



ESL Podcast 660 – Work-Related Injuries

GLOSSARY

seminar – conference; workshop; a class where many people gather to learn about and discuss a particular topic

* Would you like to attend this seminar on direct sales techniques?

work-related injury – painful damage of part of one's body caused by an activity one performs on one's job

* The people who work at this factory have too many work-related injuries. We need to get safer machines.

to rethink – to reconsider or change one's opinion or belief; to change one's mind about something

* With the economic downturn, we're rethinking our plans to buy a house.

workspace – the area one works, often a desk, cubicle, or office

* Zhao decorated his workspace with some photographs of his family and a few potted plants.

heavy lifting – the activity of using one's body to raise objects that weigh a lot from the floor or another surface, usually to move them somewhere else

* When they moved, they hired a company to help them with the heavy lifting.

to slouch – to sit or stand so that one's back, shoulders, and neck curve forward slightly, making one appear shorter than one actually is

* Your backpack is so heavy it's making you slouch!

posture – the way one holds one's body while sitting or standing, especially referring to how straight the back and neck are

* Fashion models need to have very good posture, even when wearing high-heeled shoes.

back – spine; vertebral column; the rear side of one's body between the shoulders and the buttocks (the part one sits on)

* Jerome's back felt sore for a week after going skiing for the first time.

to squint – to partially close one's eyes when looking at something, usually because one cannot see well and wants to be able to see something better

* If you have to squint to see big signs like that, you should probably get an eye exam.



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to suffer from – to have pain caused by something; to be a victim of something

* How long have you been suffering from a sore knee?

eye strain – the feeling of weak, tired, or irritated eyes caused by using one's eyes too much, especially for reading or for looking at a computer screen

* Doctors recommend avoiding eye strain by looking away from your computer screen every few minutes to take a break.

no wonder – a phrase used to show that the reason for something is very obvious or apparent

* No wonder your foot hurts! These shoes are old and worn.

repetitive motion – a movement that one makes over and over again; a movement that one makes many times in a certain period of time

* Factory jobs used to require a lot of repetitive motion, but now those processes have been automated and robots do that work.

elbow – the joint in one's arm between one's shoulder and wrist; the part of one's body that allows one to bend one's arm

* Padma accidentally knocked the vase off the table when she hit it with her elbow as she walked by.

ergonomics – the study of how changes in the position of the human body can help people work better and have fewer injuries, especially when it involves studying and improving the design of equipment and seating

* He works in ergonomics and is trying to design a computer keyboard that doesn't hurt typists' wrists.

to prevent – to stop something from happening; to take some action that doesn't let something else happen as it normally would

* One of the best ways to prevent the common cold is to wash your hands before eating.

to recover from – to feel better after an illness or injury; for one's health or mood to improve

* How long did it take you to recover from your shoulder injury?



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count me in – a phrase used to show that one wants to participate in what another person has described, or that one wants to accept another person’s invitation

- * - Bhawna and I are going to the concert tonight. Do you want to come with us?
- Count me in!

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Darrelle think they’re at risk of workplace injuries?
 - a) Because they lift too many heavy objects.
 - b) Because they don’t get to travel enough.
 - c) Because they do the same things over and over again.

2. Why does Kim say “count me in”?
 - a) Because she wants to go to the seminar with Darrelle.
 - b) Because she wants him to repeat how many days and nights it will be.
 - c) Because she can’t stay away from work for that long.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

back

The word “back,” in this podcast, means spine, vertebral column, or the rear side of one’s body between the shoulders and the buttocks (the part one sits on): “Do you sleep on your side or on your back?” The phrase “out back” means behind a home or other building: “I’ll be out back working in the garden if you need anything.” The phrase “the back of (one’s) mind” refers to something that one doesn’t want to think about and tries to ignore: “Many people are uncomfortable thinking about death and they try to keep it in the back of their mind.” Finally, the phrase “behind (someone’s) back” refers to doing something without another person’s knowledge, hiding it from him or her: “I can’t believe you stole money behind my back!”

elbow

In this podcast, the word “elbow” means the joint in one’s arm between one’s shoulder and wrist or the part of one’s body that allows one to bend one’s arm: “When you throw a softball, your elbow should be held to your side at the same level as your shoulder.” The phrase “elbow grease” refers to hard, physical work: “We had to use a lot of elbow grease to get those stains out of the carpet.” The phrase “elbow room” describes having enough space to move around: “The



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conference was so crowded that the participants hardly had any elbow room.” Finally, the phrase “to rub elbows with (someone)” means to spend time with famous, powerful, rich, and influential people: “This party is going to be a great opportunity to rub elbows with the state’s most powerful politicians.”

CULTURE NOTE

Americans spend many of their “waking hours” (time when a person is awake, not asleep) “on the job” (at work), so it is not surprising that they suffer from many work-related injuries.

