



ESL Podcast 558 – Being a Strict Parent

GLOSSARY

to spoil (someone) rotten – to do many nice things for the enjoyment of another person, and especially a child, avoiding rules or anything negative

* Her aunt spoils her rotten, always buying her candy, ice cream, toys, and new clothes.

strict – always following the rules and insisting that other people follow the rules, without making any exceptions for special circumstances

* The company has a strict policy against stealing and any employee who is caught stealing will be fired immediately, without warning.

structured – with a lot of organization, form, and shape, without flexibility and without changing

* His mornings are very structured: he wakes up at 6:45, showers and dresses from 6:50 to 7:05, eats breakfast at 7:10, and leaves the house by 7:30.

regimented – with defined order and discipline; not changing

* Would you want to send your children to a highly regimented boarding school?

frivolous – having fun and being silly, without being serious or important

* Normally, Piotr reads historical fiction and biographies, but every once in a while he enjoys reading more frivolous novels, too.

to take off the shackles – to remove certain restrictions or limitations; literally to remove the heavy pieces of metal put on a prisoner's ankles and wrists so that he or she cannot escape

* When Victoria moved out of her parents' home, she felt like she was finally taking off the shackles and could enjoy her independence.

to miss out on – to not be able to enjoy or participate in something; to miss an opportunity

* Some people believe that college students who live at home miss out on a lot of the fun things that happen on campus.

overprotective – caring for someone too much, not letting him or her experience things because one wants to protect him or her

* Flo's parents are really overprotective and never let her go anywhere unless one of them is with her.



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curfew – the time when someone must be at home and after which one is not allowed to be outside

* Their teenage sons have a 9:00 curfew on weeknights and an 11:30 curfew on the weekends.

punishment – something that is used to make another person suffer or be uncomfortable for having done something wrong

* As a punishment for what you've done, you won't be allowed to watch TV or go out with your friends for one week.

to misbehave – to do something that one knows is wrong; to break the rules

* Some children misbehave to try to get more attention from their parents.

to toe the line – to follow the rules and do what is expected

* The military believes that soldiers must be trained to always toe the line and do whatever they are told.

privilege – a special right; and advantage; something that one gets to do because of who one is or what one has done

* They told their teenage son that driving a car was a privilege that could be taken away if he began driving irresponsibly.

free spirit – a person who does what he or she wants to do, without worrying about the rules, or without worrying about what other people might think

* Tilde has always been a free spirit, wearing whatever she wants to wear, even if other people think her clothes are strange.

uptight – worried and anxious; not relaxed

* Mordechai is so uptight about everything! I guess he has been under a lot of stress at work lately.

beats me – an informal phrase used to show that one does not know the answer to something

* - What will the weather be like tomorrow?

- Beats me! I haven't looked at the weather report yet.

a thing or two – a lot; many things, especially when talking about how much a person knows about something

* Eldon can tell you a thing or two about what it's like to grow up overseas. He spent most of his childhood in Africa and Asia.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What might you expect a strict parent to do?
 - a) To be overprotective.
 - b) To take off the shackles.
 - c) To give out a lot of privileges.

 2. Why does Ola refer to Allison as a free spirit?
 - a) Because she has a lot of money.
 - b) Because she lets her granddaughter drink alcohol.
 - c) Because she doesn't worry about the rules.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

structured

The word “structured,” in this podcast, means with a lot of organization, form, and shape, without flexibility and without changing: “His presentation was so highly structured that nobody felt comfortable interrupting to ask questions.” Or, “At this preschool, the children are involved in structured activities all day long, with no time for free play.” A “structure” is also a building or something else made from many smaller parts: “Have you seen the new structure they’re building on the corner of Fourth Street and Madison Avenue?” Or, “Archeologists discovered some ancient stone structures buried beneath the earth.” Finally, “structure” can mean organization, especially when talking about how the parts of a poem, book, or film are tied together: “I really like the ideas in your essay, but they need better structure.”

to miss out on (something)

In this podcast, the phrase “to miss out on (something)” means to not be able to enjoy or participate in something, or to miss an opportunity: “Ulun missed out on his son’s soccer game because he had to stay at the office and work late.” The phrase “to not miss a trick” means for someone to seize or take advantage of every opportunity: “Cadence never misses a trick! I guess that’s why she was able to become wealthy at such a young age.” The phrase “to miss the boat” means to not be able to do something, usually because one has arrived too late or because one was born too late: “I missed the boat, because I thought the sale ended tomorrow, but it actually ended yesterday.”



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CULTURE NOTE

In the past, American parents “tended to be” (were often) much stricter than they are today. Many of the old parenting rules seem “old-fashioned” (out of date; old and no longer applicable) by today’s “standards” (the way in which things are measured or assessed).

