



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 142

TOPICS

Topics: Ask an American: Getting old; brethren versus brothers, would versus used to, I can't wait anymore versus I can't wait any longer

GLOSSARY

hip – the part of the body that is on one's side, below the waist and above the legs; the two joints (or connecting bones), one on each side of the body, above the top part of one's legs

* The dance teacher told his students to move their hips more in the dance.

fracture – a break in a hard object; a crack or break in a bone in the body

* The scientists studied the side of the mountain and noticed a big fracture in the rock.

balance – having an equal amount of weight on all sides so that one can stay standing

* Can you balance a book on your head and walk at the same time?

to stub – to accidentally hit against something, usually a toe

* Jenny got out of bed in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom and stubbed her toe in the dark.

to go flying – to fall out of something with a lot of force; to fall a great distance

* I was returning home from the grocery store when I fell and my groceries went flying all over the street.

to fall flat – to fall completely; to fall so that all of one's weight is on the ground

* The little boy was trying to reach the cookies on the shelf when he slipped and fell flat on his back.

incompetent – not having or showing the skills needed to do something; without the knowledge and ability that is needed to do something

* I do my job well, but why does my boss treat me like I'm incompetent?

nursing home – a place where older people live which provides healthcare that they are not able to get living on their own; a home where many older people live who need medical care

* This nursing home has a staff of two doctors and five nurses.



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to keep (something) to (oneself) – to not tell one’s thoughts or information to other people; to keep a secret

* Quinn has strong opinions about how people should dress, but I wish he would keep them to himself.

emergency room – the part of the hospital that gives medical care for emergencies; the part of the hospital that treats people who need immediate medical care

* We took Shea to the emergency room after she fell out of the tree.

acute care – a place, usually in a hospital, where people who are sick or who are slowly getting better after surgery, an illness, or injury can get medical care for a short time

* He spent two weeks in acute care after having heart surgery.

rehab – rehabilitation; treatment after an injury, illness, or surgery so that one can slowly get better

* After the car accident, Damon went to rehab three times a week for his legs.

to be discharged – to be told that one can officially leave a place; to be released from a hospital or other medical center

* Patients are often impatient to be discharged from the hospital so they can return to the comfort of their homes.

brethren – old word for “brother”; members of a Christian or other religious organization

* The minister said, “Welcome, brethren, to a celebration of our church.”

anymore – any longer; any further

* We used to eat at that restaurant, but after I found a bug in my salad last time we were there, we don’t go there anymore.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Elderhostels

Elderhostel is a “non-profit” (not to earn money) organization that offers educational or learning travel experiences for older people. When the organization started in 1975, it had programs for only people 60 years old and over, but the age requirement was lowered to 55. However, if you are not over 55 and still want to participate, that may still be possible. You just need to “enroll” (register) and travel with someone who is 55 or older. Elderhostel also has “intergenerational” (across generations or ages) programs so that grandparents can enroll with their grandchildren.

Elderhostel was “founded” (started) in 1975 by David Bianco and Martin Knowlton, and the first Elderhostel programs took place at the University of New Hampshire in the eastern part of the U.S. Today, it offers programs all over the world. Many of the programs are “affiliated” (connected) with universities, museums, and other learning centers.

Education is the “mission” or main purpose of Elderhostel and no two programs are “alike” (the same). Some programs last a day, while others last several weeks. Often “experts” (people who know an issue or a field very well) are invited to give “lectures” (formal talks or presentations). In other programs, participants are taken on “field trips” to visit a specific place or to get a “hands-on” (active participation) learning experience.

Today, Elderhostel is the largest non-profit educational travel organization for adults and has about 8,000 programs each year. Its programs are found in all 50 U.S. states and in over 90 countries all over the world.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 142.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café episode 142. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. On it, you can find the Learning Guide for this episode, an 8 to 10 page guide that will help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is going to be another of our "Ask an American" series, where we listen to quotes from other native speakers and then go back and explain them. The topic today is going to be about growing old in – well, the U.S., or any country really. This is specifically going to be about a very common problem among those who grow old, which is falling. We're going to listen to some people talk about this problem and what some of the solutions are. We all grow old every day and eventually many of us will be in this situation, where we need some extra help. We'll also, as always, answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

All of us grow old, and if you are an older person, or you have parents or grandparents who are old, you have probably experienced or know about some of the common problems – health problems – that the elderly have. "Elderly" (elderly) is another word for people who are older. In the United States, we usually refer to people who are over 65 or 70 years old as being elderly.

