



ESL Podcast 397 – Being a Divorced Parent

GLOSSARY

single parent – a mother or father who is raising a child alone, without the help of the other parent, usually because the parents never married or are divorced, or because one parent died

* As a single parent, Amanda has to act as both the mother and father for her children.

civil – polite; not rude, but not friendly either

* Ingrid is always very civil to her colleagues, but she is never very friendly toward them.

joint custody – a legal arrangement made during a divorce where each parent agrees to live with the child for a certain amount of time each year

* They have joint custody of their son: he lives with his mom during the week and with his dad on holidays and most weekends.

quality time – time that is spent with another person, really paying attention to each other and enjoying each other's company

* They spend a lot of time together, but it isn't really quality time because they're usually just watching TV.

adjustment – a change; an adaptation to a new situation; getting used to a new situation

* Learning how to use the new version of this software program has been a difficult adjustment for me.

visitation rights – the rules regarding when a parent can see his or her child while the child is staying in the other parent's home

* If you keep using drugs, you will lose your visitation rights and never see your daughter again!

If you don't mind my asking... – a polite phrase used when one wants to know something that normally isn't shared because it is too private or personal

* If you don't mind my asking, how much money do you make?

financially – related to money, especially how much money one has or how much money one spends

* We're doing well financially, with enough money saved up to send Jenny to a good four-year university.



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alimony – a payment, usually monthly, made from one spouse to another after a divorce so that he or she has enough money to live comfortably

* Raheem has to pay \$1,700 in alimony to his ex-wife each month.

child support – a payment, usually monthly, made from one spouse to another after a divorce so that he or she has enough money to raise the children

* Does your ex-husband send you enough child support to buy clothes and food for the kids?

objection – a reason that one states for not doing something, or for not wanting to do something

* A vacation in Hawaii would be wonderful, but my only objection is that I think it will be too expensive.

amenable – willing to do something; thinking that something is a good idea

* I'm amenable to doing whatever you want to do on our date tomorrow night.

to act out – to behave poorly, usually to get attention; to misbehave

* Ever since his mom died, Charlie has been acting out in school, fighting with the other students.

supportive – helpful; providing assistance and guidance; helping someone in a difficult situation

* Wendy was very supportive when Blake had cancer, always visiting him and cooking for him.

stability – the condition of not changing; the condition of always being the same or similar

* We have to stop moving so much! The kids need more stability in their lives.

under the circumstances – given the current situation; considering all the factors

* Normally that home would have sold for \$550,000, but the housing market is falling, so under the circumstances I think they were lucky to have sold it for \$480,000.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Penny a single parent?
 - a) Because she has only one child.
 - b) Because she never got married.
 - c) Because she got a divorce.

2. What has been an adjustment for Mina?
 - a) Spending quality time with her parents.
 - b) Getting child support but not alimony.
 - c) Living with each parent at a different time.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

civil

The word “civil,” in this podcast, means polite but not friendly: “Rebecca doesn’t like her neighbor, but she is always civil to him, saying ‘good morning’ when she passes him on the street.” The word “civil” is also used to talk about people or things that are not part of the military: “Andrew isn’t a soldier, but he works for the army in a civil job.” “Civil” also refers to people or things that are not related to religion: “Did you two get married in a church, or did you have a civil ceremony?” Finally, the word “civil” can be used to refer to all the people who live in a country: “The U.S. Civil War was fought between the North and South.”

to act out

In this podcast, the phrase “to act out” means to behave poorly, usually to get attention: “When the student began acting out in the classroom, her teacher spoke with her parents to try to understand why.” The phrase “to act on (something)” means to do something because of advice or a recommendation that one received: “Acting on the banker’s advice, we opened a less expensive checking account.” The phrase “to act up” means for something to not work as it should: “My knee has been acting up ever since I got in that car accident.” Or, “If your car is still acting up, you can pay to get it fixed.” Finally, the phrase “to act (one’s) age” means to stop acting like a child and begin acting more responsibly: “You need to act your age and stop playing with dolls!”



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CULTURE NOTE

When a married “couple” (two people) want to get a “divorce” (a legal end to a marriage), they often have many disagreements. If they cannot decide the “terms” (legal details) of the divorce by themselves, then they have to go to a divorce court.

