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**ESL Podcast 319 – Being Under Stress**

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**GLOSSARY**

**to act up** – for a part of one’s body to not work correctly or to feel pain; for something to be wrong with a part of one’s body

\* Bill’s knee started acting up, so he had to stop playing soccer before the match ended.

**stress** – the feeling of being worried, nervous, and anxious because one is under a lot of pressure or has a lot of responsibilities and things to do in a short period of time

\* The doctor told me that people who have a lot of stress in their lives are more likely to have heart attacks.

**to cope** – to be able to manage a difficult situation; to be able to succeed when things are very difficult

\* Lynn copes with her husband’s death by meeting with other people who have also lost their husbands or wives.

**pressure** – things that one needs to do, but are difficult and make one feel worried, nervous, and anxious

\* Jacqueline is under a lot of pressure to finish the report by tomorrow afternoon.

**worn out** – very tired; exhausted

\* Lupe was worn out after skiing all day.

**to lose sleep** – to not be able to sleep, usually because one is worried about something

\* Dominique is losing sleep because he’s worried about his parents’ divorce.

**no wonder** – not surprising; not unexpected

\* It’s no wonder that he has problems with his teeth, since he eats candy and drinks soda all day long.

**demands** – things that one must do; things that other people make one do

\* Having a dog places a lot of demands on the owner to feed it, take walks with it, and play with it.

**dog-eat-dog** – very competitive and aggressive

\* Financial analysts on Wall Street work in a dog-eat-dog industry where everyone wants to be the best at their job.



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**nerves** – feelings of being anxious, worried, and stressed

\* How do actors control their nerves before a performance?

**shot** – worn out; tired; no longer working correctly

\* This car's tires are shot. We need to buy new tires as soon as possible.

**to work something out** – to be able to find a solution for something; to find a way to be able to do something

\* At 3:00 tomorrow, Harvey is supposed to attend a meeting at work and go to his son's baseball game, but hopefully he'll be able to work something out so that he can do both things.

**to take (one) up on (something)** – to accept someone's offer; to agree to do what someone has suggested

\* Timotei was surprised when Carol agreed to take him up on his offer to pay for her dinner.

**breather** – break; rest; a short period of time when one doesn't have to do something

\* We've been working on this project for hours. Let's take a breather and then meet again at 4:30.

**If it doesn't kill you, it'll make you stronger.** – a phrase meaning that things that are difficult teach people to be better, as long as they aren't too difficult

\* Rebecca was complaining about how difficult her chemistry class was, but her father said, "If it doesn't kill you, it'll make you stronger."



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. Why is Jason losing sleep?
  - a) Because he's taking too many pills.
  - b) Because the dogs are eating each other.
  - c) Because he's under too much stress.
  
2. What does Jason mean when he says, "I could really use a breather"?
  - a) He needs pills that will help him breathe.
  - b) He needs to take some time to rest.
  - c) He wants to buy a breather for his stress.

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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**stress**

The word "stress," in this podcast, means the feeling of being worried, nervous, and anxious because one is under a lot of pressure: "Emergency-room doctors have very high-stress jobs." The word can also be used as a verb: "Don't stress so much – it's only a test." "Stress" can also mean emphasis, or something that one wants to draw other people's attention to: "His family puts a lot of stress on the importance of education." The verb "to stress" can have this same meaning: "The guide stressed the importance of coming back to the tour bus on time." When talking about pronunciation, a word's "stress" is on the syllable that should be pronounced most strongly: "In the word 'happiness,' the stress should be on the first syllable, 'hap'."

**shot**

In this podcast, the word "shot" means worn out, tired, or no longer working correctly: "After 20 years of playing football, Jaime's knees were shot and he needed surgery to walk without pain." The word "shot" is also the past tense of the verb "to shoot," which means to fire a gun: "Claude shot his gun, but missed the bird." At a bar, a "shot" is a small amount of alcohol, usually served in a small "shot glass": "Please give me a shot of your best whisky." The word "shot" can also mean an attempt or try: "I know it's difficult, but just give it your best shot." In sports, a "shot" is a player's attempt to move the ball and score a point: "The basketball player made a three-point shot."



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**CULTURE NOTE**

Many Americans have high-stress jobs, but they have many ways to cope with that stress. Some people simply eat or sleep, but these may not be the best “coping mechanisms” (ways to respond to something, like stress), because they can be unhealthy. Some other coping mechanisms include “exercise,” “yoga,” and “meditation.”

Many people believe that “exercising” (moving one’s body quickly) is a good way to reduce stress. These people often go the gym after work, participate on sport teams, or go “jogging” (running slowly and for a long distance). Doctors believe that the brain releases chemicals during exercise that help to “counter” (work against) the negative effects of stress.

Other people prefer to cope with stress by doing “yoga”. “Yoga” is a “Hindu” (Indian) practice that teaches people to control their mind and body through slow, thoughtful movements. In most cities, there are many yoga classes where instructors teach participants to relax their bodies and minds, reducing stress in their lives.

Finally, some Americans cope with stress through “meditation,” or quiet periods of time when they try to “empty their minds” and stop thinking about the things that are stressful in their life. To meditate, people go to a quiet place to avoid “distractions” (things that make one think about other things), often sitting “cross-legged” (sitting on the floor with one’s legs folded and crossed in front of oneself) and with their hands on their “thighs” (upper legs). Some people meditate while listening to relaxing music or nature sounds, like “bird calls” (the sounds that birds make) or ocean waves.

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Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – b



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 319: Being Under Stress.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 319. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com). We have some new features on our website, new courses in our ESL Podcast Store, and a new blog that you can follow every day to learn even more English.

In this episode, we're going to have a dialogue between two people, one of whom is having problems because he is under stress. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Wei: What's wrong? You look like you're in pain.

