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## ESL Podcast 739 – Performing an Intervention

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### GLOSSARY

**intervention** – a meeting where close friends and relatives surprise an individual who did not expect the meeting because they are concerned about his or her activities, especially an addiction, and want him or her to realize there is a problem and agree to fix it

\* They planned an intervention to help Pauline, but she became so angry at them that it really didn't work.

**to affect** – to have some influence or impact on something; to change something in some way

\* How has your wife's unemployment affected your marriage?

**to be addicted to** – to not be able to stop doing something; to need more and more of something in order to feel good, especially taking drugs, drinking alcohol, or gambling

\* Doctor, what will happen if I become addicted to these pain medications?

**to attest** – to say and/or prove that something is true based on one's experience and beliefs

\* We have hundreds of client who can attest to the effectiveness of our program.

**obsession** – something that one thinks about all the time; something that one cannot stop thinking about

\* Video games used to be a hobby for Jan, but now they are an obsession and she plays them all the time.

**consequence** – result; something that happens because something else has happened

\* High inflation is the consequence of printing too much money.

**to interfere** – to interrupt and become involved in something in a way that makes it slower, less successful, or less effective

\* When Percy broke his wrist, it interfered with his writing because he couldn't type as quickly as before.

**cornered** – trapped in a place and unable to leave or escape

\* The men used their nets to chase the bear until it was cornered.



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**therapist** – a psychologist, psychiatrist, or counselor who helps a patient talk about a problem or mental disease and find a solution

\* Their marriage isn't doing well, so they've decided to start seeing a therapist once a week.

**treatment** – a program to cure a physical or mental disease, or to recover from an injury

\* The doctor explained that Marsha's treatment could take years.

**ultimatum** – a threat; a statement that one must do something, or else some bad thing will happen

\* Sheila gave her boss an ultimatum: give her a raise or she would quit, taking her clients with her.

**healthy** – good for one's physical, mental, and/or emotional wellbeing

\* Craig's kitchen is full of healthy foods, like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, and nuts.

**to go overboard** – to do too much of something; to engage in extreme behavior

\* I know you like baking, but you've gone overboard. How is our family of four going to eat eight dozen cookies, four pies, and three cakes?

**to promise** – to seriously say that one will do something; to make a commitment to do something

\* Victor promised to take his daughter to the zoo, even though he had a lot of work to do.

**cold turkey** – an immediate end to some activity, usually one that is unhealthy and that one wants to quit doing

\* Is it easier to stop smoking cold turkey, or by reducing the number of cigarettes a little at a time?

**to be weaned off** – to reduce the number or amount of something one is addicted to slowly, not all at once; to gradually end some addictive activity

\* Changing your diet all at once can be very difficult. You'll be more successful if you are weaned off sugary, salty, and fatty foods.

**to cut back** – to reduce; to decrease the number or amount of something

\* They're cutting back on how often they eat at restaurants so that they can save up some money to buy a house.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is everyone in Petra's apartment?
  - a) Because they haven't seen her in a long time and they are worried about her.
  - b) Because they want her to tell them more about ESL Podcast.
  - c) Because they think she has a serious addiction and they want her to end it.
  
2. What does Petra mean when she says, "I know I've gone overboard"?
  - a) She's sorry she lost touch with her friends and family.
  - b) She realizes that she has been lying to others.
  - c) She admits she has been listening to ESL Podcast too much.

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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **cornered**

The word "cornered," in this podcast, means trapped in a place and unable to leave or escape: "After 17 years of marriage, Qing began to feel cornered and thought about filing for divorce." The phrase "to push (someone) into a corner" means to put someone in a difficult situation where he or she has few or no choices or options: "Damian's manager pushed him into a corner, making him work extra hours when he knew Damian wouldn't be able to quit because so few other jobs are available." Finally, the phrase "to see (something) out of the corner of (one's) eye" means to notice something happening to the side, not directly where one is looking, by accident and without moving one's head: "Tatiana saw something out of the corner of her eye, but when she turned toward it, it wasn't there anymore."

#### **to cut back**

In this podcast, the phrase "to cut back" means to reduce or decrease the number or amount of something: "Xavier has been in a bad mood lately, because he's trying to cut back on coffee." The phrase "to cut in line" means to go in front of other people who have been waiting to do something: "Hey! Did you see that woman cut in line? We've been waiting here for hours, and she should have to do the same!" Finally, the phrase "to cut (someone) short" means to interrupt someone and not let that person finish what he or she was saying: "It isn't nice to cut people short like that. It's better to say 'excuse me.'" Finally, the phrase "to cut class" means to not go to a class one is supposed to go to: "The teenagers cut class and went to the movies instead."



