



ESL Podcast 291 – Going on a Diet

GLOSSARY

scale – balance; a small device that one steps on to see how heavy one is; a small machine that is used to weigh oneself

* Is your bathroom scale in kilos or pounds?

to weigh – to find out how heavy something is; to find out how many kilos or pounds something is

* Sheryl is too thin. She's almost six feet tall but she weighs only 115 pounds!

to gain – to get more of something; to increase in something

* Many people gain weight during the holidays because they eat too much food.

diet – eating less food and/or eating healthier food to lose weight; eating fewer calories to lose weight

* Jim is on a strange diet where he can eat only cabbage and grapefruit.

to shed – to get rid of something; to lose something; to reduce something

* Fast runners can shed more than one pound of water every hour, so it's important for them to drink a lot of liquids.

diet pill – a medicine that helps one lose weight, either by making one less hungry, or by making one's body use more calories (energy)

* This commercial says that the diet pills will help anyone lose 20 pounds in 5 days, but I don't believe it.

to take it easy – to do something in moderation; to not get too excited about something; to do something slowly and/or calmly

* The car dealer said to take it easy with your new car by driving it slowly for the first 100 miles.

protein – something found in foods like meats, eggs, and beans that helps one's body build muscle

* How many grams of protein should people eat each day?

empty carb – a carbohydrate that has calories but little nutrition (vitamins, minerals, or fiber), such as white bread, white rice, candy, and sugar

* If you want to eat fewer empty carbs, try eating whole wheat bread instead of white bread.



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yo-yo dieting – the practice of losing a few pounds, then gaining those pounds, then losing them again, and then gaining them again, over and over

* Yo-yo dieting is frustrating and bad for our health. Let's talk about ways to lose weight and to keep it off.

exercise – physical activity; physical movement, usually done to lose weight or to have a healthy heart and body

* The new government guidelines say that people are supposed to do at least 30 minutes of exercise each day.

to fast – to not eat or drink anything for a period of time

* Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan.

to come around to (something) – to begin to see things in a new way; to begin to share someone else's opinion

* I never used to like big cars, but now I'm coming around to Jorge's idea of buying a truck.

weight-loss – one's success in losing weight, so that one is less heavy than one was before.

* Elijah's weight-loss plan includes eating five fruits and vegetables, drinking eight glasses of water, and riding his bicycle for 40 minutes every day.

to follow (one's) example – to do what someone else is doing

* I'm going to follow Terry's example by saving 15% of the money I earn each month.

love handles – the extra fat and skin on one's sides, at the waist

* My wife says she likes my love handles, but I'm going to get rid of them by exercising.

strenuous – vigorous and difficult; very active

* If running is too strenuous, try walking quickly.

obese – very overweight; weighing too much; being too heavy; being unhealthily heavy

* The doctor told Hank that he was very obese since he weighed almost 400 pounds.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Decima going on a diet?
 - a) Because she is making a decision.
 - b) Because she wants to shed extra pounds.
 - c) Because she is getting some diet pills.

 2. How did Sebastian's wife lose 30 pounds?
 - a) By taking some diet pills.
 - b) By yo-yo-dieting for years.
 - c) By eating healthy foods and exercising.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

scale

The word “scale,” in this podcast, means a small device that is used to weigh oneself: “Take off your shoes and coat before you step on the scale.” A “scale” can also be used to weigh other things (not just people): “Please use the kitchen scale to weigh one pound of blueberries.” The word “scale” also refers to the size or importance of something, compared to what is normal: “The organization has a large-scale project that means working in more than 30 countries.” A “scale” can be a system for measuring something: “On a scale from one to ten, how helpful are these podcasts?” Or, “The pH scale is used to measure the acidity of liquids.” On a fish or snake, a “scale” is one of the small, hard pieces that cover the body: “The snake has yellow and black scales that protect it from other animals.”

to shed

In this podcast, the verb “to shed” means to get rid of something: “Ursula looked much younger after she shed her long hair for a shorter haircut.” The verb “to shed” can also mean for something to fall off in nature: “The trees shed their leaves in the fall.” Or, “The cat is shedding, so there is hair all over the sofa.” The phrase “to shed tears” means to cry: “They shed some tears when they said goodbye.” The phrase “to shed light on (something)” means to explain something so that it is easier to understand: “They asked the professor to shed light on his research project.” Finally, as a noun, a “shed” is a small building that is used to store things when they are not being used: “We keep the children’s bicycles and other outdoor toys in the shed.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Obesity is a big problem in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “approximately” (about) 66% of U.S. adults are overweight or obese. The agency also “states” (says) that approximately 17% of U.S. children and teenagers are overweight.

