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**ESL Podcast 526 – Talking About Age**

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**GLOSSARY**

**decrepit** – falling apart because something or someone is too old and no longer works correctly

\* They want to move out of their decrepit apartment building, but they don't have enough money to move somewhere nicer.

**in the prime of (one's) life** – living in the best period of one's life, when one is happy, healthy, and having fun; the best years in one's life

\* In the prime of her life, she spent several years traveling throughout North and South America.

**middle age** – not young or old, maybe 45-55 years old

\* This store has a lot of clothing for women who are middle age, but not for teenagers or people in their 20s.

**perspective** – point of view; a way of looking at things; a way of understanding the world

\* Americans who have lived in other countries often have a different perspective on American culture than people who have always lived in the United States.

**spring chicken** – an informal term for a young person

\* Most of the runners competing in the race are spring chickens, but a few of them are much older.

**angst** – feelings of worry, uncertainty, and discomfort, usually because one doesn't know what will happen next

\* The school principal said that some students try to hurt themselves when they are experiencing teenage angst.

**mature** – adult; grown and no longer a child

\* When I was younger, something like that might have made me angry, but now I usually have a more mature response.

**insecurity** – a feeling of not knowing what one should do or how one should act; a lack of self-confidence

\* Most teenage girls feel insecurity about their changing body.

**uncertainty** – a feeling of not knowing what will happen or what one should do; a feeling of not knowing what one should decide

\* There's a lot of uncertainty in their lives right now, because Hank still hasn't decided which job to accept.



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**awkwardness** – a feeling of being uncomfortable and not knowing what to say or what to do with one's body

\* Hattie showed a lot of awkwardness when she was learning how to ride a bike.

**teenage** – related to people between the ages of 13 and 19

\* Our grandparents think teenage music just sounds like a lot of loud noise. They don't even think it should be called music!

**nostalgic** – remembering things from the past and wishing that one could do or experience them again, or wishing that things were like they used to be

\* Whenever I smell apple pie, I get nostalgic and begin thinking about spending time in my mother's kitchen when I was a child.

**innocence** – the state of not knowing very much about the real world, especially about bad things that happen

\* The six-year-old boy's innocence was destroyed when he saw the murder happen.

**skydiving** – a sport of jumping out a plane with a parachute (a large piece of fabric) to slow down one's fall

\* He has a terrible fear of heights and would never go skydiving.

**to kick the bucket** – to die; to pass away; to no longer be living

\* When I finally kick the bucket, I hope I'm surrounded by family and friends.



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. What does Gabby mean when she talks about “the innocence of youth”?
    - a) The way that everything is new for young people.
    - b) The way that young people are honest and don’t lie.
    - c) The way that young people haven’t broken the law.
  
  2. What does Gabby mean when she says, “I’m not ready to kick the bucket yet”?
    - a) She’s scared of heights.
    - b) She’s scared of dying.
    - c) She’s scared of flying.
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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**mature**

The word “mature,” in this podcast, means adult, or grown and no longer a child: “Tana has always been very mature for her age, preferring to read the newspaper rather than play outside with other kids.” When talking about plants, the word “mature” means fully grown: “We love having two mature apple trees in the backyard.” When talking about business or economics, a “mature” industry is one where there is a small number of strong companies, but not very much sales growth: “When did automobiles become a mature industry?” Finally, as a verb, “to mature” means for a financial investment to become old enough that one can exchange it for money and be paid: “These bonds will mature in 15 years.”

**innocence**

In this podcast, the word “innocence” means the state of not knowing very much about the real world, especially about bad things that happen: “I wish our children could keep their innocence forever, never learning about hardship and death.” The phrase “in all innocence” is used to describe one’s actions when one has hurt another person but didn’t mean to: “In all innocence, I offered Jim a glass of wine, not knowing that he’s a recovering alcoholic.” The word “innocence” also means not being guilty, not having committed a crime, or not having done something against the law: “He was arrested for stealing money, but throughout the entire trial, he kept trying to prove his innocence by saying that someone else must have stolen the money.”



## **CULTURE NOTE**

Americans use many words to talk about babies and young children. A “premature baby,” often called a “preemie,” is a baby who is born before 37 weeks of “gestation” (the amount of time spent inside a pregnant woman’s body), where the normal gestation is 40 weeks. Most preemies are very small and, depending on how early they were born, they may have “severe” (very bad and serious) “developmental problems” (difficulties in growing older as other children do).

