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My Sister's Wedding – Transcript

In today's episode, I talk all about how I injured my leg at my sister's wedding, the race riots currently happening in the UK, not so nice, and end with some motivation for all of you. Very nice. Keep listening to learn English.

[intro]

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from okay to good and from good to great. I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's episode is a conversation about my sister's wedding, among other things. As always, you can find the transcript at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com) and you can find the link to that in the description.

Hello, my Goodbody buddies, my fictional friends, and my lovely learners. I know what you're thinking. Ariel, what is a Goodbody buddy? What is a fictional friend? Why are you calling me a lovely learner all of a sudden? Well, it's considered good practice for podcasters and YouTubers and anyone with an online audience to have a little name for their fans.

And I realised recently that this is something that I've never really done. So I decided to experiment. Now a buddy is a friend, so maybe you're my Goodbody buddies. But of course, on this podcast, we also love fiction, stories, so you could be my fictional friends if you prefer. And then of course, you're all such lovely people, so you could also be my lovely learners.

Hmm, what do you think? Which name do you prefer? I would love to hear your thoughts. Do you want to be a Goodbody buddy, a fictional friend, or a lovely learner? Or perhaps you have an even better suggestion for the nomenclature of this podcast. Nomenclature is a very fancy and difficult word that basically just means naming. It means to do with names. So please help me out with the nomenclature of all of you.

A reminder that you can leave a comment about the nomenclature and other such things on Spotify, on [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com), or on YouTube. There are so many ways of getting in touch with me. You can even send me an email at Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com.

Now, in today's episode, I'm trying something a bit new. I've decided that I really need to yap. Now before you all run to your dictionaries, let me explain what yapping is, because it's a very modern, current slang term, and you may not find the answer you're looking for if you look online.

So yap, Y A P, traditionally refers to the sound that a small dog makes, such as a chihuahua. You know, these little dogs, sometimes they're carried around in handbags, uh, by celebrities such as Paris Hilton, and these dogs love to yap. That's yapping. And then more broadly, we can use yap to refer to that kind of annoying complaining and whining.

However, recently this word has acquired a new meaning, mainly on TikTok. That's right, this is Gen Z slang.

Gen Z, or Generation Z, is one of the younger generations. So I'm a millennial, a very young millennial. And the generation below the millennials is Gen Z. And Gen Zedders, people from Gen Z, love to use TikTok and come up with all kinds of new slang on there. Yap is one of those terms.

So on TikTok and now more generally, yap is used to mean to talk a lot and often without much meaning. This actually came up a lot originally in the form of a joke. There are some people on TikTok and Instagram who talk so much that people started asking in the comments, Who ordered a yappuccino? Well, that refers to a cappuccino, the drink, but of

course, replacing the beginning with the word yap, basically implying that this person is yapping away and nobody wants to hear them. So, a bit mean. In fact, definitely very mean. But I have to say, who ordered a yappuccino? I actually find quite funny. Hopefully, in this episode, you will not be asking, did somebody order a yappuccino? However, I do intend to yap in a positive way, by which I mean, this episode is going to be longer than normal.

Because normally when I do the conversation episodes, I just do one topic in particular, but in this episode, I'm going to talk about lots of different things. That's right, today's episode is split up into segments.

Now, segments are just like the pieces of an orange, delicious little sections. And this first segment is where I'm describing what yapping is. And if you haven't stopped listening by now, don't worry, because I am going to talk about what's in the title of this episode, which is my sister's wedding.

Now, I just want to say, first of all, that this idea of doing a longer segmented episode where I talk about loads of stuff and the goal is to just immerse you in English listening content to give you a nice big juicy chunk of English listening to do is stolen.

That's right. I shamelessly stole this idea. I took this idea and I did not feel bad about it. I stole this idea from [Luke's English Podcast](#). You probably listen to it because I know it's very popular. And Luke likes to do ramble episodes. Rambling is essentially the same thing as yapping, although it maybe doesn't have such a negative meaning.

But I'm using yap because I'm younger. You know, I'm more in touch with youth culture, you know? I'm not quite Gen Z, but if I was born a few years later, I would have been.

