

BETTER CREATIVE HABITS

A 5-Day Training by Violeta Nedkova

hey there rebel

Welcome to Better Creative Habits, the training!

We're going to do some epic work together to turn your bad creative habits into better ones. It's going to *massively* improve your work, trust me.

Before we begin, let's see what's coming:

1. On Day 1 we're going to see **how habits work** and how you can change them by simple replacement (this is scientifically proven)
2. On Day 2 we're going to look at some of **your limiting beliefs** around creativity, and the Top 3 that are standing in your way
3. On Day 3 we're going to make lists and discover your **Core Challenges**, so you can focus on them and not waste your time
4. On Day 4 we're going to discuss why you must always follow **your natural ways** and how they always lead into creative flow
5. On Day 5 we're going to dig deep and talk about **Tipping Habits** and how they are in the very heart of lasting habit change

There! Doesn't this sound like so much work/fun?

Rebel on!

Lesson 1:

HOW HABITS WORK

It's time for your first Better Creative Habits lesson!

I don't want to waste any of your time, we'll start right away, and I'll keep everything brief and simple because we're all busy and overwhelmed with too much information and in some cases, too many courses. (You, too?)

Let's start from the beginning...

Habits account for most of our time.

It's just easier for your brain to go with what it already knows to do for most of your day, and only when it's really necessary/beneficial will it stop, evaluate, and take risks and get out of its comfort zone. And **the only way to make progress** is to launch your brain into this process yourself.

Mostly, you will have to evaluate what's working, what's not, and make sure that nothing's holding you back from achieving your creative goals.

And you and I both know, there are many questionable habits that we accidentally or intentionally developed that stand between where we are now and where we want to be ultimately, including:

- Getting distracted easily
- Putting it off until the last minute

- Trying to make it perfect
- Overthinking, overplanning, overcomplicating
- Waiting for something/someone to give you permission
- Not distinguishing between important and unimportant tasks
- Starting new ideas before finishing old ones
- Not asking anyone for feedback
- Not asking for help when you need it
- Allowing resistance to stop you from creating
- Trying to control the creative process too much
- Not putting yourself “out there”
- Comparing your work with others’
- Asking for feedback too early
- Taking criticism personally

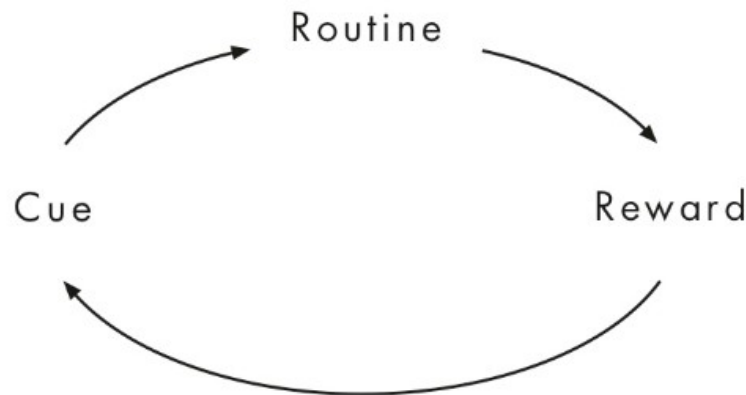
I bet you can relate with some of those, or even all, can't ya?

We all know how frustrating it is to be doing something all the time and feel like you can't get out of it. But listen--

Habits are easier to break out of than you think.

To understand how that works, let's look at their structure.

A habit is a loop that goes between a Cue, a Routine, and a Reward. The same elements are also sometimes called trigger, response, and reward. Here's a visual representation of that process (called a "habit loop"):



The above illustration is from the book [*The Power of Habit*](#) by Charles Duhigg, who has studied how habits can be changed for individuals and corporations alike, and how to make it stick. After reading it I could never look at habits the same way again, and I never really felt stuck into one either.

So the habit loop is a really simple process:

1. First you get the cue, which launches you in a specific behavior
2. Next you respond by doing your routine, or what you always do
3. Finally you get your reward, or the feeling of satisfaction at the end of your routine. And you get it every single time you do the routine. No wonder you don't want to stop doing what you always do!

Now, here's the thing...

Sometimes the cue is physical (like, your stomach growls, so you eat, or you do whatever you do to keep your diet), but **most of the time the cue is an emotional trigger like boredom, overwhelm, or anxiety.**

For example, you may feel overwhelmed by the approaching deadline for your

book and your response is to engage in procrastination, which makes you distracted and therefore calm for a while. But as you know, it makes matters worse because the more you put something off, the more anxious you become. It's a vicious circle, one that you need to break out of, eventually.

And here's where it gets interesting:

To change a habit, all you need to do is to replace the middle part, your response to the cue. Just leave the cue and reward where they are, but change the routine.

That's good news because creating completely new habits is exhausting and most of the time it's ineffective. But when you already have a loop in action, you can simply utilize it to change your habit from “bad” to better.

