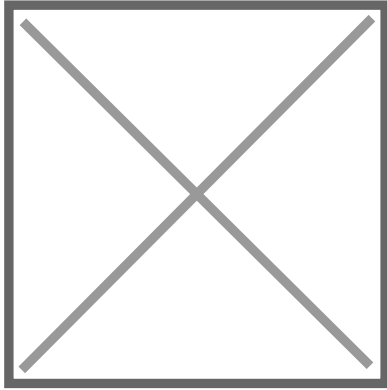




Daily Routines of a Creative Entrepreneur: What's Working Right Now {Summer 2021}

Description

This article is the first of an upcoming series where I share the routines that have been working for me. My goal is to always have the three elements that matter most to me: movement, play, and rest rather than create habits that don't feel nourishing. I'm sharing them to add nuance to the habits conversation in the entrepreneur world.

This season, I've had a lot of challenges since I moved continents. Changing homes is always a big transition, but this time around, I was jumping from Shanghai to Gothenburg or what feels like jumping, with only a 12h flight to prepare for the culture shock and process the last 2 years spent in a place I used to call home.

My work hopes for this summer season

My intention for this season was to be kind to myself and remember that it was normal to feel uprooted. I wanted to always consider my work output in light of this change. So what if I could only reply to a few emails and barely manage to write a newsletter in a day's worth of work when I would usually do twice or three times as much? In the grand scheme of things, taking a few months to focus on settling here rather than hustling or spending hours and hours at my computer to try and manage my usual workload has been a million times worth it. My creative energy will settle back into place once I do, too.

The time I used to focus on landing here has helped me find focus and joy in my work; in fact, it must be the first time that I feel so grounded during a change. I have lived in 6 different countries in the last decade, and every time I moved was a chaos of things and emotions. I can really feel the difference. I guess making play and rest a priority in my day-to-day life is starting to pay off.

The routines that have worked this summer

Now, I'm a big fan of routines, but I know that trying to always stick to the same elements is not only impossible but also gets boring. With a creative brain, routines help to bring some structure and stability while freeing up mental space for exploration and play. This summer, my routines have been in line with the weather outside and the things that I felt most excited about before moving to Sweden: filled with time in nature, movement, and creative rest.

Routine bring a sense of familiarity while making space for presence and ease.

- **Time outside**

It might seem a bit silly to mention "time outside" as an element of routine but it feels more gentle than adding a mandatory bike ride, walk in the forest, or 5k run to my to-do list. To me, routines are meant to come easy and feel intuitive; if not, then they put more strain than they restore. There are days where I just don't want to hop on my bike, but prefer to sit in the grass. Or some days, I have surprised myself wanting to take a long, slow in the forest under the rain. I stop to observe mushrooms, touch leaves, smell tree bark, and eat wild raspberries and it simply feels nice. So, time outside is always enough.

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- **Gentle movement**

If you know me, you know movement is always part of day-to-day life. Right now, though, it feels important to make it a priority and another opportunity to find pockets of presence rather than automatic movements. These have been my favorites:

- *Finger stretches, overhead arm stretches, and the like.* I even recorded this video below to walk you through them. They're really perfect for a 10-minute computer break or to close the workday after spending hours on the computer with the hands and arms in the same position. I've had fun rebuilding my website this month, so I got stuck with my arm in the same position for (easily!!) 2h in a row, lost in my creative flow. That hand routine was a game-changer, especially since I was going back in the next day.
- *Swimming in the cold ocean like a seal.* I have no care in the world for what I look like, how many km of water I'm moving through, or how much muscle I can build while getting my magnesium fix. I just feel the cold on my skin and swirl around, happy to be there. It's like a reset for my brain.

- **Other kinds of movement**

That one I ended up adding in the middle of the summer because I noticed bike rides seemed to help me sleep. I haven't been doing much cardio in the last few months so I'm assuming that's the reason I can feel the difference. So I've been doing:

- lots of biking to go to the deck to take aforementioned swims, to go get craft supplies or explore thrift shops in the city.
- 7-minute workouts, to add more strength exercises to my day without having to think about it. I downloaded the app. It's quick to get through and fun, and accessible in 3 screen taps.

- **Organize, organize, organize**

- in work; I even started writing down recaps of our team calls at [Shut Up & Yoga](#) to keep track of all the things weâ??re discussing and everything we need to get done. It makes me feel so much more relaxed and allows me to truly disconnect from work when I close my computer. Then whatever I need to do, I know where I have to go to find it.
- in life; weâ??ve been staying at Airbnbs since the beginning of July so I have to get used to the organization of the new home every time we move. Itâ??s exhausting for my little sensitive brain, and I use up so much of my mental energy every day just to remember where cups and ingredients are when I make a cup of tea. I decided to re-organize where things go so it feels more like *my* home.

