



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 103

TOPICS

Ask an American: raising children; one of those, reply versus answer, customer versus purchaser

GLOSSARY

to be in competition – to be competing; to play a game or do another thing to find out whether one is better or worse than another person or group of people
* Eddy and Samantha are in competition to see who will make the most sales this month.

stressed out – very worried, nervous, and anxious about something
* Bo is stressed out about school this week because he has three important exams.

to get (someone) into (something) – to arrange for someone to be able to participate in something or become a member of a group
* Were you able to get Victoria into the ballet class, or was it already full?

to pause – to hesitate; to wait a short period of time before doing something
* Whenever I get angry, I try to pause and take a deep breath before saying anything.

to build self-esteem – to improve one's confidence in one's own abilities; to make oneself believe that one is good at doing something
* What do you think about building children's self-esteem by telling them that they're good athletes, musicians, or students?

competent – capable; able to do something, but maybe not very well
* I'm a competent writer, but I don't think I'll ever publish a great novel.

capable – competent; able to do something, usually very well
* Sampson is a very capable in business and I think he'll be a company president within 10 years.

it's all about (something) – a phrase meaning that something is the only important thing, or that one is completely focused on something
* For Cindy, it's all about getting good grades in school, and not necessarily about learning things that will be useful later.



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spoiled – overindulged; having received everything that one ever asked for (usually from parents and grandparents) so that one expects everything to be this way and doesn't know how to act in the real world

* Priscilla is so spoiled! Her parents buy her all the toys and candy she asks for.

narcissistic – self-loving; liking oneself too much

* Craig is very narcissistic and thinks he is the most handsome man in the world.

one of those – one of a group of something; that one

* I'd like to buy one of those necklaces, but they're too expensive.

reply – a response to something

* Have you sent a reply to Janice's email about her idea for the project?

answer – a response to a question

* What was her answer when he asked her to marry him?

customer – a person who buys something at a store or business

* The customer bought more than \$100 in groceries.

purchaser – a person who buys something, often for a business or company

* How long did it take you to find a purchaser for your home?



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Competitive High School Sports

American high schools have many sports teams. These sports teams compete with teams from other schools. Sometimes high school sports can be very “competitive” (with a lot of pressure to win), with the “entire” (whole) school and even community supporting the teams by “going to the games” (watching the competitions).

Many movies have been made about competitive high school sports. Hoop Dreams, for example, was made in 1994. It is a documentary (true story about real people) movie about two African American boys in Chicago who play basketball in high school and college and want to become professional basketball players. The movie is about what happens in the boys’ lives and their changing relationship, but it also has a lot of information about competitive high school sports and how they can “affect” (have influence on) the players’ lives.

Friday Night Lights, which was made in 2004, is about a high school football team in a small Texas town that has many economic and “racial” (relating to people’s ethnicity and skin color) problems. The entire community supports the high school football team and the games help to “bring the community together” (help the community members stop fighting and feel like part of one group). The “coach” (the person who leads a sports team) is very strong and helps the players do their best. This movie shows the pressures and “rewards” (good things that happen as a result of something) of competitive high school sports.

Finally, Hoosiers is a 1986 movie about a high school basketball team in Indiana. The team has a bad coach, but it is able to “beat all the odds” (do better than anyone expects) and win the “championship game” (the final game that decides which team is the best in a year).



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 103.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café episode 103. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in the beautiful City of Los Angeles, in the State of California.

You can visit our website at eslpod.com and download a Learning Guide for this episode. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, which has some additional premium courses you may be interested in.

On this Café, we're going to be talking about bringing up children, and what some people give as advice for parenting – what some American experts think are good ideas for bringing up children. You'll have a chance to see a little bit about the way children are raised in the U.S. This is part of our "Ask an American" series. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Before we begin our main topic today, a small correction from a previous English Café – English Café number 96. In that Café I talked about how to become a doctor in the United States. I said that many doctors go through what is called a "residency" in order to learn more about a specialized topic after their four years of medical school. This is not quite correct. One of our listeners emailed me and said that almost all doctors in the U.S. go through a residency, which is a sort of practical training; this usually lasts between three and seven years. After that, if they want to have a specialization of one specific area, they would complete something called a "fellowship." So, just a small correction about what a residency is versus a fellowship if you want to become a doctor in the United States.

