



ESL Podcast 529 – Insulting Other People

GLOSSARY

to mess around – to do unimportant things to have fun when one has nothing else to do; to waste time doing silly things

* We've been messing around on the computer for hours. Don't you think we should start our homework soon?

to pipe down – to be quiet; to stop making noise

* Hey, pipe down in there! We're trying to sleep!

to get on (someone's) nerves – to annoy or bother someone; to do things that make another person upset or angry

* It really gets on my nerves when you leave your dirty clothes on the floor.

disgrace – something that is bad, unacceptable, and shameful; something that cannot be approved of

* In the past, getting divorced was a disgrace, but now it is more acceptable.

to get a rise out of (someone) – to get an angry reaction from someone; to make someone do something in response to one's actions or words

* He's only doing that to get a rise out of you. He thinks it's funny when you get mad. Try to ignore him instead.

to wave (someone) off – to move one's hand in the air in a way that shows one wants another person to go away or leave a place

* We offered to help Ms. Klein clean up the classroom, but she waved us off and said she could do it by herself.

unpredictable – acting in an unexpected way, so that one cannot know what will happen next

* That movie was so unpredictable! I had no idea it would end that way.

slight – a rude or disrespectful criticism; something that one says or does that makes another person angry or upset

* When you criticized the way Marie's children were dressed, she took it as a slight to her skills as a mother.

to set (someone) off – to make someone very angry; to cause someone to do something, especially out of anger

* It really set Kelvin off when he found out his brother had been lying to him.



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to insult – to offend; to do or say something to make another person angry and show that one does not have respect for that person

* When we were kids, I used to insult my little brother by calling him a fat little pig.

to ask for trouble – to do something even though one knows it will create problems or make another person angry

* If you drive your parents' car without their permission, you're just asking for trouble.

to flip (someone) off – to hold up the middle finger of one's hand as a very rude insult

* Why did that driver flip us off? We didn't do anything wrong – he did!

two can play that game – a phrase used to show that one is going to do something bad or mean to another person, because he or she has done that same bad or mean thing to oneself

* When Sarah found out that Parham was telling lies about her, she said, "Two can play that game" and started spreading lies about him.

take that – a playful phrase used to give emphasis to what one is doing to another person, especially if one is almost hurting that person by hitting or winning in a game

* Wow, you threw that ball really hard! Take that! I can throw just as hard as you can!

to give as good as (one) gets – for person A to do to person B exactly what person B did to person A, especially if it is a negative behavior, or something that annoys or hurts another person

* Our neighbors are stealing our tomatoes, but we're going to give as good as we get. Tonight, we'll go into their garden and steal all of their strawberries!

to moon (someone) – to pull down one's pants and underwear and show one's bottom (the part of the body one sits on) to another person, either to be funny or as an insult

* The teenage boys drove through town, mooning people through the car windows.

nuts – crazy; acting in illogical, non-rational ways

* Whenever we go to the park, the dog goes nuts, barking and jumping in circles.



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watch me – a phrase used to give emphasis to what one is going to do next, especially when the other person doesn't believe that one will really do it

- * - You're not going to wear *that* to the gym today, are you?
- Yes, I am. Watch me!

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why doesn't Lourdes like having the teenagers nearby?
 - a) Because they're smoking.
 - b) Because they're dressed badly.
 - c) Because they're too loud.
2. What happened after Lourdes waved off the teenagers?
 - a) They started waving back.
 - b) They made a rude gesture.
 - c) They shouted at her.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to pipe down

The phrase "to pipe down," in this podcast, means to be quiet, or to stop making noise: "Could you please pipe down and listen to what other people have to say?" The phrase "To pipe up" means to begin speaking after one has been quiet for a long time, especially after listening to other people: "Debra listened to what everyone had to say, and then piped up with her own opinion toward the end of the meeting." The phrase "to pipe (something) in" means to send recorded music into a room: "When did the building managers start piping music into the elevators?"

slight

In this podcast, the word "slight" means a rude or disrespectful criticism, or something that one says or does that makes another person angry: "It's a slight to her religious beliefs when other people say 'Jesus Christ' when they're angry." The word "slight" also means a little bit, or a small amount: "There's a slight possibility of rain tomorrow." Or, "He suffered only a slight injury in the car accident." The phrase "to not have the slightest idea" means not to have any knowledge about something: "He didn't have the slightest idea they were planning a surprise birthday party for him!" Finally, a person who is "slight" is very thin and not very strong: "She was always a very slight, sickly child."



