

# Normal People Problems – Transcript

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from OK to Good, and from Good to Great.

I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's episode is a conversation about normal people problems. You can find a transcript of the episode at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Problems](https://EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Problems), where you can also download the episode as a PDF.

So, what are normal people problems? Well, if you've been listening to the podcast for a while, then you'll know that I am a very normal, average, run of the mill, typical person. Yeah, nothing strange about me, nothing unusual. I talk normally, I act normally, I am just a heterosexual male. I'm married. I have children. I love watching football.

Okay, I can't keep going. Obviously, you know that that's not the truth. I am a bit different, let's say. Now, in the past, I used to think of myself as very weird. But since moving to London, I've been embracing the fact that maybe I'm not so weird. I'm just interesting. Before, I lived in the countryside and there I was weird. I very much stood out from the crowd. We say I stood out like a sore thumb. I was very obvious and that's quite stressful.

But now I feel like I've really found my tribe. That's an expression, when you find your tribe, you find the group of people that you really connect with, where you can be your most authentic self and express yourself fully. And I say I've found my tribe here in London, but really it's more like three, four or five tribes. I'm very much involved in the storytelling community in London. I've got involved with my church, so that's two tribes, there are probably others, I won't go into all of it.

But anyway, before, as well as being a bit different and standing out like a sore thumb, I really was going through a lot of problems, let's say. My 20s were not easy years for me. I know everyone says, Oh, your 20s are for discovering yourself. Your 20s are for making mistakes. And yeah, that was definitely my experience. But at the same time, I feel like my 20s were pretty unusual by most people's standards. Most people don't change gender twice. Most people don't go from one extreme to the other quite as much as I did.

So a lot of these problems I dealt with were, you know, quite big problems. On a scale, they were quite high up, you know, things like mental health, struggling a lot with identity, occasionally having housing problems. Of course, as I'm saying this, I have to acknowledge that I am very lucky that I've never been homeless. I've never had to move country. So, you know, actually on the grand scale of things, I have been very lucky

But at the same time, I've always known a lot of people who have struggled with being marginalised, let's say. So the margins are the edges of something, and we talk about the margins of society, the edges of society, and people who are pushed towards the margins are marginalised. So often that's poor people, LGBTQ people, immigrants, and so on. And I've always known quite a lot of marginalised people, I guess. That's quite often the kind of people I make friends with. You know, I've had friends who have had very serious mental health struggles. I've had friends who have been sectioned.

So when you're sectioned, it means you are forced to go into a mental health hospital. So if someone has a really serious mental health crisis and they are at risk of hurting themselves or hurting other people, then they can be sectioned and forced to stay in a mental health hospital until they get better.

And I have several friends who have been sectioned. I have friends who have suffered with drug addiction and then recovery from addiction. Fortunately, I've not had to go through

any of those problems myself. But when I talk about, you know, big problems, you can probably un-

Sorry, if you are listening, I just hit my microphone. Silly Ariel, stop hitting the microphone! If you're not watching on YouTube, you're really missing all of my fun facial expressions, and I know you love that stuff.

So anyway, you can probably understand that, you know, these are what I would consider real problems, or back then that's what I considered real problems, and I often saw other people having what I am calling normal people problems. Yeah, so what are normal people problems?

Normal people problems is things like, Oh, I spent too much money when I went out this week and now I can't go out again. Or, Oh, I've started dating someone, but they want to go fast and I want to go slow. Or, Oh, I really wish I could go on a holiday, but I don't have the money right now. Or, Ah, I was gonna go on holiday on that date, but then my sister's getting married, so I can't go, that's so annoying. That kind of stuff. And of course, these are real problems, right? But back then, they didn't seem quite so real to me, because I was going through, I guess, what felt like deeper crises.

But since moving to London in December - God, I keep talking about that. I just talk nonstop about moving to London. I am so annoying. My life has got a lot better. I am thriving now. I have really hit the ground running. That's like when you start doing something and you just are doing it really well straight away. I've hit the ground running here. I'm having a fantastic time.

And so a lot of my serious problems have now been replaced by normal people problems. And at first, this was quite disconcerting. This was quite surprising and unexpected. But I soon came to realise that actually this is lovely. Because if I'm having normal people problems, and I'm complaining about normal people problems, that means I'm not suffering from really serious issues, right? And I'd much rather it be that way around. So today, I thought it might be fun if I just talk about some of the normal people problems I've been experiencing.

So, problem number one, my upper back has been itchy. When you have an itch, when you are itchy, you really want to scratch part of your skin. And I think technically, scientifically, it doesn't actually help to scratch an itch. But of course, you have this feeling of like, oh, I really want to scratch that itch. And if you can't scratch the itch, it's very annoying. And for some reason, since I moved, my upper back has been itchy a lot. Now, at first, I thought this was to do with the hardness of the water.