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**CULTURE NOTE**

**Drinking Over the Holidays**

Some American holidays are “associated with” (connected to) “excessive” (too much) “drinking” (consumption of alcohol). This is especially true for “New Year’s Eve” (the evening of December 31<sup>st</sup> and early in the morning of January 1<sup>st</sup>), when many people go to parties where there are lots of “alcoholic beverages” (drinks containing alcohol).

Unfortunately, this often “leads to” (causes) “drinking and driving,” where people drive a car while they are “intoxicated” (acting strangely because one has had too much alcohol). Some party “hosts” (the people who organize a party) try to “prevent” (not allow) this by collecting everyone’s keys when they come to the party, so that people cannot drive home unless the host believes it is safe.

Many communities “take steps” (perform actions; do things) to “curb” (reduce or prevent) instances of “DUI” (driving under the influence; driving while intoxicated). For example, many communities offer free taxi services on New Year’s Eve and other holidays. Anyone who has had too much to drink can call a free taxi for a ride home. This is especially common in “college towns” (towns or cities where there are many college students).

Police often set up “checkpoints,” or places on the road where all cars must stop. The police speak with the drivers and, if they “suspect” (think something might be true) the driver has had too much to drink, they might “administer” (perform) a “breath test,” where they ask the driver to breathe into a small machine that determines how much alcohol is in the individual’s “bloodstream” (the flow of blood through one’s body). Drivers who fail the test might be “arrested” (taken to jail) or even has their “driver’s license” (permission to drive) “revoked” (taken away).

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 739: Performing an Intervention.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 739. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there and take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, with some additional courses for you, in English of course.

This episode is called "Performing an Intervention." That's when people come together and try to get someone who has a problem, especially a problem with addiction, to stop and get help. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Petra: Hey, what's going on here? Why are all of you here in my apartment?

Johann: Your family and close friends are here to perform an intervention. We feel that you have a problem that is negatively affecting your life and the lives of the people around you.

Petra: An intervention?! I don't need an intervention. What am I supposed to be addicted to?

Johann: I think you know. Each of us can attest to your obsession and the consequences of that addiction. It is interfering with your work and your personal relationships.

Petra: No, it's not. I can't believe this. I feel cornered!

Johann: We just want to help you. We all agree that you need to see a therapist and maybe go into treatment.

Petra: You guys are all crazy. Is that an ultimatum?

Johann: Yes, I'm afraid it is. If you don't stop your obsessive behavior, we'll take that away.



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Petra: What?! Take away my MP3 player? If you take away my MP3 player, how am I supposed to listen to ESL Podcast?

Johann: That's the idea. Listening to ESL Podcast 14 hours a day is not healthy.

Petra: Okay, I know I've gone overboard, but I'll stop. I promise.

Johann: You'll stop cold turkey?

Petra: Well...I need to be weaned off, I think. How about if I cut back to 10 hours a day to start?

[end of dialogue]

We begin our dialogue with Petra saying, "Hey, what's going on here (what is happening here)? Why are all of you here in my apartment?" Obviously, there's a group of people there. Johann says, "Your family and close friends are here to perform an intervention." An "intervention" in this case means a meeting where close friends and relatives usually surprise an individual, who isn't expecting a meeting, because they are concerned about this person's activities, usually involving an "addiction," when you can't stop doing something. We think about drug addictions, alcohol addictions, gambling addictions, and so forth. Johann says that they're here "to perform" or to do an intervention. He says, "We feel (we believe) that you have a problem that is negatively affecting your life and the lives of the people around you." "To affect" means to have some influence or impact on something, to change something in some way. They're saying that Petra's addiction is affecting other parts of her life, usually in a negative way.

Petra says, "An intervention?! I don't need an intervention. What am I supposed to be addicted to?" "To be addicted to" means to have an addiction regarding or involving something. "I'm addicted to gambling" means that I can't stop gambling. I want to gamble all the time, or I'm gambling in such a way that it is hurting me but I can't stop; I feel like I cannot stop it. That's an addiction. That's just an example, by the way; I am not myself a gambler.

So, Petra is wondering what she is addicted to. Johann says, "I think you know (you know what it is). Each of us can attest to your obsession and the consequences of that addiction." "To attest" (attest) is to say it or prove that something is true based on your experiences – based on some facts that you know of. These friends and family of Petra can attest to her obsession. An "obsession" is something that you think about all of the time, something you



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cannot stop thinking about. Some men have obsessions about women – specific women; we would say they are “obsessed with” them. In this case, the friends and family of Petra believe she has an obsession, and they can also attest to the consequences of her addiction. The “consequences” are the results, what happens because of, in this case, the addiction. Johann says, “It is interfering with your work and your personal relationships.” “To interfere with (something)” is to interrupt it, to make it less successful or less effective, to slow it down. If an addiction is interfering with your work, it means that you are not working as well you should because you have this addiction.

