



ESL Podcast 523 – Having Trouble Making a Decision

GLOSSARY

consumer review – a short paragraph written by someone who has bought and used a product, sharing his or her experience and recommending that other people do or don't buy it

* Dido likes to read the consumer reviews on the Internet before she buys a book.

to weigh (one's) options – to carefully consider all of one's choices and determine which one is best

* Ahmed has received acceptance letters from five colleges, and now he's weighing his options, trying to decide which one to go to.

to keep (one's) options open – to not make a decision yet, so that one can still have many choices

* Why do you want to hire a new employee so quickly? I think you should keep your options open and wait until you're sure you've found the right person.

to make up (one's) mind – to make a decision; to know what one will do

* I went to the store to buy some ice cream, but there were so many flavors that I couldn't make up my mind, so I bought one of each!

to hesitate – to wait to make a decision; to delay; to not do something right away

* Please don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions.

option – choice; one of many things that one can select or choose

* This camera has three color options: black, silver, or red.

logically – rationally; with clear thinking

* Logically, it doesn't make sense to buy such an expensive car, but I really like this model.

analysis – careful research and examination of something to understand it better

* The researchers are conducting an analysis of recent weather patterns to better understand winter weather.

to live with the decision – to accept the consequences of what one has decided or chosen

* Are you sure you want to get a tattoo? You'll have to live with the decision for the rest of your life!



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to haunt (someone) – for someone to be bothered, worried, or concerned about something bad that happened in the past, or about a bad decision that one has made

* Memories of the war have always haunted his grandfather.

crippled – unable to do something; unable to work properly or correctly

* The U.S. economy is crippled by the high cost of healthcare.

indecision – an inability to decide what to do; not being able to make a decision

* You've been talking about your indecision for weeks. How can I help you make a decision?

to stall – to delay doing something; to do many other unimportant things so that one doesn't have to do something yet

* Kai always stalls before bedtime, asking his parents to read him another story, get him a glass of water, and rub his back before he falls asleep.

electronics store – a store that sells electronics such as televisions, stereos, computers, and telephones

* Did you buy your fax machine online or at an electronics store?

to regret – to wish that one hadn't done something, or to wish that something hadn't happened

* Do you ever regret becoming a police officer?

to hold (someone) to (something) – to make someone keep a promise; to make sure someone does what he or she has said he or she will do

* You said you'd take the kids to the zoo this weekend, and I'm going to hold you to it!



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Lorenzo mean when he says that Katia is stalling?
 - a) She's not a very good decision-maker.
 - b) She's too logical and analytical.
 - c) She's trying to delay her purchase.

 2. Why does Katia think she might regret her decision?
 - a) Because she doesn't have enough money to buy a TV.
 - b) Because she isn't sure which TV to buy.
 - c) Because she doesn't want to have anyone's help at the store.
-

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

crippled

The word “crippled,” in this podcast, means unable to do something, or unable to work properly or correctly: “Without an Internet connection, the employees are crippled and cannot do their work.” Or, “The entire city was crippled by the snowstorm.” When describing people, the word “crippled” is an impolite way to say that someone is disabled, or that his or her body doesn't work normally: “Was she hurt in a car accident, or was she born crippled?” Or, “Zeb was crippled by polio, but he taught himself to walk again.” Finally, a “cripple” is a person who cannot walk normally, or cannot walk at all, but it is a rude word that shouldn't be used: “Yvonne always has to use a wheelchair, and she cries whenever anyone calls her a cripple.”

to stall

In this podcast, the verb “to stall” means to delay doing something, or to do many other unimportant things so that one doesn't have to do something yet: “Chase is very good at stalling, always finding other things he has to do before he can start his homework.” When talking about cars or machines, the verb “to stall” means for a motor or engine to stop working because it was going too slowly to continue: “The car stalled because he didn't give it enough time to warm up on the cold morning.” The phrase “to stall (someone)” means to slow a person down, or to stop someone from doing something until one is ready for it: “Verma is almost here, but we haven't had time to finish getting ready for her surprise birthday party. Quick, stall her so she can't come in yet!”



