.

To get the most English learning benefit from this conversation, make sure to download the transcript for this episode so you can read along to check your understanding. The transcript also has notes about the language we use in the conversation, including vocabulary explanations and example sentences.

You can find the transcript at [betteratenglish.com/transcripts](http://betteratenglish.com/transcripts).

Until next time, have fun practicing your English! If you have questions or suggestions about what you would like to hear in these podcasts, I'd love to hear them. You can find all the ways to get in touch with me at [Betteratenglish.com/contact](http://Betteratenglish.com/contact). Bye for now!



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## Vocabulary and usage notes

### a bunch of

A large amount. Can be used for countable or uncountable nouns.

Example:

1. BJ bought *a bunch of* markers to practice whiteboarding. (countable)
2. You need *a bunch of* sugar if you want to make candy. (uncountable)

### to get something set up (variation of *to set something up*)

to prepare something so it's ready to use.

Example:

1. It took me two hours to *get my new DVD player set up*. It was very complicated!
2. It took me two hours *to set up my new DVD player*.

### to be at hand, to keep something at hand

near, within reach

Example:

She always keeps a notebook *at hand* so she can write down ideas.

### to be on a roll

experiencing a period of success or good luck

Example:

It is only 10 am, and I've already answered 100 emails. I'm really *on a roll*!

## Oh my gosh.

A euphemism for “Oh my God.” An interjection that shows excitement or surprise.

## to pay off

to show results or benefit, usually after some cost or effort

Example:

All Jenny’s hard work in the gym *is paying off*. She’s looking really fit and strong.

## outcomes

results

Example:

The *outcome* of the experiment surprised the researchers. They expected a different result.

## whereas

a word used when you are talking about how two things are different

Example:

Whiteboarding is easy to learn, *whereas* reducing your stress is more difficult.

## obvious

very easy to see or notice

Example:

His jeans are so tight now that he can’t zip them up anymore. It’s *obvious* that he has gained some weight.



## dramatic

very noticeable

Example:

After only 2 weeks of weight training, I've noticed a *dramatic* increase in my strength. I can lift twice the weight I could in the beginning.

## to be stuck with something

to have something unwanted that you can't get rid of.

Example:

Most people dislike the new president, but we *are stuck with him* for the next for years.

Note: Don't confuse *to be stuck with something* and *to stick with something* (to persist).

## shift/switch into a (different) gear

to change the way you do something

Example:

Many people *shift into a different gear* when they speak a foreign language.

## to beat oneself up

to blame or criticize yourself harshly.

Example:

Professional athletes can't *beat themselves up* if they perform poorly. They need to stay positive and focus on doing their best.

## to fluctuate

to change frequently, becoming higher or lower.

Example:

My motivation to study Dutch *fluctuates* wildly. Some days it's a lot of fun. Other days it really seems like work.

## intimidating

something that causes you to feel worried, nervous, fearful, or less confident

Example:

Giving a public speech is *intimidating* for almost everyone. It's normal to feel at least a little bit nervous about it.

## might as well

an expression to say that it makes no real difference if you do something or not, or that there are no good reasons not to do it. Often used with *just*.

Example:

We've already eaten most of this pizza, so we *might (just) as well* finish it.

## key (noun.)

the most important part of something.

Example:

Lots of listening and speaking practice is the *key* to improving your English fluency.

Key can also be used as an adjective.

Example

Lots of listening and speaking practice is *key* to improving your English fluency.

## to congratulate

to show someone that you are pleased about something they have done or that has happened to them.

Example: Everyone *congratulated* Michelle on winning the lottery.

## to move on

to start doing something else

Example:

Teacher to class: When you finish this worksheet you can *move on to* exercise B in on page 97 of your course book.

## advice

Someone's opinion about good ways to act or good things to do in a given situation.

Note: In many languages advice is countable, but in English it is UNCOUNTABLE.

Example:

I have a problem, could you give me some *advice*?

## to pick someone's brain

Asking someone to tell you about something that they know a lot about (usually so you can benefit from their knowledge).

Example: (Said to a friend who knows a lot about cars)

I want to buy a car, but don't know anything about them. Could you *pick your brain* about it sometime?