One of the common problems that some elderly have is falling – falling down and breaking their bones. The most common fall type involves breaking the bone in the hip. Your "hip" is the bone that is around your waist; it connects your legs to the rest to your body. A break of a bone in the hip is usually called a "fracture" (fracture). Actually, a break in any bone would be called a fracture; this is where the bone comes apart. Of course, this can be quite painful.

We're going to listen to a couple of people talk about this problem of getting old, and some of the things that happen especially here in the United States. It may also happen in your country, about how your health care system helps these people or doesn't help these people. We're going to listen to a quote from a woman who is going to describe how she fell, what happened, and what it meant



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for her. As we usually do in our “Ask an American” segment, we’ll listen first and then go back and explain what she said, then listen again.

[recording]

And the last time was bringing the groceries in from the garage, the step from the garage into the kitchen. I, again, stubbed my toe and I went flat on the floor, my groceries went flying, my glasses went into my cheek, and...I think that last fall was the most dramatic for me.

[recording ends]

You’ll notice from the tone or the quality in her voice that she is probably an older person; she is 83 years old. She says, “the last time (the last time she had a fall – she fell) was bringing in the groceries in from the garage.” “Groceries” refers to food that you buy at a store and bring home to eat.

She, apparently, fell on the step from the garage into her kitchen. She says, “I stubbed my toe.” “To stub (stub) your toe” is to hit your toe, not to break it but to scratch it or to hit it on something that causes you pain. I do this all the time when I don’t have my glasses on! She stubbed her toe and fell flat – or “went flat” on the floor. So, she fell down on the floor – she went flat on the floor. Her groceries “went flying,” meaning they fell out of the bag and went out of the bag into a different part of the kitchen, and her glasses went it into her cheek. Her “cheek” is the part of her face below the eye on either side of her nose. She says, “I think that last fall was most dramatic for me. “Dramatic,” here, means the most serious or the one that was most memorable. Let’s listen again.

[recording]

And the last time was bringing the groceries in from the garage, the step from the garage into the kitchen. I, again, stubbed my toe and I went flat on the floor, my groceries went flying, my glasses went into my cheek, and...I think that last fall was the most dramatic for me.

[recording ends]

As we talked about in other English Cafés, in the United States is not uncommon when someone gets old and sick to have them put into a special place, which we would call a “nursing home.” However, most, or many, elderly don’t like the idea



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of having to go into a nursing home – of losing their independence – but sometimes this is necessary.

This is a quote from a nurse, who talks about why sometimes when older people have these falls – when they hurt themselves – they don't tell anyone else.

[recording]

One of the biggest fears is “If I tell my children that I fell, or my doctor that I fell, they will think I'm incompetent and can't take care of myself, and therefore, I will go to a nursing home.” So, they keep it to themselves.

[recording ends]

This woman, who is a nurse, says one of the biggest fears, or main fears that the elderly have, is thinking to themselves “If I tell my children that I fell, or my doctor that I fell, they will think I'm incompetent.” In other words, the family or the doctor will think that the person – the elderly person – is not competent. To be “competent” means to be able to do something, to do it well. To be “incompetent” is the opposite.

They also fear that they will make their doctor or family think that somehow they can't take care of themselves, and therefore they need to go to a nursing home. The result of this is that sometimes the elderly will “keep it to themselves.” The expression “to keep something to yourself” means not to tell anyone else, it's like a secret. Let's listen again.

[recording]

One of the biggest fears is “If I tell my children that I fell, or my doctor that I fell, they will think I'm incompetent and can't take care of myself, and therefore, I will go to a nursing home.” So, they keep it to themselves.

[recording ends]

Next we hear from a researcher at Yale University, one of the better universities in the United States, talking about why after someone falls, sometimes the person doesn't get the help they need. There are many programs now in the U.S. for the elderly to help them prevent themselves from falling by doing certain exercises, by having them test their balance. The “balance” of a person is his or her ability to be able to stand on two feet without falling down. We talk about



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“keeping your balance” and “losing your balance.” If you “lose your balance,” then you fall. But there are programs to help the elderly keep their balance better. Unfortunately, many of the elderly do not participate in that. The researcher is going to explain why that is, what happens when someone has an accident, typically.

[recording]

The common thing that happens nowadays is come in through the emergency room and be classified as a hip fracture person. Go up to the floor and get the acute care. Go off and get short-term rehab. Maybe come home and get home care and be discharged. And nobody figures out that this was a fall-related fracture, which they almost always are – and that “why did she fall in the first place?”