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CULTURE NOTE

Many Americans like to “tell” (share) insulting jokes, or jokes that “make fun of” (find ways to laugh about) other people. These jokes are usually about people being “ugly” (not beautiful), fat, short, “broke” (without money), “stupid” (not intelligent), or old. Often these jokes are made about a person’s mother, and there are a series of jokes called “Yo Mama” jokes that all begin the same way.

“Yo Mama...” is a slang way to say “your Mother.” Here are some examples:

- Yo Mama is so ugly, when she applied for the “ugly contest” (a competition where the winner is the ugliest person), they told her “no professionals.”
- Yo Mama is so stupid, I found her looking over a glass wall to see what was on the other side.
- Yo Mama is so fat, she could be the eighth “continent” (one of the seven large areas of land, like North America, Africa, or Australia).
- Yo Mama is so broke, even “beggars” (people who ask other people for money) give her money.
- Yo Mama is so old, when she was at school, there was no history class!
- Yo Mama is so “greasy” (with lots of oil on one’s unclean face), the oil companies buy oil from her.

When these jokes are told among friends, they can be very funny. They aren’t really joking about each other’s mother. Instead, they’re trying to see who can be the most creative and funny in “thinking up” (finding a new idea for) new jokes. But if these types of jokes are told to “strangers” (people one does not know well), they can be very insulting and can even start a fight.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 529: Insulting Other People.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 529. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Go to our website at eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode. The Learning Guide will help you improve your English even faster. Consider supporting this podcast by becoming a member or by making a donation on our website.

This episode is called "Insulting Other People." It's a dialogue between Lourdes and Nick, and we're going to be using a lot of vocabulary of related to...well...insulting people. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Lourdes: Do you see those teenagers over there? They're making trouble again.

Nick: Those kids are just messing around. When they get bored, they'll pipe down and go home.

Lourdes: They're really getting on my nerves, playing loud music and making all that noise. They're a disgrace.

Nick: Get away from that window before they see you. If they see that they can't get a rise out of us, they'll move along. What are you doing? What are you planning to do with that broom?

Lourdes: I'm going to use it to wave them off.

Nick: I wouldn't do that if I were you. Teenagers can be unpredictable. You don't know if a small slight might set them off. Insult them and you're asking for trouble.

Lourdes: I don't care. I'm doing it anyway.

Nick: Great! Now you have their attention. They're flipping us off!



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Lourdes: Yeah, well, two can play that game. Take that!

Nick: Are you crazy?!

Lourdes: No, I'm just giving as good as I get. Look what they're doing now!

Nick: They're mooning us!

Lourdes: Well, two can play that game, too!

Nick: What?! Are you nuts?! You can't moon them back.

Lourdes: Oh, no? Watch me!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Lourdes saying, "Do you see those teenagers over there? They're making trouble again." They're causing trouble; they're causing problems. Nick says, "Those kids are just messing around." "To mess (mess) around" means to do unimportant things, perhaps to have fun because you have nothing else to do, to be wasting your time doing silly things; this is messing around. Sometimes people will say, "Stop messing around," meaning stop wasting your time or stop making jokes perhaps. Messing around is usually considered harmless; that is, it isn't necessarily bothering or hurting anyone, or at least you don't intend (you don't try) to do that. Nick says, "When the teenagers get bored, they'll pipe down and go home." "To pipe (pipe) down" is another two-word phrasal verb meaning to be quiet, to stop making noise. This is something I'm sure my father often said to those of us in the backyard of our house, playing. There were many of us, of course. He would perhaps say, "Pipe down out there!" The word "pipe" has a couple of different meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Lourdes says that these teenagers are really getting on her nerves. "To get on (someone's) nerves" means to annoy or bother someone, to do something that will make someone angry or mad. Lourdes says playing loud music and making all that noise is getting on her nerves. "They're a disgrace." A "disgrace" (disgrace) is something that is very bad, something that is unacceptable, something that you cannot approve of; we might even use the word "shameful." That's a disgrace. She's saying these teenagers are a disgrace. It's a rather strong word to criticize someone.



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Nick says, “Get away from that window before they see you.” Lourdes is obviously looking out the window of their house at these teenagers playing outside. Nick says, “If they see that they can’t get a rise out of us, they’ll move along.” “To get a rise out of (someone)” means to get an angry reaction from someone, to make someone respond in a certain way. Usually, someone is trying to make you angry; they’re trying to get a rise out of you – they’re trying to get a response from you. Nick says if the teenagers see that they are not bothering us – that they can’t get a rise out of us – then they’ll leave. They’ll move along; go somewhere else. Nick then says, “What are you doing? What are you planning to do with that broom?” A “broom” is what you use to clean the floors. It has a long, usually wooden handle (a stick), and on the bottom are the things that you use to clean the floor; we would say “to sweep the floor.”