Divorce courts are mostly “concerned with” (interested in) two things: the distribution of “assets” (things that can be sold for money) and care of the children. If there is a “prenuptial agreement,” or an agreement that was signed by the husband and wife before they were married, then the judge will simply make sure that that agreement is followed. If there is no prenuptial agreement, then the judge will help the divorcing couple decide who should get which assets.

A couple’s assets might include the family’s home, cars, and “valuables” (things worth a lot of money). In addition, the divorce court can “mandate” (say that something must happen) that one spouse pay alimony to the other spouse. Alimony is often paid when one spouse worked and made money while the other spouse stayed home and took care of the children.

Regarding custody, divorce courts should “act in the best interest of” the children (do what is best for the children). If both parents can and want to take care of the children, then the court “grants” (gives) joint custody. If only one parent is able to care for the children, the court grants him or her sole custody. The court can also “rule on” (decide) the parents’ visitation rights and child support payments. In the past, the mother was usually given sole custody of children after a divorce, but now joint custody is more common and sometimes fathers are given sole custody.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 397: Being a Divorced Parent.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 397. 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 to download a Learning Guide for this episode. Our Learning Guides contain all of the vocabulary, definitions, new sample sentences using the words that we discuss in the episode, additional explanations not found on the audio podcast, cultural notes, comprehension checks, and a complete transcript of every word we say on this episode. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, where we have some additional business and personal English courses we think you will be interested in.

This episode is called "Being a Divorced Parent." It's a dialogue between Oscar and Penny, talking about the problems, the sometimes difficulties, of being a parent, taking care of your son or daughter, when you are divorced – when you have legally separated from your husband or wife. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Oscar: How are you adjusting to being a single parent?

Penny: It hasn't been easy, but Paul and I are trying to be as civil as possible. We worked out joint custody so that Mina will get quality time with both of us. Still, it's been an adjustment for her.

Oscar: I'm sure, and for you and Paul, too. Will you get to see Mina when she's with her father?

Penny: We each have visitation rights. Fortunately, Paul and I both want what's best for Mina, so we're working hard to make the right decisions.

Oscar: If you don't mind my asking, how are you managing financially?

Penny: Neither of us is paying alimony to the other so that was never an issue, but Paul will be paying child support since I'll have Mina most of the year. Paul had no objections. He's been amenable to anything that would be good for Mina.



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Oscar: How has Mina been reacting to the whole thing?

Penny: She has been acting out, which is to be expected. Paul's parents and my mother have been very supportive, and we're all trying to give her as much stability as possible.

Oscar: It sounds like you're doing all you can.

Penny: We're trying our best, under the circumstances.

[end of dialogue]

Oscar begins by saying to Penny, "How are you adjusting to being a single parent?" "How are you adjusting?" – how are you getting along; how are you changing in this circumstance – in this situation? A "single parent" is a parent, a father or a mother, who is taking care of their child or children by themselves either because they never married or they were married and divorced, or perhaps one parent has died.

Penny says, "It hasn't been easy, but Paul and I are trying to be as civil as possible." Paul is Penny's husband; they're trying to be as civil (civil) as possible. "Civil" means to, in this case, be polite, not rude – not friendly either, just not mean, not rude. "Civil" has a couple of different meanings in English; look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Penny says, "We worked out joint custody." "We worked out," here, means we negotiated; we came to an agreement for "joint custody." Something that is "joint" is between two people or two organizations. "Custody" refers to who takes care of the children. "Joint custody," then, is a legal arrangement – a legal agreement when two parents decide to divorce, where each parent agrees to live with the child, or the child lives with the parent, for a certain amount of time. Perhaps the mother takes care of the child during the week, and the father takes care of the child on the weekends. Or, one month the child is here, another month the child is with the other parent.

Penny and Paul worked out joint custody so that their daughter, Mina, "will get quality time with both of us." The term "quality time," here, means the time that you are with another person but that you are really paying attention to each other, enjoying each other's conversation and company. "We need to spend quality time together," a wife may say to her husband, meaning we can't just sit down and watch television, we need to go and talk, and perhaps do something together that would allow us to get to know each other better or to love each



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other better. This is quality time. A parent can have quality time with his or her children.

