



## ENGLISH CAFÉ – 217

### TOPICS

Ask an American: sleep and weight gain; to slip through (one's) fingers; drink versus beverage; individually versus separately versus independently

### GLOSSARY

**pretty much** – mostly; generally; referring to something that is usually true or is almost always true for most people

\* August is pretty much the warmest month of the year.

**anecdotally** – based on stories from one's personal experience, but not necessarily true for all people at all times

\* Anecdotally, I know several people who have found their husband or wife through online dating services, but I wonder what percentage of all the people who use those websites actually marry someone they meet online?

**largely** – mostly; primarily

\* The medical students here are largely interested in becoming surgeons.

**half-eaten** – with only about 50% of a food having been eaten, and the rest remaining untouched

\* It makes me sad to throw away all this half-eaten food. I wish we had a way to share it with people who don't have enough to eat.

**buffet** – a long table that has many different types of food, so that one can take an empty plate and fill it up with a small amount of many different foods, deciding what one does or does not want to eat

\* They spent hours trying many different foods at the all-you-can-eat buffet.

**to shift** – to change from one position to another, or to slightly change the way that one is doing something

\* Her interests have shifted from music theory to performance.

**to graze** – to eat a small amount of food almost all day long, instead of having three large meals

\* The new engineer is always grazing at his desk, eating bags of chips and cookies and drinking soda between meals.



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**shift worker** – a person who works non-standard hours (hours that are not 9:00-5:00), usually because he or she works for an organization that has to be open 24 hours per day, meaning that some people have to work at night

\* He makes good money as a shift worker, but he doesn't like it, because he has a hard time sleeping during the day and working at night.

**disruption** – an interruption; something that makes something else stop working normally for a short period of time

\* There was a disruption in our electricity service, and we didn't have power for almost two hours.

**metabolic change** – a change in how much energy one's body uses and how much food one needs

\* As people get older, they notice a metabolic change where their bodies slow down and they don't need to eat as much food as they used to eat.

**to slip through (one's) fingers** – a phrase used to describe something or someone that one is losing or letting go of, but that one is trying to keep hold of

\* Time is slipping through my fingers and there aren't enough hours in the day to do everything I'd like to do.

**drink** – (noun) a liquid in a single serving meant to be swallowed; (verb) to swallow liquid

\* Do you want to go out for a drink after work today?

**beverage** – (noun) a more formal term for liquid in a single serving meant to be swallowed

\* The airline offers its passengers many beverages, including coffee, tea, soda, juice, wine, and beer.

**individually** – in a way distinct from all the others; describing a way of doing things just by oneself alone, apart from the group; one at a time

\* The manager discusses performance and raises individually with each employee.

**separately** – describing a way of doing things apart instead of together

\* How long have Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins been living separately?

**independently** – in a way that does not depend on others; ability to control one's own actions



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\* Teenagers say they want to do things independently, but they still need their parents, too.



## **WHAT INSIDERS KNOW**

### **Lullabies and Nursery Rhymes**

It can be very difficult to get young children to fall asleep at night. Many parents try to create bedtime “routines” (things that are done the same way every time) to get their children ready for bed, usually by bathing them, reading stories, “rubbing” (gently touching or massaging) their back, and singing.

“Lullabies” are quiet songs that are sung to help children fall asleep. Some popular lullabies include “Rock-a-Bye Baby” where “to rock” means to hold a child in one’s arms and slowly move back and forth or side to side, often while sitting in a “rocking chair” (a chair that has two rounded pieces at the bottom, so that it moves forward and backward smoothly). Other popular lullabies include “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” where “to twinkle” means for a star to shine with light in the sky, and “Hush Little Baby,” where “hush” is something we say to someone to ask them to stop making noise and calm down. You can hear these and many other lullabies and read their “lyrics” (the words to a song) at <http://tinyurl.com/nzugt9>.

Parents who don’t like to sing might instead “recite” (say something many times from memory, without reading it) “nursery rhymes,” which are short, silly poems. “Hey Diddle Diddle” is a nursery rhyme about a cat that plays the “fiddle” (an instrument like a violin) and a cow that jumps over the moon. “Humpty Dumpty” is about a large egg that sat on a wall, fell, and broke. “Little Miss Muffet” is about a young lady who was sitting down and eating, but ran away when a spider scared her. You can read these and many other nursery rhymes at <http://tinyurl.com/n5asa>.