For example, in the past, teenagers who wanted to “date” (spend time with a member of the opposite sex due to romantic interest) would have to be with a “chaperone” the entire time. A “chaperone” is an adult whose job is to watch what the two young people do and make sure that there is no inappropriate behavior. Today, however, most parents allow their teenage children to go out on dates without a chaperone as long as they know where the teenagers are going and when they’ll be back.

In the past, parents often repeated two phrases: “children should be seen and not heard,” and “speak only when spoken to.” These both mean that children shouldn’t “volunteer” (offer) information unless they are asked a direct question. For example, if people were eating a meal together, in the past, the children were expected to sit “at the table” (around the table) without saying anything unless someone asked them a question. Today, most parents enjoy hearing their children participate in conversations, sharing their opinions or just telling adults about their life.

Finally, in the past, most adults insisted that children “addressed” (called) adults as “sir” or “ma’am,” or used “Mrs.” or “Mr.” with the adult’s last name. This is still true for some parents, but other parents “prefer” (like more) to let their children address adults by their first name.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 558: Being a Strict Parent.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 558. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at eslpod.com. Download a Learning Guide for this episode. The Learning Guides are designed for each of our current episodes to help you improve your English even faster. You can take a look at a sample Learning Guide before becoming a member of ESL Podcast by going to our website.

This episode is called "Being a Strict Parent." It's a dialogue between Allison and Ola, and you're going to learn about this particular parent and all of the rules that she wants her daughter to follow. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Allison: I'm almost ready for my granddaughter's visit. She'll be here tomorrow and I want everything to be perfect.

Ola: What do you have planned?

Allison: I'm going to spoil her rotten. My daughter is very strict and doesn't allow her to do anything that a normal 10-year-old wants to do.

Ola: Like what?

Allison: Well, her time is very structured and regimented. She's never allowed any time for just frivolous fun.

Ola: And you're taking off the shackles.

Allison: That's right. She can play as much as she wants to for the next week. I don't want her to miss out on any experiences just because her mother is overprotective. There will be no curfews and no time schedules.

Ola: Are you sure that's a good idea? I'm sure your daughter has instructions about how your granddaughter should behave and the punishments she should get if she misbehaves.



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Allison: You're right about that. I'm expecting a long list of rules for my granddaughter while she's here, but she shouldn't expect me to toe the line. I'm the grandmother after all, so I have special privileges. Nobody tells me what to do with my own granddaughter.

Ola: How did a free spirit like you end up with a daughter who is so uptight?

Allison: Beats me.

Ola: She's not going to thank you for spoiling her daughter, you know.

Allison: I know, but I'm her mother and there's still a thing or two I can teach her about raising a daughter!

[end of dialogue]

Allison begins our dialogue by saying, "I'm almost ready for my granddaughter's visit." Her "granddaughter" would, of course, be the daughter of either her son or daughter. "She'll be here tomorrow and I want everything to be perfect." Ola says, "What do you have planned?" Allison replies, "I'm going to spoil her rotten." "To spoil (spoil) (someone) rotten (rotten)" means to do something nice for another person, especially a child, never doing anything negative, never yelling at them, always doing nice things for them, giving them whatever they want for example. Most parents try not to "spoil their children," meaning they don't want their children to get used to getting good things all the time, and then when they don't get good things they don't "behave," or they don't act appropriately. This expression actually can also refer to vegetables or fruit or meat, any type of food that after a few days will begin to go bad so that you can't eat it anymore. When food spoils, we say that it has become rotten. That means it's no longer something you can eat because it's gone bad

Allison says, "I'm going to spoil my granddaughter rotten. My daughter is very strict and doesn't allow her to do anything that a normal 10-year-old wants to do." "To be strict" means to insist that someone follow all of the rules, without making any exceptions. You must do everything according to the rules. So, a strict parent is someone who has a lot of rules for their children, and expects them to follow all of these rules.

Ola says, "Like what?" meaning give me an example of one of these rules.

Allison says, "Well, her time is very structured and regimented." To say something is "structured" means that it has a lot of organization, it's very



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organized, it can't be changed. We might say it's "inflexible," you can't change it. "Structure" has a couple of different meanings in English however. You can get the other meanings by going to our website and downloading the Learning Guide for this episode. "Regimented" means with a definite order, a definite discipline, almost like the military – almost like the army. In fact, the word "regiment" can also mean a group of soldiers. Here, it simply means very ordered, very disciplined, not changing.

Allison says her granddaughter is never allowed any time for just frivolous fun. Something that is "frivolous" (frivolous) is something just for fun, something that isn't serious, something that has no important meaning. Sometimes, "frivolous" can be a criticism, meaning someone isn't very serious; they don't take anything seriously. Here, it just means fun, just to have fun, no educational or other purposes for it.

