



ESL Podcast 615 – Watching Daytime Talk Shows

GLOSSARY

day off – a day when one has permission to not work, although it would normally be one's workday

* Could you help me fix my car on your day off?

daytime talk show – a television show that has a host who speaks with many different guests on a particular topic usually related to family, romantic relationships, lifestyle choices, alcoholism, eating disorders, or related topics

* Oprah is one of the most popular daytime talk shows ever.

you've got to be kidding – a phrase used when what one hears from another person seems ridiculous, very surprising, and unbelievable

* You're going to major in music performance? You've got to be kidding! You're a horrible singer.

to book (someone) – to schedule a date and time when someone will perform or participate in a show at a particular place

* Which band are you going to book for your wedding?

loser – a person who has had little or no success in life and has no hope for a successful future; someone who is not respected for his or her accomplishments

* Brock isn't a loser! He has failed a few times in what he's tried to do, but that is because of bad luck.

exhibitionist – a person who does very strange or unusual things because he or she likes to be noticed by other people

* Melissa is an exhibitionist who wears wild clothing and has a wild hairdo. She likes it a lot when other people stare at her.

attention – when someone concentrates on another person or thing by listening, watching, considering, and thinking about him, her, or it

* Students, please pay attention. This is important.

human drama – relationships between two or more people with a lot of excitement and extreme emotions, often more than seems necessary or good

* Whenever our family gets together for the holidays, there's always too much human drama and people end up crying before the day is over.

tragedy – something that is very sad, often because of a death

* Romeo and Juliet is her favorite Shakespearian tragedy.



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to relate to (something) – to connect with something on an intellectual and/or emotional level; to understand something because it is similar to something in one's own life

* Even though he's 20 years older than she is, they're able to relate to each other really well because they have had so many similar experiences.

fame – being well-known by many people

* The singer has a lot of local fame, but she's unknown elsewhere in the country.

at any cost – no matter how difficult something is or what negative consequences it may bring; no matter what else happens as a result

* Ahmed wants to be a powerful attorney at any cost, even if it means working 14 hours a day for many years.

to exploit – to use someone; to treat someone unfairly, making them do something for oneself; to use another person's weaknesses or ignorance for one's own benefit

* Makiko feels exploited by her boss whenever he asks her to make coffee, wash his car, or pick up his dry-cleaning.

ratings – the popularity of one television show compared to other shows

* Shows with higher ratings can charge advertisers more for their commercial breaks.

salacious – with too much interest in sex; with an inappropriate level of interest in sexual relationships

* Have you heard the salacious rumors about Joanne and her new boyfriend?

to get off (one's) high horse – to stop acting as if one were superior to other people; to stop pretending to be better than others

* I know you think you're too good to vacuum and wash bathtubs, but please get off your high horse and help us for a just a few hours!

to get rid of – to no longer have or be around someone or something; to do something so that one doesn't need to interact with someone or something

* Why does your little brother always follow us around? Isn't there any way we can get rid of him?



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to get away with (something) – to not be punished for something bad that someone has done; to avoid the negative consequences of one’s actions

* The criminal thought he could get away with the crime, but he was wrong and the police arrested him.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why doesn’t Sally like daytime talk shows?
 - a) Because they are about people who do strange things.
 - b) Because they are too expensive.
 - c) Because they have low ratings.

2. Why does Jerry ask Sally to get off her high horse?
 - a) Because Sally should sit down for a while.
 - b) Because Sally should learn how to listen to others.
 - c) Because Sally should stop pretending to be better than him.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

at any cost

The phrase “at any cost,” in this podcast, means no matter how difficult something is or what negative consequences it may bring, or no matter what else happens as a result: “The doctor intends to save his life at any cost.” The phrase “at cost” refers to the price paid to buy something that one plans to sell for additional money: “As a dealership, we can’t sell the car to you at cost, because we have to make at least a few hundred dollars in profit.” The phrase “to cover the cost of (something)” means to have enough money to pay for something: “Will the income from your new job be enough to cover the cost of childcare?” Finally, the phrase “to bear the cost of (something)” means to be responsible for paying for something: “Our children will bear the costs of the environmental pollution created by our generation.”

to get away with (something)

In this podcast, the phrase “to get away with (something)” means to not be punished for something bad that someone has done, or to avoid the negative consequences of one’s actions: “Kai’s parents are strict, but his grandparents let him get away with anything and everything!” The phrase “to get away from it all” means to go somewhere for a relaxing vacation: “Let’s go to the coast this weekend to get away from it all.” The phrase “to get over (something)” means to



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feel better after one has been very sad, disturbed, or upset: “It took many years for them to get over the death of their son.” Finally, the phrase “to get over (something)” can mean to feel better after an illness: “Naomi has almost gotten over her cold, but she’s still coughing a little bit.”