So, as I record this episode, the date is the 19th of August, 2024. So, some of the things I talk about may not be as relevant when you listen. There may be new things that I don't talk about, and so on. If you're new here, I just want to say I'm Ariel Goodbody. Thank you for listening. And I do stories and conversational episodes here on a regular basis, and it's a fantastic way to learn English.

If you're finding this episode a bit too difficult for you, go and listen to some beginner level stories, which are a much easier way to start on your Easy Stories in English journey. Soon you too could be a Goodbody buddy, a fictional friend, or a lovely learner. We haven't decided yet which. But I'm sure it will happen.

So, as I alluded to earlier, as I mentioned and suggested earlier, I just got back from my sister's wedding, and what a wedding it was. Now, my sister, she's never one to do things the traditional way, because traditional weddings are very expensive, and I guess there's this whole religious overtone to them. You know, the traditional wedding ceremony happens in a church, and my sister wasn't really a fan of that. So, she and her now husband decided instead to get a civil partnership.

Now, the difference between a marriage and a civil partnership is pretty complicated but essentially for a long time before gay people could get married in the UK, before you could have a same-sex marriage, there was civil partnership and many gay couples got civil partnerships.

I also believe that friends can get civil partnerships whereas marriage is defined more as something romantic.

So the actual civil partnership ceremony itself was a very small and not particularly interesting affair in the registrar's office in Bristol. So a registrar is someone who deals with government things. And in this case, a registrar is someone who helps do the formalities of a civil partnership. And very few people came to that part.

But after the civil partnership, we had a lovely meal and then we took a boat ride along the river Avon in Bristol. So the idea was that was on Tuesday and that was a gathering for close friends and family because both my sister and her husband have big families.

My mum is one of eight, which means she has seven siblings. And my sister's husband's mum is one of 11. So as you can imagine, there are lots of aunts and uncles and cousins to invite.

After Tuesday, over the weekend, from Friday to Sunday, was the big party. And, ooh! It was big. We all went to a lovely farmhouse in the countryside in Somerset, which is the area of the UK we grew up, and it was a wonderful party with I think about 110 guests in the end.

So I think the idea of having both days separate was that if some people could only come to one and not the other, that was perfectly okay, and then also to have some variety. I have to say, I really liked having the two separate ceremonies, the two separate celebrations, because normally at a wedding, I want to talk to people I haven't met before, but it's very hard to talk to everyone because I also want to talk to my family a lot.

So by going to the thing on Tuesday, I could meet my new brother-in-law's family. So because he's married my sister, he's now my brother in law, as in not my biological brother, but my legal brother. Although if it's a civil partnership, that might not be the case. I'm not actually sure about the legal situation in that case. But anyway, I'm calling him my brother-in-law.

I got to meet all of his family who I hadn't met on Tuesday, which made things much easier on the weekend, and it meant I got to talk to many more people than I would have otherwise been able to.

So what actually happened at the wedding, what happened on the weekend? Well, quite a lot as I'm sure you can imagine! So let me talk you through.

On Friday evening we had a bonfire which is basically just a big fire that everyone stands around and I was playing with my niece, my brother's daughter, and we were doing cartwheels. Now, it's very hard to explain what cartwheels are, almost as difficult as I find doing this podcast while an ambulance is driving outside, but there you go. That just shows how dedicated I am.

Now cartwheels is a kind of gymnastics move where you throw your body sideways on the ground, but you hold yourself up with your hands, and you make a wheel shape. If you're watching on YouTube, there will be an image or a video to describe what I'm talking about, because it's very hard to describe gymnastics moves.

On Friday I was playing with my niece and doing cartwheels and then I pulled a hamstring. Now the hamstrings are the muscles on the backs of your legs on either side of your legs. And these are the muscles that allow you to bend and flex your legs. So if you stretch your legs out as far as they will go, you will feel tension on your hamstrings, So hamstrings are very important for running and other such activities. And I landed a very bad cartwheel and then I felt a OOF! In my left leg, and I pulled the hamstring, which means I injured the hamstring. So every step I took was painful. It hurt a lot.