So, in some parts of the UK, there is very soft water, and in some parts of the UK, particularly London, there's very hard water. So, hard water is water that has more minerals and like tiny tiny bits of rock in it. Hard water is very good for you, it has a lot of nutrients, but it's also quite rough on the skin. A lot of people find after they move to London that they maybe have some skin problems or that their hair gets greasy a lot because London water is very hard.

Where I lived before in Devon had very soft water, so I thought maybe the issue was adapting to the hard water here. But the thing is, I grew up in Bath, which I think has even harder water than London. There's actually an ancient volcano in that area that means that it's a very hard water region.

So I thought, hmm, it's probably not that. And then I realised it might be the laundry detergent I'm using. So laundry detergent is the powder or liquid or capsule that you put in the washing machine with your laundry to clean your clothes. And there are two types of laundry detergent, there's bio and non-bio. And I don't really understand the difference. I

think bio laundry detergent uses more harsh chemicals and non-bio detergent is more gentle and natural.

So I was using bio and I switched to non-bio, and since I switched, my back has been a lot less itchy, so, yay! Normal person problem number one, solved.

My second normal person problem, or, normal people problem – now I'm not sure which one to say. Anyway, my problem was that I was dating someone, and they wanted to go slow. And I wasn't used to that. I'm very used to intense relationships, where you dive in right from the very beginning, and we're seeing each other all the time, and it's really romantic. And I'm really not used to taking things slowly. Practically, it's a lot harder in London to go really fast in a relationship because often you live far away from the person, and there are travel times, and also people tend to be a lot busier here. So it was quite an adjustment for me to get used to taking things slowly, but actually it's probably a very healthy experience.

And I haven't seen that particular person in a while, but I've sort of been dating other people and I'm trying to keep that mindset, that practice of going slowly. So that normal person problem was very much a learning experience for me. So I'm very happy to have had that. In the past, I was always so desperate for a relationship that I would just dive in and not worry about these things and I would get very, very emotionally attached very quickly.

So actually, this is a sign that I'm doing really well because I feel confident and independent enough to take the space and the time that I need. So, very happy about that.

On that note, the next two problems are kind of similar. One is that it's hard to see all my friends. Everyone is too damn busy in this city.

Not only that, before I moved to London, I travelled a lot. I visited London a lot, but I also visited other parts of the UK pretty often, and I saw a lot of friends. But since moving to London, I've left it about once, which was over Christmas. Oh, and then another time, I went to Stratford-upon-Avon with my friend to see a play. But generally, when you live in London, there's so much going on, you're so busy, there are so many events you want to go to, you're already travelling a lot within the city, that it becomes psychologically very hard to leave the city.

There are so many friends who I said, Ah, after I move, I'll be nearer to them and I can visit them. And have I visited them? No! I've very much just stayed in my London bubble and not left. So that's an issue. There are also friends I have who live in London who I haven't seen since I moved. So it's definitely hard to find time.

And the next problem, very closely related to that, is it's hard to find time for me to read, go to the cinema, and go to the theatre, which are all very important things for me, but particularly reading.

Last year I read around 137 books, and this year, to be fair, I've read, I think, at least 45, but it's still probably going to be a much smaller reading year for me than last year, because I'm just busy. And of course you can read on the bus, or on the Tube, but I find it quite hard to focus when it's loud.

And believe me, where I live, people are very loud on public transport. People sit on the bus and they watch football matches. They listen to TikToks out loud, no headphones. They talk really loudly on the phone or to other people. It's a bit of a nightmare and even if I put my headphones on, my noise-cancelling headphones on, often I can still hear them very loudly.

So it can be very difficult to focus on my book. And often it's actually nice for me to just sit on the bus and look out the window and kind of have a bit of a mindful moment. So I often don't want to read as well.

The next problem, I kind of mentioned this before is, I really want to go on holiday, and it's funny, before I moved, I was travelling a lot, but I wasn't really travelling abroad, I've

travelled abroad very little since COVID, and I was kind of okay with that, I was happy to save money, I didn't feel like I needed that holiday abroad to get a change of air, I just felt okay with it. But now, I don't know if it's being surrounded by advertisements, or knowing people who are going on holiday, or it's just that I'm kind of in this bubbling pot of stress in London. It's a very fast-paced, hectic city. Everything is loud and bright.

And more and more, I've really been feeling the desire to just go on holiday somewhere, go sit on a nice beach in Spain or whatever. And I can't, because I don't have the money! Which is frustrating. To be fair, I am going to Hamburg later this year for a family party. I may do an Easy Stories in English meetup in Hamburg, because I know I have quite a lot of listeners in Germany. So look forward to that. But yeah, that's just a bit of a small frustration.

And speaking of small frustrations, my biggest normal person problem is you can't get good cider in London. So cider is a drink very similar to beer, but cider is made with apples... Usually. You can also make cider with pears or other fruit, But traditionally, cider is made with apples. I come from Bath, which is in Somerset, which is part of the West Country, which is kind of southwestern England. And the West Country is the cider-producing region in the UK.