Most injuries are “attributed to” (believed to be caused by) repetitive motions. Factory workers, for example, repeat the same motions over and over again. When these are “forceful” (with a lot of strength) movements combined with a lot of “vibration” (very small, rapid movements that make something shake), people often suffer from “sprains” (twisting a body part) and “strains” (pulling a body part) of “joints” (places where parts of the body are connected and can move, like an elbow or knee).

For example, “movers” (people whose job is to help other people move their things to a new home) and truck drivers often suffer from sprains and strains in their back, arms, and legs, often caused by not lifting “properly” (in the correct way). Many nursing aides and “healthcare attendants” (people whose job is to help people who are ill or disabled) often suffer similar injuries from lifting patients in and out of bed.

“Carpal tunnel syndrome” is a very common work-related injury often caused by typing. Holding one’s hands at the wrong “angle” (the position of something related to a flat line, ranging from 0° to 360°) “pinches” (pushes something together, almost closing it) the “nerves” (pathways in the body that send electrical messages and information about touch and pain) in the “wrist” (the body part between a hand and arm) that go to the fingers. Carpal tunnel syndrome is very painful and makes it difficult or impossible to use one’s fingers.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 660: Work-Related Injuries.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 660. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Go to eslpod.com to download a Learning Guide that goes with this episode that includes a complete transcript of everything we say – not just the dialogue – as well as vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, cultural notes, and a few comprehension questions.

This episode is called “Work-Related Injuries.” An “injury” is when you hurt yourself. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Darrelle: I just went to a seminar about work-related injuries. I really have to rethink my workspace.

Kim: Work-related injuries? It's not like we're doing heavy lifting every day. We sit at our desks all day.

Darrelle: That's the problem. Look at how you're slouching over your keyboard. Poor posture can cause a lot of problems over time. Aren't you always complaining about back pain?

Kim: Yeah, but...

Darrelle: And look at how you squint at your computer monitor all day. Aren't you always complaining about headaches? You're probably suffering from eye strain.

Kim: It's true that I sometimes have headaches.

Darrelle: It's no wonder. Look at what we do all day, repetitive motion after repetitive motion. Aren't you suffering from elbow pain right now?

Kim: I was this morning...



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Darrelle: See what I mean? We need better ergonomics in this office.

Kim: Okay, where do we start?

Darrelle: I think we need to sign up for a seminar on how to prevent work-related injuries.

Kim: What do you have in mind?

Darrelle: How about this four-day seminar?

Kim: But that seminar is in Florida.

Darrelle: What better way to recover from any work-related injuries than spending four days and three nights in Florida?

Kim: Count me in!

[end of dialogue]

Darrelle (or Darrelle – I guess either pronunciation is possible) says that he just went to a seminar about work-related injuries. A “seminar” (seminar) is the same as a workshop, or we might call it a conference. Usually it’s one or two days, sometimes more. Typically, seminars are meant to teach you something so it’s sort of like a class. Almost every major profession has seminars. I used to give seminars – I used to do seminars for teachers, several years ago, in talking about teaching reading to high school students. That’s one of the things I did before starting ESL Podcast.

A “seminar,” then, is a class where you go to learn something, and Darrelle learned about work-related injuries. “Work-related” means that it was somehow part of your job. Well, in this case it wasn’t part of your job; it’s something that happened when you were working or because you were working, something you did at work. An “injury” is when you hurt yourself physically, so “work-related injuries” would be things that would happen at work that cause you pain, that cause you to hurt yourself. Darrelle says, “I really have to rethink my workspace.” “To rethink,” you should be able to guess, means to think again. In English, that prefix “re” before a word typically means to do it again, to do it over and over again. Darrelle needs to rethink his workspace. “Workspace” (one word) is the area where you work: your desk, your office, and so forth. This word has become popular in last few years; so has another word called “workflow.”



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“Workflow” is the order in which you do things: first I do A, then I do B, then I do C.

Darrelle needs to rethink his workspace. Kim asks, “Work-related injuries?” She’s confused; she doesn’t understand why Darrelle is talking about this. She says, “It’s not like we’re doing heavy lifting every day.” Kim thinks of work-related injuries as being something that would happen if you were doing a lot of heavy lifting. “To lift” something (lift) means to pick it up and raise it up high. “Heavy” is, of course, the opposite of “light,” something that weighs a lot. So, “heavy lifting” is when you are moving, for example, big boxes of books or things that are very heavy and difficult that could cause you to, for example, hurt your back or your legs or arms. “Heavy lifting,” in general, is often used to mean difficult work or a lot of work. You could talk about a computer programmer who does the heavy lifting for a project. He or she is the person that does most of the work. That’s another way of using this expression.