Now, I was not about to let a pulled hamstring stop me because I knew on Saturday there would be lots of dancing and I didn't want to miss that. So I made myself exercise it and stretch it and go for walks and it seems like that worked because the next day it felt a lot better. And I was indeed able to take part in the dancing.

But before the dancing on Saturday, the rest of the guests arrived who hadn't arrived on Friday, and then we did speeches.

Now, I believe this was my first time giving a speech at a wedding, but actually I wasn't nervous. The thing is, because I've been doing stand-up comedy for a few months now, I

kind of just treated it like that, but I decided to keep my speech very short because nobody loves a long chain of long, teary, crying wedding speeches that go on for ages.

And it seems to have worked, because people liked my speech, I got many compliments on my speech. Of course, I made a few jokes about my sister and her new husband, but they weren't too mean. Actually, that was the main reason I kept it short, because I didn't want to get too mean. And I didn't cry. I did not cry. My mum cried, but I didn't cry.

And after the speeches, we had a buffet dinner. So it wasn't like a traditional wedding, where you sit down and you have a three-course meal. No, we just had a buffet, which worked really well.

Oh, I should say while I remember that there were beautiful flowers on all the tables. There were beautiful orbs, spheres covered in flowers hanging from the ceiling and there were beautiful vases full of flowers all around the room where we had the buffet which were all courtesy of my mum. The flowers were all made by my mum so it's thanks to her that we had such gorgeous flower decorations.

My mum is a keen gardener. She's a very enthusiastic gardener. She loves gardening. And I helped out a fair amount with the flowers. You know, obviously she did most of the work, but actually preparing the hanging globes, spheres, of flowers was very tricky because you have to take this green foam, which you can stick flowers into, you have to put that in the bath so it gets full of water, and then you wrap, uh, chicken wire around it, so chicken wire is this like metal wire that's used to keep chickens in when you have a chicken pen in your garden. She also had to wrap a layer of plastic around it, a layer of clingfilm to keep the water in, and then you have to stab all the flowers in. So the whole process was very complicated.

After the dinner is normally when you would have the cake cutting, but again, my sister decided to be a bit unconventional, and rather than having a massive wedding cake and a long ceremony of cutting it, they cut the cakes while we were all outside enjoying a drink. And that's right. It was cakes, plural. There were four kinds of cake and they were a normal size, but still very delicious.

Finally, after the cake cutting came the real highlight of the evening, which was the ceilidh. So a ceilidh, C E I L I D H, yes that is how it's spelt, and it's spelt that way because it's a Scottish word, it is a Scots Gaelic word.

So Gaelic refers to languages in Ireland and Scotland that are not spoken so much now, but the word ceilidh comes from Scots Gaelic. These are Celtic languages, I should add. And basically a ceilidh is just Scottish country dancing. It's a kind of dancing that's practised traditionally in Scotland, but is also fairly popular in the rest of the UK. There's also English country dancing, which is similar to ceilidhs, but the dances are a bit different.

But basically, these are big group dances. So even if you're not a confident dancer, they're a really great way to take part because you get instructions before each dance on what you're doing. All of the dance moves are in groups, usually between two and eight people in a group. There are a few dances that involve like everyone.

In particular, there's a really fun dance called stripping the willow. So strip means to pull things off, and a willow is a type of tree. And that dance, basically, everyone stands in two lines facing each other, and then you're kind of working your way up and down the lines, linking arms with people and spinning around, kind of up and down the line.

Again, it's very hard to explain ceilidhs without showing them. So if you watch on YouTube, I'll put a clip of a ceilidh in here.

Now, my family is a big fan of ceilidhs. Pretty much any time any one of us gets married, there's a ceilidh. So we are very used to these dances and they're really good fun and a great way to work off all of that food that you have inevitably eaten before the ceilidh.

Now, I had a great time. My hamstring injury did not stop me from enjoying the ceilidh. But even now, two days later, my calves are killing me. So your calves, C A L V E S, are the bottom half of your legs.