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CULTURE NOTE

When making a decision is difficult, some people like to “leave it to chance” (not actually make a decision, but just see what happens). You can do this by “flipping a coin,” throwing a “coin” (a metal piece of money) into the air and catching it in your “palm” (the inside, flat part of one’s hand). While it is in the air, you can “call” (say aloud) “heads” (the side of the coin with a person’s head) or “tails” (the other side of the coin). For example, you might say, “Heads, I go to the conference. Tails, I go to the beach.” Then, if the coin lands with its head facing up, you have to go to the conference. If the coin lands with the other side facing up, you can go to the beach.

Sometimes people need to make a decision together, but can’t agree. If you want Chinese food, but your friend wants Italian food, you might play “rock, paper, scissors.” You each make a “fist” (a closed hand, with your fingers folded into your palm) with your right hand and hit it against your left hand “in unison” (at the same time) three times while saying, “one, two, three.” But the third time, you change the position of your hand. If you leave it as a fist, it is a rock. If you hit your hand flat against your other hand, it is paper. If you keep your hand in a fist, but point out your index finger and middle finger, it is scissors. You determine who has won by knowing that rock “crushes” (destroys with weight of) scissors, paper “wraps around” (surrounds on all sides) a rock, and scissors cut paper. If you choose paper and your friend chooses scissors, you’ll have to eat Italian because he won.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 523: Having Trouble Making a Decision.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 523. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

You can support this podcast by becoming a member; go to our website at eslpod.com. If you don't want to become a member, you can also make a donation on our website to help keep these audio files free to everyone.

This episode is called "Having Trouble Making a Decision." It's a dialogue between Lorenzo and Katia; they're talking about buying a new television and all of the things that they need to think about. We'll be hearing a lot of expressions that you might use when you are talking about making a difficult decision. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Lorenzo: Have you bought a new television yet?

Katia: No, I'm still looking at consumer reviews and weighing my options. I'm not sure yet what size I want or what features I need. I'm keeping my options open for now.

Lorenzo: I thought your old TV stopped working three weeks ago. You still haven't made up your mind about buying a new one?

Katia: Oh, I've decided to buy a new one. It's which one I'm going to buy that's making me hesitate. There are so many options to choose from. I want to approach this logically and decide only after I've done the proper analysis.

Lorenzo: It's only a TV. It's not like it's a house or even a car.

Katia: I know, but I'm the one who has to live with the decision. I'll look at it every day, and if I don't make the right decision, it'll haunt me for years.

Lorenzo: You know what I think?

Katia: What?



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Lorenzo: I think you're crippled by indecision, and you're stalling. The sooner you make a decision and buy a new TV, the better.

Katia: Hey, what are you doing? Where are you taking me?

Lorenzo: We're going to the electronics store this minute, and you're buying a TV – today!

Katia: What if I regret my decision?

Lorenzo: Then I'll buy you a new one.

Katia: Fine, but I'm holding you to that!

[end of dialogue]

Lorenzo begins our dialogue asking Katia, "Have you bought a new television yet?" Katia says, "No, I'm still looking at consumer reviews and weighing my options." What a lot of people do now, especially with the Internet, before they buy something they look to see what other people think about it – what their opinion is. If you buy a book on Amazon.com, there are all sorts of reviews – customer or consumer reviews. "Customer" and "consumer" mean the same thing, the person who buys something. So you can look at their opinion, that's what their "review" is, their opinion about this product or service.

Katia says she's still looking at consumer reviews and weighing her options. "To weigh (weigh) your options" means to carefully consider all of your choices to determine which one is best. That's weighing your options. Sometimes, of course, you don't have very many options, so you don't have much to weigh! Katia says, "I'm not sure what size I want or what features I need." "Features" are things that a product offers you. It might be a color television, that could be a feature. Or, it might be a television that has a digital video recorder, that would be a feature. Katia says, "I'm keeping my options open for now." To keep your options (your choices) open" means not to make a decision yet; wait until you have looked at all the possibilities – all of the options. So, "to keep your options open" means think about it some more, wait until you have more information.