Jason: My stomach is acting up again.

Wei: It's all of this stress. I don't know how anyone can cope with the pressures you're under.

Jason: It's nothing. I'll just take a pill for my stomach.

Wei: That won't solve the problem. Look at you. You look worn out. Are you losing sleep, too?

Jason: I have had trouble sleeping.

Wei: It's no wonder. At home, you have the demands of raising two kids on your own, and at work, you're in a dog-eat-dog environment everyday.

Jason: I have to admit that my nerves are shot, but what can I do?

Wei: Maybe we can work something out. To start, how about if I watch your kids for a few hours this weekend so you can get some rest?

Jason: I couldn't ask you to do that. You have to take care of your own kids.



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Wei: So, what's two more?

Jason: If you really don't mind, I'll take you up on that. I could really use a breather.

Wei: It's set, then. Here, take one of these pills. If it doesn't kill you, it'll make you stronger.

Jason: Thanks!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Wei saying to Jason, "What's wrong? You look like you're in pain" – you look like you're having some painful experience. Jason says, "My stomach is acting up again." When we say something is "acting up," we mean it's not working correctly. In this case, his stomach is causing him pain. You can also use the verb "to act up" when we are talking about a machine: "My car is acting up again." If a person is "acting up," especially a young child, we mean that that child is causing problems – yelling, fighting, screaming, et cetera. So, to "act up" has those different meanings.

Jason says, "My stomach is acting up" – it's causing me pain. Wei says, "It's all of this stress." "Stress" is the feeling of being worried, nervous, and anxious, usually because you have a lot of responsibilities or things that you have to do – a lot of pressure. Wei says, "I don't know how anyone can cope with the pressures you're under." To "cope" (cope) means to be able to manage a difficult situation, to be able to succeed when things are very difficult. Wei says, "I don't know how anyone can cope with the pressures you're under." "Pressure," in this case, means things that you need to do, but that are difficult and make you feel worried, nervous, and anxious. "I'm under a lot of pressure" is the expression we would use – I have a lot of things that people want me to do and that I have to do.

Jason says, "It's nothing (meaning I don't have that many problems). I'll just take a pill for my stomach" – a pill that has medicine that will help my stomach. Wei says, "That won't solve the problem (that won't end the problem). Look at you. You look worn out." When someone says "look at you," they're saying there's something wrong with you; you need to realize something that you are not realizing yet. "You look worn out," Wei says. To be "worn (worn) out" is when you are very tired, when you're exhausted. "I was playing with my five-year-old nephew, and now I'm worn out" – I'm very tired; he has a lot of energy, and I, as you know, am an old man...or, getting older!



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Wei says, “Are you losing sleep, too?” To “lose sleep” means to not be able to sleep at night, usually because you are under a lot of stress – under a lot of pressure. There’s an expression, “I’m not going to lose any sleep over it,” which means I’m not going to worry about it; it’s not going to bother me. Here, Wei is asking, “Are you losing sleep?”

Jason says, “I have had trouble sleeping.” Wei says, “It’s no wonder.” When we say something is “no wonder,” we mean it’s not surprising; it’s not unexpected. She says, “At home, you have the demands of raising two kids on your own.” The “demands” are the things that Jason has to do. He has many things in raising his two kids on his own, meaning there’s no mother or wife at home; he is the only one who is helping the children grow up. She continues, “at work, you’re in a dog-eat-dog environment everyday.” The expression “dog-eat-dog” means very competitive – very aggressive. Someone says, “This is a dog-eat-dog business,” they mean it’s a very difficult business; there’s a lot of competition; a lot of people trying to do better than the other people.

Jason says, “I have to admit that my nerves are shot, but what can I do?” Your “nerves,” here, are your feelings of being anxious, worried, and stressed. We have another expression “to get on someone’s nerves.” It means to make them feel anxious or worried – to bother them. Jason says his “nerves are shot.” When we say something is “shot,” we mean it’s worn out; it’s tired; it doesn’t work anymore correctly. “Shot” has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Wei says, “Maybe we can work something out.” To “work something out” is an expression that means to be able to find a solution for a problem – to find a way to be able to do something. Wei says, “To start, how about if I watch your kids for a few hours this weekend so you can get some rest?” Wei is offering to go over and take care of Jason’s two children, so Jason can have some time to rest and not worry about taking care of the children.

Jason says, “I couldn’t ask you to do that,” meaning no, it’s not right for me to ask you to do that. He says, “You have to take care of your own kids.” Wei has children that she has to take care of. Wei says, “So, what’s two more?” meaning having two more children will not be a problem for me.

Jason replies, “If you really don’t mind (if it’s really not a problem), I’ll take you up on that.” To “take someone up on something” means to accept someone’s offer, to agree to do what someone else has suggested to you. Usually it’s when someone is offering to help you. Jason says, “I could use a breather.” A “breather” (breather) is a break; a rest; a short period of time when you don’t



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have to do anything. If you're working very hard with someone, you might say, "Let's take a breather" – let's take a break; let's stop working for a short time so we can rest.

Wei says, "It's set, then," meaning okay, we've agreed. "Here," she says, "take one of these pills" – for Jason's stomach, we can guess. She says, "If it doesn't kill you, it'll make you stronger." This is sort of a funny expression: "if it doesn't kill you, it'll make you stronger" – it will make you stronger. It means that things that are difficult often help people be better, as long as they're not too difficult. Jason says, "Thanks!"

Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

Wei: What's wrong? You look like you're in pain.

Jason: My stomach is acting up again.

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Wei: So, what's two more?





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Jason: If you really don't mind, I'll take you up on that. I could really use a breather.

Wei: It's set, then. Here, take one of these pills. If it doesn't kill you, it'll make you stronger.

Jason: Thanks!

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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