



ESL Podcast 518 – Learning Self-Defense

GLOSSARY

self-defense – the physical skills and ability to protect oneself when one is attacked by another person or animal, so that one does not get hurt and/or can stop the attack

* Lex asked his wife and daughters to take a self-defense class, because he was worried they lived in a dangerous neighborhood.

to size up – to assess; to determine the characteristics of something, including how big or important it is

* The soccer players were looking toward the other team, sizing up the players.

harmless – not able to hurt oneself; unable to cause damage, usually because someone or something is very weak

* Most doctors think that drinking a glass of wine in the evening is harmless, but drinking an entire bottle may be bad for your health.

threatening – dangerous and scary or frightening; with the potential to cause injury, harm, pain, or damage

* Can you be sent to jail for saying threatening things against the president of the United States?

hand-to-hand combat – fighting between two people without using any weapons; fighting between two people using only their hands and bodies

* When they ran out of bullets, the soldiers began fighting through hand-to-hand combat.

to defend – to protect someone or something from attack by fighting against the attacker

* Is it better to try to defend yourself or run away from the danger?

martial art – one of many fighting styles from Asia where people learn to defend themselves without weapons, using only their body

* Have you studied any of the martial arts, like karate or judo?

to beat up – to hit another person many times to cause pain or injury

* Ahmed was beat up by a bigger boy at school today.

to confront – to deal with something directly, especially if it is scary or dangerous

* I think we should confront Maggie about her gambling problem.



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pumped up – very excited and interested; eager to do something

* The kids are really pumped up for our beach vacation next month.

adrenaline – a chemical made by the body when one is excited, frightened, or angry, increasing one's heart rate and breathing

* If a loud noise scares you, your heart starts beating more quickly because of the adrenaline in your blood.

to defuse – to make a dangerous situation safer; to make something become calmer

* The policeman tried to defuse the fight by shouting, "Everyone please stay calm."

to harass – to bother or annoy; to do something that makes another person's life more difficult or less pleasant

* The female employees felt harassed by the male employees' comments and jokes about their bodies and appearance.

to do some damage – to do something that has an impact and changes a situation, perhaps making it worse

* Wow, there's a lot of work to do today. Let's get started and do some damage.

mindset – a way of thinking about something; perspective

* Do you think Jim has the right mindset to finish this difficult job?

instinct – something that one knows naturally, without having studied or learned it; knowledge or feelings that one is born with

* How do birds know to fly south in the winter? Is it instinct, or do they learn it from other birds?

punch – the act of hitting a person or thing very hard with one's fist (closed hand)

* The boxer won the match with his first punch.

offense – the act of attacking another person or thing, especially when one has not been attacked first

* The company's sales team has a strong offense, always trying to take customers away from other companies.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What will the students be able to do once they've learned to size up a situation?
 - a) They'll know how big their opponent is.
 - b) They'll know how many fighters they need.
 - c) They'll know how dangerous a situation is.
2. What does Amy mean when she says, "I always trust my instincts"?
 - a) She already knows how to fight and doesn't need to take the class.
 - b) She always knows whether she's in a fighting situation.
 - c) She trusts in her physical abilities more than in other people.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to size up

The phrase "to size up," in this podcast, means to assess or determine the characteristics of something, including how big or important it is: "Everyone's trying to size up the new manager and figure out what kind of boss he'll be." The verb "to size" means to make something in a particular "size" (how big or small something is): "These t-shirts are sized from extra small to extra large." Something that is "life-sized" is as big or small in a photo or picture as it is in real life: "The crackers on the box are shown life-sized so that people can see their texture." Finally, something that is "bite-sized" can fit easily in one's mouth, without needing to be made smaller first: "Would you rather have one regular cookie or three bite-sized cookies?"

punch

In this podcast, the word "punch" means the act of hitting a person or thing very hard with one's fist (closed hand): "Her punches left him with a bloody lip and a black eye." The phrase "to pack a punch" means to have a big impact or to be very strong and influential: "That movie about the Holocaust really packs a punch!" The word "punch" also refers to a drink made from fruit juice, water or soda, and sugar: "Would you like a glass of punch or iced tea?" If the punch is "spiked," alcohol has been added to it: "Who spiked the punch? There wasn't supposed to be any alcohol at this party." Finally, the phrase "as pleased as punch" means very happy: "She was as pleased as punch when she found out she got the job."



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CULTURE NOTE

American companies sell many products for self-defense. Many women carry safety “whistles” (something that one blows into to make a loud, musical noise) on their “keychain” (the small metal circle that holds one’s keys). These whistles can be used to get others’ attention during an emergency.