So I grew up with access to very good cider, lots of local ciders and I took it for granted. I didn't really think much about it. But since moving to London, I've been drinking more, and I love having a nice cider. I don't really like beer so much. You know, I still want a drink that's got quite a low alcohol percentage, something relaxed, something just, you know, summery vibes. But in London, it's very hard to get good cider. They just choose really bad ciders here.

Now, when you go to a pub in the UK, there will be beers and ciders on tap that are fresh and usually better quality. And then they also have ciders in bottles. And often the cider they have on tap in a London pub is a very basic bland cider, and then often the bottled ciders are fruit ciders, so not apple, maybe like pear, raspberry, pineapple cider.

Which, I don't mind. I quite like fruit ciders, although I think some fruit ciders are not very nice, they're far too sweet, but sometimes I just want a really nice dry West Country cider. I just want a nice, a nice pint of cider to have on a Sunday afternoon. But, alas, it's hard to get here.

Now there are some specialty cider pubs in London, which I haven't been to, and I want to go to. The thing is, no one else around me really cares about cider the way I do, so it's quite hard to persuade people to go with me.

So those are my normal people problems. And I will say one flip side of the fact that I'm doing so well and that I have these relatively insignificant problems, you know, I have these very simple problems now, is that I still have friends who are going through the wringer.

When you're going through the wringer, you're going through some really difficult problems, you're going through a difficult life phase. I have a lot of friends who are still going through the wringer, and it's quite difficult because when I talk to them, I'm up here all like happy and fun and like living my life, and then they're all the way down there going through the wringer, suffering, you know, really chewing on the big problems, right?

So in the past, when I was also going through a lot of crises in my life, it was much easier for me to relate to them, to empathise with them. It was much easier for me to give them advice and support them. But now it's, it's weird. It's like I'm in a very different position, and I feel like sometimes if I do give advice, it sounds very kind of preachy.

So preaching is when at a religious service, a priest or someone else tells you, This is what you should do. I'm preaching about what you should do with your life. That's preaching. So when someone is preachy, they're basically telling you, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, don't

do that. Do this, this, this, this is what you need to make your life better. And if you're in a good place, if you're really thriving, having a great time, it can be easy to be preachy, right?

It's like those people who are really healthy, who exercise all the time, and they just tell you to, oh, well, if you want to lose weight, just diet and exercise. It's so easy, right? That's being preachy. And I really don't want to be preachy to my friends. So I have to be quite careful, I guess, about what I say to them.

I heard someone say recently that they heard somewhere that, when you're doing badly, when you are in a low place, when you're depressed, you actually shouldn't go to your friends who are doing really well for help. You should go to your friends who are maybe just doing average or who are also in a low place. Because if you go to your friends who are doing well, you're kind of dragging them down in a way. And being a good friend means, you know, being considerate of that as well.

And I have to admit, that kind of surprised me. Like, it's a very different way of thinking about friendship and support. But in a way, I kind of understand it now that I'm in the other position, where it can just feel really hard to support someone when you're doing really well and they're doing terribly.

To be fair, I think it partly is just a practicality thing. If I have a friend who's doing badly, but they live near me, I can go and visit them, I can cook them food, I can really support them in a very immediate, physical way, but if it's a friend who lives further away and we're messaging online, it's quite different, and I don't feel like I can really support them, or I worry about being preachy, so I think it's also a bit contextual.

Anyway, that's been my normal people problems. I would love to hear what you think on this topic. Come on over to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Problems](https://EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Problems), or find this episode on YouTube, and leave a comment and tell me about your normal people problems.

There's a phrase people say, I've got big fish to fry. I've got bigger fish to fry. And the idea is that the big fish that you're frying, they're the big problems. Let's say someone complains to you about a small problem, and you say, Ugh, I don't care about that. I've got bigger fish to fry. Right? Like, I've got more serious problems to deal with.

But, there's a podcast I listen to where the host always says, no, no, no, no, no. Here we fry the small fish. Here we talk about the very small insignificant problems. Here we fry the small fish. So I feel like at the moment I'm very much frying the small fish. I don't have bigger fish to fry, or even if I do, I'm frying mostly the small fish. Okay, this metaphor is going a bit too far.

Anyway, I look forward to reading your comments. Thank you so much for listening, watching, commenting, as always. I hope you're also experiencing normal people problems and not serious problems. I hope you're not going through the wringer. I hope you can just fry all the yummy little fish and not the big scary ones. And um, I'll see you soon.

If you enjoyed today's episode and want to be able to read my stories in a physical format, then good news! I have a book of ten short stories called, well, [Easy Stories in English](https://EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Book). Get it on Amazon, Apple Books or Google Books, or go to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Book](https://EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Book) to find out all the places it's available. Thank you for listening, and see you soon!