



ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

GLOSSARY

to be supposed to do (something) – to be expected to do something; to have an obligation or agreement to do something

* The person who leaves the house last in the morning is the one who is supposed to lock the door.

deal – an agreement that one person will do one thing if another person does another thing

* Sonya and Dmitrius made a deal that she would help him with his math homework if he would help her study history.

to tell on (someone) – to tell someone that another person has done something bad; to tell someone about a bad thing that another person has done

* Brothers and sisters often tell on each other to their parents.

tattletale – a child who often tells an adult when another child does something wrong

* Katya was the tattletale when she told the teacher that Billie had put frogs in the classroom.

to swear – to promise that what one says is true

* I swear that I didn't know that your ex-boyfriend would be at this party.

to hold up (one's) end of (something) – to do what one must do in an agreement; to do what one has said that he or she will do

* I held up my end of the agreement by completing the work, so now Kathy needs to hold up her end and pay me for it.

off – canceled; over; finished; ended; no longer valid; not valid anymore

* Chandler and Rachel got in a fight and broke up, so the marriage is off.

to spill the beans – to accidentally tell a secret; to accidentally say something that shouldn't have been said because another person asked one to keep it a secret

* Who spilled the beans about Gwen's surprise birthday party?

to put the blame on (someone) – to say that something is another person's fault; to say that another person's actions are the reason that something bad happened

* You can't put the blame on Jeremy for breaking the vase. It wasn't his fault that he fell down and accidentally hit it.



ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

liar – a person who tells lies; a person who lies; a person who does not tell the truth

* If you are a liar, other people won't trust you.

to mean to do (something) – to intend to do something; to have the intention to do something; to want to do something; to do something on purpose

* Colleen didn't mean to be late for the show. She was stuck in traffic.

come on – a phrase used to show that one doesn't believe what another person has said; a phrase to encourage someone else to do something

* Come on, Desmond. Stop saying that. We both know it isn't true.

chore – something that one has to do regularly, usually around the home

* When Rob was a child, his chores were to milk the cows and feed the pigs every morning.

to warn – to tell someone to do (or not do) something because something bad will result

* Steve warned everyone to work hard yesterday, because the boss was very angry.

on notice – aware of something; given a warning

* The government put people in southern Florida on notice for hurricanes.

to be dead to (one) – to no longer be part of one's family or one's friend; to no longer be important to someone else

* A mother must be very angry to tell her son that he is dead to her.



ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Therese say, “The deal is off”?
 - a) Because she turned off the deal.
 - b) Because Stephen broke the deal.
 - c) Because Stephen wants to go to the movies.

2. Why does Stephen say, “Come on, please”?
 - a) Because he wants Therese to come to the movies.
 - b) Because he wants Therese to stop saying bad things about him.
 - c) Because he wants Therese to put the blame on him.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to swear

The verb “to swear,” in this podcast, means to promise that what one says is true: “Chandler swore that he didn’t steal the money.” The verb “to swear” can also mean to make a very serious promise to do something: “I swear that I will do everything I can to help you.” Another meaning of “to swear” is to make an official promise before beginning to work in a public office: “Supreme Court judges swear on the Bible when they accept the position.” The phrase “to swear somebody in” means to bring someone into a public office: “He was sworn in as the new governor of Ohio.” Finally, “to swear” can mean to say bad words when one is angry: “Please don’t swear in front of the children.”

off

In this podcast, the word “off” means canceled, finished, or ended: “The meeting is off, because too many people are on vacation that day.” The phrase “to be off” means to begin a race: “They’re off, and Jackson is already leading the other runners.” The phrase “to be off” can also mean to be on vacation and not in the office: “Juliet is off today, but I can give her your message when she returns.” The word “off” can refer to a piece of equipment that isn’t working or in operation: “The radio is off, but the TV is on.” We also use the word “off” to talk about pieces of clothing that are removed: “Please take your shoes off before you walk into the house.”



ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

CULTURE NOTE

Young children often keep secrets from their parents. These are things that they want to keep “private” (known only to them), but they often share them with their friends.

One common way for children, and especially girls, to keep secrets is to use a “diary.” A diary is a small book with “blank pages” (pages without any writing on them). Each day, the children begin with the words, “Dear diary,” and then write about what is happening in their lives, or what happened that day. Many diaries have “locks” so that they can be closed with a small key. Sometimes girls share their diaries with their close friends, but they generally don’t share them with their parents.

