



ESL Podcast 513 – Snooping and Eavesdropping

GLOSSARY

to talk (someone) into (something) – to get another person to agree to do something that he or she doesn't really want to do

* How did you talk Mousari into buying your car at that price?

to rifle through – to quickly look through many pieces of paper, usually while searching for a particular page or piece of information

* If I were more organized, I wouldn't have to spend so much time rifling through papers on my desk to find what I want.

to snoop – to spy; to look at things that one shouldn't see, or that don't belong to oneself, usually when trying to learn a secret

* Mark snoops on his older sister by reading her diary.

suspicion – a thought or feeling that something is wrong, or that someone is doing something wrong, but without having any proof

* He has a suspicion that the cashier is stealing money from the store, but he hasn't yet seen her do it.

to confront – to deal with something that is difficult or unpleasant; to speak with another person about something that is difficult to talk about, especially when one wants to tell another person that what he or she is doing is wrong

* I think we should confront Silvana about her drinking problem.

height of stupidity – extremely stupid and foolish; something that is not a good idea

* When we were teenagers, we used to drive as fast as we could on dark highways. It was the height of stupidity.

to be holed up – to be trapped in a small space, unable to get out; to be stuck in one place, not able to leave

* We were holed up in our house for almost a week during the snowstorm.

to sit tight – to stay in one place, being patient and without moving

* We all wanted to know when the flight would leave, but the airline employees just kept telling us to sit tight, even though we had already been waiting in the plane for more than two hours.

confined – without very much room; without allowing someone to move or stretch

* I don't know how people can wear such tight clothing. I'd feel too confined.



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to make a break for it – to escape; to leave a place, especially when one is trapped there and cannot or should not leave it

* The prisoners decided to make a break for it while the guards weren't paying attention.

to suffocate – to die because one cannot breathe; to feel as though one will die because there is not enough fresh air

* Doctors say that babies should never sleep with pillows or heavy blankets, because they might suffocate under them.

to kvetch – to complain loudly and repeatedly

* Please stop kvetching about the weather! There's nothing we can do to change it.

to eavesdrop – to listen to something that one is not supposed to hear; to secretly listen to another person's conversation, not letting that person know that one is listening

* Have you ever eavesdropped on your wife while she talks on the phone?

to lose (one's) mind – to go crazy; to do something very strange, irrational, or illogical

* Liam got really mad while driving and lost his mind, screaming at the other cars and almost getting into an accident.

no guts, no glory – a phrase meaning that if one doesn't do things that are difficult or frightening, one won't be able to win; a phrase meaning that one needs to be brave and do something difficult in order to get what one wants

* Michelle was scared to sing on stage in front of so many people, but she told herself, "No guts, no glory."



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these is a way to snoop on someone?
 - a) Suffocating.
 - b) Kvetching.
 - c) Eavesdropping.

2. Why does Kumar say he's going to suffocate?
 - a) Because he doesn't like being in the tiny closet.
 - b) Because he wants to tell Dan about what Kate's doing.
 - c) Because he doesn't have any guts or glory.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to talk (someone) into

The phrase “to talk (someone) into (something),” in this podcast, means to get another person to agree to do something that he or she doesn't really want to do: “How are we going to talk Leanne into letting us stay in her apartment for a month?” The phrase “to talk some sense into (someone)” means to say something that makes another person change his or her behavior or what he or she was planning to do: “Someone needs to talk some sense into Sakari before she hurts herself.” The phrase “to talk (someone's) ear off” means to talk to someone too much: “Claudia talked his ear off, telling him about her work for hours.” Finally, the phrase “now you're talking” is used to show another person that one agrees with what he or she has said: “When Brooke suggested making margaritas, we said, ‘Now you're talking!’”