Petra says, “No, it’s not (it’s not interfering with my work or personal relationships).” She says, “I can’t believe this.” When someone is frustrated or is confused or surprised by something they may say this. “I can’t believe this. I feel cornered!” “To be cornered” means to be trapped in a place and you are unable to leave; you cannot escape. “Corner” has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at the Learning Guide for some of those.

Johann says, “We just want to help you. We all agree that you need to see a therapist and maybe go into treatment.” Johann says that they believe that Petra needs to see a therapist. The word “therapist” (therapist) can refer to a couple of different kinds of people: it could be a psychologist, it could be a medical doctor – a psychiatrist, it could be someone trained in helping people with addictions – a counselor. If you put a word in front of “therapist” sometimes you know more specifically. These examples are all dealing with emotions, thoughts, and feelings – psychological issues, but you could also have a physical therapist. That would be someone who helps you get over a certain problem. Maybe you broke your leg and now you need to get your leg strengthened after the operation or whatever happened. That would mean you would go to a physical therapist, who would help you.

Well, Petra needs a therapist to help her with her addiction. Johann says that maybe she needs to go into treatment. “Treatment” is a general term that refers to a program to help cure or help you when you are ill or sick. In this case, treatment usually involves going to a separate house or building specifically for people who have this addiction, and you stay there. Here in Hollywood, there are several places – very expensive – where celebrities who are having addiction problems go. Some of them go many times!

Petra says, “You guys are all crazy. Is that an ultimatum?” An “ultimatum” is when you say something to someone that if they don’t do something, something bad will happen to them. It’s a kind of threat, or could be. It’s the last thing that you can do before something bad happens, in this case.



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So, Petra's asking if this is an ultimatum that she go see the therapist. Johann says, "Yes, I'm afraid it is." Remember, when we are telling someone some bad news we often say "I'm afraid." It doesn't mean you're actually scared of anything; it's just a polite way of saying something negative or bad to someone: "I'm afraid that I cannot go with you today." You're giving someone bad news. Well, Johann says, "I'm afraid (that this is an old an ultimatum). If you don't stop your obsessive behavior, we'll take that away."

Johann is going to takes something away if Petra doesn't stop her behavior. Petra says, "What?! Take away my MP3 player? If you take away my MP3 player, how am I supposed to listen to ESL Podcast?" Ah, now we understand her addiction! Johann says, "That's the idea. Listening to ESL Podcast 14 hours a day is not healthy." "Healthy" is something that is good for your physical or mental wellbeing – your being well, the opposite of sick. Petra says, "Okay, I know I've gone overboard, but I'll stop. I promise." "To go overboard" here means to do too much of something, to engage in some sort of extreme behavior, or to do too much of any sort of action. You meet a girl and the second day that you are with her you ask her to marry you; you bring her dozens of flowers; you buy her a car. That's probably going overboard, even if you like the woman. It's actually a pretty good way of getting the woman to run away from you – not that I have any personal experience in that. I mean in going overboard; lots of women have run away from me, trust me!

Anyway, Johann says that listening to ESL Podcast is not healthy – 14 hours a day listening to ESL Podcast. Petra says, "I know I've gone overboard, but I'll stop. I promise." Johann asks, "You'll stop cold turkey?" To stop something "cold turkey" is to immediately end some activity, usually something that is not good for you such as an addiction. So if you are a smoker – you like to smoke cigarettes – and you stop cold turkey, that means that you stop suddenly. You say one day, "No more cigarettes," and you don't smoke another cigarette the rest of your life – or at least the rest of that week! That would be going cold turkey or stopping cold turkey. Why "cold turkey"? I have no idea.

Petra says, "Well...I need to be weaned off, I think." "To be weaned (weaned) off (something)" is to slowly reduce the amount or number of something that you are addicted to. It's not the same as cold turkey, it's not suddenly; it's slowly. Some people, for example, who are addicted to nicotine, will wear nicotine patches, things on their arm, or they'll chew nicotine gum to wean them off slowly from this addiction. Petra says, "How about if I cut back to 10 hours a day to start?" "To cut back" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to reduce, to decrease the number or amount of something. Petra is saying that she needs to quit her addiction





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slowly. Instead of listening for 14 hours she'll listen for 10 hours, which of course we know is still probably a little bit too much time, even for ESL Podcast.

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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

I can attest to the wonderful qualities of our scriptwriter, our very own Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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