That bit if you're on the video, and if you're not on the video, I just slapped my calves. So if you do a lot of running or dancing, you might hurt your calves and my calves are killing me, which means my calves are in a lot of pain.

But at the time I was having too much fun to care. After the ceilidh, there was more food. There was like burgers and hot dogs and then a disco to close the night.

And then on Sunday morning, those of us who were still there all went for a walk along a river and we had lunch together, and then, unfortunately, it was time to say goodbye.

And it always feels sad coming home from a holiday or a wedding, doesn't it? Because we have to return to everyday life. But, I have all of you. And that makes it a bit nicer.

It's kind of funny. I'm at an age, I'm 31 now, where most people are going to weddings a lot because all of their friends are getting married. Um, that's not really the case with me though, because I have friends of all different ages and I also have a lot of friends who are polyamorous.

So polyamory is when you have multiple relationships at once, but in an ethical way. So it's open and discussed and negotiated between all the different partners.

So I'll probably be going to another family wedding next year. I think another one of my cousins is getting married. But um, I don't know when I'll next be going to a friend wedding.

Every time I go to a wedding, I like to imagine it's going to be like the film Four Weddings and a Funeral, and I'm going to meet the love of my life at the wedding. Um, but that doesn't happen. I usually just end up spending a lot of time with my family, so.

Phew, I kind of tired myself out talking about my sister's wedding. I think the problem with doing longer yappy episodes is that I need to pace myself better. I'm so used to doing episodes that are like 30 minutes in length that I use up all my energy really quickly. So I'm gonna try and be a bit calmer for the rest of this episode. Dare I say, maybe even a bit sedate.

Sedate means when you're very just calm. So yes, I will be sedate.

So recently, I've also been doing a lot of self-development, which basically just means I've been reading books about how to be a better person, I suppose, and I've been doing some exercises to change myself.

So it's a bit weird. On the one hand, I've been reading these kind of slightly woo woo books. So when something is woo woo, it means it's to do with like, magic and witchcraft and telling the future, you know, all of that kind of esoteric mysticism stuff. But I've also been reading some classic philosophy, some ancient philosophy, such as Cicero, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca.

Now, this latter one was inspired by a podcast I've been listening to called The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps, which as you might guess is about the history of philosophy. And it goes literally from the very beginning in ancient Greece with Thales, who was the first ancient Greek philosopher that we know of, all the way up to the modern period.

Now, if you know a bit about ancient philosophy, you might have noticed that two of those people I mentioned, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca, are Stoic philosophers.

Now, the word Stoic in modern English usually means someone who is very serious and not emotional, but in this case, Stoicism is a school of philosophy. So the Stoics were a group of philosophers in ancient Rome and ancient Greece.

And it's quite hard to summarise a school of philosophy in a few words, but Stoics basically believed that we need to control our emotions, we need to submit our bodies to our minds, so we basically need to control our minds above our bodies, and that anything can be endured, anything can be survived, that we can live through pain and difficult things, such as the noise of this ambulance interrupting my podcast, again.

Stoicism is actually kind of going through a revival right now. It's regaining popularity, and lots of people are engaging with Stoicism now. So if you're interested in reading some Stoic philosophy, I really recommend *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius. It is like the foundational Stoic text, the most important Stoic text, but definitely go for the modern Gregory Hays translation if you read it in English, because it is a really good translation that makes the meaning very clear, whereas I think the older translations are a bit harder to understand.

So weirdly enough, I kind of feel like this um, woo woo stuff I've been reading and this ancient philosophy are like two sides of the same coin, which basically means I think they're both related around the same concept. They are quite similar, but they just show different sides of things. So I've been doing lots of exercises based on these books I've been reading.

For example, I've done this thing called a deepest fear inventory, which is basically, you write about something that you can't do in your life, or you are finding really hard, and then you write out all of the fears that are causing it, then you read it out loud, you pray for God or whatever to take away those fears, and then you rip up, you rip up the piece of paper and throw your fears away.