Another common way for children, and especially boys, to keep secrets is to become “blood brothers.” If two young boys share an experience that they don’t want other people to know about, each child will make a small cut in his “index finger” (the finger next to one’s thumb) and then they hold their fingers together so that they share their blood. Because diseases, such as AIDS, are transferred between people by blood, the practice of becoming “blood brothers” isn’t as common now as it used to be.

When children share secrets, they often ask each other to swear that they won’t share them with anyone else. One common “oath” (the words that people say when swearing to do something) is “Do you swear to keep the secret? Cross your heart and hope to die?” This phrase means that the child should prefer to die than tell the secret. This is an “exaggeration” (what is said is much bigger than what is actually done), but the idea is that the secret should not be shared with other people.

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



ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 273: Telling Secrets to Parents.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 273. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at eslpod.com for more information about this podcast. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, which has some additional courses you may be interested in.

This episode is called “Telling Secrets to Parents,” and it's a conversation between a brother and a sister, and has some good vocabulary that we would use in a family. Let's get started.

[start of story]

Therese: I can't believe you told Mom and Dad about me driving the car last Saturday when I wasn't supposed to. I thought we had a deal. You wouldn't tell on me and I'd take you and Kathy to the movies this weekend. You're such a tattletale.

Stephen: I swear it wasn't me! Why would I tell? We do have a deal and I've held up my end.

Therese: Forget it. The deal is off. There'll be no movie this weekend.

Stephen: Hey, I told you it wasn't me who spilled the beans. Are you sure it wasn't Jeffrey?

Therese: Don't try to put the blame on somebody else. I know it was you.

Stephen: How?

Therese: You're a terrible liar.

Stephen: Well, if I did tell on you, I didn't mean to do it. Come on, please! I really want to see that movie this weekend. What can I do?



ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

Therese: Hmm...that's a good question. How about doing my chores for two weeks?

Stephen: Two weeks?! No way. How about one week?

Therese: You've got a deal. I'll take you if you do all of my chores for a week. But I'm warning you. You're on notice. If you tell on me one more time, you'll be dead to me.

Stephen: Yeah, yeah. I heard you.

[end of story]

The dialogue begins with Therese saying to her brother Stephen, "I can't believe you told Mom and Dad about me driving the car last Saturday when I wasn't supposed to." So, Therese is angry; she's upset; she's mad. That's why she says: "I can't believe you did this," that's an expression we would use if you were angry. Therese is angry with Stephen because she thinks that Stephen told her parents, or their parents, that Therese had driven the family car when she wasn't supposed to. "To be supposed to do something" is to be expected to do something.

Therese then says to Stephen, "I thought we had a deal" (deal), meaning I thought we had an agreement. A "deal" is an agreement, when two people agree to do something. The deal between Therese and Stephen was that Stephen wouldn't tell on Therese, and she would take Stephen and their sister Kathy to the movies this weekend. "To tell on someone" means to tell another person that you are doing something wrong; to tell another person that someone is doing something bad or doing something wrong. This is something that a brother and a sister might do: "Mom, Julie didn't wash the dishes!" That's how we would say it just with that – that tone – that intonation. A little child would be telling on her sister, saying that she didn't do what she was supposed to do; she did something wrong.

Another word we have for someone who does that is a "tattletale." A "tattletale" (tattletale) is a word we usually use for a child who tells their parents or another adult – their teacher – that another child is doing something wrong. Tattletale has a somewhat negative connotation – a negative meaning. It's not a nice thing to be called a tattletale. Someone may say to you, "Don't be a tattletale" – don't tell someone else that another person is doing something wrong, worry about yourself.



ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

Stephen says that “I swear it wasn’t me!” “To swear” (swear) here means to promise to say something that is true; to promise that what you are saying is true. “To swear” has some other meanings in English as well; take a look at the Learning Guide for those.

Stephen swears that he was not the person who told the parents about Therese driving when she wasn’t supposed to. He asks, “Why would I tell? We do have a deal and I’ve held up my end.” The expression “to hold up your end” means you did what you agreed to do; you did what you said you were going to do. We also have an expression: “I held up my end of the bargain.” Here, “bargain” means agreement; my end of the deal.

So, Stephen is saying that he did what he was supposed to do, so Therese has to do what she agreed to do. Therese, however, says, “Forget it,” meaning no, I’m not going to do it. “The deal is off.” When we say something “is off,” in this case, we mean it’s canceled; it’s over; it’s finished; it is ended; it’s off. “Off” has a couple of different meanings, and you can take a look at the Learning Guide for some more of those.

