

Vera Chiu writing sample: 不可戒掉的壞習慣

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習慣是很奇怪的東西。我們每天重複着，確從未想過是否真的需要跟隨。習慣起來的東西通常也無傷大雅，亦無必要戒掉，但到你真正戒掉時，又很「爽皮」！

習性從何來？

我習慣把水杯放在工作枱上，每次要喝水，也總需先去斟水，然後又回到桌子工作。有天我發現了我大可把杯放到水壺旁，令添水時減少一個步驟，但很奇怪，就算新習慣比較方便，我也有點想捉緊舊的。

我另一習慣是把毛巾放到離浴缸遠點的架上，我每次沖完涼也滴著水伸手到遠處拿毛巾。有天我發現可把毛巾放到浴缸旁，但……浴缸旁的位置原本安排了放置小毛巾。

當我把大巾與小巾對調後，我再把水杯的位置也換掉。舊的習慣可能不方便，那我為何要捉緊舊物？

我想起在家住時，媽媽執屋的方式。與父母同住時很多規矩，其一是「東西在那裏拿，就放回原位」。碗在碗櫃、碟在碟櫃、杯在杯架，其實很合理，也令空間很整潔。但當本來的規矩不是我定的，不論合理與否，我就是跟隨，沒想過需要從新建立。

很多時，我們執著於一些看起來轉換了也無傷大雅的東西上，也反映了自己本身的執著，人很怕沒了「身份」。大家有看過電視劇Friends嗎？當中Monica Geller這角色就是一個很執著於家居擺設的人，也為劇集帶來多集笑料。試想有天Monica不執著了，你身為觀眾也會問：「那現在我們看甚麼？」

我們的習慣也是我們身份的一部分。在建立新居的過程，也是擺脫舊身份的過程。本來的家居擺設需每件放在原位，現在，自己的家居中，可因應自身需要，隨時調配，不需再跟隨舊一套。

訓練你的直覺力

很多時，我們會把自己的生活習慣當成是直覺。為何每次到咖啡店也點牛奶咖啡喝，而不選其他咖啡？這不是直覺，是安全感，因為你知牛奶咖啡的味道是你喝慣的。下次到咖啡店，不妨試試新口味，是驚是喜也會是個有趣的經驗。最起碼，你可能找到新的最愛或成功在人生中撇除某個咖啡口味。

在其他時候，進餐廳後，我們總會在餐牌中左挑右揀，遲遲未能拿定主意。雖然很多時，我們第一眼已奠定了自己想吃甚麼，但又怕失去其他選項，所以才花大量時間挑選。下次點餐時，試試點你「一見鍾情」的那道茶，因為這是身體在當下告訴你它最需要吃甚麼。當你每次也相信你第一刻的選擇，便能慢慢提升成你的直覺力。

怎樣從長久習慣中走出來

戒掉小習慣讓人feel good，但通常我們更想的是戒掉長久的習性。生活習慣如長時間使用社交媒體好像更需急切戒除。

去年，香港曾興起社交媒體大轉移。跟很多人一樣，其實我早已對自己不段掃手機這習慣厭倦，所以當大家選擇轉換社交陣地時，我選擇把手機上最常用的社交媒體拆掉，只留下帳號，在電腦上瀏覽。我依然有另一比較少用的社交媒體在手機上，留作工作之用。

拆掉了一個app後，我亦有增加使用另一個app，但整體掃手機的時間少了。就算在電腦開出網頁，也少了不段掃的衝動。我同意要戒掉這攝時間的工具是有難度。這轉變要帶點不怕失去的勇氣及按下「拆除」的衝動。我建議當這一刻來臨時，好好擁抱當下機會。用時間來看書、寫作或放空，總比無意識的掃手機好。

更多時間、更少慣性

戒掉壞習慣需時，你可能從一個習慣走出來時，又塑造出新的習慣來，這是一場長久戰。我在過程中，戒掉了些舊習慣，亦學習到接受變幻原是永恆、更訓練起直覺力來！慣性行為在生活中未必帶來大影響，但如果作出點改動會讓生活好一丁點，總可以試試吧！

Simple ways to break everyday habits

Habits is a funny thing. We stick to them and work through them everyday without thinking about them. They are mostly harmless. The process of breaking them doesn't seem necessary. Yet, when you really get to doing so, it feels better instantly. The moment we realise a habit has done us little good, it is time to let go.