CULTURE NOTE

The Daytime Emmy “Awards” (honors; prizes; recognition of being the best) recognize excellence in daytime television programming. The first Daytime Emmy Awards were “presented” (given to winners) at a ceremony in 1974. Now, they are awarded by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in New York and the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences in Los Angeles each May or June.

There are almost 70 “categories” (types) of Daytime Emmy Awards. Some are for the shows themselves, such as “Outstanding” (very good) Drama Series, Outstanding Game/Audience Participation Show, and Outstanding Talk Show. Other Daytime Emmy Awards are given to the best “Lead” (main; most important) Actor/Actress or “Supporting” (secondary; working with the lead) Actor/Actress. Still others are given to the writers and directors of the shows.

Winners of the Daytime Emmy Awards receive a small, golden “statue” (a metal sculpture, usually in the shape of a person or animal) of a woman with wings who is reaching upward and holding a large ball made of many “interlocking” (touching each other and inside each other) “rings” (circles).

Because daytime television has a relatively small number of actors involved in shows, many actors have been “nominated” (named; suggested as winners) many times for the Daytime Emmy Awards. Many actors also win multiple Daytime Emmy Awards throughout their acting “careers” (all the jobs one has during one’s lifetime).

Industry experts often compare the Daytime Emmy Awards to the Academy Awards for movies, the Grammy Awards for music, and the Tony Awards for “live theater” (drama on stage; plays and musicals).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 615: Watching Daytime Talk Shows.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 615. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website – well, you know – it's eslpod.com. You also know that you can download a Learning Guide from our website. If you're not a member please consider supporting the podcast by becoming one. You'll feel good about yourself, and your English will improve!

This episode is a dialogue between Sally and Jerry. It's about daytime talk shows. These are shows where people are interviewed often about rather strange and unusual topics. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Sally: Why are wasting your time on your day off watching these daytime talk shows?

Jerry: I think they're entertaining.

Sally: You've got to be kidding. The only people who are booked as guests on those shows are losers or exhibitionists who want attention.

Jerry: No, they're not. These shows are all about human drama and tragedy, something we can all relate to.

Sally: Give me a break! The people who appear on these shows want fame at any cost and the producers of the shows exploit them for ratings. They're full of salacious details that nobody should talk about in public, and that I certainly don't want to hear.

Jerry: I completely disagree. If you get off your high horse for a minute, you may learn something.

Sally: Like what?



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Jerry: Like how to get rid of an annoying wife and get away with it!

[end of dialogue]

Sally begins by saying, “Why are wasting your time on your day off watching these daytime talk shows?” That’s a question for Jerry. Your “day off” (two words) is a day when you do not have to go to work, although normally you would work that day. So if you, for example, had a vacation day, you decided to take Friday off, we would say that is a day off.

Well, Jerry has the day off, he’s not working, and he’s spending his time watching daytime talk shows. Daytime talk shows are very popular in the U.S. They’re usually on television sometime between 9 o’clock in the morning and five o’clock in the evening. A “talk show” is where you have typically one person, we call that person the “host,” who speaks to different guests who come and visit him or her. Sometimes they’re famous people, sometimes they’re average, unknown people who are coming to talk about some problem. In the last 20 years or so, daytime talk shows have become more and more controversial. They try to get people to pay attention to them by having all sorts of usual topics. Often there will actually be people who are fighting on the talk shows, although some of this I think is probably fake, that is, they bring people on who pretend to fight. In any case, daytime talk shows, and you can tell I don’t watch many of them, are popular with people watching TV in the daytime. Now, they’re not all bad, but they’re not to be confused with a serious news interview; that is certainly not what you will find on most daytime talk shows.

Jerry answers Sally’s question by saying, “I think they’re entertaining (I have fun watching them).” Sally says, “You’ve got to be kidding.” The expression “you’ve got to be kidding” or “you have to be kidding” is used to show that you think the person you’re talking to is saying something very surprising, unbelievable, perhaps even a little ridiculous. Somebody says, “I am going to read my horoscope and I will plan my day according to that.” Your “horoscope” is the idea that events in your life are controlled by the planets and the stars. Another person may say, “You’ve got to be kidding. Why do you waste your time on reading horoscopes?” Well here, Sally is wondering why Jerry is wasting his time watching daytime talk shows. She continues, “The only people who are booked as guests on those shows are losers or exhibitionists who want attention.” “To book (someone)” as a verb means to schedule a date and time typically when someone will perform in a show or participate in a show. If you have a music band, a group that plays music, you might have a restaurant or a party that wants to book you. They want to have you come and perform on a



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certain day and time. This verb “to book” is also used when the police arrest someone and decide to accuse them or charge them with a crime. I don’t know why we use the same verb, but we do. Maybe some performances are so bad that people think the performer should be booked for taking their money, I’m not sure! When we use it in relation to the police, it’s usually with the preposition “for”: “He was booked for murder.” “He was booked for robbery.”