Therese says, “There will be no movie this weekend,” meaning they will not be going to see a movie this weekend. Stephen says, “Hey, I told you it wasn’t me who spilled the beans.” The expression “to spill the beans” (beans) means to accidentally tell someone a secret; to accidentally say something that you shouldn’t have said because the other person didn’t want anyone else to know. So, to somebody a secret, but by accident, that’s to spill the beans.

So, Stephen is saying that he did not spill the beans. He, of course, tries to blame Jeffrey, but everyone knows that Jeffrey is, perhaps, the most honest person in the world. He would never do that! I should say that I have a brother named Stephen and a sister named Therese, but this story is not related in any way to anything that happened when I was a child!

Back to the story: Therese says, “Don’t try to put the blame on someone else.” “To put the blame (blame) on someone” means to say that someone else did the action; that someone else is at fault; they did the bad thing that happened. That’s to put the blame on someone else: “It wasn’t me, it was him!”

Therese says, “I know it was you.” And Stephen says, “How?” Therese responds, “You’re a terrible liar.” A “liar” (liar) is someone who lies; someone who does not tell the truth.



ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

Stephen says, “Well, if I did tell on you, I didn’t mean to.” Here, the truth comes out. Here we learn that Stephen probably did tell on Therese, that wasn’t Jeffrey, who, as we know, was a perfect child! Stephen says, “I didn’t mean to do it.” “I didn’t mean to do something” means I didn’t have the intention to do something; I didn’t want to do something. “I didn’t want to do it on purpose,” you could also say.

So, Stephen is saying here that it was an accident if he did tell the parents, and then he says, “Come on, please!” The expression “come on” means that you don’t believe what the other person has said. It can also be used to encourage someone to do something for you or with you. You could say, “Come on, let’s go to the movies,” meaning please come to the movies with me; I want you to come with me. So Stephen says, “Come on, please,” meaning please do what I want you to do.

Therese says that she will take Stephen to the movies if he does her chores for two weeks. A “chore” (chore) is something that you do on a regular basis; something you do every week, for example, or every day. Usually it’s something at home – in your house – that involves cleaning or washing; those are typical chores. It could be anything, however, that you do at home that is usually not something pleasant.

Stephen says, “No way,” meaning absolutely not, I won’t do your chores, Therese, for two weeks. He says, “How about one week?” Therese says, “You’ve got a deal,” meaning you have an agreement; okay. “But I’m warning you,” she says, “You’re on notice.” “To warn someone” is to tell them not to do something because if they do, something bad will happen. To tell someone they’re “on notice” means that you are giving them a warning; you are warning them not to do something. That’s the general meaning here of “on notice.”

Finally Therese says joking to Stephen, “If you tell on me one more time, you’ll be dead to me.” “To be dead to someone” means that you no longer think of that person as being one of your friends or part of your family. That would only happen under a very serious condition, with a very serious problem. So, Therese is joking here, saying to Stephen, “you’ll be dead to me,” in order to warn him; to say that this is serious. Stephen responds by saying, “Yeah, yeah. I heard you,” meaning I understand what you said; I understood it.

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



ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

[start of story]

Therese: I can't believe you told Mom and Dad about me driving the car last Saturday when I wasn't supposed to. I thought we had a deal. You wouldn't tell on me and I'd take you and Kathy to the movies this weekend. You're such a tattletale.

Stephen: I swear it wasn't me! Why would I tell? We do have a deal and I've held up my end.

Therese: Forget it. The deal is off. There'll be no movie this weekend.

Stephen: Hey, I told you it wasn't me who spilled the beans. Are you sure it wasn't Jeffrey?

Therese: Don't try to put the blame on somebody else. I know it was you.

Stephen: How?

Therese: You're a terrible liar.

Stephen: Well, if I did tell on you, I didn't mean to do it. Come on, please! I really want to see that movie this weekend. What can I do?

Therese: Hmm...that's a good question. How about doing my chores for two weeks?

Stephen: Two weeks?! No way. How about one week?

Therese: You've got a deal. I'll take you if you do all of my chores for a week. But I'm warning you. You're on notice. If you tell on me one more time, you'll be dead to me.

Stephen: Yeah, yeah. I heard you.

[end of story]

The script for today's podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.



English as a Second Language Podcast
www.eslpod.com

ESL Podcast 273 – Telling Secrets to Parents

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. This podcast is copyright 2007.