I have the habit of putting my cup on my work table, because that's where I usually drink water. Every time I want a drink, I bring my cup and walk to the water counter, pour the drink, then walk back. One day, I start to realise that I could leave my cup at the water counter, but I didn't want to move it for reasons that I cannot explain.

Another habit I have is that I put my towel on a railing further from my shower. Every time I shower, I have to reach to get my towel. The day I realise so, I thought to myself, "Well, because there is a cloth on the closer rail...but wait, I could place the cloth on the further railing and put my towel closer to the shower."

WHERE DID THAT HABIT COME FROM?

After the switch of towels, I connected the two incidents together. It might be less convenient, but I stick to the arrangements I started off with. The question is "Where did I get this habit from?"

I am reminded of my mum's way of home arrangements. There are a lot of rules in my parents' household. One of my mum's rules is to put things where they belong. The bowls belong in the bowl cabinet, while the plates have their own cabinet, sharing it with the glassware. It is not necessarily a bad arrangement, it keeps the kitchenware nice and tidy. But when a better arrangement could be made, it doesn't seem to be my issue, because it isn't my arrangement to off start with. I get used to following the rules set rather than making my own rules.

SMALL CHANGES SPICE UP LIFE

I have recently moved into my own home, and have started setting my own arrangements. Every week, as I clean my household, I would pick up a candle holder or a pen holder to wipe the surface. After my realisation, I start making a few rearrangements, such as bringing the candle holder onto the table or putting the pencil holder onto the window ledge. At times, it created more space for me, other times, it just doesn't work functionally. But the act of rearrangement stops me from sticking to what I am used to.

TRAINING YOUR INSTINCT

Sometimes we view what we use to doing as part of our instinct, but a lot of times, it is our habit. Why just drink that latte you always order, when there is a menu full of coffees? Because it is safe, you know what a latte tastes like. Next time you are at the coffee shop, try getting something different. Some surprises (no matter pleasant or not), can be fun. At the very least, you either find a new love in life or successfully eliminate a coffee you dislike off your to-drink list.

On the other end of the spectrum, why take so long to choose from a menu of salads instead of going with the first one? Because we fear we are missing out. For your next meal at the restaurant, try just getting the dish that makes you think, "I want this!" It is usually a good choice, and possibly

something that your body needs at the time. As long as you start training them, instincts can be trained.

HOW TO LET THE BIGGER HABITS GO

These small habits could be harmless. Changing them feels good, but might not sound like a must. It is those bigger habits that everyone would agree less is good, like social media usage. Hong Kong had recently experienced a shift in social media usage after a popular messenger app announced a renewal in its terms and conditions. Mobile phone users are worried about certain apps' data collecting policies. Users start to migrate to other apps to avoid these new rules. Like many, I find the convenience of scrolling, a bit too much. I took the opportunity to uninstall one of my social media apps. I'd kept the account ruining still, but I can now only access it on the computer. There is still one social media app running on my phone, because I need to upload work-related posts, and I do still scroll on that account.

After I quit the one app, there are times that I scrolled more on the other, but generally, my screen time had decreased. When I open the website on my computer, I have less urge on scrolling through it. I agree it is hard to stop that addiction of convenience to fill in time. It takes a little bit of courage to fight the fear of missing out, and a moment to click into the change. I advise, when you do have that courage, cease it! Rather than mindless scrolling, I am now blessed with more time to read, write and paint.

MORE TIME, FEWER HABITS

Breaking habits is a lifelong process. You broke one, another one starts to form. It might not be a problem keeping them, but if a little change could spice up your life, it's worth a shot. In the end, whilst breaking my habits, I adapted to changes a bit easier, train my instinct to make better decisions and free up more time for me to enjoy life.