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 217.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 217. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

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On this Café, we're going to have another one of our Ask an American segments, where we listen to native speakers talking at a normal rate of speech – a normal speed. Today's segment is a little different; it could be called Ask an Australian since we're going to listen to an Australian woman talking, so you'll get a little different and perhaps a little more difficult accent to understand. Today we're going to talk about the importance of sleep and how your sleep relates to your weight. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Our topic on this Café's Ask an American segment is how not getting enough sleep can sometimes make you gain weight (become fatter). A researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, which is located in the northeast part of the United States, has been studying how sleep affects your weight. She worked with a group of about 90 people whose sleep was "restricted," or limited, so they didn't allow them to sleep as you might normally, and then they compared these people to those who got normal amounts of sleep. Let's listen to her explain what she learned. Try to understand as much as you can, and then we'll go back and explain what she said. Remember, she's speaking in an Australian accent, even though she works at an American university; she's, no doubt, originally from Australia. So, do your best to understand, and then we'll go back and explain. Here we go.

[recording]



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“It seems that everybody pretty much over the whole experimental sleep restriction group gained weight. The average was at about 1.3 kilos.”

[end of recording]

She talks very quickly; let's go back and review what she said. She begins by saying that the whole experimental sleep restriction group, or the entire group of people who she studied and had a limited amount of sleep gained weight. She says, “It seems that everybody pretty much over the whole experimental sleep restriction group gained weight.” “Pretty much” means most, the majority, almost everyone. She uses the expression “over the experimental sleep group,” she means, really, in the experimental sleep group, looking at all of the individuals inside of this experimental group. “Experimental” is a word we use to, in science, reflect some group that you are making changes to – that you are doing something different, and then you compare those to another group, which is sometimes called a “control group” or a “comparison group,” that may be getting a different sort of the word we would use is “treatment,” that is, “intervention,” something you're doing to them, or who aren't getting any sort of treatment or intervention. So, she's talking about the experimental group, the group that had their sleep limited or restricted.

We use the phrase “pretty much” to talk about things that are true for almost everyone, or are usually true. If someone says that he's pretty much seen all the episodes of a television series such as, I don't know, Lost or Battlestar Galactica or some American television series, what they mean is that they probably saw almost all of them but not all of them; maybe they missed one or two.

The researcher here, her last name is Banks, says that pretty much everybody in the group gained weight. On average, she says, the gain was 1.3 kilos. Of course, Americans have no idea what she's talking about when she uses kilos, but we can convert that into a little less than three pounds. Let's listen to her talk one more time.

[recording]

“It seems that everybody pretty much over the whole experimental sleep restriction group gained weight. The average was at about 1.3 kilos.”

[end of recording]



The idea here is, of course, that people who don't get enough sleep actually gain weight. The question is: Why is that the case? She is going to try to give one possible explanation of it. Let's listen to that now.

[recording]

"They think people seemed anecdotally to be largely uninterested in food. You know, I would often go in and see that people had only half-eaten their meals. We gave them regular meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner. And then we sort of had a buffet of snacks that they could choose from at any time."

[end of recording]

Once again, she's speaking very quickly, and some of the words are pronounced a little differently than they would be in normal American English. Let's go back and try to figure out what she said. Even I have to listen very carefully to understand her.

She begins by saying, "They think people seemed anecdotally to be largely uninterested in food." When you listen to it, it really sounds like she's saying "they thank," but she's saying, in American English, "they think." They believe people seemed anecdotally to be largely uninterested in food. An "anecdote" (anecdote) is a short story based upon your personal experience; it may or may not be true for everyone. For example, a woman might tell you that she became popular with the men in her office when she changed the color of her hair from black to blonde. Many Americans say that blondes have more fun, but her story is only an anecdote. It's true for her, we don't know if it would be true for every woman who changed the color of her hair from black or brown to blonde. I am thinking of changing the color of my hair from brown to red. First, of course, I need to get some hair! This is an example of an anecdote. Well, the word that she uses in the quote here is "anecdotally," meaning this is the story, or these are the stories that people say, but we're not exactly sure if it's true for everyone. So she says, "They think people seemed anecdotally to be largely uninterested in food." "Anecdotally" is often used in talking about scientific results to indicate that it wasn't something but they studied specifically or they have very good information on. The idea is that people in the experimental group (people who were not getting enough sleep) were "largely," meaning mostly, uninterested in food (they didn't want to eat).