For example...

You already have the habit of surfing Youtube when you get bored. And you don't like it because you end up watching cat videos for hours. **What if, instead of going to Youtube, you opened TED or grabbed your Kindle?** You could end up getting a real rest or getting inspired and motivated, and that will improve not only your mood, but your creations as well.

Obviously, it takes time and effort to make sure the habit sticks, and we can't just change all of our habits at once (when each habit takes 30 days to stick), but if you just start with one simple replacement of a really bad routine with a better one, that's doable! You can do it today even!

So let's start with an exercise:

1. Think of a particularly bad habit you have.
2. Ask yourself, What is the feeling I get before I do this? (the cue)
3. Ask yourself, What would I rather do in response to this cue, instead of doing what I've always done? (the routine)
4. Your answer is your better routine, and therefore your better habit!

5. Replace your old routine with the new one as often as you can (for example, when you catch yourself feeling the cue, remind yourself of the new routine OR when you catch yourself doing the old routine, stop and remind yourself of the new one, and then try to do it instead).
6. The more you repeat the new one, the easier it will get.

So say I want to stop procrastinating on important tasks. I think about the feeling I get before I start procrastinating and it's almost always URGENCY. When I feel pressured to do something NOW (like when there's a deadline), I put it off. And the more I put it off, the worse my stress gets.

So I decide, instead of putting things off and getting stressed by this feeling of urgency, what if the minute I felt the urgency, I did it right away? And then a step further - what if to AVOID the feeling of urgency, I were to start doing things BEFORE they were due. So if I had to release something this Friday, what if I got everything *ready* by Thursday? That way, I wouldn't be stressed and there will even be time for last minute changes!

And notice how doing something the "experts" advise - to put a deadline on it or tell someone you're doing it or put it on your calendar, etc. - would totally backfire on me because of the pressure? We need to be self-aware of how our brains work and how we react to negative situations before we adjust our habits, or the latter will flop, always. (We'll talk about it on Day 4!)

The switch from doing everything at the last minute to doing tomorrow's work today has truly made me a better creative/business owner.

And even though the exercise we just did is pretty simple, it's still a lot of work to identify all the cues and replace all the bad routines we've gotten ourselves into. In fact, it's impossible to do that, and it's not exactly something we want to be doing with all of our time and energy...

Which is why during this entire training we'll focus on:

- digging deep and getting to the *core* of your bad habits
- focusing on tipping habits, aka habits that create a tipping or an avalanche effect that does more than just eliminate ONE bad habit, but overall improves your life and creative process

And that laser focus on what really matters will make a real change. :)

In the end, it all comes down to this quote:

"If you want to live a life you've never lived, you have to do things you've never done."

(I read it in *You Are a Badass*, which I definitely recommend if you want to change your mindset and have a lot of laughs, too.)

So... are you ready to dig deeper than you ever have before?

Lesson 2:

YOUR LIMITING BELIEFS

Welcome to Lesson 2 of Better Creative Habits.

So far we talked about some of the habits that hold creatives back and about the way habits work, and how we can change them for the better by replacing the middle part of the habit process (the routine, or response).

And now we'll take a tiny step back and examine some of the other things that stand in your way when it comes to having a healthy creative process AND changing your habits. Because before you can attempt to change your habits for the better, you just have to be aware of these trouble-makers.

Think of it as quicksand - you don't know what's happening until it's already happening, and that's exactly what these suckers do.

I'm talking about your **limiting beliefs**.

You've heard about those, right? They're the stories we tell ourselves, the narratives running inside our heads, the voices that tell us what we can and can't do, and they're more often than not, WRONG.

You see, they mean well. You formed them when you really needed to protect yourself, but later when the threat was over you kept believing them! And even though they are no longer serving you, but limiting your capabilities and your potential, your brain clings to them because they've helped you in the past.

And if something has helped in the past, it's hard to let go of it.

But you have to see what they *really* are. They're stories that hold you back from making progress, creating more joyfully, and getting the things you want.

And there are so many limiting beliefs in the creative world!

Some of them you won't even think are limiting until someone points them out to you and some others you'll really want to cling to, even though you know they're bad for you. (Hello, it's called a *comfort zone*.)

Let's list some of the usual and most harmful suspects, to try and understand why you're at the impasse where you have found yourself.

Limiting Belief #1:

"I'm only creative when..."

This is extremely common among creative folk.

Any way you finish that sentence, it is a limiting belief...

- I'm only creative when I'm inspired.
- I'm only creative early in the morning.
- I'm only creative when I have had a nice sleep.
- I'm only creative when it's November and I have had my ears cleaned out.
- I'm only creative when my favorite team has won.
- Etc.

If you ask me, it's not just some, they are *all* ridiculous!

The idea that you would tie your creativity to anything outside of yourself is outrageous, and that you would make it dependent like that. You're basically tying your creativity to this pole – like a dog – and saying, *I'll only walk you at these times of the year when these conditions are met. Understand?*

Ughh – NO!