So that's one thing I've been doing. And then the Stoicism is less kind of exercises, but more ways of thinking. So for example, this isn't an exact quote, but more or less there's this idea, I think in *Meditations*, that the past is regret. You know, if you think about the past, you're just focusing on things you did that you weren't happy about. And the future is fear. If you think about the future, you're just thinking of things you're scared of. So you must remain in the present. You should try and stay in the present because the past and the future are not good places to live in your mind.

And then, kind of, again, completely unrelated to those two things, I read this book, *Damn Good Advice for People with Talent* by George Lois. Now, I didn't know about this man before, but George Lois was one of the most famous admen of the 20th century. So he worked in advertising and came up with some really, um, important and influential advertisements.

So here you can see, there's his one about, um, MTV, music television. MTV is a big TV channel in America. And he talks about how when MTV first started, they were not successful. Nobody really wanted to make music videos, so he worked with famous musicians and got them to call radio shows and say, I want my MTV!

And apparently, this campaign was really successful at, um, growing the popularity of MTV. So, this is just an example of his approach.

He talks a lot about, uh, the big idea, right? Rather than the text or the image being the most important thing, the most important thing, artistically, is always the big idea, like, what is the idea you're putting across.

And actually, there were some really important campaigns such as this one. Well, this was the cover of *Esquire* magazine, which was, *is*, a men's magazine in America. And on the cover, there is the boxer, Muhammad Ali, being shot with arrows. So there is a famous

painting of Saint Sebastian who is a Christian saint being shot with arrows and posing. So this, uh, cover references it.

So there's a lot of context but basically, at the time of this cover, which was in the 1960s, there was the Vietnam War going on, and many people were being conscripted, many men were being told, you have to go and fight in the war in Vietnam. The boxer, Muhammad Ali, refused to be conscripted. He refused to go and fight in the war, so he was put in prison. So this image represented a lot about the sacrifice he made by going to prison to fight for his beliefs. It, uh, said a lot about the Vietnam War and, yeah, I had no idea how influential the work of this adman, George Lois, was.

It's actually really interesting. I had this idea before that admen, people who worked in advertising, were really like racist and sexist and just, you know, evil capitalists, essentially. But actually this book challenged my perception, because there's this section where he talks about how he campaigned to release, um, Rubin Carter from prison.

So Rubin Carter was a black man who was wrongly imprisoned for 300 years for supposedly killing three white people. And, uh, this adman, George Lois, did all these ad campaigns, which were basically, you know, asking for his freedom. So this campaign says, it's just like a simple block of text with a black background that says:

Counting today, I have sat in prison 3,135 days for a crime I did not commit. If I don't get a retrial, I have 289 years to go. Six months ago, the eyewitnesses - so eyewitnesses are people who see a crime - who testified - testify means to say in legal court that something happened - they saw me leaving a bar in which three people had been killed, admit they gave false testimony.

So basically, six months ago, the people who said that they saw him leave this bar admitted that actually they were lying. So that obviously would mean he wasn't the murderer.

Despite this, the judge who sentenced me won't give me a retrial. So despite this, the judge who sent him to prison won't give him a retrial. *Why?* And then it says, *Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter, number 45472, Trenton State Prison.*

So I guess the idea is that this ad looks like a letter from a prison. So I don't know, I read this and I was really surprised, like how principled this man was.

And happily, in the end, after 22 years, Rubin Carter was released from prison. So, George Lois's campaigning played a big part in bringing justice to this case.

I've been talking for a while, so you know what? I think it's about time we took a break.

On the note of racial injustice, one of the things I want to talk about is the recent race riots in the UK. You've almost certainly heard about this. So, a riot is when people go and smash stuff, they break stuff in the streets. They often happen after sporting events or when there is a real situation of chaos and unrest in a country.

Unfortunately, the race riots in the UK, it's a really hard thing for me to talk about because I honestly feel disgusted by my own country. I feel shocked at what's happening, even though I know I probably shouldn't be shocked.

Basically, there was a stabbing. Some young girls were stabbed and killed and then when it was discovered that apparently the person who stabbed them was a Muslim, all of these riots started happening.

Hey, so I'm actually in the middle of editing this podcast, and I quickly went and looked up about the stabbing that happened in Southport, and it turns out the person who stabbed the young girls was 17 years old, and his parents were immigrants from Rwanda?