A baby that is born “full-term” (after at least 38 weeks of pregnancy) is simply called a “newborn” for the first few days or weeks. When the newborn is around four weeks old, he or she is no longer a newborn, and is instead called a baby or an “infant.” These terms are generally used for many months, at least until the infant is one year old or until he or she is “crawling” (moving with one’s hands and knees touching the floor).

Once children learn to walk, some people call them “wobblers,” where “to wobble” means to walk in a very unsteady way, “losing one’s footing” (not being able to stand on one’s feet) and falling down. Once children are able to walk better, they are called “toddlers,” usually between the ages of one and three.

When children are two years old, people often say that they are in their “terrible twos,” because two-year-olds tend to have a lot of “temper tantrums” (moments where children become very angry and kick and scream) and can be very difficult for parents to control.

As children become older, they are referred to by whatever year they are in at school. Most three- and four-year-olds are called “preschoolers,” five-year-olds are called “kindergartners,” six-year-olds are called first-graders, and so on.

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 526: Talking About Age.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 526. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

You can visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com). Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode. Consider becoming a member of ESL Podcast or sending a donation to help support this free audio service.

This episode is called "Talking About Age." It's dialogue between Gabby and Cherif. It's going to be using a lot of vocabulary that we use to describe how old someone is. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Gabby: Another birthday! I'm going to stop celebrating. What's there to celebrate – getting old and decrepit?

Cherif: Are you kidding me? We're in the prime of our lives. Who's decrepit? I'm not.

Gabby: If I'm in my prime, then why do I feel so middle age?

Cherif: It's a matter of perspective. It's true that we're not spring chickens anymore, but who wants all of the angst of youth? Not me. I like living these mature years without the insecurity and uncertainty of youth.

Gabby: It's not that. I don't miss the awkwardness of my teenage years, and I definitely don't miss the struggles I had to go through in my 20s. What I miss is the excitement of seeing and experiencing things for the first time. If I'm nostalgic, then I'm nostalgic for the innocence of youth.

Cherif: Come on. There's nothing stopping you from seeing and trying new things now. Don't tell me that you've seen and done everything.

Gabby: No, I haven't.



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Cherif: Then you'll come with me next Saturday, and I guarantee you a new experience.

Gabby: What new experience?

Cherif: Have you ever tried skydiving?

Gabby: No, I haven't and I don't plan to now. I may be old, but I'm not ready to kick the bucket yet!

[end of dialogue]

Gabby begins by saying to Cherif, "Another birthday! I'm going to stop celebrating. What's there to celebrate – getting old and decrepit?" Gabby is obviously not too happy because it's her birthday. She doesn't want to celebrate – she doesn't want to have a party or be happy because there's nothing to be happy about. She says, "What's there to celebrate – getting old and decrepit?" "Decrepit" (decrepit) means when someone is getting very old, or something is getting very old and it stops working or it is falling apart, we would say that it's decrepit. This old bookcase I have that holds all of my books, it's old and decrepit, it's starting to fall down.

Cherif says, "Are you kidding me? We're in the prime of our lives." "To be in the prime (prime) of your life" means to be living in the best period of your life, when you're happy and healthy and having fun. To be in the prime of your life means to be in the best years of your life. Gabby says, "If I'm in my prime, then why do I feel so middle age?" "Middle age" depends on the country and the period of history you're in. Nowadays, middle age is someone who's not young but not old, maybe between 45 and 55 or 40 and 60. It depends on how old you are, whether you think you're middle age. I think I'm definitely middle age!

Cherif says, "It's a matter of perspective." "Perspective," here, means it's a matter of the way you look at things, your point of view. This is a common expression: "it's a matter of perspective," meaning it's an issue of perspective. Cherif says, "It's true that we're not spring chickens anymore." A "spring chicken" is an informal term, sort of an old-fashioned term for a young person. Cherif is probably using it here to be sort of funny, because we don't hear that expression very often. But a spring chicken would be a young chicken – a young person. He says, "who wants all of the angst of youth? Not me." "Angst" (angst) is when you're worried, when you're uncertain. You don't know what's going to happen next, so you feel uncomfortable; that's angst. He says he doesn't want the angst of youth, "I like living these mature years without the insecurity and uncertainty of



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youth.” If we’re describing someone as “mature,” here it means someone who is an adult, someone is grown up and no longer a child. “Maturity” has a couple of different meanings – the word “mature.” Take a look at the Learning Guide for some more explanations.