Our main topic today is going to be children – how to raise happy children. To "raise" children means the same as to "bring them up" – to help them as they grow older. Usually, we talk about the parents, or a parent – mother or father – who raises the child. We're going to listen today to some Americans giving their advice to American parents about how to raise children. I think it will give you an interesting perspective – an interesting view – of the way some Americans raise their children. This is one of the more difficult things to try to understand about another country or culture, so I hope that listening to these experts – these people who say they are experts – will give you some insight, some perspective



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into that question. These are taken from a news story on the Voice of America website.

We're going to start by listening to a man talk about how parents feel as though they are in competition with other parents. He's going to talk about what happens when parents feel this pressure, and what are some of the results of that pressure. We're going to listen to this person talk at a native rate of speech. He's going to speak somewhat fast, but I will go back and explain everything he says. So don't worry, just try to understand as much as you can and then we'll explain it. Here we go.

[recording]

We're constantly in competition with other parents and with the whole society, we think, to make our kids become whatever was our idea, 20 years before when they were born, of what a success would be. So, they spend their days very stressed out, driving kids everywhere, getting kids into whatever they consider the best pre-school, and if their child's self-esteem isn't high, then she won't succeed, or if he doesn't compete well, he won't succeed.

[recording stops]

The man begins by saying, "We're constantly in competition with other parents and with the whole society." "We're constantly (meaning we parents are constantly – are always) in competition." To be "in competition" means to be competing against someone else. It means that you are both trying to get something. For example, in a game there are two teams in competition. They are going for one prize, trying to get something and only one of them can win. So, he is saying that American parents sometimes feel, or think, that they are in competition with other parents to do a better job. I know this is quite true in the area where I live in Los Angeles, where many of the parents feel like they are in competition with other parents to make their child better.

Some of these parents try to make their children become whatever their idea was 20 years ago of a success. The expert says, "we think, to make our kids become whatever was our idea, 20 years before when they were born, of what a success would be." What he is saying here is that we imagine what was successful when we were younger, and then try to give that to our children – we try to make them successful.



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Because of this, parents “spend their days,” meaning they use their time, “they spend their days very stressed out.” To be “stressed out” means to be anxious, to be worried. Part of the reason why parents are stressed out is that they are “driving kids everywhere.” Once again, I know this is quite true for the parents in the area where I live, and probably of some of my own brothers and sisters with their children. Many of the children now are involved in dozens of activities; they go swimming, they go dancing, they take music lessons, they’re involved in sports teams. All these different activities require that the parent be the one who drives them to these different places, usually after school or on the weekend.

Of course, there’s nothing wrong with having many activities for your child; it certainly helps children with many things. So, it’s not a criticism of having activities for your child to make sure they do the best that they can. I think this gentleman is talking about parents who, perhaps, try to do too much, and that puts them under pressure.

This pressure begins at a very early age. The expert says that parents try to get “kids into whatever they consider the best pre-school.” To “get their kids into” means to get them admitted, to make them part of something. We often use this pressure when talking about school: “He got into Harvard,” means Harvard said yes, you can be a student, because, of course, there is a lot of competition to get into the best universities.

These parents are worried about getting their children into the best pre-school. “Pre-school” is a program for children who are three and four years old, maybe five years old. It is the youngest kind of educational program – or program for young children. I went to pre-school; this is where I learned colors and numbers. Although, I don’t think I learned them very well; I was a poor student even when I was three years old! But, we spent most of our time playing. Many parents try to get their children into the best pre-schools because they think it will give them an advantage, they will be able to get into a better elementary school and high school if their child goes to a good pre-school.

The expert goes on to say that if the parent’s children have low self-esteem, then they won’t succeed. He says, “if their child’s self-esteem isn’t high, then she won’t succeed.” “Self-esteem” is what you think of yourself. Do you think you are a good person, a smart person, a beautiful person; all of these could be part of your self-esteem – what you think of yourself. We talk about self-esteem being high or low; high is good, low is bad. If a child has low self-esteem, some parents think they won’t succeed in life. Or if their child doesn’t compete well, if they’re not able to do better than the people – the young children – around them,



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they won't succeed later in life. So, parents are trying to make their children, in some cases, to be perfect – to be the best they can be. Of course, all parents want their children to do well; this expert is talking about parents who, perhaps, do too much. Not necessarily most parents, but certainly some parents.