She goes on to say, "You know, I would often go in and see that people had only half-eaten their meals." We're assuming that the people here in this experiment



in a building, in a certain number of rooms (that they are kept there), because the researchers says “I would often go in,” meaning, we think, she would go into the rooms where the people were, and she would see that people had only half-eaten their meals. “Half-eaten” means that they only ate about 50 percent (or one half) of their food. Normally, we’re not that careful about this expression; someone could eat 10 percent, or even 60 percent or 70 percent, and you may still say “you’ve only half-eaten,” so it’s not always technically half. We also have similar expressions; for example, if you said that someone was “half-dressed,” you would mean that they are not completely dressed. Maybe they put on their shirt, but they didn’t put on their pants yet. That would be someone who’s half-dressed. You can also say someone is “half-ruined,” meaning they’re almost destroyed; perhaps they lost most of their money but not all of it. We have another expression, “to be half-baked.” “To be baked” means to be put in an oven, like for example a cake. But when you say an idea is “half-baked,” you mean that it’s not completely thought out, it’s not a very good idea. It’s an insulting term to say something is half-baked.

So, the researcher is going in and seeing that people had only half-eaten their meals (their food). She says, “We gave them regular meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner. And then we sort of had a buffet of snacks that they could choose from at any time.” So, they gave them three regular meals, and they had what she calls a “buffet of snacks.” A “buffet” is a long table that has many different kinds of food on it. If you go to a restaurant that has a buffet, you take a plate and you go and you take the food that you want. It’s sort of a self-serve operation. Normally in a restaurant, you tell the waiter or the waitress what you want to eat and they bring it to you, but at a buffet, which is very popular here in the United States, you simply go and you take the food you want. These are often called “all-you-can-eat” buffets, because you can eat as much food as you want. That’s why they are sort of dangerous if you are trying to watch your weight – that is, you are trying to make sure you don’t gain weight. Well, in this experiment they had a buffet of snacks. “Snacks” are kinds of food that you would eat in between meals, things like potato chips perhaps, or other food – popcorn, that isn’t real food; it isn’t the kind of food that you would eat at a meal, things that you would eat in between meals. So, although people had regular breakfast, lunch, and dinner (three meals), they could also eat in between meals; they could eat these snacks from the buffet. Let’s listen to the researcher again.

[recording]

“They think people seemed anecdotally to be largely uninterested in food. You know, I would often go in and see that people had only half-eaten their meals.





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We gave them regular meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner. And then we sort of had a buffet of snacks that they could choose from at any time.”

[end of recording]

So, what is the relationship between getting regular meals that are only half-eaten and the buffet of snacks? The researcher now explains why she thinks the people gained weight who didn’t have enough sleep.

[recording]

“People might have shifted a little bit from eating a full meal to grazing and snacking more.”

[end of recording]

She says, “People might have shifted a little bit from eating a full meal to grazing and snacking more.” When we say someone “shifted,” we mean that they changed from one position to another, or they slightly changed the way that they were doing something. A “shift” isn’t a complete change; it’s small change. The researcher thinks people might have shifted a little bit (meaning a small amount) from eating a complete or full meal to grazing and snacking more. The verb “to graze” (graze) is usually used to talk about cows and horses and other animals that are outdoors (that are outside), and spend the day slowly eating their food. Here, she’s using it just to mean to eat small amounts of food over a long period of time. So normally, Americans eat a large meal three times a day, but in this study, people seemed to be eating a little bit all day. Remember, they have this buffet of snacks, and this causes them to eat more, but ironically (that is, surprisingly) they don’t eat their regular meals; they are eating the snacks, which are probably not very good for them. Notice also that “snack” can also be a verb: “to snack.” She uses both the term “grazing” and “snacking.” Let’s listen:

[recording]

“People might have shifted a little bit from eating a full meal to grazing and snacking more.”

