



ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

GLOSSARY

to make (someone) sick – to make someone very angry or jealous; to cause strong negative emotions

* It makes me sick to know that he has been lying to us for so long.

to bust (one's) butt – to work very hard; to do a lot of work

* Heather busts her butt at the office all day long and expects the house to be clean and dinner to be ready when she gets home.

to be born with a silver spoon in (one's) mouth – to be born into a rich family; to grow up in a family with a lot of money and privileges

* Shannon was born with a silver spoon in her mouth and didn't have to get a job until she was in her late 20s.

to pull (oneself) up by (one's) bootstraps – to work very hard to improve one's situation in life, without receiving help from other people

* When Hans came to this country, he had only \$20, but he pulled himself up by his bootstraps and became a successful businessman and homeowner.

pleasantly surprised – having received information that one was not expecting, but that is good and positive

* We were pleasantly surprised when the store's owner apologized for the mistake by giving us a \$100 gift card.

blue blood – a person who belongs to the richest, most powerful, and most highly respected part of society; a person who is part of the elite upper class

* They spent the weekend with other blue bloods, going to horse races and sailing on yachts, spending thousands of dollars without even thinking about it.

privilege – advantage; something that one has or does when most other people do not

* These days, a good education is often a privilege, but many people believe that everyone should have access to a good education, no matter where they live or how much money they have.

old money – wealth that has been in a family for a long time; money that has been passed from one generation to another

* The Rockefeller family has old money from the oil business.



ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

to do no wrong – to be unable to make a mistake or error; for one's mistakes and errors to be forgiven, ignored, or overlooked by other people

* Most parents think their children can do no wrong and get angry if anyone criticizes them.

to hold (someone) accountable – to make someone be responsible for his or her actions and accept the consequences; to punish or reward someone for what he or she has done

* If we break the law, we'll be held accountable and forced to pay a fine and/or spend time in jail.

to get a break – to have an unusual opportunity to do something, often because the situation changed; to have good luck and be able to do something

* Pierre is working so hard to sell his artwork. If he could just get a break, I'm sure he'd become famous.

wrong side of the tracks – in an undesirable part of town, where people are poorer and the houses aren't as nice, often where there is a lot of crime

* As a teenager, Maggie wasn't allowed to date anyone from the wrong side of the tracks.

white trash – an informal, rude phrase used to refer to Caucasian (light-skinned) people who are poor, have little education, and have bad jobs or are unemployed

* Hugo's family is white trash and none of his relatives have finished high school.

So what? – a phrase used to show that something isn't important or relevant

* She has a degree from a good university, but so what? If she doesn't have any professional experience, she isn't qualified for the job.

to pay (one's) dues – to spend a long period of time working in unimportant, low-paying jobs before one can get a better job in a business or organization

* John paid his dues for six years in the mailroom before he was finally promoted within the company.

to get used to (something) – to become accustomed to something; for something to begin to seem normal, common, or ordinary

* When Edna moved to Malaysia, it took her a long time to get used to the food.

not on your life – an informal phrase used to mean that something is impossible and will not happen under any circumstances



ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

- * - Are you going to Yuki's party tonight?
- Not on your life! I don't like spending time with her friends.
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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Andy mean when he says, "We bust our butts around here"?
 - a) They work really hard at the office.
 - b) Their jobs include a lot of physical exercise.
 - c) The employees were keeping a secret.
 2. What is a "blue blood"?
 - a) A person who is very cold-hearted.
 - b) A person who is not generous.
 - c) A person from a wealthy family.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to make (someone) sick

The phrase "to make (someone) sick," in this podcast, means to make someone very angry or jealous, or to cause someone to feel strong negative emotions: "It makes me sick to hear you say such mean things about your own parents." The phrase "to make (someone) sick (to one's stomach)" means to make someone nauseous and maybe to make someone vomit or throw up: "When Becca was pregnant, the smell of meat made her sick to her stomach." The phrase "to be sick and tired of (something)" means to be very bored with something that one has had or done many times: "I'm sick and tired of going to work each day. I need a vacation!" The phrase "sick to death" has the same meaning: "We're all sick to death of hearing about the economic recession."

to get a break

In this podcast, the phrase "to get a break" means to have an unusual opportunity to do something, often because the situation changed: "Maxine got a break when a tornado destroyed almost all the other apple orchards in the area and she was able to start selling her apples for more money." The phrase "to take a break" means to have a short period of time when one stops working



ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

during the day, when one can rest: “Saida usually takes a break around 10:30 to drink a cup of coffee in the cafeteria.” The phrase “to give (someone) a break” means to stop doing something that is irritating: “I’m so tired of hearing you complain! Give me a break!” Finally, the phrase “to make a break for (something)” means to begin running quickly, trying to escape: “When the police officer turned her head, the criminal made a break for the exit.”