But as far as I can tell, there is no proof that he was Muslim and the entire link between this incident and Islam was just made up by far right people. So it's even worse, right? And it

really goes to show how strong disinformation is online now, which is something I'll talk about in the podcast.

So just chiming in, just throwing in my voice here to correct a mistake I made.

They've mostly happened in small towns around the country, but some of them have happened in big cities like Manchester. Now the new Labour government, the new government that just came into power in the UK has been doing a lot. They have arrested a lot of people. They've even arrested like 12- and 13-year-old children who were taking part in these, um, racist activities.

So there is something being done, but as I'm recording this, these riots are still happening, and it's honestly really scary. I think it's very easy these days for us to get kind of trapped in our own bubbles on social media, and I think most likely this is a case of people getting whipped up into a fury, people being kind of made angrier and angrier because of what they read online and in the news, and unfortunately the British media...

Basically we have a lot of these things called tabloids, which are newspapers like The Daily Mail and The Sun, which post a lot of - well they don't post, they write newspaper articles that are really racist and sexist and homophobic and they're designed to shock people and they also have a lot of awful stuff about celebrities and they're basically recognized around the world for being really bad.

And I do think a lot of the anger that's been caused, a lot of the fury that's been whipped up in these riots can be blamed on these tabloid newspapers. Because for years they've been sending out these messages about immigrants coming and ruining the economy and stealing our jobs.

But realistically, they are not the problem. They are still very much the minority in most of the UK. And especially in the areas where these riots are happening, they're ironically usually not very diverse areas.

I've just seen a lot of stuff online that's really anti-immigrant. Uh, I've seen a lot of comments... even on my own videos about it, like some of my podcast episodes, people will somehow find a way to be like, Oh, this is a metaphor about immigrants coming to the UK. And I'm like, what? Like I'm telling stories for people to learn English. Obviously I'm okay with immigration. I think it's a good thing. Why are you reading this into my stories? Right? So I think it's become a real problem online.

An example is I saw a TikTok the other day of a woman having her phone stolen in London. Unfortunately, this is becoming more common in London where people are using their phones on the streets and someone drives by on a motorbike and grabs the phone and steals it.

Now, statistically, it's actually not that likely to happen to me, for example, mainly also because I don't have a new expensive iPhone, thankfully, so they don't want to steal it.

But, um, in the comments on this video, everyone was talking about the race of the people who stole the phone. They ended up dropping it in the end because it wasn't a new fancy iPhone so they didn't want it, right?

I have an aunt who is from Kenya. She's lived in the UK for a long time. She works for a university and, uh, part of her job is to travel to various countries in Africa and try and recruit students to go and study at this university in the UK and she was saying at this wedding that right now it's very difficult because a lot of the families are saying, Oh, well, is it safe to come and study in the UK as an African, right? As a black African.

And she's like, well, I can't tell them it is safe because we don't really know what's happening and we want to say that, oh yeah, it's gonna be fine, it's gonna be okay, but you don't want to be responsible for someone's child getting attacked.

So that's all sad and depressing, but I also found some positive news. Always looking for the light at the end of the tunnel. The light at the end of the tunnel is an expression which refers to something positive coming at the end of a lot of negativity.

So this is not really related, but it's a piece of positive news I found.

Baby beavers have been born in London. So a beaver is this big rodent, this big animal that has big teeth and they, um, they take wood and they eat wood and they make dams with wood, which are like ways to block water on rivers.

Beavers are very common in Canada, for example, and beavers, I don't know if they went extinct, but certainly in many parts of Europe, the numbers of beavers went down significantly over the past century, maybe several hundred years, but for the first time in 400 years, a baby beaver has been born in London.

So there was a rewilding project recently. So a rewilding project is a project to introduce more wildlife back into places, to allow nature to kind of take over some places again, and beavers were introduced to an area in West London and the beavers have just had a baby for the first time in 400 years in London.

I don't know, this makes me very happy because I love beavers. I think beavers are very cute, and I love rewilding. I think rewilding is one of the best ways we can fight climate change, and I also just think it's really good for everyone to have more nature about.