[recording ends]

This is a good example of someone who speaks quickly and not necessarily in complete sentences. You will notice that the sentences of this quote don't necessarily make complete sense, but this is quite common in normal conversation. She begins by saying, “The common thing that happens nowadays (these days)” is that the elderly “come in through the emergency room and are classified as a hip fracture person.” So they come to the “emergency room,” which is the place in the hospital where you go if there is something seriously wrong with you and you need to get care – you need to be treated immediately. They go to the emergency room, and they're “classified,” that is, the doctor or the nurse writes down on their medical record that they are a hip fracture person. So they go to the hospital and get acute care. “Acute (acute) care” is care for people who are very sick, who need a lot of attention but usually for a short amount of time, until the emergency is over. So, the hip fracture patient is someone in that situation.

Then she says the patient – the elderly person – goes off and gets short-term rehab. “To go off,” here, means simply they leave or they go to a different part of the hospital to get short-term rehab. “Rehab” is short for rehabilitation; it's, in this case, what you do to make yourself better. Often it involves physical exercises, in this case. “Short-term” just means for a short amount of time. Then, she says maybe they go home and get home care. “Home care” is when you go home, but a nurse visits you, or someone visits you to help you with your medical problem. These patients, then, are discharged from the hospital. “To discharge a person from a hospital” means to release them, to let them go home. So you



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go to a hospital for four or five days, then you are discharged – you are sent back home.

The elderly patients, then, are sent back home, and nobody figures out that what happened to them was a fall-related fracture, meaning they know that they fractured their hip, but people in the hospital don't find out how that happened. And if it happened because they fell, well, there are things that they can do to help them to prevent them from falling in the future. But if they don't know, of course, they can't help them. She says at the end that these fractures are almost always "fall-related," meaning they're caused by someone falling. Unfortunately, the doctors and nurses don't find out why the person fell in the first place. This expression, "in the first place," means why they originally did something. It's an expression used to refer back to something the first time it happened. Let's listen again.

[recording]

The common thing that happens nowadays is come in through the emergency room and be classified as a hip fracture person. Go up to the floor and get the acute care. Go off and get short-term rehab. Maybe come home and get home care and be discharged. And nobody figures out that this was a fall-related fracture, which they almost always are – and that "why did she fall in the first place?"

[recording ends]

Getting old in any country usually means more health problems. This is just one possible problem – one of the many things I can look forward to in the near future! The quotes for this "Ask an American" segment came from the [Voice of America](#) website.

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Urbano (Urbano) in Brazil. Urbano wants to know the difference between the words "brethren" (brethren) and "brothers."

Well, "brothers" is easy. A "brother" is a male child who has the same mother and/or father. Usually when we say "brother," we mean someone who has the same parents as you – a male who has the same parents as you. If they have just one parent in common – the same mother – we would call them "half brothers," perhaps. The term "brothers" is also sometimes used to refer to men



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who are part of a fraternity – who are part of a same group at college. There are social clubs in college called “fraternities.” “Brothers” is sometimes used to refer to people of the same race. Usually in the United States it’s used by African American, or black Americans, to refer to other members – other male members of that race. It’s somewhat informal in that respect.

“Brethren” is an old word, not as common anymore, that also refers to brothers. Nowadays, it’s usually only used to refer to people who are members of the same church – to men who are part of the same religious organization. It’s a word that you might hear in the Bible, for example. It’s not as common as “brothers,” not at all; it’s somewhat of an uncommon word nowadays, especially outside of church. In a church setting, “brethren” usually refers to both men and women.

Greg, from a mystery country, wants to know how we use the expressions “would” and “used to” when talking about things that have happened in the past.

“Would” and “used to” are similar when we are talking about the past tense. They refer to things that you once did repeatedly – over and over again – but you no longer do: “When I was in college, I used to look at all the pretty girls” – “When I was in college, I would look at all the pretty girls.” Now, of course, I’m married; I don’t look at pretty girls anymore, just my pretty wife! “Would” and “used to,” then, mean the same thing here, no difference. Both “would” and “used to” have other meanings, where they do mean something different. But when we are talking about the past, we use them in the same way.

Silvain (Silvain) in France wants to know the difference between the expressions “I couldn’t wait anymore” and “I couldn’t wait any longer.” These actually mean the same thing. They’re used to describe someone who doesn’t have enough time or patience to continue waiting for someone else.

“I couldn’t wait anymore” is a more informal way of expressing this idea. “I couldn’t wait any longer” sounds a little more formal; it means the same thing, however. “I couldn’t wait any longer for him to ask me out on a date, so I asked him.” The girl was waiting for the boy to ask her to go on a date. She decided that she couldn’t wait any longer, so she asked him first. That would mean the same as “I couldn’t wait anymore for him to ask me out on a date, so I asked him.” This has never happened to me!

If you have a question or comment, email us. Our address is eslpod@eslpod.com.



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From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listened to us next time on the English Café.

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