[end of recording]

You may be asking: Well, why is this research important? Why is that fact that people who don’t get enough sleep or get limited sleep gain weight? Why is that



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important? Well, the researcher is going to give her reasons why it is important. This is a little longer quote. Once again, we'll listen and come back and talk about it. Here we go:

[recording]

"I think it's very important that if, say, if you're shift worker, to be aware of the fact that your sleep disruption may cause some metabolic change. We're not exactly sure what that is, but it might set you up for having some difficulty in maintaining weight, or it might make you a little more hungry. Certainly, that's what some of the evidence is."

[end of recording]

She begins by saying, "I think it's very important that if, say, you're shift worker"; the use of "say" here means for example, so she's trying to give an example of a kind of worker (a kind of employee) for whom this information about sleeping and eating would be important. She starts by talking about a shift worker. When a hospital, for example, needs to be open 24 hours a day (we hope they are open 24 hours a day), it has to have some employees that work in the morning, some in the evening, and some at night. Usually, in the United States, we have what are called "eight-hour shifts" (shifts). A "shift" is an amount of time that you work; it's typically used when we are talking about a business that is open for more than eight hours. In that case, you have to have two shifts – two groups of people or three groups of people who work the different hours of the day. Some of these shift workers have the night shift, meaning they work when most of us are sleeping. These, in general, are called shift workers, people who have to work in the evening or at night when most of us are sleeping. People who are shift workers, she says, need to be aware of the effects of sleep disruption. She says they need to be aware of the fact that your sleep disruption may cause some metabolic change. A "disruption" is an interruption, something that makes something else stop working normally for a short period of time. A disruption changes something, usually in a negative way. For example, a very bad rainstorm can cause disruptions in the bus schedules, making buses come later because there's so much rain it's more difficult to drive, and so forth. Working in shifts, she says (that is, working at night when you should normally be sleeping), can cause sleep disruptions, because shift workers can't sleep when they normally would sleep.

The researchers says that these sleep disruptions might cause some metabolic change. Your "metabolism" (metabolism) refers to how your body works,



especially how much energy your body burns or uses during the day. People with a high metabolism rate can eat a lot of food and never gain weight, because their bodies use a lot of energy. People who have a low metabolism may eat a very small amount, but still gain weight (still get fatter). If sleep disruptions cause metabolic change, they might slow down a person's body so that he or she doesn't need as much energy. So if not getting enough sleep (if having your sleep disrupted) slows down your metabolism (causes a metabolic change – "metabolic" is just the adjective that comes from the word "metabolism"), then you may continue to eat as normal, but now, with your slower metabolism, you will begin to gain weight.

The researcher isn't sure exactly what the metabolic change is however, she's sort of guessing, but it might set people up for having some difficulty in maintaining their weight, in keeping their weight where it should be. She says, "We're not exactly sure what that is (what this change is), but it might set you up for having some difficulty in maintaining weight." "To set (someone) up for (something)" means to prepare you for something, or to put you in a position for something to happen. We hope listening to this episode sets you up for a conversation with a native speaker – possibly an Australian speaker! That's what we're trying to do; we're trying to set you up for success in communicating in English. We're trying to prepare you, to get you ready, to put you in a certain situation. Well here, working the night shift may set you up for (may put you in the position) of having difficulty maintaining your weight (keeping your weight where it is right now, not getting fatter). It might also make you a little more hungry. "Certainly," she says, "that's what some of the evidence is," meaning that's what some of her evidence seems to indicate. Let's listen one more time to this quote:

[recording]

"I think it's very important that if, say, if you're shift worker, to be aware of the fact that your sleep disruption may cause some metabolic change. We're not exactly sure what that is, but it might set you up for having some difficulty in maintaining weight, or it might make you a little more hungry. Certainly, that's what some of the evidence is."

[end of recording]

If you're looking for a good excuse not to get up early in the morning, certainly this story, which comes to us from Voice of America, gives you a good reason why you should sleep a little more, so you don't gain weight. This is what I'm



going to tell my wife when she wants me to get up early to do some work; I'm going to say, "Oh, no. I need sleep more so I don't get fat!"

Now let's answer some of your questions.