If you do that and I'm your creativity, I'll vamoose and never come when you beckon. Seriously.

There's a big difference between feeling naturally creative and inspired and actually sitting down to create. The former happens rarely and the latter can happen every day. And if you only do the former, then you'll always be blocked and dependent on your silly limitations.

What would happen if instead, you told yourself your creativity was limitless? What would happen if you told yourself that your creativity depended on you showing up every day, not waiting for your Muse to grace you with its flaky presence? Why not start a daily practice of showing up and creating!

When I started writing every day, it was awkward at first, and my old limiting beliefs were creating resistance, but in a couple of weeks there was no resistance, just flow. And I was better because of all the practice.

Now every time I write, it flows. Whatever mood I'm in.

This is something professional creatives KNOW - if you turn your craft into a habit, you will never be blocked or stuck or uninspired. When it becomes a habit, what you create will not be dependent on or tied to anything.

And that way, you show your creativity the respect it deserves!

Because when you show up every day, your Muse will start to show up regularly, too. **Because the way you treat your creativity is the way it treats you. *Period.*** It can't be all fun and play, you're not a kid anymore. You have a responsibility toward your craft, so man (or woman) up and *show up*.

Fun fact:

Did you know that a lot of "successful" creatives started from a daily project?

Homework:

Start a daily project. Or just create daily.

And make it simple, so you can follow through.

Limiting Belief #2:

"Creativity is sacred, so no..."

No forcing it to happen. No asking money for it. No using selling tactics to undermine it. *No selling out.* No forcing it. No changing it for other people. No creating without the holy aid of alcohol and drugs...

Ahem. What a bunch of bullcrap.

A lot of problems can arise from romanticizing *anything*.

I'll tell you what's really sacred... showing up and doing the work is sacred. Sharing your work with the world is sacred. Doing anything you can to make sure that your art is seen and heard and felt is sacred. Whether that involves putting up a shop and promoting it on social media or not.

There is no such thing as "selling out."

Look at the people who use that phrase. Have they made any money from their passion? Or are they feeling bitter about it and trying to make you feel bad, too? I see you and I get you, dear limiting belief, but this is PRIDE talking.

They say don't let fear drive your car, but you shouldn't let your sins drive it either. If pride drove the car, you'd never ask for directions when you get lost. If gluttony drove the car, you'd be stopping at every gas station. If wrath drove the car, there'd be a lot of road rage going on. If sloth drove the car, you wouldn't even be driving. And don't even let me think about lust!!!

I'm as much of an idealist as anyone else. **But I want you to recognize that you deserve to realize your creative dreams and to spread your "art" as far as you can because the world deserves to experience it.**

If that's selling out, I'm a purple cow dancing to Beyonce.

Limiting Belief #3:

"I'm not good enough, it's not good enough."

By far, *this* is the worst thing you can think about yourself or your craft!

It's not like you're thinking it actively all day every day, but there's an active script running behind the scenes and whether you can feel it or not, it's there, and it's screwing up your chances for creative success.

So what are we gonna do about it?

First of all, I am going to recommend 2 books to you, which my coach recommended to me and which have helped many women get out of this thinking. The first is [You Are a Badass](#) and the second is [Playing Big](#).

I guarantee that if you read even a part of both, you will start seeing things – and yourself and your habits – in a new, more optimistic light.

Also, I want to recommend **a really key exercise**:

Go to the mirror, look at your reflection and smile. Good. Now tell yourself all the things you admire about yourself. All the things you have accomplished and that you are proud of. Compliment yourself. Do it for at least a few minutes.

This exercise is *so* vital. If possible, stop reading and go do it right now. After, come back and read the rest of the email. Do it every day because it's one of those tipping habits that make a real difference (we'll talk about it on Day 5).

Usually, anything to do with bettering your mindset has a great "tipping" quality, meaning it doesn't just affect what you want it to affect, but also kind of pulls everything else in a bundle of joy and positive change, and you're a better (wo)man for it. So the more you work on your inner dialogue, the better.

Which reminds me to suggest another exercise:

1. Think about your creativity, hold it in your mind.
2. Start free-writing about your creativity in particular and how you feel about it - do you feel great or disappointed? What exactly is it that delights or disappoints you about your creativity? Write until your hand itches.
3. Look at what you wrote down and identify any limiting beliefs you have about your creativity. You have to know what they say.
4. Brainstorm ways to change the script/story!

If you try to change your habits while you hold onto your limiting beliefs, you will not only fail, but you will also spend a looong time with your best buds, frustration and helplessness.

So yeah...

Those are my **top 3 choices of limiting beliefs that creatives have**, and if you can turn those beliefs around in your head, I guarantee your life - and creative work - will change for the better. Like I said before, there are tipping habits, and I believe there are also tipping beliefs. As in, if you believe them, everything else will revolve around them, and you won't make progress or reach your goals or be a best bud with your own creativity because they're right there beside you every step of the way, whispering lies and tripping you up, making you self-sabotage and miss truly amazing opportunities to shine.