People can also carry “pepper spray” or “mace” in a small “aerosol can” (with a special top for pushing out liquids under a lot of pressure, like hairspray). Pepper spray is a liquid that is very painful when it touches one’s skin or eyes. Under attack, people can use pepper spray to make the attacker stop “advancing” (coming closer). Pepper spray is often sold in small cans that can be put on one’s keychain.

A “stun gun” is a device that produces an electric shock. Most stun guns have “variable settings” (something that one can change from low to high), where the lowest setting might just be “annoying” (bothersome, but not painful or dangerous) and the highest setting might be “disabling” (making it impossible for a person to move). The stun gun is held next to a person’s skin and can be quite painful. Some stun guns look like regular guns, but others are made to look like cell phones, so that people never “suspect” (think they know) what they really are.

Other people carry “pocket knives” (knives that fold and can be put in one’s pocket) for self-defense. A “switchblade” is a special type of pocket knife that can be opened very quickly by pushing a button.

Pepper spray, stun guns, and switchblades are “illegal” (against the law) in certain parts of the country, so it is always a good idea to learn about the local laws before carrying these or other self-defense products.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 518: Learning Self-Defense.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 518. 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 today to download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your looks and your English even faster!

This episode is called "Learning Self-Defense." It's a dialogue between a teacher and a student. The student is learning how she can defend herself against other people who may try to harm or hurt her, but she isn't a very good student. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Teacher: Welcome, everybody, to this self-defense class. Today, you'll learn how to size up a situation and how to tell the difference between a harmless situation and a threatening one. You'll also begin to learn some hand-to-hand combat moves to defend yourselves.

Amy: Oh, good. I can't wait to learn some martial arts so I can beat up anyone who tries anything.

Teacher: Well, the best thing we can do in a dangerous situation is to avoid having to fight. It's not a good idea to confront someone pumped up on adrenaline. If you can defuse the situation or run away, that would be the best strategy.

Amy: All right, but if someone is harassing me, I want to be ready to do some damage.

Teacher: I'm not sure if that's the right mindset...

Amy: I always trust my instincts. If my intuition tells me that someone may be dangerous, I want to get in the first punch.

Teacher: Whoa, that's not the purpose of this class. You're here to learn defense, remember?



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Amy: Yes, but you know what they say: The best defense is a good offense!

[end of dialogue]

We begin with the teacher saying, “Welcome, everybody, to this self-defense class.” “Self-defense” are the physical skills to protect yourself when someone is attacking you or perhaps you are being attacked by an animal, but usually it refers to being attacked by another person – another human being. Self-defense allows you to protect yourself so that you don’t get hurt. The teachers says that today, you’ll learn how to size up a situation. “To size up” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to assess, to determine the characteristics of something including how important it is, or how big it is, or how serious it is. To size up a situation is to be able to look at the situation and decide what its characteristics are: is this important, is this not important, is this person angry, are they not angry, and so forth. For more meanings of this word “size,” take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

The teacher says the students are also going to learn how to tell the difference (how to distinguish) between a harmless situation and a threatening one. “Harmless” is the opposite of “harm,” harm means to hurt someone or something. If you say something is “harmless,” you mean that it cannot hurt anything or anyone. Here, we’re talking about a harmless situation, a situation that is not dangerous versus a threatening one. “To threaten,” as a verb, means to say or do something to another person so that they are scared or frightened; usually you’re saying that you’re going to hurt them. “If you don’t be quiet, I’m going to punch you in the mouth (I’m going to hit you with my fist),” that is to threaten someone. So, “threatening” (with an “ing”) means a dangerous, scary, or frightening situation.

The teachers says, “You’ll also begin to learn some hand-to-hand combat moves to defend yourself.” “Hand-to-hand combat” is when you have two people fighting without any weapons – two people fighting, typically, with just their hands. Sometimes people use it to mean just two people fighting, perhaps one might have a weapon, but the idea is that you have these two people fighting each other, not with guns usually. “Combat” is merely another word for fight. Here, the students are going to learn some hand-to-hand combat moves. A “move” is a way that you would move your body; it’s a noun, a “move.” You’re doing something with your body, moving your arms and legs in a certain way, perhaps. “To defend yourself” means to protect yourself, to make sure that no one else hurts you.



