



ESL Podcast 870 – Using Caffeine as a Stimulant

GLOSSARY

high-strung – tense; with a lot of tension and anxiety; very alert; not relaxed

* Caroline is a great doctor, but she's too high-strung to work in the emergency room.

wired – with a lot of nervous energy and excitement, unable to fully control one's actions and words, especially when one is under the influence of a medicine or a chemical substance

* The new medication reduces Bryant's pain, but it makes him so wired that he can't sleep.

to be up all night – to stay awake all night, without sleeping at all

* Jason was up all night with his wife at the hospital, but she still hasn't given birth.

to bounce off the walls – to have a lot of energy and be very active, in a partly uncontrolled way

* Our kids had cake, ice cream, and soda at the birthday party, and now they're bouncing off the walls because they've had too much sugar.

to imply – to say something indirectly, but in a pointed way; to make a strong suggestion about something without saying it directly

* The vice president implied that there would be a lot of changes in the company next year, but he hasn't said anything specific.

to snap at (someone) – to say something in an angry way, without thinking about it first; to have a short temper and speak in an angry way

* I know you're upset about losing the client, but please don't snap at us.

energy drink – a drink that contains ingredients designed to help someone stay awake and have a lot of energy and a high ability to perform

* What percentage of college students use energy drinks when they're preparing for exams?

caffeine – a chemical substance found in coffee, black tea, colas, and chocolate that gives people extra energy and helps them stay awake

* What has more caffeine: a cup of coffee or a shot of espresso?



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in (one's) system – in one's body, usually because one has eaten, drunken, or breathed in a substance

* A lot of the soldiers who worked with chemical weapons are asking whether any of those chemicals are now in their system.

agitated – nervous, upset, and excited, with extra energy

* Why does Victor become so agitated whenever he sees a police car? Do you think he committed a crime?

stimulant – a food, medicine, or chemical substance that makes one's body stay awake and become more alert and active

* Some people have trouble falling asleep at night if they drink coffee or a similar stimulant in the evening.

to stay awake – to not allow oneself to fall asleep when one is very tired and/or at a time when one would normally be asleep

* It must be hard for security guards to stay awake all night.

drowsy – very sleepy and tired, almost falling asleep

* If you ever feel drowsy while driving, please pull over and take a short nap.

dose – the amount of medicine that should be taken at a particular time

* The doctor increased the dose of his pain medication from 100 mg to 150 mg every four hours.

instant – sudden; immediate; happening right away

* In our public speaking class, the other students try to give instant feedback on the speaker's performance.

jolt – a large and sudden increase in something, especially energy, enthusiasm, or activity level

* Jumping out of airplanes gives Janice a jolt of adrenaline.

to not know the meaning of (something) – a phrase used to show that a word or phrase is not applicable to oneself, often used in a humorous way

* You think Tim should relax? He doesn't know the meaning of the word! That man would work 24 hours a day if he didn't need to eat or sleep.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Joan so high-strung?
 - a) Because it's part of her personality.
 - b) Because she has had too much caffeine.
 - c) Because she is stressed out about the assignment.

 2. What did Joan do when she snapped at Roberto?
 - a) She hit him.
 - b) She left him.
 - c) She responded to him angrily.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

wired

The word “wired,” in this podcast, means with a lot of nervous energy and excitement, unable to fully control one’s actions and words: “After sitting on the plane for 13 hours, the kids were wired and couldn’t stop running around the airport.” The word “wired” also describes someone who is connected to the Internet and uses a lot of devices to remain connected with others at all times: “Ned is completely wired. He always carries his laptop, tablet computer, smart phone, MP3 player, and digital camera wherever he goes.” Finally, when talking about a room, “wired” means having all the connections and cables needed to do something: “Every room in their house has been wired for speakers that are connected to a central stereo system.”

instant

In this podcast, the word “instant” means sudden or immediate, happening right away: “Very few actors become an instant success in Hollywood. It takes most actors years and years to launch their career.” When talking about food, the word “instant” describes something that can be prepared very quickly, usually just by adding hot water: “When they go camping, they usually just take instant coffee and instant oatmeal so they don’t have to do anything but boil water and stir.” Finally, the phrase “instant replay” describes how important actions in sports games can be shown again immediately after they happen by showing the video: “The referee gave the point to the winning team, but the instant replay showed that he had made a mistake.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Energy Drinks

Energy drinks are becoming increasingly popular in the United States and other countries, but they are also a source of “controversy” (disagreement with very strong opinions for and against something). Manufacturers argue that energy drinks, when used “in moderation” (without too much of something), can provide a necessary “boost” (temporary increase) of energy for people who need more energy at certain times of day. They compare their product to cups of coffee. However, some researchers and doctors believe the “consumption” (eating or drinking) of energy drinks can be “detrimental” (harmful) or even “fatal” (deadly; causing death).