So, yes, um, beavers! Woo! That's my impression of a beaver. If any beavers are listening, please let me know if I did a good job.

And speaking of baby beavers eating wood, I have recently completely changed my diet based on two books which I read.

So the first one is called *Ultra-Processed People: the Science Behind the Food that Isn't Food*, and the second book is called *This is Vegan Propaganda and Other Lies the Meat Industry Tells You*.

So this combination of books for me was a double whammy. So a double whammy, I think it's originally a boxing term, but it basically means when two things hit you at once and they are especially strong together.

So these books were a double whammy of information for me. They actually really complemented each other. They worked well together. I learned lots about the science of both, uh, veganism and ultra-processed food, and these books literally gave me food for thought.

So food for thought is an expression when you get some information that you really have to think about for a long time or chew on. So this has given me food for thought.

Now you've probably heard about ultra-processed food because it's a topic that people are talking about a lot at the moment. But if you're not quite sure what ultra-processed means, I'm going to read out a definition that the author of the book, Chris van Tulleken, gave in an interview. He says:

It's pretty straightforward. Anything that's wrapped in plastic that has an ingredient that you don't typically find in a domestic kitchen. Domestic means in your house. Xanthan gum, an emulsifier, a stabiliser, a humectant, high fructose corn syrup. Don't worry if you don't know what these things are because they're all chemical stuff. Is very likely to be ultra-processed.

I'll repeat that. Anything you find wrapped in plastic with ingredients that you wouldn't find in your kitchen is probably ultra-processed.

So processed foods are things like bread or flour, where the ingredients have been modified, like maybe they've been cut up or blended, but they haven't added any of these chemicals. Okay, back to the definition.

There are a couple of other good rules of thumb. A rule of thumb is a quick and easy rule you can use to decide something. If there is any health claim on the pack, low fat, high in fibre, vitamin enriched, supports weight loss, benefits your immune system, that is likely to indicate a food that's ultra-processed. Real food - broccoli, bananas, steak, almost never has a health claim.

And this is a really interesting point from the book. Like you see advertisements for ultra-processed food all the time. But when was the last time you saw an advert for tomatoes or broccoli? You don't! They don't advertise the real food in that way.

So another quote from the book that really stuck with me is one of the scientists in the book who says, *it's not food, it's an industrially-produced edible substance*. So yes, we can eat it, but it's not really food. Because with a lot of these things, if you take away the flavourings and chemicals, our body wouldn't treat it as food and we probably wouldn't be able to eat it.

Now, I won't go into all of the health effects of ultra-processed food, the environmental effects, uh, you can probably guess that they're bad, um, and they are, but basically this book gave me a very strong reason for trying to cut out ultra-processed food.

It's very hard to completely cut out ultra-processed food, especially because if you're buying anything, like, while travelling or eating in a cheap restaurant, it's almost impossible to avoid.

But I've been trying, when I'm cooking at home, to have as little UPF, ultra-processed food, as possible.

Another thing that really stuck with me from the book is that one ingredient that is in so much UPF is xanthan gum, which is the slime, the goo, that bacteria produces to stick to things. So, we are putting bacterial slime in our ice cream, and chocolate, and all of these things, and I think that's a bit disgusting. In fact, I think it's really disgusting.

So, on to the second book: *This is Vegan Propaganda*. When I read this book, I was not expecting to be super convinced. So I've been vegan at different points in my life, but I've never stuck to it for more than a year, let's say. And I know a lot of vegans, and I've heard a lot of the arguments, so I didn't think the book was going to change my opinion that much. I was a bit sceptical, basically.

But, the book wore me down. It gave me argument after argument, and statistic after statistic, that finally convinced me, okay, I should really try being vegan more seriously.

The main things that stuck out to me were the environmental arguments, but I knew before that veganism is really just the best option for the environment, but also the practices, the things that are done to animals for meat and dairy really shocked me, and like I knew about some of the things, but what really stuck with me was that often we make the argument that, oh, well, there are ethical ways to raise livestock, right?