But if you find a way to finally tell them to p*ss off, your entire creative life and process will transform to accommodate **your new belief system**.

Finally, I have a story to tell ya...

The story.

My mother and I have always been into self-development books. (Can you tell.)

So, often, when one of us says something limiting or negative, the other will say "let's change the script" or "let's change the focus." This means that you take what you just said or thought and turn it into something much better.

It's a great strategy that has served me well for many years!

The other day a similar thing happened, except this time I *corrected myself*. IKR! It literally never happens, but this time I caught myself saying something like "I spent the whole day doing (this) when I should have been doing (that), how silly am I." But then, I realized what I'd just said was limiting me to always being silly and doing things out of order and just doing everything wrong, and that this was no way to treat myself or my creative process.

So I said, "No, you know what? I needed the break and working on that thing was FUN! I needed some fun in my day, so it's a good thing I did it."

And that was that.

I went from beating myself up to congratulating myself on doing something needed. And I accomplished it in no more than 20 seconds.

So my final plea to you is:

Watch your stories about yourself and your creativity and make sure they're not mean or limiting. You deserve better.

Lesson 3:

YOUR LIST LIST OF NON- NEGOTIABLES

Welcome to Day 3 of Better Creative Habits.

So far we talked about habits and how we can change them, and then we talked about some limiting beliefs most of us creatives hold at some point in our lives, and how to change the damaging stories we tell ourselves.

Now we're going to stop beating around the bush and go straight to the HEART of the matter: your Core Challenges. :)

First, let me explain what a core challenge is...

Your core challenge is something you always struggle with, that you have always struggled with, and I'm not talking about a bad habit that you have, like putting things off until the last minute. **I'm talking about something that you find hard to do or achieve, always.**

For example, maybe you can never complete your creative projects. Or maybe you can't sustain your motivation for long enough, and so every time you're working on something, it just sizzles out and gives way to a new something. In these examples your core challenges are: **COMPLETION & MOTIVATION.**

(And if those are your core challenges, no wonder you have so many bad creative habits! But don't worry, we'll tackle them in a bit.)

So we're going to go through the following process:

1. Identify your core challenges
2. Figure out what the reasons behind them are

3. Brainstorm ways to turn them around

Ready? :)

1. Identify your core challenges.

Before we can do anything about them, we have to first identify your core challenges. Think about the things that you find most difficult.

Here, I'll start with mine....

- completing projects
- staying in the present moment
- having confidence in myself (and my abilities)

Those are definitely my top 3 core challenges, and they are CORE because they affect everything I do: how I approach things, the progress I make, how I treat my creations, and so on. Everything stems from these...

...Or the lack thereof.

I already told you about my difficulty to complete my projects. It's a really damning challenge because if you never finish anything, you'll never get it out into the world either and you'll beat yourself about being flaky, etc.

I also cannot, for the life of me, stay in the present moment. I keep hopping to the future (thanks mom!) because maybe the present is too boring? I don't know why, I just know that this discombobulated existence in the future is causing me to jump the gun on things, create products I probably don't need right now, launch a giant program that is slightly premature, etc.

Finally, the confidence thing AFFECTS EVERYTHING ELSE. The difference between having confidence in yourself and not having it is the difference between success and failure, between happiness and misery.

2. List your "reasons" for struggling with those.

Completing a project used to be my biggest core challenge.

I just couldn't complete anything for the life of me. I started many amazing creative projects, collaborations, blogs, and so on, but almost none were lucky enough to be completed by yours truly. They usually just fizzled out after a while or flopped because I couldn't sustain them the way I needed to.

And there are specific reasons for this:

1. I get easily bored.
2. I get too many ideas every day.
3. I prefer beginning stuff to finishing them because:
 1. The act of finishing is sad because the thing you love is done.
 2. The prospect of new ideas is always more exciting.
4. I am a sprinter, not a marathoner, and yet, I insist on overcomplicating projects, until they become so overwhelming that they are too much for me to handle, and btw, I almost never ask for help when I need it.

You see, my core challenge is so difficult because it's associated with all of these **bad reasons and habits** that I have built, and also associated with my not respecting my own process or how I naturally do things.

In fact, not respecting your process is the worst thing you could ever do!
(But we'll talk about this in detail in our next lesson.)

And now it's your turn! **List the reasons for every core challenge you have**, and keep listing until you can't think of any more reasons. Our brains are really smart in that they will rationalize everything, so we won't fight it, but if we use our powers of rationalization for better reasons than remaining scared and blocked and safe, we'll be one step further to our creative dreams.

So... Do you have your lists?

If you don't, go and do that. You can come back when you have them.