Cherif says that living in these mature years, he doesn’t have insecurity and uncertainty. “To be insecure” means to be not secure. In English, sometimes we put the word “in” in front of a word to mean “not,” sometimes we put the letters “un” – technically, the prefix “un” in front of a word to mean “not,” it depends on the word. This word is “insecurity,” it means not feeling secure; in this case, not knowing how to act, not having confidence. “Uncertainty” means not certain, meaning you don’t know what’s going to happen next. You don’t know what you should do, how you should live your life; this would be uncertainty. So, being mature means not being insecure and not being uncertain, or secure and certain.

Gabby says, “It’s not that,” meaning that’s not why she feels sad. She says, “I don’t miss the awkwardness of my teenage years.” “Awkwardness” is a feeling of being uncomfortable, of not knowing what to say, perhaps not knowing what to do with your body. People who are teenagers, someone between the ages of 13 and 19, often are sometimes awkward; they’re uncomfortable, their body is growing, they may not feel comfortable in the way they talk or the way they look. This is not uncommon for teenagers. Gabby says she doesn’t miss the awkwardness of her teenage years – notice we use it as an adjective to mean the time I was a teenager. She says, “I definitely don’t miss the struggles I had to go through in my 20s. What I miss is the excitement of seeing and experiencing things for the first time.” She says, “If I’m nostalgic, then I’m nostalgic for the innocence of youth.” “To be nostalgic” (nostalgic) means to remember things from your past and wishing, perhaps, that you could do those things again or experience those things again. I’m sometimes nostalgic for the years that I was in graduate school, when I was studying for my degree after I finished my bachelor’s degree. It seemed to be, now, a wonderful time, although when I was there, at that time, hmm, not so much. But now that I’m older, I think, “Oh, those were wonderful years.” Actually, I think these are wonderful years, too, so I’m not that nostalgic. Well, Gabby says she’s nostalgic for the innocence of youth. “Innocence” is a state where you may not know very much about the real world – about the bad things that happen in the world. We often think of young children as being in an “age of innocence.” “Innocent” has many different meanings, and you know where to go to find out those meanings. The Learning Guide, that’s right!

Cherif says, “Come on. There’s nothing stopping you from seeing and trying new things now. “Come on” is here used to mean don’t be silly or that’s not the right



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view. He says, “Don’t tell me that you’ve seen and done everything.” Cherif is saying there’s lots of new things in life to experience. Gabby says, “No, I haven’t.” Cherif then says, “Then you’ll come with me next Saturday, and I guarantee you a new experience.” Cherif is going to show Gabby something she has not experienced before. Gabby says, “What new experience?” Cherif says, “Have you ever tried skydiving?” “Skydiving” is when you jump out of an airplane with a “parachute,” which is a large piece of fabric – of material that helps you slow down your fall. To parachute out of a plane means to jump out of a plane as it’s high above the ground, and then you have your parachute that helps you come down to the ground slowly. We also call that skydiving.

Gabby says, “No, I haven’t and I don’t plan to now,” meaning I don’t plan to skydive now. “I may be old,” she says, “but I’m not ready to kick the bucket yet!” The expression “to kick the bucket” means to die, to pass away, to no longer be living. She’s making a joke here, saying that if she tried skydiving she could kill herself, and she’s not ready to die – she’s not ready to kick the bucket. It’s an informal expression.

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

[start of dialogue]

Gabby: Another birthday! I’m going to stop celebrating. What’s there to celebrate – getting old and decrepit?

Cherif: Are you kidding me? We’re in the prime of our lives. Who’s decrepit? I’m not.

Gabby: If I’m in my prime, then why do I feel so middle age?

Cherif: It’s a matter of perspective. It’s true that we’re not spring chickens anymore, but who wants all of the angst of youth? Not me. I like living these mature years without the insecurity and uncertainty of youth.

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[end of dialogue]

The script today was written by somebody in the prime of her life, 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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