Sucking at something is the first step to being sort of good at something. However, most people never even get this far when trying to master a new skill. The self-degradation they feel when they aren’t instantly "good” at it is often too much to bear and results in immediate surrender. The retreat into mediocrity leaves them convinced that they are talentless good-for-nothings. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The process for mastering a new skill is a nebulous concept which is unique for every individual. There’s a reason most will liken it to a journey or a quest. However, the core set of emotions that the process evokes is more common than one might think and there are some philosophies that, if taken as mantra, can help in dealing with the inevitable self-doubt one will encounter on the road to success.

**“If you believe you can, you can. If you believe you cannot, you cannot.”** In his 1985 book, “Outliers: The Story of Success,” Malcolm Gladwell asserts that the key to achieving expertise in any skill is to practice correctly for at least 10,000 hours. If one believes that they won’t be able to do something, then it will be impossible to muster the requisite self-discipline to achieve this goal. Learning brings with it a range of self-deprecating emotions that need to be faced in order to persevere toward mastery. As acclaimed artist, Bob Ross, once said, “Talent is pursued interest. Anything you practice you can do.”

**“Fail as fast as quickly as possible.”** The road to success is paved in mistakes. Be bold, dive in and take note of how not to do things along the way. Use errors as blueprints to make improvements.

**“Not perfect, but good enough.”** No one will judge more harshly than oneself and if perfection is the goal, self-criticism is never in short supply. In practice, most of what one creates will be far from perfect and it’s important to take pride in even the smallest of accomplishments to not allow negative self-perception to creep in.

**“Comparison is the death of joy.”** No matter what level of proficiency one might have in a particular area, it’s always possible to feel inadequate in comparison to one’s peers. If progress is judged in relation to the achievements of others, satisfaction will never be found in a new skill. Everyone’s experience is unique and so too is their self-expression.

**“Maintain a beginner's mind.”** Mastering a new skill is a lifelong endeavor. If someone believes they have learned all there is to know about a subject, then the journey is over. As one gains knowledge, it’s important to keep that knowledge in perspective and to proceed with humility. Even the most skillful people in the world feel like beginners sometimes. This might seem discouraging, but knowing everything leaves no room for improvement.

While a skill might seem to come more naturally to one person than another, their innate ability won’t become true talent without diligent practice and continued pursuit of improvement. Human beings are multi-faceted creatures, capable of amazing feats of knowledge and creativity. The only obstacle to our own greatness is ourselves.