In recent years, there have been several “incidences” (events; happenings) where people, especially high school and college students, have been “hospitalized” (put in the hospital to receive medical care) or have died after drinking several energy drinks. Of “particular concern” (a special cause of worry) are energy drinks that contain alcohol. The “stimulating effects” of caffeine and other stimulants combine with the “depressing effects” of alcohol, sometimes in unpredictable ways, and can cause people to “misinterpret” (not understand correctly) their level of “intoxication” (how drunk they are). In some cases, energy drinks with alcohol have caused heart problems and other health issues.

As a result, some states and countries are limiting which energy drinks can be sold, how they can be sold, and whom they can be sold to. The States of Washington and Michigan have “banned” (not allowed) the sale of caffeinated alcoholic energy drinks. The State of Utah has never allowed the sale of caffeinated alcoholic energy drinks.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 870: Using Caffeine as a Stimulant

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 870. 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, download a Learning Guide, become a member of ESL Podcast.

This episode is a dialog between Joan and Roberto, about using caffeine, what people often have in their coffee to keep them awake, as a stimulant. Let's get started.

[start of story]

Joan: Hi, how are you? What are you doing? What is this?

Roberto: Whoa! You're very high-strung this morning.

Joan: Am I? I am a little wired. I've been up all night trying to finish an assignment for one of my classes.

Roberto: You don't seem tired at all for having been up all night. In fact, you seem to be bouncing off the walls.

Joan: What are you trying to imply? Sorry, I didn't mean to snap at you. I've been drinking a lot of coffee and energy drinks. I still have a lot of caffeine in my system.

Roberto: That's for sure. You seem agitated from too many stimulants.

Joan: Well, I needed to stay awake, so as soon as I felt drowsy, I'd have another dose of caffeine. It gave me an instant jolt!

Roberto: But you're done with your assignment now, right?

Joan: Yes.



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Roberto: And you have a few hours before your class, so why don't you get some sleep?

Joan: Sleep? Sleep?! I don't know the meaning of the word!

[end of story]

Joan begins our dialog by saying to Roberto, "Hi, how are you? What are you doing? What is this?" Roberto says, "Whoa! You're very high-strung this morning." "Whoa" (whoa) is just an expression of emotion, when you're surprised about something. Joan seems to be very excited. She's coming in and she starts asking all of these questions – "Hi, how are you? What are you doing? What is this?" That's why Roberto says, "Whoa!" – often said as well when we want someone to slow down, to speak slower.

Roberto says to Joan, "You're very high-strung this morning." "To be high- (high) strung (strung)" means to have a lot of tension, a lot of anxiety, someone who is not relaxed, someone who is very tense – a young child, for example, who's always jumping up and down and yelling and running around and all the things my neighbor's children do. We might describe those children as being high-strung. Joan says, "Am I?" Am I high-strung? "I'm just a little wired," she says. "Wired" (wired) here means you have a lot of energy, a lot of excitement, usually because you are using some sort of drug or medicine that is making you very excited, very "energetic," we might say.

Joan says, "I've been up all night trying to finish an assignment for one of my classes." "To be up all night" means to stay awake throughout the entire night. You never go to bed. You never go to sleep. Joan is obviously a typical student who has waited until the very last day to finish her homework. In this case, she calls it an "assignment," which is basically something you're required to do for your classes.

Roberto says, "You don't seem tired at all." You don't seem even a little bit sleepy or tired. "In fact, you seem to be bouncing off the walls." The expression "to bounce (bounce) off the walls" means again to have a lot of energy, to be very active – almost too active, like you can't quite control yourself. "To bounce" is to take an object like a ball, throw it down on the ground or against a wall, and have it come back to you. We talk about bouncing a basketball, for example. Well, the expression "to be bouncing off the walls" means that you're like a ball that is hitting one wall and then it bounces. It hits another wall and it bounces. It doesn't stop moving. It's very active.



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Joan says, “What are you trying to imply?” “To imply” (imply) means to say something indirectly, not in a direct way, to suggest something but not to say it specifically or in detail. “He implied that I wasn’t doing my work.” He didn’t say to me, “You’re not doing your work,” but he made other comments, he made other statements that gave me the idea that that was he was really trying to tell me. Joan is asking what Roberto is implying by his comments that she seems to be bouncing off the walls.