Apparently, Lourdes has a broom in her hand, and Nick is asking what she’s going to do with it. Lourdes says, “I’m going to use it to wave them off.” “To wave (someone) off” means to usually move your hand in the air to show that you want that person to leave (to go away). She’s going to use the broom to get the children to leave (to go somewhere else).

Nick says, “I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” meaning if I were in your position I would not do that, it’s not a good idea. “Teenagers,” he says, “can be unpredictable.” They may act in ways that you don’t expect. “You don’t know if a small slight might set them off.” A “slight” is a rude or disrespectful criticism, something that you say really to make the other person angry. “Slight” has a couple of different meanings however; that’s just one of them. The rest of them are found in our Learning Guide, where you can get some more explanations.

So, Nick is telling her that you don’t want to insult or anger these teenagers because that might set them off. “To set (someone) off” is another two-word verb meaning to make someone very angry, to cause someone to do something out of anger. He says, “Insult them and you’re asking for trouble.” “To insult (someone)” is to offend someone; that is, to do or say something that makes the other person angry and shows that you don’t have respect for them. So it’s a very severe, often personal criticism. The verb is “to *insult*,” the noun is “*insult*,” a difference in the way that we stress the different syllables. She is going to insult these teenagers, Nick believes, and he says that Lourdes is asking for trouble. “To ask for trouble” means to do something even though you know it’s going to create problems or make another person angry. Usually we try to avoid causing problems.

He’s saying that Lourdes is asking for trouble, she can expect there to be more problems if she does this. Lourdes says, “I don’t care. I’m doing it anyway.”



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Nick says, “Great! Now you have their attention,” meaning now they’re paying attention to you. “They’re flipping us off!” “To flip (someone) off” is, in an American context, to use your middle finger to insult someone. It’s a very vulgar, very insulting gesture, a way of using your hands to insult someone. That’s to flip someone off.

Lourdes says, “well, two can play at that game.” “Two can play at that game” is an expression that we use to show that if someone does something mean or bad to you, you’re going to do something mean or bad to them. This, of course, is not usually a good idea, but some people when they get angry, they do that, and they use this expression: “Two can play that game.” And, of course, what does she do? Well, she flips the teenagers off. She says, “Take that!” The expression “take that” is a phrase we use to emphasize what you are doing to another person, especially if you’re hurting them or hitting them or doing something to beat them in a competition. “Take that!” Sometimes it’s used playfully, but I don’t think that’s the meaning here.

Nick says, “Are you crazy?!” Lourdes says, “No, I’m just giving as good as I get.” “To give as good as you get” means that you do the same amount that someone does to you back to them. Usually it’s a negative behavior; you’re insulting them or you’re doing something bad to them. “To give as good as you get.” It’s similar to the phrase “two can play that game.”

“Look what they’re doing now,” Lourdes says. Nick says, “They’re mooning us!” “To moon (moon) (someone)” is an informal expression that means to pull your pants down and bend over and show someone your behind. For some reason, this became popular in the 1970s, briefly. I’m not sure why. I’m not sure what was in the water at that time! But, to moon someone is a very insulting, physical action – a gesture, if you will, using your body to insult them by showing them your behind. I will not moon you in this podcast – well, if I did, you couldn’t see me anyway!

Lourdes says, “Well, two can play that game, too (also)!” Nick says, “What?! Are you nuts?! You can’t moon them back.” Lourdes says, “Oh, no? Watch me!” “To be nuts” means to be crazy. Nick says, “Are you nuts (are you crazy)?! You cannot moon them back,” do the same thing that they did to her, and Lourdes says, “Watch me!” We use the expression “watch me” when you are going to do something that the other person doesn’t believe that you’re going to do. They can’t believe you’re going to that. Somebody says, “I’m going to go to the beach with my jacket on,” and the other person says, “Well, really? That’s crazy. I don’t believe you,” and the crazy person says, “Watch me,” meaning I’m going to do it even though you don’t believe me. So, Lourdes is a little – a little crazy here,



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letting the teenagers take control of her anger. Perhaps she just needs to step away from the window and relax!

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

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Nick: What?! Are you nuts?! You can't moon them back.



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Lourdes: Oh, no? Watch me!

[end of dialogue]

Thanks to our scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse, who never messes around at work – unlike me!

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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