Let's listen again now to the man describing American parents.

[recording]

We're constantly in competition with other parents and with the whole society, we think, to make our kids become whatever was our idea, 20 years before when they were born, of what a success would be. So, they spend their days very stressed out, driving kids everywhere, getting kids into whatever they consider the best pre-school, and if their child's self-esteem isn't high, then she won't succeed, or if he doesn't compete well, he won't succeed.

[recording stops]

This expert then goes on to talk about his own children and what happened to them, and how they started to do the same thing as other parents. They tried to get their children involved in many different things, and then decided that they were doing too much.

Once again, let's listen and then we'll go back and explain.

[recording]

I'm a parent of a 17 and a 14-year old, and both my wife and I are professionals, and we actually had to make a conscience decision when our kids were young. If they were in soccer and they were doing this and that and this – you know what I mean? And we just said, "Wait a minute! We need to pause and see who are these kids and what are the two or three activities they need?"

[recording stops]

Once again, he speaks very quickly; let's go back and review what he said. He says, "I'm a parent of a 17 and a 14-year old, and both my wife and I are professionals." They're, perhaps, businesspeople: lawyers, doctors, et cetera – professionals. He says, "we actually had to make a conscience decision (meaning a deliberate decision – a decision that you think about) when our kids were young. If they (their children) were in soccer (meaning they were playing



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soccer – football soccer) and they were doing this and that and this – you know what I mean?” He’s having a conversation here, and he uses the expression “you know what I mean,” which means do you understand what I am saying. We use that expression, “do you know what I mean,” when you expect the other person to agree with you; you expect them to say, “Oh, yes.”

He and his wife said, “Wait a minute,” meaning stop, we have to think about this. “Wait a minute! We need to pause to see who are these kids and what are the two or three activities they need?” In other words, “we need to pause,” we need to stop doing something. To “pause” means to stop what you are doing, and then continue later. The parents are pausing – they’re stopping – and trying to decide what are the two or three things that their children should be involved in.

Let’s listen again.

[recording]

I’m a parent of a 17 and a 14-year old, and both my wife and I are professionals, and we actually had to make a conscience decision when our kids were young. If they were in soccer and they were doing this and that and this – you know what I mean? And we just said, “Wait a minute! We need to pause and see who are these kids and what are the two or three activities they need?”

[recording stops]

We’ll listen now to another expert, who talks about the importance of self-esteem, how children get self-esteem. He’s going to talk about where self-esteem comes from, and why parents, sometimes, don’t do a very good job at helping their children because they don’t understand this.

Let’s listen to him, and then we’ll go back and explain what he is saying.

[recording]

Parents were told by parenting experts that the way to build self-esteem is to always praise your kid and always make sure they feel good about themselves. Yes, of course, children need to feel loved and valued, but they also need to feel competent and capable, that their actions matter.

[recording stops]



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This expert says that “Parents were told by parenting experts (people like him) that the way to build self-esteem is to always praise your kid (always tell them how good they are doing) and always make sure they feel good about themselves.” “To build self-esteem” here means to increase, to make it higher – to make your child feel better about themselves. “Yes, of course,” he says, “children need to feel loved and valued, but they also need to feel competent and capable, that their actions matter.” To be “competent” means something very similar to “to be capable”; it means to be able to do something. We often use the word “competent” in talking about a job, for example – are you able to do it? Do you have the knowledge and the skills to do it? To say “their actions matter” means their actions are important – they make a difference.

Let’s listen again.

[recording]

Parents were told by parenting experts that the way to build self-esteem is to always praise your kid and always make sure they feel good about themselves. Yes, of course, children need to feel loved and valued, but they also need to feel competent and capable, that their actions matter.

[recording stops]

Finally, this expert goes on to talk about the problems that American parents have when they raise – or create kids that don’t understand the importance of other people and people in their community.

Let’s listen.

[recording]

These days, unfortunately, parents are told that it’s got to be all about the kids, all about the kids, and that creates kids who are spoiled and narcissistic and don’t understand that they’re a part of something much larger, meaning a family, a neighborhood, a community, and a country, and a world.

