



ESL Podcast 89 – A Good Listener

GLOSSARY

long time no see – it has been a long time since the last time we saw each other; a greeting used to say that a lot of time has passed since the last time two people saw one another

* It had been three months since the last time Shantelle saw Neville, so when she met with him, she said, “Long time no see.”

trouble – a problem; difficulty

* Anisa was having trouble with her science homework, so she asked her father to help her with it.

secretive – unwilling to talk or give information; in the habit of keeping information hidden

* Manuel was being very secretive about his plans for Saturday night.

to run around with – to be around or do things with; to be friends with

* Elsie did not like the new guy her sister was running around with because he usually convinced her sister to misbehave.

wrong crowd – a bad group of people; a group of people who do bad or dangerous things

* Aaron got involved with the wrong crowd, and he ended up getting in trouble with the police.

curfew – the time of night that one must be home by

* Mr. and Mrs. Jackson gave their children a curfew of 9:00 p.m., and the kids were punished if they were late without a good excuse.

to break down – to stop working; for a machine to no longer run or work like it should

* The bus broke down, forcing the passengers to wait a long time for the next bus.

phase – a stage; a way of acting or thinking that is only temporary and will not continue forever

* The toddler did not want to sleep alone in the dark, but her parents knew that it was just a phase and she would be fine with it soon.



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to go through – to pass through; to move through a place, behavior, or emotion without staying there forever

* There were many stressful things happening in Una's life and she was really going through a tough time.

it doesn't hurt to – there is no harm in; a phrase used to say that an action will be more of a benefit than a harm

* Trying to overcome a fear may seem difficult, but it doesn't hurt to try.

to get it off (one's) chest – to confess; to tell someone information that one is worried about or bothered by

* Errol felt embarrassed for complaining about the prank his friends played on him, but he was very angry about it and needed to get it off his chest.

my door is always open – I am always willing to listen to you; a phrase used to let someone know that one is willing and able to listen to that person's worries

* When his neighbor was hesitant to talk about her problem, Mr. Stevens told her, "My door is always open if you want to talk."



CULTURE NOTE

Profanity in Music

In recent years, it has become more and more common to see popular songs with an “expletive” (an offensive word one says when angry or have strong emotions) in the title. At one point in 2011, there were three “top” (most popular) songs with an expletive in the “chorus” (the group of lines that are repeated in the song) and couldn’t be played on the radio “uncensored” (with the offensive material covered over) or “modified” (changed to different lyrics or the word removed).

“Pushing the envelop” (trying to move beyond the limit or what is considered acceptable) has always been a part of pop music. When Madonna’s song “Like a Virgin” came out in 1984, it was “shocking” (very surprising) to most people. Although “virgin” (a person who has never had sex) is not an expletive, it was not a word you’d expect to hear “bandied about” (used casually), at least in the mid-1980’s. Madonna wanted to shock listeners and that’s what these more recent singers wanted to do.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is a “federal” (national) agency that enforces indecency laws, or laws that are related to what is and is not appropriate for “broadcast” (transmission on radio, TV, etc.). The FCC does not keep a list of words that are not allowed, but it has standards. According to their website: “The FCC has defined “profanity” (obscene language) as “including language so ‘grossly’ (clearly; entirely) offensive to members of the public who actually hear it as to ‘amount to’ (be the same as) a ‘nuisance’ (annoyance; something that bothers others).”



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 89: A Good Listener.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 89. I'm Dr. Jeff McQuillan, your host, from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On this podcast, we're going to talk about ways of listening politely to someone else. We'll listen to a conversation. Here we go!

[start of dialogue]

Woman: Hi. Long time no see. How have you been?

Man: Oh, I've been fine, but I'm having some trouble with my son.

Woman: Tell me all about it.

Man: Oh, he's 14 and in the past few months, he's become quieter and a bit secretive. He locks himself in his room and I think he's running around with the wrong crowd.

Woman: Oh, I see. What makes you think that?

Man: Well, he's become friends with a couple of older boys who are in a band and one night last weekend, he came home really late, way past his curfew.

Woman: Really? What happened?

Man: He told me that his friend's car broke down and they had to walk home.

Woman: I see what you mean. I understand why you're concerned. Have you tried talking to your son about it?

Man: I haven't yet. I just keep hoping it's just a phase he's going through.

Woman: You may be right, but it doesn't hurt to find out more about what's going on in his life.



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Man: You're right. I should talk to him. Sometimes, it's not easy being a parent. Thanks. It helps to get it off my chest. You're always so easy to talk to.