Lorenzo says, "I thought your old TV stopped working three weeks ago. You still haven't made up your mind about buying a new one?" Lorenzo's a little surprised since Katia has not had a television for three weeks. He says, "You still haven't made up your mind." "To make up your mind" means to make a



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decision. Sometimes we use that expression when someone is having difficulty making a decision and you are getting impatient, you want them to hurry up. You may say, “Oh, make up your mind.” Make a decision – make up your mind.

Katia says, “Oh, I’ve decided to buy a new one,” that’s her decision, “It’s which one I’m going to buy that’s making me hesitate.” “To hesitate” means to delay, not to do something right away. She says, “There are so many options (so many possibilities – choices) to choose from. I want to approach this logically and decide only after I’ve done the proper analysis.” To do something “logically” means to do it rationally, following clear thinking. “Analysis” is when you do careful research and examination of something to understand it better. A scientist would do analysis on the results of his or her study. That’s analysis; analysis just means to think about it, to look at all the information, to make careful judgments about it.

Lorenzo thinks that Katia is being too careful. He says, “It’s only a TV,” meaning it’s not that important, “It’s not like it’s a house or even a car.” A house and a car are much bigger purchases – much more expensive, so you might think about them more. A television is less important, and so you probably don’t need to think about it all that much, but Katia does. She says, “I know, but I’m the one who has to live with the decision.” “To live with the decision” means to accept the consequences – the results of what you decided. If you buy a small car, and then you want to take all of your friends to the beach, well, that’s not going to be possible. You have to live with your decision. In this case, it could mean a good thing; it could mean a bad thing.

Katia says, “I’ll look at it every day, and if I don’t make the right decision, it’ll haunt me for years.” “To haunt (haunt) (someone)” means that someone is bothered, worried, or concerned about something bad that happened in the past, or about a bad decision that you’ve made and you continue to think about it. It haunts you – you’re reminded of it every day or very frequently. Katia’s worried about making the wrong decision because she doesn’t want it to haunt her for years.

Lorenzo says, “You know what I think?” Katia says, “What?” Lorenzo says, “I think you’re crippled by indecision, and you’re stalling.” “To be crippled” (crippled) means, in this case, to be unable to do something, to be unable to work properly or correctly. The word “cripple” has a couple of different meanings in English however, so take a look at the Learning Guide for some more explanations. “Indecision” is the inability to make a decision, the inability to decide, when you can’t decide because, for whatever reason, you are unable to. So, Lorenzo is saying that Katia is crippled by indecision; she can’t do anything



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because she can't decide, and so she's stalling. "To stall" (stall) means to delay in doing something, usually to do other, less important things because you don't want to do the thing you're supposed to do. You're delaying it; you're waiting longer and longer to do it. "Stall," like "cripple," has a couple of different meanings, so take a look at the Learning Guide for some explanations of that.

Lorenzo says, "The sooner you make a decision and buy a new TV, the better." Katia says, "Hey, what are you doing? Where are you taking me?" Lorenzo says, "We're going to the electronics store this minute, and you're buying a TV – today!" Lorenzo is taking her to the electronics store, a store that sells televisions, radios, telephones, computers perhaps – things that are electronic in nature. They're going to the electronics store this minute, meaning immediately, right now, and you're going to buy a TV today, he says.

Katia says, "What if I regret my decision?" "To regret" is to wish that you hadn't done something, to wish that something had not happened. When someone thinks you're making the wrong decision they may say to you, "you're going to regret that decision," you'll regret it. They might even say "you'll live to regret it," meaning you may not regret it immediately, but in the future you'll look back and say "I made a mistake." So "to regret" something is to realize that you've made a mistake, to wish that you had made a different decision.

Katia says, "What if I regret my decision?" Lorenzo says, "Then I'll buy you a new one," meaning a new television. Katia says, "Fine (meaning okay), but I'm holding you to that!" "To hold (someone) to (something)" means to make someone keep a promise, to make sure that the person is going to do what they say they are going to do. If you tell your children you're going to take them to a movie this weekend your children are probably going to hold you to it, meaning on Friday or Saturday you can't say, "Oh, you know what kids? We're not going to go to a movie." Well, your children will not be very happy, I don't think!

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

[start of dialogue]

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Katia: Fine, but I'm holding you to that!

[end of dialogue]

You'll never regret listening to the dialogues written by our own 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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