



ESL Podcast 661 – Demanding an Apology

GLOSSARY

uncalled for – inappropriate and unacceptable; not reasonable

* I know you're frustrated we didn't get the contract, but yelling at your employees is uncalled for.

apology – a statement where one says one is sorry for what one has done, regrets it, and wants to ask for the other person's forgiveness

* The newspaper printed an apology for misquoting the mayor.

chill out – an informal phrase used to tell someone to relax or calm down

* Chill out! It was just thunder and nothing to be scared of.

to cross the line – to go too far, often when one has been playing around or joking, but did something to make any other person very mad; to take something to an unacceptable extreme

* We know students often work together on the homework assignments, but you really crossed the line when you put your name on someone else's essay.

to freak out – to become very upset and worried about something; to react so strongly that one loses control of one's actions and/or words

* Gerry freaked out when his TV stopped working in the middle of the most important football game of the year.

get over it – an informal phrase meaning that one should stop thinking or worrying about something that happened in the past and begin to act as before, as if the thing had never happened

* You and Jenna broke up more than two months ago. Get over it and start dating other women!

to hurt (someone's) feelings – to make someone feel bad, usually by saying something that is insulting or offensive

* It really hurt my feelings when you forgot our wedding anniversary.

for God's sake – a phrase used when one is very frustrated and thinks another person is being unreasonable

* For God's sake, I just need one dollar! I know you could lend it to me if you wanted to.

to take (something) back – to retract what one has said; to have another person pretend that something never happened or was never said

* I'm sorry for what I said. I said it without thinking and I wish I could take it back.



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sorry – filled with feelings of regret for what one has done or said; wishing that one had not done or said something, especially when it hurt another person

* Blake says he's sorry his campaign ran such negative political ads, but nobody believes him.

to regret – to feel bad about something and wish that it had never happened

* Do you ever regret your decision to stop working as an attorney and instead work for low-paying nonprofit organizations?

to owe (someone) – to be indebted to someone; to need to give someone something or pay someone a certain amount of money

* How much do you owe the city in parking tickets?

cruel – mean; intending to hurt another person; wanting to cause problems or pain for someone

* The soldiers were very cruel to their prisoners.

over the hill – old; past the best years of one's life

* Young people often think 40-year-olds are over the hill, but 40-year-olds tend to think that term better describes 60-year-olds.

to take years off (one's) life – to shorten one's life; to do something that makes one more likely to die sooner, often used when one is exposed to something that is very annoying, frightening, or frustrating

* That horror movie scared me so much it took years off my life!



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Vera say “it crossed the line”?
 - a) Because Alvaro’s joke was unacceptable.
 - b) Because Alvaro crossed to her side of the room.
 - c) Because Alvaro interrupted her phone conversation.
2. What was Alvaro’s joke about?
 - a) About Vera’s bad sense of direction.
 - b) About Vera’s laziness.
 - c) About Vera’s age.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

chill out

“Chill out,” in this podcast, is an informal phrase used to tell someone to relax or calm down: “Chill out! It’s just a test, and in a few years no one will care what grade you got.” The phrase “to take a chill pill” has the same meaning: “Yes, you got a bad haircut, but take a chill pill! It will grow back.” The verb “to chill” means to make something colder: “Please chill the bottle of wine before dinner.” The phrase “chilled to the bone” means extremely cold: “After skiing all day in a light jacket, Mimi was chilled to the bone.” Finally, the phrase “to chill (one’s) blood” means to scare or frighten someone very badly: “Lawson thought he saw a ghost and it chilled his blood.”

to take (something) back

In this podcast, the phrase “to take (something) back” means to retract what one has said, or to have another person pretend that something never happened or was never said: “I can’t believe you just said that! Take it back, or I’ll never be your friend again.” The phrase “to take the lead” means to move into the winning position in a race or competition: “Darrell started slowly, but after the third lap, he took the lead.” The phrase “to take it or leave it” means that one does not care whether another person accepts an offer: “I’ll sell the car to you for \$5,800. Take it or leave it.” Finally, the phrase “to take after (someone)” means to be similar to an older relative, either in appearance or behavior: “Drake takes after his father, always daydreaming about space travel.”



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CULTURE NOTE

An “apologist” is someone who “defends” (protects from attack) an idea or system, especially when it is unpopular with most people. Often apologists defend religious views, but the term “American Apologists” refers to a group of economists who defended the “industrial age,” or the period of time from the 18th to 19th century when large “industry” (large businesses that produce things) grew.

During the industrial age, a few people like Vanderbilt, Carnegie, and Rockefeller became very wealthy. Their “greed” (strong desire for more of everything, especially money and power) seemed “unethical” (immoral and wrong) to some Americans. At the same time, most people lost the opportunity for “property ownership” (the ability to own one’s home and land) and simply worked for the large industrial “giants” (people and companies that are very successful in a particular field).

The American Apologists tried to defend the greed of the “robber barons” (the people who made a lot of money in the industrial age) “at the expense of” (creating disadvantages for) most other Americans. These economists defended the power of industrial leaders and argued against “anti-trust legislation” (laws that do not allow a single person or company to provide all the products or services of a certain type). They also argued against “labor unions” (groups of workers who create organizations to fight for better pay and conditions). Many of the American Apologists argued that these things were normal, necessary parts of the country’s economic development.

Most of their beliefs have been “discredited” (are no longer believed or supported) and most economists now believe that the power of industrial leaders needs to be “limited” (have restrictions) and that workers need certain “protections,” like “minimum wages” (the smallest amount of money that can be paid to workers).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 661: Demanding an Apology.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 661. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California, home of Hollywood and the Beach Boys – and a lot of crime and smog, but usually sunny and warm, so that's something.