confined

In this podcast, the word “confined” means without very much room, or without allowing someone to move or stretch: “It must be difficult for astronauts to get used to living in such a confined space.” Or, “Junior feels too confined whenever he drives a small car.” The phrase “to be confined to (someone or something)” means to affect only a certain person, thing, or group: “These restrictions are confined to all new members, but not current members.” Or, “So far, the disease is confined to one state.” As a verb, “to confine” means to limit: “Their research is confined to information that was published in the past seven years.” Finally, the phrase “to be confined to (something)” means to be forced to stay in a particular place: “The patient was confined to his hospital bed for weeks.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Normally, U.S. government agencies like the National Security Administration (NSA) must have a “warrant” (official permission to enter one’s home or look for something) for “domestic” (within the United States) “spying” (trying to find secret information) activities. However, in 2005, the New York Times published an article about how “then-President” (the person who was President at that time) George W. Bush “authorized” (allowed; gave official permission) the NSA to eavesdrop on Americans. The NSA didn’t have warrants or any other legal permission, but it started listening to Americans’ telephone conversations and getting copies of their “phone records” (a written history of telephone calls one has made and received).

The government argued that the eavesdropping and other types of domestic spying were necessary to look for “evidence” (proof) of terrorist activity after the attacks on September 11, 2001. However, since the government’s activities are secret, nobody knows how many conversations the NSA listened to, and whether they were limited to just “suspected” (thought to have done something wrong) terrorists.

Most Americans thought it was a “violation” (something that breaks a rule or law) of their “privacy” (one’s right to have secrets or not share information). The Fourth “Amendment” (a section of text added to the U.S. Constitution, or America’s most important legal document) protects Americans against “unreasonable” (not justified) searches. Many people think the eavesdropping was unreasonable, but the government argues that the eavesdropping was necessary to protect Americans from terrorists.

This has become known as the domestic spying “controversy” (something that people do not agree on, but have very strong opinions about).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 513: Snooping and Eavesdropping.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 513. 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 to download a Learning Guide for this episode that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, comprehension questions, cultural notes, and, would you believe it, a complete transcript of everything we say on this episode.

This episode is called "Snooping and Eavesdropping." These are different ways of gathering or collecting information secretly, sometimes illegally. We'll listen to a conversation Enrique and Stella, who are trying to get information about Stella's boyfriend. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Enrique: I don't know how you talked me into coming with you to Dan's apartment to rifle through his papers. This snooping is stupid! If you have suspicions, you should just talk to him.

Stella: Confront him without any evidence? That would be the height of stupidity.

Enrique: Instead, we're holed up in this closet until he leaves. I thought you said he wouldn't be home until 6:00.

Stella: That's what I thought. Just sit tight. I think he just came home to pick something up. He'll be gone in a minute.

Enrique: I don't like confined spaces. If we don't make a break for it soon, I'm going to suffocate.

Stella: Stop your kvetching. Now that we're here, maybe we can do better than looking through his papers. We can eavesdrop on his conversations.

Enrique: Have you lost your mind? Do you know what he would do to us if he found us here?



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Stella: No guts, no glory!

[end of dialogue]

Enrique and Stella are inside of Dan's apartment. In fact, they're inside one of the closets of Dan's apartment, the small space you use usually to put clothing or other things. Dan has come home unexpectedly while Enrique and Stella were there trying to find information about him.

Enrique says, "I don't know how you talked me into coming with you to Dan's apartment." "To talk (someone) into (something)" is to get another person to agree to do something that they don't really want to do, and usually we use this expression when you discover later that it was a mistake, that you should have said no. "I don't know how you talked me into buying this car, it's too expensive" – I should not have listened to you. The verb "to talk" has several different meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide for this episode for some more explanations.

Enrique says that he doesn't know how Stella talked him into coming with her to Dan's apartment to rifle through his papers. "To rifle through (something)" means to look through something quickly, usually to steal it, usually for reasons that are not good. Someone who's looking for something who wants to steal something may rifle through your desk – the papers on your desk in order to find that something. Enrique says, "This snooping is stupid!" "To snoop" (snoop) means to spy, to look at things that you shouldn't be looking at or that don't belong to you, usually things that contain some sort of secret information. Enrique says, "If you have suspicions, you should just talk to him." A "suspicion" is a thought or a feeling that something is wrong. You don't have any proof, you don't have any evidence, but you have a suspicion – you think that something might be wrong.