Now look at your lists and check for:

1. bad habits
2. limiting beliefs, rationalizations, and excuses
3. going against your nature

We all do those 3 things all the time. Your brain will rationalize (even in ways that aren't true) and it will always opt to stay in its comfort zone. But remember, progress and success do not live next to comfort.

So for example, from my list I can see:

1. Overcomplicating things is a bad habit
2. Starting new things before finishing the old is a bad habit
3. The sprinter not a marathoner thing is true, but the fact that I overcomplicate things is just going against my nature
4. Getting bored and too many ideas are excuses for not sitting on my butt and working hard to complete what I've started
5. Etc.

Listen, all of these things are making your life difficult and miserable, so it's time to do something about it. It's time to retire them.

3. Brainstorm ways to counter them.

So now that we know your core challenges and the "reasons" for them, we can figure out how to create better habits (that specifically target those challenges and reasons). We can turn your limiting beliefs around, get rid of those pesky excuses and rationalizations, and go back to the natural way you do things.

Here's what you can do from here:

- Change your bad habits by simple replacement (the one from lesson one) OR create new habits that will specifically target those challenges
- Turn your limiting beliefs and rationalizations around and just get rid of those excuses right now because that's not who you are

- Identify any instances where you go against your Nature and get rid of them, so you can go back to the way you do things naturally

If you remember, I said that completing things used to be my top challenge. Now, I'm proud to report that it is no longer my top challenge because this year I have completed almost every thing I started (including huge projects).

Huzzzaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah.

How did I do it?

Well, first of all I made that list of the things that were stopping me.

Mainly, the things in my way were my limiting belief that I wasn't capable of finishing things (I fought that one by finishing something small and "proving" to my logical brain that I was indeed capable of it), and the other ones were my tendency to go against myself and not ask for help.

I was going against myself by making everything too complicated (when I am a sprinter), so my solution was to break down any big projects into small chunks or even better, just start small projects. Finally, I pushed myself to get out of my comfort zone and ask for help, including hiring a virtual assistant.

insert horrified face here

Actually, once you start doing the unthinkable - like asking people for help or hiring people to pick up your slack - it won't be as hard as you thought, or even if it is, you'll immediately feel relief because you needed it.

And now, for the biggest thing that helped me with completing my projects - developing a daily habit of writing and learning to consistently create, whatever mood I was in.

That was definitely my best "tipping" habit. (More on Day 5!)

So...

Your turn! How will you take on your core challenges and win???

Take out a pen and some paper and start brainstorming. Make a mind map or draw a little person - you - who is overcoming all these obstacles.

One more thing.

Here are the steps we covered today, with one notable addition.

1. Identify your core challenges
2. List all your imaginary reasons for them
3. Identify what is a habit, what's a limiting belief, etc.
4. Brainstorm ways to change the habits by replacement OR create new (tipping) habits that will affect everything you struggle with
5. Practice **affirmations** that negate the damaging beliefs

I mention affirmations because they have been VITAL for my progress with better habits and overall better quality of life. When you repeat "loving affirmations" as you fall asleep or as you wake in the morning or during meditation or all of the above, you're accessing that part of your brain that forms those beliefs in the first place, and your new beliefs replace the old ones.

This is perhaps the only "hack" I'll be able to give you - affirmations. Just pick something that negates your limiting belief and make sure the affirmation feels good when you say it. If you get an emotional reaction, then you've hit it.

P.S. I talk about affirmations more in [this article](#).

What happens next.

In our next lesson, we'll talk about the importance of following your Natural Ways and what happens when you don't. And in our final lesson, we will complete the journey with the most important piece of the puzzle:

Tipping habits that will change everything.

Until then, hang tight and examine those lists you just made.

Lesson 4:

YOUR NATURAL WAYS

Welcome to Day 4 of Better Creative Habits.

So far we talked about habits and your most crippling limiting beliefs, and then we looked at your core messages and made lists of "reasons" why you struggle with them, and even brainstormed on how you can tackle them.

Now we're going to talk about something most people miss:

The point of better creative habits is not to make something up and make it stick so you can win. The point is to build on your Natural Ways, as they are what holds the key to flow, to better habits, and ultimately, success.

So many people say things like:

- “I don’t have many talents, so I’ll just get a job like everybody else”
- “I’m so bad at this and this, which means I will never win”
- “This worked for him/her, so I should try it as well”

All of those statements are WRONG. You heard me.

The first one is wrong because you do have talents, and I wrote about it at length [HERE](#). (It actually motivated a lot of people, so give it a try.)

The second one is wrong because as long as you’re focusing on what you CAN’T do and ignoring what you CAN do, you’ll always be in that slump. If you want to lead a badass creative life, you must forget your weaknesses and focus on your strengths. (Here's [a miniguide](#) I wrote that will help you do this!)

The third one is wrong because things work differently for everyone.

For example, if you're a charismatic person, you'll be a great vlogger, but if you're an introvert, a blog or a podcast would be much more fitting than a vlog. So if you look at all the people who vlog and think, *I should probably follow this trend as well*, you are putting yourself at a disadvantage!