Anyway, we’re talking about daytime talk shows and Sally is saying that the only people who come on as guests – who are booked as guests are losers or exhibitionists. A “loser” is a person who has had little or no success in life, who doesn’t seem to be very successful and is not respected by other people. It’s an insulting term, to be sure. An “exhibitionist” is someone who likes to do strange or unusual things because he or she wants other people to notice them; he or she wants attention, when other people are looking at you and listening to you. So people who, for example – I don’t know, take off their clothes in the middle of a shopping center, that could be an exhibitionist, somebody who wants to have other people pay attention to them. If you do that, you’ll probably be booked for some crime! Sally is saying that the people on this kind of program are losers or exhibitionists, and there’s some truth to that. If you watch some of these shows you can see that there are some people on there who just want other people to pay attention. They want to be famous, I guess.

Jerry disagrees, he says, “No, they’re not. These shows are all about human drama.” “Human drama” refers to relationships between two or more people that are somehow exciting, often more than seems necessary or good. Jerry says the shows are also about tragedy. “Tragedy” is something that is very bad, something that is very sad that has happened, often related to someone dying. Jerry thinks these shows are something we can all relate to. “To relate to (something)” is to connect with something on an intellectual or emotional level, to understand something because it is similar to something that has happened in your life.

Sally says, “Give me a break!” which is an expression – an informal expression we use when we are telling the person that we don’t believe them. “The people who appear on these shows want fame at any cost.” “Fame” is to be well known – famous. “At any cost” means no matter how difficult something is. These people want to be famous, and it doesn’t matter what they do to be famous – to get fame. She says, “the producers of the shows (the people who organize these shows) exploit them for ratings.” “To exploit (exploit) (someone)” means to use someone, to make someone do something for you, often hurting or treating the other person unfairly. So, to exploit something would be to take someone who is



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innocent and, we would use the expression, take advantage of them. That is, do something because perhaps they are too weak or they are not very smart, and you do something that benefits you and usually hurts them. Well, the producers are exploiting these exhibitionists and losers for ratings. “Ratings” here refers to how popular a television show is compared to other television shows. If you say, “The television show has good ratings,” you mean that it’s very popular, there are a lot people who watch it. Sally continues, she says these shows are full of salacious details that nobody should talk about in public. “Salacious” (salacious) means too much interest in sex or sexually related topics, things that are perhaps inappropriate, things that you shouldn’t be talking about in public with other people. And that’s certainly true that these shows often have a lot of salacious details that are discussed and talked about.

Jerry says, “I completely disagree. If you get off your high horse for a minute, you may learn something.” The expression “to get off your high horse,” like the animal, means to stop acting as if you were superior to other people, stop pretending that you are better than others. It’s a negative, insulting thing to say to someone: “get off your high horse.” You’re saying to them “You think you are better than everyone else.”

Jerry thinks Sally could learn something from these shows. Sally asks, “Like what?” Jerry responds, “Like how to get rid of an annoying wife and get away with it!” “To get rid (rid) of (something)” is a phrasal verb meaning to no longer have someone or something in your presence or around, to do something so that you don’t need to have any contact with this person. Sometimes it means simply to throw out, to put in the garbage: “I’m going to get rid of this trash that is on my desk.” It can also be used informally to mean to kill someone, and that’s the meaning that Jerry is using here, he’s joking of course – I hope! He says he can learn how to get rid of an annoying wife. Someone who is “annoying” is someone who is bothersome, someone who is always causing problems.

Not only does Jerry want to get rid of his annoying wife, he also wants to get away with it. The expression “to get away with (something)” means not to be punished for something bad that you have done. You do something bad but you are not punished; you are not discovered perhaps, no one finds out, or for whatever reason you are not punished for doing something wrong. That’s to get away with it. We talk about people getting away with murder. The most famous case of that here in Los Angeles took place in the 1990s with a former football player by the name of O.J. Simpson. He, according to most people who looked at the evidence, killed his wife and another man, but he was not found guilty. Unfortunately later he committed a robbery and is in prison now, not for the



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murder but for another crime he committed. You can get away with things that are less serious, of course. Children may get away with misbehaving in class because the teacher is too busy or too tired to punish them. That used to happen to me all time!

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

[start of dialogue]

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Jerry: I completely disagree. If you get off your high horse for a minute, you may learn something.

Sally: Like what?

Jerry: Like how to get rid of an annoying wife and get away with it!

[end of dialogue]

Fortunately, Dr. Lucy Tse did not take a day off, and instead wrote this wonderful script. 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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