Stella says, "Confront him without any evidence?" "To confront (someone)" means to talk to someone or deal with something that is difficult or unpleasant, usually to talk to another person about a very difficult topic. Stella says, asking Enrique, "Confront him without any evidence? That would be the height of stupidity." "Stupidity" is a noun for things that are stupid or foolish. The expression "the height of stupidity" means this would be extremely stupid, very stupid. We use this expression sometimes, "the height of" followed by some noun, usually when we're expressing something negative that has happened, something very bad. For example: "That is the height of arrogance to tell the President of the United States that he should cut his hair." It's the height of



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arrogance – it's the very extreme example, the highest example of that particular quality.

Enrique says, "Instead (instead of confronting Dan directly), we're holed up in this closet until he leaves." "To be holed up (somewhere)" means to be trapped in a small space and you can't get out. You're stuck; you can't leave. If you go skiing and suddenly there's a lot of snow and you can't leave your hotel, you could be holed up in your hotel. Sometimes we use this expression when someone voluntarily goes somewhere that they don't want to leave, to be separated from other people. But here, Enrique is using it to mean that they are in a small space, a closet, and they can't leave. They can't leave because they're in Dan's apartment, and Dan doesn't know that they are there.

Stella tells Enrique to sit tight. "To sit tight" means to be patient and don't move, don't go anywhere else. "I think Dan just came home to pick up something up (or to pick something up – it means the same). He'll be gone (he'll leave) in a minute." Enrique says, "I don't like confined spaces." "Confined" means you don't have a lot of room, you can't move easily. "Confined" has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some more explanations.

Enrique says that he doesn't like confined spaces – confined places. "If we don't make a break for it soon," he says, "I'm going to suffocate." "To make a break for it" means to escape, to leave a place where you are trapped or that you're not supposed to leave. A prisoner may try to make a break for it, meaning try to escape from the prison. Enrique says if they don't make a break for it soon (if they don't leave – escape out of this closet), he's going to suffocate. "To suffocate" means to die because you can't breathe. Someone may be preventing you from breathing by covering your mouth, or maybe there just isn't enough oxygen in the air; that could also cause you to suffocate – to die because you can't breathe.

Stella says to Enrique, "Stop your kvetching." "To kvetch" is an informal expression meaning to complain loudly and repeatedly. Someone who's always complaining, "Oh, it's so hot in here. Oh, why can't we get a better air conditioner (etc., etc.)," this is someone who likes to kvetch. The word "kvetch" is a Yiddish word, a language spoken by primarily Jewish immigrants to the United States. There are several Yiddish words that have become part of the general English language, at least American English.

Stella says to Enrique, "Stop your kvetching. Now that we're here, maybe we can do better than looking through his papers. We can eavesdrop on his



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conversations.” “To eavesdrop” means to listen to something that you’re not supposed to hear, to secretly listen to someone else’s conversation. If someone is in a restaurant sitting next to you in the next table, and you’re not supposed be listening to their conversation but you are, that would be to eavesdrop. Often people eavesdrop in order to get information – to get secret information.

Enrique says, “Have you lost your mind?” “To lose your mind” means to go crazy, to do something very strange or even illogical. He says, “Do you know what he would do to us if he found us here?” “Do you know what he would do to us?” – do you know what sort of punishment he would give us, perhaps. Stella, however, says, “No guts, no glory!” “To have guts” means to have courage; it’s an informal expression. “No guts, no glory” means that if you don’t have courage – if you’re not willing to do something that’s difficult, you’ll never be able to win. In order to get things that you want, things that are difficult to obtain, you have to have guts, and if you don’t, you will never get those things. “Glory” here refers to either being famous but more generally getting something desirable that you want.

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

[start of dialogue]

Enrique: I don’t know how you talked me into coming with you to Dan’s apartment to rifle through his papers. This snooping is stupid! If you have suspicions, you should just talk to him.

Stella: Confront him without any evidence? That would be the height of stupidity.

Enrique: Instead, we’re holed up in this closet until he leaves. I thought you said he wouldn’t be home until 6:00.

Stella: That’s what I thought. Just sit tight. I think he just came home to pick something up. He’ll be gone in a minute.

Enrique: I don’t like confined spaces. If we don’t make a break for it soon, I’m going to suffocate.

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Enrique: Have you lost your mind? Do you know what he would do to us if he found us here?

Stella: No guts, no glory!

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by someone who never kvetches, Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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