- **Logging on to The Work Gym almost every day**

[The Work Gym](#) was created by Ultraworking. You log on Zoom do to â??cyclesâ?• with other people, where â??cyclesâ?• is similar to the Pomodoro technique to find focus in work, except thereâ??s a whole planning process involved. The idea is that, by being extra specific about what youâ??re trying to achieve, you can more easily troubleshoot when a problem arises. You also learn about how fast (or slow) you can do a task, which in turn informs future planning. I find it useful for so many reasons, but this season itâ??s been helping me define a clear starting and endpoint. **This way, I can consciously plan based on my available energy and not skip the aforementioned swims in the ocean because I have â??too much work.â?•**

- **Limiting new input**

- Iâ??ve spent almost no time on social media this season, and none at all for the first 3-4 weeks I got to Sweden. I really try to avoid it at the moment; I just canâ??t see what theyâ??re bringing me and messages are giving me anxiety.
- No podcasts, no new tv shows, barely any movies. I just donâ??t have the brain space for fast-paced content (as opposed to books, for example) so Iâ??ve been re-watching Friends and the new season of Atypical at the end of the day.

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less new input, more time in nature â?? the perfect break for my creative brain

- **Waking up & going to bed at a time that works best for me**

- Early start: Last summer, I was testing out new habits with my friend Ines â?? she was learning about Ayurveda â?? and I started waking up at 5 or 5:30am every morning. I was going for a 3-5km walk, enjoying the empty Bund while the sun was still rising and the heat still bearable. I felt such a difference in my energy levels that when I moved here, I decided, kind of intuitively, that I would start doing that again. I also wanted to enjoy the sunlight (catching all the vitamin D I can before the long and dark Swedish winter comes). Iâ??ve

been waking up between 5:15 and 6 am, and unsurprisingly, itâ??s been working well for me. I read or go for a walk, or stretch, or just go outside to look at the blue sky and listen to the seagulls (see previous points!)

- o Early end: I have always been a fan of going to bed early. I like to get cozy with a book and a warm cup of tea. What can I say, itâ??s the little things. Iâ??ve been reading a lot of fiction, especially romance novels (my favorite genre), see point below.

- **Reading lots of fiction**

There used to be a time, in my beginnings as an entrepreneur, where I felt pressured to read only non-fiction. I bought into the idea that I had to learn things all the time, in one way and one way only: by reading and gulping down pages and pages worth of entrepreneurial knowledge, in the form of super catchy titles like â??Write the Most Bestest Headlines Ever to Attract a Million Followers You Donâ??t Even Needâ?• or â??Make A Shit Ton of Money Using The Most Unethical Marketing Techniques Everâ?• or â??Manifest Your Dreams by Relying on Your Privilege Only.â?• I am making those titles up, of course, but thatâ??s really how those books sound to me now after a few years of experience and conversations with fellow entrepreneurs who are, like me, not interested in entrepreneurship for the money or the fame, but for the impact. So, this summer, I let my inner teenager take over my reading choices; hereâ??s a list of the books Iâ??ve read so far:

- o [The Brown Sisters series](#) by Talia Hibbert (3 books). Oh my goodness, where do I even begin? A breath of fresh air. Her books are my new favorite in the genre. Iâ??ve never read romance novels that felt so real, so inclusive, so unique. The main characters and love interests are Brown, Black, Muslim, autistic, have a chronic disease; theyâ??re also kind, funny, determined, ambitious, caring (and sometimes all of those at once! gasp!)

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I watched a [video](#) by What Ambria Reads on the last one of the 3 books and was sold!

- [The Fifth Sacred Thing](#) by Starhawk. Iâ??d wanted to read Starhawkâ??s books since I learned that she was one of the first feminists to advocate for spirituality to enter politics. The story is filled with indigenous spiritual practices, down-to-earth thinking mixed in with chats between living beings and the spirits of their dead ancestors, and infused with a deep connection to the earth. Nothing like a deep connection to *la Pachamama* to ease anxiety from reading [climate emergency news](#) of burning forests and flooded cities.
- [Psalm for the Wild Built](#) by Becky Chambers. I picked this one up at the local â??science fictionâ?? bookstore (oh how I missed those in China) and it was such a lovely surprise.
- [Angus, Thongs, and Full-frontal Snogging](#) by Louise Rennison. I read this when I was 14 and felt like revisiting it (like I said, I let my inner teenager take over). Other than the fact that it reads homophobic and transphobic at times, Georgiaâ??s humour still makes me giggle and laugh out loud (in the authorâ??s defense, it was published in 1999 when it was supposedly okay to be overtly homophobic and transphobic).

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The temperatures are already starting to lower here and I can tell coziness will be a big theme in the fall. Sign up for my [Restorative Bubble newsletter](#) to receive the next installment of this series!

There you have it, the elements of routine that have worked for me this season. Since this is the first installment of the series, let me know if thereâ??s anything youâ??d like to see or information you want me to share.

And now, your turn! What are you doing at the moment that feels restorative and that helps you be creative in your work?

Category

1. Design
2. English
3. Entrepreneurship
4. Lifestyle
5. Slow Living

Tags

1. lifestyle design
2. nature connection
3. reads of the season
4. routines
5. the work gym
6. time in nature
7. work routine

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