Penny says, “Still (even though), it’s been an adjustment for her” – for her daughter. An “adjustment” is a change, an adaptation. Remember, Oscar began the dialogue by asking, “How are you adjusting to being a single parent?” Oscar says, “I’m sure (“I’m sure it is an adjustment,” he’s saying). Will you get to see Mina when she’s with her father?” Penny says, “We each have visitation rights.” This is another expression used when talking about divorced parents. To “visit” means to go and be with someone, usually someone who’s in another place – in another house, for example. “Visitation” is the act of going and visiting someone else. Your “rights” are things that you are allowed to do. So, “visitation rights” refer to rules that the parents agree to, where a parent can go see the child even though the child is at the other parent’s house.

Penny says, “Fortunately, Paul and I both want what’s best for Mina, so we’re working hard to make the right decisions.” Oscar says, “If you don’t mind me asking, how are you managing financially?” The expression “if you don’t mind me asking” is a polite way of asking someone something that perhaps is normally private or personal. If someone says, “If you don’t mind me asking, how much do you make every year at your job?” Well, that’s considered a very personal question, at least in the United States, so if you wanted to ask someone that you would probably have to begin by saying “if you don’t mind me asking.” Notice the verb here, “to mind,” means to be bothered, to be upset. So, he’s asking, “If you are not upset by my question (if it is okay for me to ask this question), how are you managing (how are you doing) financially?” “Financially” refers to money – how much money do you have; do you have enough money for what you need?

Penny says, “Neither of us is paying alimony to the other.” “Alimony” (alimony) is money that one spouse in a marriage, either the husband or the wife, pays the other spouse in order to have enough money to live on. So, if a husband and wife get divorced sometimes the agreement will be that the husband has to give the wife 2,000 dollars a months so the wife has enough money to live on. Not every divorce has an alimony agreement. Penny and Paul do not pay alimony to each other, but Paul is paying child support. “Child support” is a little different from alimony. Child support is money that one parent gives to the other parent to help pay for the child’s – the child’s education, the child’s food, clothing, etc. So, if a husband and wife divorce, the father may have to pay child support to his ex-wife – his former wife – so the wife has money to take care of their child. This is often something that is legally required. In most states, if a father doesn’t pay, or a mother doesn’t pay child support to the other parent, that can cause problems – legal problems. It is against the law, if you are required to give child support,



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not to pay. This typically, at least historically, has happened between the father and the mother – that is, the father pays child support to the mother, but it could also happen the other way.

So, Penny says that her husband – her ex-husband – is paying child support. “Paul has no objections.” An “objection” would be a reason for not wanting to do something. But Paul says he has no objection; he thinks this is a good idea. “He’s been amenable to anything that would be good for Mina.” To be “amenable” (amenable) means to be willing to do something, to think that something is a good idea. This is what I say to my wife, “I’m amenable to doing anything you want, my love, my darling, my dear!”

Oscar asks how Mina has been reacting to the whole thing – how she has reacted to the situation. Penny says Mina has been acting out. To “act out,” when we are talking about a child, means to behave poorly, to do something that the parent doesn’t like – to “misbehave,” we would say. That’s to act out. They may be yelling, they may be crying, they may be not doing what the parent tells them to do.

Penny says, “Paul’s parents and my mother have been very supportive.” To be “supportive,” in this case, means to be helpful; to provide assistance to someone, to give help to someone. Penny says, “we’re all trying to give Mina as much stability as possible.” “Stability” is a situation or condition where things don’t change; things stay the same. So, they are trying to create a stable situation for Mina so that she doesn’t go through a lot of changes, which can be difficult for a young child in this situation.

Oscar says, “It sounds like you’re doing all you can.” Penny says, “We’re trying our best, under the circumstances.” The expression “under the circumstances” means given the current situation. Usually we use this expression when we’re saying well, this isn’t the best situation, but it’s something that we are trying to deal with, trying to do the best we can. “Under the circumstances” – under the difficulties that this causes.

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

[start of dialogue]

Oscar: How are you adjusting to being a single parent?



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Penny: She has been acting out, which is to be expected. Paul's parents and my mother have been very supportive, and we're all trying to give her as much stability as possible.

Oscar: It sounds like you're doing all you can.

Penny: We're trying our best, under the circumstances.

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by Dr. Lucy Tse, who's always amenable to your suggestions!

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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