CULTURE NOTE

Most American families do not have “servants” (people who work in their homes on a regular basis), but some “wealthy” (rich) families have “household help” to “maintain” (continue the operations of) their large homes.

For example, some wealthy families have a “live-in” (staying in the home, living with the family) “nanny,” which is a person, usually a woman, who takes care of the children. Paying for a nanny is usually much more expensive than paying for “daycare” (a child care arrangement with children going to a place outside of the home where they are cared for every day), but it allows the children to develop a personal relationship with their nanny.

Some wealthy families have an *au pair* instead. An *au pair* is similar to a nanny, but is a young person from another country. An *au pair* wants to learn English, so she stays with the family and “looks after” (cares for) the children, usually receiving a small “salary” (money received for working).

When large homes have large “lawns” (garden areas), the family might have a professional “gardener” (a person who takes care of the plants in outdoor areas) who works only in that particular home. Wealthy families can also have “housekeepers” or “maids” (women who clean the home), cooks, and “butlers.” A butler, usually a man, is responsible for managing the household, coordinating the services of the other servants and making sure that everything “runs smoothly” (happens without problems). Finally, some wealthy families have “chauffeurs” who drive them wherever they need to go.

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



ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 624: Advantages and Disadvantages in Life.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 624. 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. You can download the Learning Guides you become a member of ESL Podcast. Not only will you get the Learning Guide, but also the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping support this podcast.

This episode is called "Advantages (which are things that help you in some situation) and Disadvantages (things that hurt you) in Life." Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Andy: Doesn't it make you sick? We bust our butts around here and the boss brings in his nephew to be the new manager.

Nia: You never know. He may be a good boss.

Andy: I doubt it. He's getting this opportunity just because he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He didn't have to pull himself up by his bootstraps like the rest of us.

Nia: I'm going to wait and see how he is as a manager. I'm hoping to be pleasantly surprised.

Andy: If you're a blue blood like he is, born into privilege and old money, you can do no wrong.

Nia: That's not true. He'll be held accountable for how this department performs.

Andy: But when does somebody like me get a break? Okay, I was born on the wrong side of the tracks. I grew up in a white trash neighborhood. So what? I've worked hard to get where I am now. That guy hasn't paid his dues like I have.



ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

Nia: You can complain all you want, but it doesn't change the situation. He's the new boss and we work for him. Get used to it.

Andy: Get used to it?! Not on your life!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Andy saying to Nia, "Doesn't it make you sick?" The expression "to make (someone) sick" in this context means to become very angry, to cause very negative emotions in someone. When you see something that you think is very wrong you would say, "That makes me sick," or "It makes me sick to think there are children who need food in this world and don't have it." There are a couple of different meanings, however, using the words of this expression; those can be found in our Learning Guide.

Andy says, "We bust our butts around here and the boss brings in his nephew to be the new manager." The expression "to bust (bust) your butt (butt)" means to work very hard, to do a lot of work. Your "butt" is that which you sit on; it's an informal term that is short for "buttocks." "To bust" usually means to break, and so basically you're saying you're working so hard. However, the boss brings in his nephew to be the new manager. The "nephew" would be the son of the boss' brother or sister.

Nia says, "You never know," which is a general expression meaning you may be wrong, we don't know. "He may be a good boss," this nephew. Andy says, "I doubt it." Andy is upset because he thinks that one of the employees should be promoted to manager – should be made manager because they have been working very hard in the company. Andy says, "He (this nephew) is getting this opportunity because he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth." This is an old expression; "to be born with a silver spoon in your mouth" means that you were born into a rich family; you grew up in a family that had a lot of money. It's usually used to make some sort of negative comment about a person, how they don't deserve what they have or how they have not worked very hard. Andy says that this nephew of the boss' didn't have to pull himself up by his bootstraps like the rest of us. This is another old, but common expression: "to pull yourself up (meaning to lift yourself up) by your bootstraps." Your "bootstraps" are literally little round holes that you use to put on your boots; they're in the back of the boot on the bottom. But the idea of the expression is that you work very hard to improve your situation in life, you work very hard to get better even though you don't have very much money or a lot of things to help you – you don't have a lot



ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

of advantages. Andy says that everyone else in the company had to work hard to get what they have; they had to pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

Nia says, “I’m going to wait and see how he is as a manager.” She’s saying we should wait and see what happens. “I’m hoping to be pleasantly surprised.” “To be surprised” means that you are not expecting certain things to happen. “Pleasantly” means nicely. So “to be pleasantly surprised” is to have something unexpected happen that you like.