Then she apologizes, since the expression or the question, “What are you trying to imply?” is often one someone will use when they think the other person is criticizing them. She says, “Sorry. I didn’t mean to snap at you.” “To snap (snap at someone)” means to say something to someone in an angry way – when you are mad, when you are upset – without thinking about it first. If you’re tired, you might sometimes snap at your husband or snap at your wife or snap at your children because you’re not thinking. You get angry with them and before you can really think about it, you say something negative to them.

Joan says, “I’ve been drinking a lot of coffee and energy drinks.” “Energy drinks” are drinks that have ingredients that are supposed to keep you awake and give you more energy. These are very popular among, for example, college students, who are always going out and drinking and partying and then when they have to do their schoolwork, they have to stay up all night just like Joan did. So, they have these energy drinks.

The most common ingredient – the most common thing you will find in these drinks – is caffeine. And that’s what Joan says, “I still have a lot of caffeine in my system.” “Caffeine” (caffeine) is a chemical substance found in coffee, in black tea, in certain kind of sodas, in chocolate, that gives a lot of people energy when they consume it, when it enters into their body. I drink coffee now, every day. For a while, I was just drinking tea but now I’ve switched back to coffee and I have caffeine in my coffee. In the morning, I like to have a cup of coffee and that caffeine wakes me up a little – gets me going.

The expression “to be in your system” means the same as to be in your body. The chemicals are still in your body and they’re affecting you still. Roberto says, “That’s for sure.” Yes, you do have a lot of caffeine in your system, he’s saying. “You seem to be agitated from too many stimulants.” “To be agitated” (agitated) means to be nervous, to be excited, perhaps to be a little upset, with a lot of extra energy – similar to being wired, except agitated can often be something negative, when someone is upset about something. “Stimulants” (stimulants) is any food, medicine, or chemical substance that makes your body more alert, more active,



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that allows you, for example, to stay awake longer. Caffeine is a kind of stimulant but there are other chemical stimulants as well.

Joan says, “Well, I needed to stay awake.” “To stay awake” means not to fall asleep, not to allow yourself to fall asleep. Remember, Joan was staying up all night to finish her homework. She says, “As soon as I felt drowsy, I’d have another dose of caffeine.” “Drowsy” (drowsy) is very sleepy, very tired. It means you’re almost falling asleep. “I feel really drowsy” or “I am very drowsy” – that means you’re just about to fall asleep. I hope none of you are feeling drowsy right now. I’ll try to keep you going, wake you up.

Our next expression will help do that. It’s a “dose of caffeine.” “Dose” (dose) is usually a word we use in medicine, talking about the amount of medicine you should take at a certain time. So, if the doctor gives you some pills to take, he may say, “Take two of these pills every morning.” That is your dose. That is the amount of medicine you’re supposed to take. Well, a “dose of caffeine” would be an amount of caffeine that will keep you awake.

Joan says, “It gave me an instant jolt.” “Instant” means suddenly, immediately, something that happens right away. A “jolt” (jolt) is a large and sudden increase in energy or enthusiasm or, sometimes, activity. So someone says, “I’m going to give you a jolt.” I’m going to give you a lot of energy, get you moving again. We often use the word with another type of stimulant – “a jolt of caffeine,” “a jolt of adrenaline,” which is sort of your body’s natural way of getting you excited, getting you energized. That’s a jolt.

Roberto says, “But you’re done with your assignment now, right?” You’re finished with your homework. Joan says, “Yes.” Robert says, “And you have a few hours before your class. So, why don’t you get some sleep?” He’s suggesting that Joan sleep for a few hours until her class begins. Joan says, “Sleep? Sleep?! I don’t know the meaning of the word.” This expression – “I don’t know the meaning of the word,” or of sleep, in this case – is used to show that what that person is talking about, that word or phrase, isn’t applicable to you. It doesn’t apply to you. You can’t really understand it. We use it as a joke, this expression. When we say, “I don’t know the meaning of the word ‘work’,” that would be someone who is making a joke, saying that they’re very lazy, that they don’t like to work. They don’t even know what work is. That’s the idea. I’m a little like that.

Now let’s listen to the dialog this time, at a normal speed.

[start of story]



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Roberto: And you have a few hours before your class, so why don't you get some sleep?

Joan: Sleep? Sleep?! I don't know the meaning of the word!

[end of story]

Her scripts are always stimulating, interesting, and exciting. I speak, of course, of our wonderful scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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