Why are so many Americans overweight? Part of the answer is “genetic,” or related to the “genes,” or biological code, that is received from one’s parents. These genes can affect how much energy our bodies use and how we store fat. But a bigger reason for America’s obesity problems is “behavioral,” or related to the things that people do and don’t do.

Americans are eating more food than they used to. “Portion sizes” (the amount of food that is served at one meal) are growing. And the food that Americans eat today has more “calories” (energy) than it used to. “Fast food restaurants” and “pre-packaged food” are very popular because they require little or no cooking, but they aren’t as healthy as traditional foods are.

Another behavioral “factor” in (reason for) America’s obesity problem is that Americans aren’t getting as much exercise as they used to. Most Americans like to drive instead of walk. They often sit at their desks at work all day, and then sit on their couches watching TV in the evening, with little exercise.

People who are overweight or obese have a higher “probability” (chance) of having health problems like heart attacks, cancer, and diabetes. “Consequently” (for this reason), the U.S. government believes that obesity is a national problem and it has many programs to try to help Americans lose weight. Unfortunately, the programs haven’t succeeded yet and Americans continue to get heavier.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 291: Going on a Diet.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 291. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com. You can take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, which has some interesting premium courses. You can also download a Learning Guide for this episode.

Our episode is called “Going on a Diet.” Let's get started!

[start of story]

Decima: My scale at home can't be right. I weighed myself this morning and I've gained another five pounds since last month!

Sebastian: You're not the only one. My pants are feeling tight and it's getting harder to see my feet!

Decima: Okay, I'm making a decision right here, right now. I'm going on a diet, and I'm going to do whatever it takes to shed these extra pounds. Right after work I'm going to the drugstore for some diet pills.

Sebastian: You'll want to take it easy with those pills. My wife took some diet pills last year and she did lose some weight, but she gained it right back. She found it was better to eat right by getting plenty of fruits and vegetables, and to eat more low-fat protein and fewer empty carbs. The truth is, she had been yo-yo dieting for years until she changed her diet and started exercising.

Decima: Oh, no. Not exercise. I hate exercising. I'd rather fast than go to a gym.

Sebastian: That's how I feel, but I'm starting to come around to my wife's thinking. Working out helped her with her 30-pound weight-loss earlier this year and she's kept it off. I may follow her example so I can get rid of these love handles.

Decima: What kind of exercise are you thinking about?



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Sebastian: Nothing too strenuous. I'm thinking of walking before work everyday and maybe taking a walk at lunchtime.

Decima: I suppose I could start with some walking. Maybe I'll join you for your lunchtime walk. If I don't do something soon, I'll be obese in a few months.

Sebastian: No, you won't, but you're welcome to join me. When should we start? Today?

Decima: Today? No, not today. Let's start tomorrow.

Sebastian: All right. We'll start tomorrow, then.

[end of story]

Our dialogue begins with Decima saying, "My scale at home can't be right." My "scale" (scale) refers to a small machine, a small device, that you step on to see how heavy you are or how heavy something is. If you are trying to lose weight, you may want to start by finding out how much you weigh right now; if you step on a scale, you can see. If you're like me, and you don't want to know because you do not want to be depressed, then you'd want to stay away from the scales!

But, Decima wants to lose weight. She says, "I weighed myself this morning and I've gained another five pounds since last month!" "To weigh something" means to find out how heavy it is – how many kilos or pounds it is. "To gain" means to get more of something. We use that verb in talking about weight: "He gained weight," or, "He lost weight." I usually gain weight!

Sebastian then says, "You're not the only one," meaning "You're not the only person who has gained weight recently." He says, "My pants are feeling tight and it's getting harder to see my feet!" He means that his stomach – the middle of his body is getting bigger so his pants are getting tight – they don't fit, they're too small. It's getting hard to see his feet because his stomach – what we would probably call his "belly" (belly), which is just another word for stomach – is too big for him to look down and see his feet. Fortunately, I can still see my feet when I look down!

