

## Words on Habits

Here's a collection of messages from professors across disciplines on how self organization shapes creativity and learning.

Students often seek the secret to efficiency and exceptional performance, yet most professors agree on the same foundations: habits, discipline, and action. This collection of values brings together real messages from professors in diverse fields, reminding us that genuine creativity begins with structure.

Every message is a seed, and you decide how it grows. Use every professor's insight to design small, actionable habits that reflect the same principle.

Visit <https://lighthousecreativity.com/products> to discover how powerful self organization can transform the way you learn.

### From a professor of music

I completely agree that establishing a daily routine is the first step toward success. Managing your life more organically will help make your studies and research more efficient. Additionally, starting something new, even if it's a small task, can be both challenging and crucial. For example, if you want to learn a language, dedicating just a few minutes each day can make a significant difference. **The hardest part is getting started**, but once you do, momentum will carry you forward.

**Reflect on your routine :**

## From a professor of psychology

There's a lot of value in developing routines and habits for everyday life. Several years ago a Stanford dean wrote a book about Stanford's incoming freshmen being unprepared for college, an excerpt is here:

<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2017/08/28/overparenting-how-to-raise-an-adult>

I think for many people – though not necessarily all – developing routines and habits of every day affords structure. Within the military (as Admiral McRaven highlights) there is an extreme amount of structure that is intended, in part, to do just that. I often find that I get more done when I'm the busiest and less done when I have more free time, because I'm more likely to impose structure and discipline when I absolutely have to.

For college students the freshman year is often the first time of real freedom in their lives, and after the highly structured realities of high school it can feel like you have all the time in the world to do stuff in college. **But, that's an illusion.** You do have less structured time but you have more responsibilities that are on you. So, you have to learn how to manage that lack of structure. Some people can live with chaos but, honestly, that drives me nuts. So, structure can be a key to time management, which in turn is a key to success. And, yes, that can include structure in the forms of simply making the bed, cleaning the kitchen, etc.

Returning to the Stanford dean and the role of parents, this has become a challenge in today's society, **because failure feels very high-stakes for adolescents.** If you fail in your classes in high school you might not get into The Right College or get that big scholarship. And so it becomes tempting for parents to intervene to prevent failure, to prevent bad outcomes, to support students' success. And so you end up in the paradoxical situation that kids are better students than they've ever been, but some may be less prepared for college at the level of basic life management. For me as a professor that often comes in the form of students thinking it odd that I don't offer study guides for exams, or students being told by their parents to ask for extra credit when I've clearly said there is none.

Fortunately, I think most young adults adapt to this. And, again, there's variability. I may need a lot more structure, others may not. It worked for me, and I assume it would work for you, and it's on any individual to figure out what works for them.

**Reflect on your routine :**

## From a professor of economics

It's important to articulate that we have to take care of ourselves because no one else is going to.

Basically, once you're out on your own, no one will show up at your house to wash your clothes or clean your dishes. You either have to do it yourself or pay someone else to do it (like you mentioned). Most people don't have the extra income to afford services like that, so you have to get used to doing it for yourself. It's either do it yourself or live in gross, dirty conditions. I can't stand living in a messy, filthy home, so I clean up after myself. Most people aren't generally happy living in a filthy home, so the solution is obvious... Clean it up. People sometimes make up reasons like "they don't mind it" or "it's boring." Yes, it is boring. Some parts of maintaining your well-being are boring, but that's life. There's a great scene from Rick and Morty that sort of gets at this. I'm going to link it here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUHECXS6IEU> Basically, it's not an adventure, so they don't want to do the work. For me, I just learn to make it fun. I listen to podcasts or music when I do the boring life maintenance.

Moreover, it's not just the dishes and laundry, it's also personal care like showering, brushing your teeth morning and night, flossing, moisturizing, wearing sunscreen, exercising, doing health exams, etc. For example, women should do monthly breast self-examinations to check for lumps, so they can detect cancer early. It's not hard to do and takes like 2 minutes, and it has the potential to save your life. The same idea applies to checking your body for skin cancer.

It's fairly easy to do, but people skip these sorts of self-exams and then they don't catch the health issue until it's really far along.

These things aren't time-consuming, but they make your health and overall well-being better.

I don't know how many times I hear my dad complain about his dental bills when he gets a cavity, but I always point out that he refuses to floss regularly and doesn't brush his teeth before bedtime when your teeth are at their grossest. Those bills are very costly, but if he'd just spent five minutes at night brushing his teeth and flossing, he could avoid the hassle. Instead, he brushes in the morning to keep up appearances. **People tend to do the superficial self-care.**

When people "cut corners" in one element of their life, it tends to lead to that sort of mindset for other (potentially more important) elements of their lives as well.

**Reflect on your routine :**