Same goes with habits - if you decide to take up a habit that some successful person had, again, bad idea. **Go with what comes naturally.**

(The only exception is when your comfort zone says something is not you and the only way to make progress is to push the limits. Uncomfortable things are not always unnatural, sometimes they're just scary and worth exploring.)

You shouldn't do things you hate just because someone else does them. Same thing goes for habits. Don't adopt a habit because someone successful did it. It has to fit *you*.

Your audience can tell what comes naturally and what doesn't. And your natural ways bring you peace and joy and flow. And it shows.

I'll tell you my theory...

Flow happens when you step into your most natural state.

We are all different human beings and in those differences lie our strengths. Trouble is, most people don't think to look there when they want to improve their lives. Most people think they should be better at things they suck at.

D'OH.

Well, then you'll waste your time trying to be someone you're not!!!

What would happen if instead, you decided to focus on your strengths and forget about your weaknesses? What would happen if you tried to figure out what your Natural Day would be like? What would happen if you let go of your limitations and became a BADASS? What would happen if you reframed some of your weaknesses and tried to see them as hidden strengths?

Obviously, your life would improve. A lot.

Here are some recordings I've made on the above topics:

- [Honor Your Natural Ways](#) (secret lesson)
- [Your weaknesses are strengths in disguise](#) (podcast episode)
- [What would your Natural Day look like?](#) (podcast episode)

Let's look at some examples and see why they worked specifically for me and why they may not work for you, like you want them to.

It's hard to pinpoint when exactly I began my work with habits...

I guess my whole life has been about self-improvement, so when things like self-development and life coaching came on the horizon I was thrilled! Finally, a language I speak! But I didn't like reading those self-help books (well, most of them) because I happen to believe the answers lie inside of us.

Meaning if you want to change something, you probably already know how to do that, but maybe you need someone's help to see it clearly. So I have always enjoyed making my own exercises and coming up with my own systems.

It's just who I am. And it may not be who you are.

And that's OK! That's more than OK, each of us has our own unique blend of strengths and talents (which you can discover in [Now, Discover Your Strengths](#) if you take the free test), and it would be so boring and crowded if we all did the same things in the same ways. It's a great thing that we are different!

So anyway, ever since I can remember, I have been working to improve myself. And creating better habits has been HUGE in that respect.

Here are some of my better habits:

- Doing tomorrow's work today (to avoid stress)
- Writing daily even when I don't feel like it
- Working with an accountability partner
- Mini-goals and breaking projects up
- "Sucking" at something for 30 days
- Loving affirmations and meditation

And here's why they worked for me *specifically*.

- I get stressed easily and when I'm stressed, my work suffers, so priority #1 is removing stress if possible, at all times
- I get very self-conscious when I create, in a way that I would question something as I'm creating it, and the only thing that's helped is to make writing a habit, so I can friggin' do it and not think about it
- I'm a rebel, so I don't do things when I say I'll do them, which is why working with an accountability partner helps me get accountable
- Like I said, being a sprinter not a marathoner makes it difficult for me to finish big things without getting overwhelmed and abandoning the whole thing, so I always break things down and/or keep them small
- I'm a perfectionist, so openly admitting that I suck at something was liberating and has led to some interesting creative projects, but if I didn't love fun challenges so much, this method wouldn't have worked as well (and I can always go back to the [30 Days of Sucking](#) challenge)
- I have low confidence in my own abilities to get things done, so being "loving" with myself and using affirmations, both during meditation and outside of it, helps me grow my confidence and think positive (because even though most of the time I am super excited about things, I am also just as likely to get on the negative train as anybody)

You see? Those are things very specific to me.

Remember, sometimes progress will be achieved when you embrace your natural assets, while other times progress will be achieved when you watch out for your natural pitfalls. Both are just as natural.

Which is why I recommend getting to know yourself REALLY well before attempting to change any of your habits. If you don't know yourself and how you naturally work, then you might run into obstacles on your path to better habits that could have been avoided by simply seeing what's there.

And finally, some of those habits are big, others are small, and before you go ahead and apply everything you've learned, wait for tomorrow's lesson because it's going to

a) blow your mind and b) make everything easier.

In our next lesson we'll finally talk about **my favorite "tipping" habits**, or the habits that affect everything, not just the things they're supposed to.

I believe they are the key to true change. :)

P.S. One great resources on the topic of habits is [Zen Habits](#), and it's so quietly powerful, and Leo Babauta, the founder and writer, is a rebel, too.

Lesson 5:

TIPPING HABITS

Welcome to Day 5 of Better Creative Habits. :)

So far we talked about habits and your most crippling limiting beliefs, and then we looked into your core challenges, the reasons why they're there, and how to tackle them. We also touched on your natural ways and how if you want to be in flow, you must bet on your strengths rather than focus on your weaknesses.

And now we're going to talk about my favorite thing - Tipping Habits...