Decima says, "Okay, I'm making a decision right here, right now," meaning immediately: "...right here, right now. I'm going on a diet," she wants to eat less food or eat different food so she can lose weight. She says she's "going to do whatever it takes to shed (shed) these extra pounds." "To shed" means to get rid of something, we often to use it in talking about pounds: "I'm going to shed a few



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pounds” – I'm going to get rid of a few pounds. That word has a few other meanings in English as well; take a look at our Learning Guide for an additional explanation.

Decima says that she's “going to the drugstore,” the pharmacy, “for some diet pills.” “Diet pills” are little things that you swallow; a “pill” is something that is usually medicine – a drug. In this case, it's a drug to help you lose weight. You can go to many drug stores and pharmacies in the United States and buy pills that are supposed to help you lose weight. In fact, many of these things don't help at all, probably most of them. But they're very popular because it seems like an easy way to lose weight; you just take a pill.

Sebastian says, “You'll want to take it easy with those pills.” “To take it easy” means not to get too excited or to go slowly – to do something in moderation, we would say, not too much. He says that “My wife took some diet pills last year and she did lose some weight, but she gained it right back,” she lost it and then she gained it again. He says that his wife “found it better to eat right,” or correctly, “by getting plenty of fruits and vegetables, and to eat more low-fat protein and fewer empty carbs.”

“Low-fat” means not a lot of fat, still some fat but not much. “Protein” is foods such as meat, eggs, beans; all these have protein. It's a kind of food. A “carb” stands for “carbohydrate.” It's a different kind of food; white bread, rice, sugar are all carbohydrates. We usually abbreviated that by saying “carbs.” “Empty carbs” are carbohydrates, sometimes called “simple carbohydrates,” like white bread, white rice, sugar. You can also have “complex carbohydrates,” things like brown rice, for example, or whole wheat bread.

Well, Sebastian says that his wife has “been yo-yo dieting for years.” “Yo-yo” (yo-yo) is a type of toy. You have a string around your finger, and around a disk that goes up and down, that's a yo-yo; it goes up and down. “Yo-yo dieting” means that you lose some pounds, then you gain some pounds, then you lose some pounds, and then, two months later, you gain them back, and so forth. So, it's repeatedly losing and gaining back weight: “yo-yo dieting.”

Sebastian suggests that Decima start to exercise, and Decima says, “No. Not exercise,” meaning not physical activity or physical movement, that's exercise. She doesn't want to do that, she says, “I hate exercising. I'd rather,” meaning I would prefer to, “fast than go to a gym.” She doesn't want to exercise at a gym, she says she would “rather fast.” “To fast,” as a verb, means not to drink or eat anything for a certain period of time. If you are going in for some medical



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examinations, sometimes you have to fast – not eat food for 12 hours or 24 hours before your appointment.

Sebastian says that he does not like to exercise either, but he's starting to come around to his wife's thinking. "To come around to something" means to begin to see things in a new or different way, to begin to think like someone else. "I'm coming around to your way of thinking" means I'm beginning to agree with you, to see things the way you do.

"Working out," Sebastian says, helped his wife "with her 30-pound weight-loss." "Weight-loss" is the amount or your success in losing weight. Sebastian says, "I may follow her example so I can get rid of these love handles." "To follow someone's example" means to do what someone else is doing. "Love handles" is an informal expression; it refers to extra fat and skin at your waist – around your waist where your belly is. The word "handle" (handle) usually means something that you grab onto, something that you hold onto with your hands.

Sebastian says he's not going to do anything "too strenuous." Something that is "strenuous" (strenuous) is something that is difficult or is something that is very active. Jogging can be very strenuous; walking is less strenuous.

Decima says, "f I don't do something soon, I'll be obese in a few months." "To be obese" (obese) means to be very overweight – to weigh too much. This is a big problem in the United States; some people say that as much as 30% of the U.S. population is overweight. Many of them are obese, they're really overweight. Maybe we should exercise more and eat a little less.

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

[start of story]

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Decima: I suppose I could start with some walking. Maybe I'll join you for your lunchtime walk. If I don't do something soon, I'll be obese in a few months.

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Decima: Today? No, not today. Let's start tomorrow.

Sebastian: All right. We'll start tomorrow, then.

[end of story]

The script for this 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.

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