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Amy, the students, says, “Oh, good. I can’t wait to learn some martial arts so I can beat up anyone who tries anything.” Amy says she can’t wait; she is very eager to begin learning some martial arts. “Martial arts” are the fighting styles, most of which come from Asia, where people learn to defend themselves without weapons, using only their body. Karate, Judo, Kung Fu – these are all examples of martial arts – Tae Kwon Do, and others. “To beat up (someone)” or “to beat (someone) up” is another one of those two-word phrasal verbs; this one means to hit someone, usually to hit them many times so that you have hurt them a great deal – cause them a lot of pain or even injury. Amy wants to beat up somebody using the martial arts that she’s learning in class. She wants to be up anyone who “tries anything,” meaning anyone who tries, in this case, to hurt her.

The teacher said, “Well, the best thing we can do in a dangerous situation is to avoid having to fight,” you don’t want to have to fight. “It’s not a good idea,” he says, “to confront someone pumped up on adrenaline. “To confront” usually means to deal directly with someone, especially if that person is dangerous. To confront someone, in this case, may be to tell someone to go away or to tell this person that you are going to fight them unless they leave, something like that; that would be to confront someone. You can also confront someone in a non-fighting way; you may need to talk to one of your employees or someone who works for you, and you need to talk to them about something they did wrong. You will go up and confront them about the problem. Maybe they lied, maybe they didn’t do their job, and so forth. So that can also be confronting someone.

The teachers says, “It’s not a good idea to confront someone pumped up on adrenaline.” “To be pumped up” means to be very excited, very interested, very eager to do something. “Adrenaline” is a chemical the body makes when you are excited, frightened, or angry; it usually makes your heart beat faster (go faster) and your breathing faster. To be pumped up on adrenaline can be a dangerous thing because this person may be interested and eager to fight you, so you don’t want to confront them. “If you can defuse the situation,” he says, “or run away, that would be the best strategy.” “To defuse (defuse) a situation” means to make it less dangerous, to make it safer. Now, if you can’t defuse a situation you can also “run away,” just leave the place where you are.

Amy says, “All right, but if someone is harassing me, I want to be ready to do some damage.” “To harass” (harass) means to bother or annoy someone. Here, it usually means to makes someone’s life difficult; maybe they’re yelling at you, they’re doing things that make you uncomfortable. Amy wants to be able to do some damage to someone who is harassing her. “To do some damage” means to do something that will change a situation; in this case, to hurt someone.



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The teacher says, “I’m not sure if that’s the right mindset.” A “mindset” (one word) is a way of thinking about something; another word for this is “perspective.” The teacher says I’m not sure that you, Amy, have the right mindset. Amy says, “I always trust my instincts.” Your “instincts” are things that you know naturally, without having studied them or learned them. It’s sort of like knowledge you are born with. Amy says, “If my intuition (which is another word for “instincts”) tells me that someone may be dangerous, I want to get in the first punch.” A “punch” is an act of hitting a person or a thing very hard with your closed fist – with your closed hand. “To get in the first punch” means you want to be the first person to throw a punch; notice we use the verb “to throw a punch,” to hit someone. You don’t want to wait until somebody hits you first; you want to get in the first punch or you want to throw the first punch.

The teacher says, “Whoa (meaning calm down, wait a minute), that’s not the purpose of this class. You’re here to learn defense, remember?” Amy says, “Yes, but you know what they say: The best defense is a good offense!” “Offense” is the opposite of defense; offense would be to attack another person or a thing, even though they have not attacked you. Amy quotes an old saying: “The best defense is a good offense,” meaning the best way to defend yourself is to attack the other person first. The teacher, I am guessing, does not agree with Amy’s mindset!

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

[start of dialogue]

Teacher: Welcome, everybody, to this self-defense class. Today, you’ll learn how to size up a situation and how to tell the difference between a harmless situation and a threatening one. You’ll also begin to learn some hand-to-hand combat moves to defend yourselves.

Amy: Oh, good. I can’t wait to learn some martial arts so I can beat up anyone who tries anything.

Teacher: Well, the best thing we can do in a dangerous situation is to avoid having to fight. It’s not a good idea to confront someone pumped up on adrenaline. If you can defuse the situation or run away, that would be the best strategy.

Amy: All right, but if someone is harassing me, I want to be ready to do some damage.



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Teacher: I'm not sure if that's the right mindset...

Amy: I always trust my instincts. If my intuition tells me that someone may be dangerous, I want to get in the first punch.

Teacher: Whoa, that's not the purpose of this class. You're here to learn defense, remember?

Amy: Yes, but you know what they say: The best defense is a good offense!

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by someone who has great instincts about writing, 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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