[recording stops]

He begins by saying, “These days (meaning nowadays, or currently), unfortunately, parents are told that it’s got to be all about the kids.” The expression “to be all about something” means that it concerns or is related to this



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one thing. For example, for me, when I go to a restaurant, it's all about the food. I don't care about the music or the atmosphere or even the service; for me, it's the food that is the most important – it's all about.

For parents, it's all about the kids – their children. This, according to this expert, “creates kids who are spoiled and narcissistic.” To be “spoiled” (spoiled) means your parents let you do whatever you want. This is usually considered bad for children. Spoiled children think they should get whatever they want. This is true with some American children when their parents treat them this way. To be “narcissistic” means to think only of yourself; you don't think of anyone else. These children sometimes becomes spoiled and narcissistic, and they don't understand that there are other people they have to worry about and be concerned about – the family, the neighborhood, the community, the country, and the world.

Let's listen again.

[recording]

These days, unfortunately, parents are told that it's got to be all about the kids, all about the kids, and that creates kids who are spoiled and narcissistic and don't understand that they're a part of something much larger, meaning a family, a neighborhood, a community, and a country, and a world.

[recording stops]

Those, then, are some views of American parents and their children now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Tomoe, or Tomoe (Tomoe). I'm not sure where Tomoe is from. The question has to do with the dialogue back in ESL Podcast episode 263, which was about getting older. There's a sentence that we use: “I must have had one of those senior moments.” The question is why do we say “one of those,” why don't we just say, “I must have had a senior moment?”

It is certainly not necessary to say “one of those,” you can say just “I must have had a senior moment.” But there is a small difference between saying “one of those senior moments” versus simply “a senior moment.” I should explain, if you didn't listen to 263, that “a senior moment” is a somewhat joking way of saying I forgot something, I couldn't remember something – I had a senior moment.



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When you say “one of those,” you are saying that it is very familiar to you; it is something you know very well. You also assume that the person you are talking with also knows this situation very well, or, at least, knows about it. When you say to someone, “I had one of those days today (one of those bad days),” you are saying you are familiar with it and you expect other people listening to you to also be familiar with it.

Our next question comes from Henry (Henry) from France. Henry wants to know the difference “reply” (reply) and “answer.”

“Reply” and “answer” can mean the same thing; it means you are saying or doing something in response to a question or a situation. “Reply” is most often used when you are giving someone an offer or an invitation. For example, in business you may say, “Please reply to our request at your earliest convenience” – as soon as you can. Please reply – please call us or please email us or please mail us a letter. You could also say, if you are inviting someone to a party, “Please reply by this Friday and let us know if you are coming to the party.”

“Answer” is a more general term; it can be used in many different types of responses. For example, on the telephone you could say, “I called my friend on his cell phone but he didn’t answer.” This is a case where you would have to say “answer,” you couldn’t say “reply.”

So, there are situations where you only use one or the other. In the case of a telephone, we always say “answer,” not “reply.” Or, if you are being asked a question in a classroom – you are student and the teacher asks you a question, you would give the teacher an answer, or you would answer her. You could say, “I replied to her,” but in this case, “answer” would be more common. So, although these two words mean the same, they are used in slightly different circumstances – slightly different situations.

Finally, Marina (Marina) in Argentina – Argentina – says, “I want to know the difference between ‘customer’ and ‘purchaser’ (purchaser).”

“Customer” is a common, general term we use to talk about people who buy things in a store or who get services. For example, when the iPhone (Apple’s new iPod telephone) was released – began to be sold in the United States, there were customers standing in line all night to be the first one to buy the phone. Not me, but some other people! Or, there are many customers in line, waiting to buy food.



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A “purchaser” is normally a customer in a business situation. For example, when a company sells something to another company and they send that company a bill, we would call it, in business, an “invoice” (invoice). The company that is buying the goods – buying the things – is called the “purchaser.” So, it’s a little more formal, businesslike use.

“Purchaser” comes from the verb “to purchase,” which just means to buy. You can use “purchase” both in business and in daily life. I purchased a new car – I bought a new car; they mean the same thing. Again, “purchase” is perhaps a little more formal than simply “buy,” just as “purchaser” is a little more business related than customer in this case.

If you have a question, send us an email. Our email is eslpod@eslpod.com. We get many questions, unfortunately we can’t answer everyone’s question, but we will try to answer at least some of them here on the Café.

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We’ll see you next time on the English Café.

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