Our first question comes from Esmaeil (Esmaeil) in Iran. The question has to do with the expression "slipping through your fingers." What does it mean when we say something "slips through your fingers"? This phrase describes something or someone that you are losing or letting go of. You're trying to keep it – you're trying to hold it, but you are not successful, you are losing it. For example, if you are in the kitchen and you're washing dishes (plates and cups), and because of the water you accidentally let one of them drop. You might say, "Oh, it's just slipped through my fingers." "To slip through" means to go through. But we also use this expression for other situations, not just something that physically drops. "The woman was certain she was going to marry this man, but somehow she let the relationship slip through her fingers." The idea is that she had an opportunity, but she lost it because she didn't do something correctly. Often, we use this expression for something that happens over a long period of time. You fail to do something; you don't do what you should do, and then you lose the opportunity.

Jake (Jake) in the Czech Republic wants to know the difference between the word "drink" and "beverage" (beverage). Both of these terms can mean the same thing; a "drink" or a "beverage" is a liquid that you are meant to swallow (that is, you are meant to put down your throat). That's when "drink" is used as a noun; "drink" used as a verb can mean simply to put the liquid down your throat (to swallow). "Beverage" means the same as the noun "drink," something that you would drink: a glass of milk, a glass of water, a glass of vodka. These are beverages. "Beverage" is a little more formal term; it's something that you might hear in a restaurant. The waiter may say, "Would you like something to drink?" Or, they might say, "What would you like as a beverage?" Or, "Your meal includes a beverage." A Coca-Cola, a glass of water, soda, and so forth; these are all beverages. An American menu in a restaurant will usually have a place where they list the beverages they sell; this is also called the "drinks." "Beverage," however, is not used as a verb. You can't say, "I'm going to beverage my drink." No! You could only say, "I'm going to drink my beverage," or you could even say, "I'm going to drink my drink," using it both as a verb and a noun.

"Drink," also, I should say, can refer specifically to an alcoholic beverage, something like whiskey, vodka, beer, wine. These can all be called "drinks" if



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we're referring specifically to the fact that they have alcohol in them. So sometimes it's unclear when somebody says, "Oh, I need a drink." Well, usually if they say, "I need a drink," they mean they want an alcoholic drink (a beer or a glass of wine), but it can be used also for non-alcoholic drinks, so it depends on the context.

Finally, Ike (Ike) in Thailand wants to know how we use the words "individually," "separately," and "independently." Good question.

"Individually" means that you are doing something that is different from everyone else. You're describing a way of doing things by yourself, not part of a group. It can also refer to doing things one at a time. For example: "The teacher gets the students to work on their homework individually." They're not talking to each other; they're working by themselves. You could also say, "I'm going to individually pack (or wrap) these cups." Each cup I'm going to put in a piece of paper so that it doesn't get broken. That's to pack, or to wrap. I'm going to do them "individually," each one is separate.

As you can see, "separately," then, can mean the same thing as "individually," especially if you are talking about objects: "I'm going to wrap these dishes separately." "I'm going to wrap them individually," it means the same thing. Sometimes, however, we prefer to say "separately" instead of "individually." For example: "My wife and I drove separately to the mall." We did not drive together; she was in her car, I was in my car. It would be more common to say "separately" there than "individually." "We drove individually." It's possible, but for certain context – for certain actions we tend to use "separately" to describe that situation.

"Independently" is in a way that does not depend on, or is not influenced or controlled by others; something that you do by your own action, something you do without having anyone influence you. For example, if you are going to play the piano, you need to learn how to move your 10 fingers independently, so that moving one doesn't necessarily move the other. I personally can't do that, so that's why I have never played the piano!

You also will hear the expression "to live independently." This is often referred to someone who perhaps may have some difficulty living by themselves: they may be too young, or they may have some physical condition that does not allow them to live on their own – to live independently. Or, it may simply refer to someone whose situation has changed. They no longer live with their family or with their friends, and they now live by themselves, independently.



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“Independently” is used to stress or to emphasize the idea that you don’t need anyone’s help. It implies a certain idea of freedom. “Individually” puts the emphasis on the single person, something separate from a group. “Separately” is used to stress or emphasize that two people or two groups are not working together: “The men and the women work separately.” They may not necessarily be working individually, they may be still in a group, but they are separate from another group. So that’s another way of figuring out when to use “separately” versus “individually.”

If you have a question or comment for us, you can email us at [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com), and we’ll try to answer your questions individually.

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time, won’t you, on the English Café.

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