Kim says, “We sit at our desks all day.” So, they’re not doing physically difficult work. Darrelle, however, says that that’s the problem. “Look at how you’re slouching over your keyboard,” he says. Because they sit at their desks all day they also have other injuries. In Kim’s case, she’s slouching over her keyboard. “To slouch” (slouch) means to sit or stand in such a way that your back, your shoulders, your neck sort of the curve forward slightly. They make you appear shorter than you actually are. This is something you’ll see a lot with teenagers who are growing quickly; they don’t always do what we would refer to as standing up straight. Sometimes a parent will say to their teenage son, “Stand up straight,” meaning don’t slouch, don’t lean over and pretend you’re shorter than you are; stand up, put your head up, be as tall as you are. That’s what the expression means; the opposite would be “to slouch.” “Poor posture,” Darrelle says, “can cause a lot of problems over time.” “Posture” (posture) is the way you hold your body in general, especially your what we would call “upper body,” from your waist to your head. “Good posture” would mean to sit up straight, not to slouch. Darrelle says to Kim, “Aren’t you always complaining about back pain?” “Back,” here, refers to the part of your body in between your waist and your shoulders in, of course, the back of your body. If you have poor posture, if you are slouching all the time, that might cause some pain in your back. “Back” has many different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Kim says, “Yeah,” meaning yes, I do have back pain. Darrelle says, “And look at how you squint at your computer monitor all day.” “To squint” (squint) is when you partially close your eyes. You don’t close them all the way, but you’re trying to see something better; you’re trying to focus on something. Or perhaps, there’s



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a very strong light and you can't open your eyes 100 percent – completely, so you close them a little bit. We call that “squinting,” especially when you are trying to read something that is difficult to read: it's too far away from you or it's written in too small of a font – of a print. Kim squints at her computer monitor – her computer screen, and because of this she has headaches. These headaches, Darrelle thinks, are because she is suffering from eye strain. “To suffer from” means that you have some pain caused by something. “I suffer from a sore neck in the afternoons,” it hurts me. “Eye strain” is when your eyes feel tired or they are bothering you, probably because you are trying to maybe read with poor lighting or you are looking at your computer screen all day. These things can cause problems with your eyes: eye strain.

Kim says, “It's true that I sometimes have headaches.” Darrelle says, “It's no wonder,” meaning that's not surprising; that is obvious. “It's no wonder. Look at what we do all day,” he says, “repetitive motion after repetitive motion.” “Repetitive” comes from “repeat,” to do something over and over again. “Motion” is just another word for movement. So, “repetitive motion” is doing the same movements, often we associate this with your hands or arms, over and over again. Darrelle says, “Aren't you suffering from elbow pain right now?” Your “elbow” is what we call a “joint” (joint) that connects the two parts of your arm: the part between your shoulder and your elbow and the part between your elbow and your hand, what we would call the “forearm.” “Elbow” has a couple of different meanings, believe it or not. If you don't believe me, take you look at our Learning Guide for some more explanations.

Kim said that she was suffering from elbow pain in the morning. Darrelle says, “See what I mean (which means do you understand now what I am saying)? We need better ergonomics in this office.” “Ergonomics” is technically the study of how we use our bodies when we are working. It's often used to talk about the way a chair is designed or the height of your desk versus your chair, doing things so that you don't hurt yourself at work. Kim says, “Okay, where do we start (where do we begin)?” Darrelle says, “I think we need to sign up for (to register for) a seminar on how to prevent work-related injuries.” “To prevent” means to stop something before it happens. “I prevented my wife from yelling at me by bringing home 12 roses, 12 red roses, to show her that I love her and that I'm sorry I forgot yesterday was her birthday.” I'm kidding, of course. I would not forget my wife's birthday. What kind of husband do you think I am, huh?!

Well, Kim says to Darrelle, “What do you have in mind,” meaning what idea specifically do you have about going to a seminar. Darrelle says, “How about this four-day seminar?” Kim says, “But that seminar is in Florida.” Florida is the state in the southeast corner of the United States. It is, especially in the southern part,



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a place where people go on vacation because it is warmer than most of the rest of the U.S. There's also a Disney World in Florida, though that's more in central Florida. Darrelle says, "What better way to recover from any work-related injuries than spending four days and three nights in Florida?" "To recover from" means to get better after being sick or to get stronger after an injury – after you hurt yourself. Darrelle is saying that the best way for he and Kim to recover from their injuries is to spend four days in Florida. Kim agrees with him; she says, "Count me in!" "Count me in" is a phrase used to show that you want to participate in the same thing that someone else is participating in, or you want to accept someone's invitation to do something. Somebody says, "I'm thinking of going to a concert tonight. Do you want to go?" You could say, "Count me in!" Yes, I'm very interested in going is what you're saying.

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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse, never slouches and has perfect posture.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again on ESL Podcast.

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