Ola says, "And you're taking off the shackles." "To take off" is a phrasal verb meaning to remove. "Shackles" are, literally, heavy pieces of metal that you put around someone in prison, on their arms and sometimes on their legs. So "shackles" would be something that would put on a prisoner – someone in jail. Here, the expression means to remove restrictions or limitations. "To take off the shackles" doesn't mean that her granddaughter is actually wearing shackles – we hope not! It means that the grandmother wants to remove these rules and strict regulations that her granddaughter has to follow from her mother. This, of course, is what grandparents often do. When they have their grandchildren over, they feel they can be as nice to them – not have to discipline them, because, after all, that's the job of the parent. I never knew my grandmother, so I don't know if that's true. They were dead by the time I was old enough to know who they were.

In this dialogue Allison says that she's going to take off the shackles from her granddaughter. She says, "She can play as much as she wants to for the next week. I don't want her to miss out on any experiences." "To miss out on (something)" is a phrasal verb meaning not to be able to enjoy or participate in something, to miss an opportunity. "Don't miss out on seeing the movie tomorrow." That means don't miss the opportunity, when you have it, to do that thing. "Miss" is a verb that has several different meanings also. You know where you can find those, in this episode's Learning Guide.

Allison says she doesn't want her granddaughter to miss out on any experiences just because, or only because, her mother is overprotective. Someone who is "protective" tries to keep someone else safe. But to be "overprotective" means that you're trying to protect them so much that you are taking away their



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legitimate freedom. You're not allowing them to live a normal life because you're protecting them too much. Sometimes parents can be overprotective of their children; husbands may be overprotective of their wives. In this case, Allison is saying that the mother of her granddaughter – her daughter – is overprotective.

Allison says, "There will be no curfews or no time schedules." A "curfew" (curfew) is the time when someone, usually a child or a young adult, must be home, and after which they cannot go outside again. Some places have official curfews, saying that anyone who is less than 18 years old, for example, must be at home or with one of their parents. Usually parents have curfews for their high school children, telling them they need to be home before, say, 11:00 at night, or 10:00 at night on days when there is school. Those are curfews. Governments sometimes, when there is a lot of violence in a particular place, will have a curfew. My parents never gave me a curfew. I think they expected that I would behave myself and not get into trouble and be home at a reasonable time. I have, however, lived under one case of a curfew from the government. In 1992, after the "riots," the violent actions of some people after a certain court case had finished – the riots caused the police here to issue a curfew. You could not be out on the street after the sun went down. That lasted, I think, for about a week or so. I wasn't actually living in the City of Los Angeles at the time, so it didn't affect me very much. That's quite unusual, however, for the government to "impose," or to tell people they have to "abide," or follow, a curfew.

Well, Allison will have no curfews for her granddaughter. Ola says, "Are you sure that's a good idea? I'm sure your daughter has instructions about how your granddaughter should behave (should act) and the punishments she should get if she misbehaves." A "punishment" is something you make someone do if they've done something wrong. If you commit a crime the government will give you, for example, a punishment of going to prison for a year. "To misbehave" is the opposite of to behave; "to behave" means to act properly, act appropriately. "To misbehave" means to do things wrong. We use this word in talking about children: "The children are misbehaving." My neighbor's children are misbehaving every day, right outside my window!

Allison says, "You're right about that (you're right about my daughter having these punishments). I'm expecting a long list of rules for my granddaughter while she's here, but she shouldn't expect me to toe (toe) the line." "To toe the line" means to follow the rules, to do what you are told to do. Allison says, "I'm the grandmother after all, and I have special privileges (special rights, special advantages because of who I am)." In other words, grandmothers can do what they want with their grandchildren. "Nobody tells me what to do with my own granddaughter."



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Ola said, “How did a free spirit like you end up with a daughter who is so uptight?” A “free spirit” is someone who does whatever they want to do, who doesn’t follow the rules, who doesn’t care what other people think. “Uptight” is the opposite. “Uptight” (uptight – one word) means to be very worried, anxious, not relaxed. “Uptight” is really an insulting term, it’s a negative way to describe someone. Just because a parent has rules, doesn’t mean they’re uptight, but Ola uses the word to describe Allison’s daughter.

Allison answers his question, “Beats me.” The expression “beats (beats) me” is an informal one used to show that you don’t know the answer to something. Someone says, “What time is it?” If you don’t know, you could say, “Beats me, I don’t know.”

Ola says that Allison’s daughter is not going to thank you for spoiling her daughter. Allison says, “I know, but I’m her mother and there’s still a thing or two I can teach her about raising a daughter!” When somebody uses the expression “a thing or two,” they mean many things, especially when you’re talking about how much a person knows about something. Someone says, “Do you know about iTunes or podcasting?” and if you do, you could say, “I know a thing or two,” meaning you probably know a lot about it.

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

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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter knows a thing or two about writing dialogues. You know her as Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy!

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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