Woman: I don't know about that, but my door is always open. Stop by anytime.

[end of dialogue]

We listened to two co-workers, two people who work together, having a conversation and the conversation begins by the woman saying, "Hi. Long time, no see." "Long time, no see" means, "I haven't seen you in a long time." And she asks the man, "How have you been?" meaning, "How have you been feeling? How are you doing?" And the man says, "I've been fine, but I have some trouble with my son." The woman then says, "Tell me all about it." This is an expression we use when someone – you want someone to tell you all of the details. It's a polite way of inviting the person to share their story or their problem. In this case, the man has a problem with his 14-year-old son. Who doesn't have a problem with a 14-year-old son? And he says the son is a bit "secretive." "To be secretive," you can guess, means to keep secrets, to not tell other people, to keep things to yourself. The boy is also, according to his father, "running around with the wrong crowd." "To run around with" doesn't here mean physically that he's running on a race track. "To run around" means that he is associating with, he's hanging around, he's in the company of other people, so that particular expression, "running around," usually means that he has friends that are not very good for him. The "wrong crowd" is an expression, meaning people that are going to cause you more problems, that are going to be a bad influence on you. "He's running around with the wrong crowd." Of course, "crowd" also means a large group of people but here it means the friends or the people that his son has become friends with.

The woman then says, "Oh, I see," which, of course, is a common way of indicating to the person you're talking to that you're listening. "Oh, I see. What makes you think that?" she asks the man. In other words, "Why do you think that?" "What makes you think that?" means, "Why do you have that opinion?" And the man says that he's becoming – his son has become friends with some older boys who are in a "band." A "band" of course, would be like a rock band, and that's trouble, right? Then the man says that he came home very late, way past his "curfew." "Curfew" (curfew), here, means the time in which someone is supposed to be back home. So, a teenager might say, "I have a 10 o'clock curfew." That means, "I have to be home by 10 o'clock." The woman says, "Really? What happened?" Again, those are ways of indicating that you're listening. "Oh, really?" And she asks for more information because she's a good listener, I guess.



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Well, the man says that his son's friend's car "broke down" and they had to walk home. "To break down," here, means that it stopped working. Machines -- we often talk about machines, like cars, breaking down, particularly cars. "My car broke down. The engine stopped working or there was some problem with it." The woman then says, "I see what you mean." This means, "I understand what you're saying," and it is a good expression to show the other person that you are listening. "I see what you mean." I understand. That's why she then says, "I understand why you're concerned." "To be concerned" means to be worried, to be anxious, to be thinking about a problem. The man says that he hopes that it's just a "phase" his son is "going through." The expression "just a phase he's going through" means -- Well, let's start with the word "phase." "Phase" is -- here, means a period of time or a length of time, a "phase" of something. For example, we talk about the "phases of the moon," when the moon is full and when the moon is half -- a half moon, a new moon. When you can't see the moon at all, we call that a "new moon." Those are all "phases" of the moon and that just means the period of time. But when you say someone is "going through a phase," we mean it's a temporary -- or we hope it's a temporary change in their behavior or in their attitude. That's what the man means when he says, he hopes his son -- that "it's just a phase he's going through," meaning he'll eventually, as he gets older, not have these problems. That's what we hope anyway.

The woman says, "You may be right but it doesn't hurt to find out more." The expression "it doesn't hurt," means it would be a good idea; it won't cause you any problems to do something else like ask more questions. It has nothing to do with physically hurting like you hit your head on the door or something. That's not what the expression refers to. "It doesn't hurt to" and then the verb about what you're saying the person should do. "It doesn't hurt to close your windows at night, in case it rains." It won't cost you that much. It doesn't cause you problems. The man then says that he appreciates the opportunity to talk to the woman and says, "It helps to get it off my chest." The expression, "to get something off your chest," means that -- usually there's some problem or something that you want to tell someone and if you tell them it, you will feel better. So, let's say you perhaps, have a -- something you want to tell your husband or wife or boyfriend or girlfriend or your teacher, but you're reluctant, you don't really want to, and finally you decide to tell them and you say, "I want to get this off my chest" -- means it's been bothering me and I now want to tell you so that I'll feel better about whatever it is.



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The woman says that her “door is always open.” When someone says, “My door is always open,” they mean you can come and talk to me anytime you want – that I’m available for you to talk to.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue at a native rate of speech.

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]



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We'd love to hear from you and you can write us and tell us who you are and where you're listening from. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

From Los Angeles, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast

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