Here's another something, you can go to our website at eslpod.com and download a special Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English even faster, as well as giving you discounts at many fine restaurants here in Los Angeles. Just bring your Learning Guide with you.

This episode is called "Demanding an Apology." Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Vera: That was uncalled for. You owe me an apology!

Alvaro: Chill out. It was a joke!

Vera: It wasn't funny and it crossed the line.

Alvaro: Why are you freaking out? Get over it. I was just joking.

Vera: You really hurt my feelings.

Alvaro: For God's sake, I didn't mean it. I take it back, okay?

Vera: You do?

Alvaro: Yes, I do.

Vera: And you're sorry? You really regret what you said?

Alvaro: I'm sorry you heard my joke.

Vera: That's not a real apology. You owe me a real apology. What you said was cruel.



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Alvaro: I made a joke about you being over the hill. You're clearly not over the hill, so it was clearly a joke. Okay?

Vera: Do you really think I'm old?

Alvaro: No, I don't. But you know what you're doing to me right now? You're taking years off my life!

[end of dialogue]

Vera and Alvaro are having an argument; they are having a disagreement; they're not happy with each other. Vera says, "That was uncalled for." We don't know what Alvaro said, but Vera thinks it was uncalled for. Something that is "uncalled for" is something that is inappropriate or unacceptable, something you consider wrong, usually something you consider insulting. Vera says, "You owe me an apology!" "To owe" (owe) someone something means that you have to give them something. You did something, in this case wrong, and therefore you must give them an "apology," a statement saying that you are sorry for what you did. That's an apology.

Alvaro says, "Chill out." "Chill out" is an informal phrase that's become popular in the last 20-25 years or so that means to relax, to calm down, don't be so excited. You have to be careful with this expression; if you are saying it to someone you don't know very well it's often considered somewhat rude to tell someone to chill out. However, if you're good friends with them you could say it if you thought they were getting too excited about something. Alvaro says it to his wife, always a bad idea! He says, "It was a joke!" Vera says that whatever Alvaro said wasn't funny and it crossed the line. "To cross the line" is an expression meaning to go too far. Often we say this when someone is perhaps joking but then says something that is insulting that makes the other person angry. That's what Alvaro did, according to Vera.

Alvaro said, "Why are you freaking out?" "To freak (freak) out" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to become very upset or worried about something, to react to something so strongly that you lose control of yourself: you start yelling perhaps, or doing something else to show that you are angry or worried. "To freak out" is an informal expression. If you are freaking out, someone might tell you to "chill out." Here, Alvaro thinks that Vera is over reacting, she's getting more angry than she should. Then he says something which I recommend very strongly if you are arguing with your wife or girlfriend, he says, "Get over it." "Get over it" is an informal phrase meaning that you should stop thinking about something; stop worrying about something that happened in the past and just act



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as if nothing had happened, just go on with your life. I'm joking, you would not want to say that if you still want to have dinner and sleep in your bed; you would not want to say that to your wife! "Get over it," is what Alvaro says to Vera; he thinks that she should just forget about his little joke. He repeats, "I was just joking." Vera, however, says, "You really hurt my feelings." "To hurt someone's feelings" means to make someone feel bad, usually by saying something that is insulting or offensive, something that would make them angry.

Alvaro says, "For God's sake, I didn't mean it." "For God's sake" (sake) is a strong expression used to show that you are very frustrated, that you think the other person is being unreasonable. You have to be careful with that expression and similar expressions that use the name of God or Christ or Jesus; many people will find those very strong and offensive expressions in and of themselves. That is, the expression itself may cause them to get more angry, so probably don't want to use that expression; I never do. But at least now you know what it means if you hear or read it. In any case, that's what Alvaro says. He says, "I didn't mean it," meaning I wasn't seriously trying to insult you. He says, "I take it back, okay?" When you say, "I take (something) back" you mean that you're sorry for what you said before and you want the other person to pretend that you never said it; it was a mistake.

Vera says, "You do?" Alvaro says, "Yes, I do." Vera says, "And you're sorry?" You feel bad about what happened and you wish that you had not done it. She says, "You really regret what you said?" "To regret" is similar to "to be sorry," it means to feel bad about something and wish that it had never happened, typically something that you did or didn't do. If you have regrets, you have a feeling that you should have done something that you didn't do. I think all of us have some regrets!

Vera is asking if Alvaro regrets what he said. Alvaro says, "I'm sorry you heard my joke." He's not sorry for telling the joke; he's sorry that Vera heard him say it. Vera says, "That's not a real (or true) apology. You owe me a real apology. What you said was cruel." "Cruel" means mean, something that you say or do to hurt another person. Alvaro said, "I made a joke about you being over the hill." The expression "to be over the hill" means that you are old, that you are in the last half or last part of your life; you are no longer young, you are past the best years of your life. That happens sometime around the age of – well, any age old than what I am right now! Now, Alvaro says, "You're clearly not over the hill (meaning it's obvious that you are not old), so it was (obviously or) clearly a joke. Okay?" He's explaining why what he said was meant to be a joke, because even though he said that his wife was getting old – that she was over the hill, in fact – he didn't really mean it because she is clearly not over the hill. This is another



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good way of improving your marriage: tell your wife that she's over the hill. You don't want to listen to my advice on marriage, trust me!

Vera says, "Do you really think I'm old?" Alvaro says, "No, I don't. But you know what you're doing to me right now? You're taking years off my life!" The expression "to take years off your life" means to shorten your life. More generally, it means to do something that makes you annoyed, frustrated, perhaps frightened, something that may make you die sooner than you otherwise would have. Vera, by forcing Alvaro into an apology and by arguing with him is, according to Alvaro, taking years off his life.

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 never freaks out. That's because it's the one and only Dr. Lucy Tse.

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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