Most habits are inconsequential. Sorry, but that's the truth.

For example, whether you change your habit of washing your teeth after every meal or just leave it for morning and evening (or one or the other), it probably won't change more than the health of your teeth.

And if that's your main goal, do it!!!

But if you want to make truly big and meaningful changes in your life and creative work, you'll have to dig deeper than that.

It's a lot easier to change things by adopting a couple of habits that directly address your core challenges, rather than just randomly change everything and spend all this time and energy into things that you might end up going back on.

The goal here is to make it EASY and to make it STICK.

What is a Tipping Habit?

You know that book by Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*?

Basically this is why I called them tipping habits, because the tipping point is where everything changes. When something reaches the point of overflowing after consistent change. For example, if you've been posting consistently on your blog, there will come a day when it will explode. That's the tipping point.

A tipping habit is when you do something seemingly small, but after you do it a while, it changes your whole life.

And that's what we should aim at here.

I don't mean that you shouldn't create habits that are inconsequential, but I do believe that we don't have time to spend all of our effort and energy into changing every single bad habit we have and trying to make it stick.

You'll just go crazy if you do that!!!

Rather, I propose focusing our efforts on those tipping habits that will affect not only the thing you want to improve, but also other challenges.

Let me illustrate...

Imagine you suffer from perfectionism, and it's really bad.

It's ruining your flow, it's making you exhausted, and it's not doing you any favors or even making your work better, so it has to go. But before you tackle it, you think about what could be causing it. You do some soul-searching and it turns out that you're not certain that people need what you create!

Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaat.

You definitely want to change that and stop wasting time, so...

You brainstorm some possible things you can do to change that habit, some behaviors that could replace it, etc. Your list of better habits includes: hitting publish right after you create it, establishing a rule of no editing more than 30 minutes, talking to people

and asking them why they'd buy what you create, repeating loving affirmations to overturn your damaging mindset.

What you notice immediately is that some of your ideas would fix the symptom, but not the cause.

For example, when your head hurts, you can take a pill for temporary relief, but if it hurts every day, you go to the doctor so they can treat the cause.

On the other hand you also notice that some of your ideas go *so* deep, that they can probably fix some other problematic habits that you have. So with the loving affirmations (or whatever your alternative), they might not just help your perfectionism, but also boost your confidence and make you share your work more, not to mention create with more zest and more flow.

Basically, if you attack the root cause, you'll be more successful and your "treatment" will last longer. Also, if most of your bad habits stem from the same 3 core challenges that you have, then you just have to address those, instead of coming up with a million solutions to just 3 problems. And finally, some habits are indeed more powerful than others and can just overturn everything.

Some habits are so powerful, they trigger *major* change.

And those are the tipping habits.

My 2 major tipping habits.

- Learning to create every day and—
- Loving affirmations

On one hand, learning to create every single day completely removed my self-consciousness around my writing and there was no more writer's block. There was also no perfectionism because I wrote so much I didn't have the energy to be precious about my sentences or anything that didn't matter. Also, writing every day improved my skill and gave me confidence to do it even more.

Who knew one little habit could change everything???

On the other hand, I do loving affirmations. This means picking an affirmation that feels good and also addresses a core fear you have, and then focusing on it every chance you get – for me it's mostly before I fall asleep (I explain why [here](#)) and when I meditate. And the more you do it, the easier it is to do it.

Picking a strong affirmation that addresses your core fear will change everything because it works on such a deep level that it overturns your limiting beliefs & mindsets.

So my tipping affirmation is:

I deserve to be happy and successful.

The wording of your affirmation matters a LOT because your brain just accepts the words you throw at it. And the more you repeat them, the more it believes you. You may feel weird at first, but trust me, your overall mood will shift to a more positive level, you'll operate on a higher frequency and attract amazing things, and finally, your own bad mindsets will no longer be in your way.

They will be replaced by better, more healthy, mindsets.

So, the reasons for my wording are:

1. My core fear is that I don't deserve things.
2. Happy is just as important as successful, and now I'm focusing on the balance because previously I acted like successful was not a part of happiness, but actually it's a very big part of it.

If you want to find your tipping affirmation, make sure it addresses your biggest creative fear/core challenge.

And make sure you include your current priority/goal in there because if you don't, you won't get the results you want. So if your goal is to complete a project but you can't because you get bored, go ahead and explore WHY you get bored, and then use the answers and the words that come back to you.

(Just don't use any negatives because then you'll just get negatives.)

Now let's answer some key questions:

1. When it comes to creativity, what scares you the most? What are some of the biggest fears that run through your head as you create, as you share your creations, and as you think about your creative dreams?
2. What is your current goal? What's the most important thing you have to do right now? (Choose immediate over ultimate.)
3. Is there anything from your Day 3 lists that raises red flags?
4. What could you do right now that could potentially tackle those fears, get you those results, and become a better/tipping habit?
5. What kind of wording can you use (in your affirmations, quotes on the wall, etc.) to keep the limiting beliefs at bay?