Andy says, “If you’re a blue blood like he is, born into privilege and old money, you can do no wrong.” Some more expressions here to talk about social and economic advantages of some people versus others: “blue blood” refers to a person who belongs to the richest, most wealthy part of a society – the most powerful, the most respected. We would call it the “upper class.” “Privilege” (privilege) is another word for advantage, something that you have that no one else has. It’s also, for example, used in talking about things that you can do if you are a member of a certain group: “One of the privileges of being a member of the golf club is that you get to play golf for free.” Well, you don’t have to pay for each game; you have to pay for your membership. So, privilege is another word for advantage. Again, it is often used to describe social or economic advantages. “Old money” refers to money that has been in your family for a long time, wealth that your family has had for many years. Here in the United States, the Rockefeller family would be perhaps considered a family of old money – not perhaps, they definitely would be! The Ford family – Ford Motor Company – money has been in their family for many years, many generations: the grandfather, the great-grandfather, and so forth. So, old money refers to a rich and powerful family that has been rich for many years.

Andy says if you’re a blue blood like this nephew, and you are born into privilege and old money, meaning when you are born you receive immediately these advantages, you can do no wrong. The expression “to do no wrong” means that you are unable to make a mistake. It also means, more commonly, that when you do make a mistake no one will pay attention; it will be forgiven or ignored by other people. Some parents think their children can do no wrong, so when someone complains to them about their children – for example children who are yelling and screaming in the street – when someone complains, some parents will say, “Oh, that wasn’t my child, that is impossible.” Their child can do no wrong. Well let me tell you, they can!

Moving on: Nia says, “That’s not true. (The nephew) will be held accountable for how this department performs.” The expression “to hold (someone) accountable”



ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

means to make someone responsible and accept the results or consequences of his or her actions. Basically, it's another way of saying you will be punished or rewarded based on what you do. So if you do a good job you'll be rewarded, but if you do a bad job you will be punished. Maybe you'll lose your job. That's to hold someone accountable.

Andy says, "But when does somebody like me get a break?" "To get a break" means to get an opportunity to do something, to have some good luck and to be finally able to do something you want to do. We often talk here in Los Angeles about actors and actresses getting a break in the movies or in television; they get the opportunity to work and show how good they are – or how bad they are! Andy says, "Okay, I was born on the wrong side of the tracks." This old expression, again pretty common, "to be born on the wrong side of the tracks" (tracks), means to born in a bad part of the town or city where you live. People who are poor, who don't have nice houses, where there's a lot of crime; this would be the wrong side of the tracks. "Tracks" here refers to the railroad tracks. And railroads, like modern highways and freeways were often built in cities and divided the city. And often on one side of that divide there were people who were poor, and on the other side were people who had more money. That's true here in Los Angeles in some ways. The major east-west freeway – the 10 freeway, the Santa Monica freeway – does divide the wealthy north part from the poorer south part, at least in some parts of the city.

So, Andy says he was born on wrong side of the tracks. "I grew up," he says, "in a white trash neighborhood. So what?" "White trash" is an informal and somewhat rude – somewhat not nice phrase to refer typically to someone who is white (who is Caucasian), who is poor, has very little education, doesn't have a good job or does have a job at all. White trash is a pretty insulting term to refer to someone in that condition. Andy, however, somewhat usually describes himself this way, and then he says, "So what?" which is a phrase we use to say that something is not important. "I don't have a degree from Harvard. So what?" You're saying it doesn't matter; I don't care. Andy says that he's worked hard to get where he is now. "That guy (meaning the nephew) hasn't paid his dues like I have." The expression "to pay your dues" (dues) means to spend a long period of time working in a job that is not very well paid, that is perhaps not very important. You do that for a long time so that eventually you will end up with – you will wind up with – you will get a better job at the end of working so hard at these not so important jobs. That's to pay your dues.

Nia says, "You can complain all you want (all you'd like), but it doesn't change the situation. He's the new boss and we work for him. Get used to it." "To get



ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

used to” (used to – two words) means to become accustomed to something, to see something as normal, as common, as ordinary. I’m trying to get used to the silence outside where I am recording, because school has started and all the lovely children are back in school. That’s a wonderful thing! Here in the United States, we have what is called “compulsory schooling,” you must go to school between the ages of 6 and 16 approximately. It’s a wonderful thing for me!

Andy says, “Get used to it?! Not on your life!” This is a common expression; informally we say “not on your life” to mean that something is impossible, something will never happen under any circumstances. “Are you going to go to John’s party?” You say, “Not on your life,” meaning absolutely not, that will never happen.

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

[start of dialogue]

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ESL Podcast 624 – Advantages and Disadvantages in Life

Andy: Get used to it?! Not on your life!

[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter busts her butt every day here at ESL Podcast. That person is, of course, 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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