And finally, I want to ask you to do something difficult:

Pick ONE affirmation and stick with it a while. Or pick ONE tipping habit and stick with it a while before you work on another one. This is why I pick my wording very carefully and why I focus on tipping habits, because you need to devote some time to each, if you really want them to stick.

Step 3: How do I know if it's tipping or not?

Good question, smarty pants!

I would say that you can never know for sure, but here's what I know:

When you do something to change a really bad mindset that you have, whatever you do will be a tipping habit. If you meet your biggest fear half way, it's going to be a tipping habit. Basically, anything that goes DEEP within your psyche has the tipping potential because it doesn't just treat the symptom.

It treats the cause. :)

All of those bad habits and mindsets have their origin points in your brain, so it make sense to got to the source as they say.

And just try something! You're not going to figure things out by thinking about them, but by doing and trying and experimenting. Fortune may favor the brave just like life favors DOERS. For those of us who stand still, frozen in terror, there will be no treasures and no rewards and no progress.

Those things are reserved for the action takers.

Bonus:

MAKING HABITS STICK

Uhm...

You thought we were done, didn't you?

Well, what good are better habits if we can't sustain them???

So today I want to explore that with you. :)

1. You gotta push.

Remember those breathing exercises? Now push, *puuuuuuuush*.

Sustaining habits is pretty much like giving birth to an idea. First you get that moment of clarity - your water breaking - and then the resistance comes - where are the keys, honey? - but when you overcome the resistance and your natural instinct to push comes in, you're all good. The hard part was pushing yourself to get to that moment where it just flows out of you.

It all ends in tears. And a baby on a piece of paper.



Unfortunately, you pretty much have to push against your resistance every single time. Until it becomes easier, then easier, and then one day you're not even thinking about it. **Our goal is to get you to that day.**

There is no "hack" or trick that will help you sustain your better habits.

It's going to be a lot of pushing and pulling (except there won't be a baby trying to snuggle back into you). You're going to feel the resistance *all the time*. And you'll have to catch yourself and remind yourself WHY you're doing this.

So it would be really helpful if you had your reason somewhere you can see it. Put it on your desktop, your ceiling, your mirror... and keep it there until your habit sticks. Until one day you look at it and realize you'd forgotten all about it and you were successful. Until then, keep it where you can see it.

I think a big reason for us not being able to keep our resolutions is because we don't have our motivations visible. You can't just self-motivate forever. By the way, if your motivation is not strong enough, then you might as well not try.

P.S. Have you seen Gretchen Rubin's [4-tier system](#)? It's amazing!

2. It takes 30 days.

Science says it only takes about 30 days for a habit to stick.

So if you can sustain it for that long, you're golden. Habits are great because they just kinda run by themselves, without you having to think about them or control them... you just gotta get there. 30 days, baby.

A lot of creatives achieve that by starting 30 day or 365 day projects.

If you can do the same thing every single day for that long, then it shows how bad you want it. It shows your annoying monkey mind and inner critic who's DA BOSS - you are! It shows how committed you are to improving your life. And it shows how serious you are about your craft, how important it is to you, and how you're ready to show up for it every day and eat that sh*t sandwich.

(Liz Gilbert says every dream has a sh*t sandwich attached to it.)

The beautiful thing is, the more you do 30 day projects, the easier they become. It's a great exercise in consistency, if that's your challenge.

So go ahead and look for a challenge that runs for 30 (or more) days!

There's NaNoWriMo for writers, the 365project for photographers, the #100DayProject for artists, and so on. Start googling. :)

3. Don't break the chain.

The same thing always happens...

I start a new book or decide to write a chapter every day for a month (especially during [National Novel Writing Month](#)) and I keep going pretty steady for the first couple of weeks. But then the minute I fall behind or feel like I don't want to write, it gets so hard to put words down on that paper.

So one day I decide, *it's not a big deal, I'll catch up the next day.*

Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo.

This is where you break the chain! If you break your habit for even one day, trust me, you won't be able to go back to it. Your brain will try to trick you into thinking it's not a big deal, you'll catch up, but nobody ever catches up.

So figure out a way to keep up your habit *every day.*

If it helps, set alarms. Or ask a friend to check on you. Or buy one of those annoying apps that asks you for money when you break your promise.

Do anything it takes to keep your better habits. And whatever you do, don't be too hard on yourself if you forget one day. It makes you feel bad and makes it more likely for you to break the habit altogether. Just say to yourself,

“Well done on keeping it up so far, we'll pick up again tomorrow.”



GOOD LUCK!!!

I am so proud of you, for all the work you've done, for your commitment to your creativity, and for doing the work to make your new habits stick.

If you have a question or want to tell me how this helped you, simply write to hello@violetanedkova.com.

And if you need my help, check out my [coaching](#) page.

Thank you for showing up for yourself.

Rebel on.