Livestock is like cows and pigs and sheep, animals that you're raising for their meat. There are ethical ways to raise livestock. In the past, before modern farming, you know, it was all happy and we were nice to the animals. But actually, a lot of these really violent practices have been going on pretty much forever.

So there's this thing called grafting where, let's say you have a calf, a baby cow, that doesn't have a mother, so you want to give this calf to another mother, and that mother cow will feed this calf, this baby cow.

Well, that mother normally would not accept that calf as her own. So what you do, is you take the skin from a dead calf, from a dead cow that belonged to that mother and you put the skin on the other calf so that the mother thinks that cow is her child and will let that calf feed from her, will let that calf drink her milk.

So that's just one of the many horrible things that we do to animals in the name of producing meat and dairy.

So after reading these two books back to back, after reading these two books one after the other, I have decided, shockingly, to try going on a vegan whole foods diet. So basically, to try and go on a diet that is vegan and doesn't have ultra-processed food in it.

Now, that hasn't always been possible. If I'm eating at someone else's house, I often can't avoid UPF and also, while I was at this wedding, it was difficult to completely avoid animal products, but now that I'm home again and can cook for myself, I'm going to do my best.

Also, as if that wasn't enough sudden dietary changes, I also started intermittent fasting again. I think I've talked about intermittent fasting before. Basically, fasting is when you deliberately don't eat for a period of time and intermittent fasting is when you do this regularly. So for example, maybe you only eat during four to six hours of a day.

At the moment, I'm doing 18:6 fasting, which means I fast for 18 hours and eat for six hours. Now I'm not going to go into all of the reasons and health benefits of this. If you are interested in intermittent fasting, I recommend the book *Fast, Feast, Repeat* by Gin Stephens.

Now actually, I'm pretty shocked at how well all of these dietary changes have been going, but I think I've realised why they're working, and that's because it's based in knowledge.

By reading these books that gave me a really deep understanding of these things, I have a strong internal motivation to change them. And this is kind of like what I recommend to language learners, which is, the more you learn about language learning and the processes of it, the better you are going to be able to study.

So because I've read these books about diet and, you know, animal products and ultra-processed food, when I am tempted to maybe eat one of those things, like a meat product or some ultra-processed food, I can remind myself of all the reasons why that's bad.

So if you want to change your diet, my number one recommendation is to read some books. And I will put the titles of all those books in the description.

Now, one segment I am trying out as part of this slightly experimental episode is motivation time. Because I've realised for years I've been giving all this advice about how to learn English, but what I've seen from teaching English is that most of the problems come down to motivation and mindset, the way you think. So my dose, my drop of motivation for today is laugh more. That's right. I want you to laugh more. Laughter is the best medicine, or so they say.

But applying it specifically to your language learning is really going to help. Because when we are speaking a language, it's very easy to get nervous and scared, and then you are a worse communicator. But if you focus on enjoying the language, having fun, laughing at jokes, just basically looking for joy, then you're going to associate happiness with the language you're learning, and then you'll have more motivation to study it and speak it.

The kind of common theme of all of these books I've been reading about philosophy and mindset is any negative can be a positive. So yes, you might be in pain, you might be anxious, but you can tell yourself, Hey, I can enjoy this feeling. This is an amazing feeling in my body. I'm angry, but I'm excited about being angry. Every negative has a positive.

If you think about light, the way that light works in physics. Now, I'm not a physicist, but I'll try and explain this. Light is a bunch of waves, right? You have the waves that go up and down. And all of these waves are kind of like vibrations, but we don't see the waves. We

don't see the up and the down, the positive and the negative. We just see the light because it's so close together.

And it's the same with music. We don't hear the vibration. We hear the beats of the drum. Or the *brrm* of the guitar, right? Or the *brrp* of the saxophone. So imagine your emotions are the same. Imagine your emotions are these waves with positives and negatives.

Now, if you just focus on the positive or the negative, you're cutting out half of that feeling. But really, if you tell yourself, okay, every positive feeling has a negative side to it, and every negative feeling has a positive side to it. You know, when someone is criticising me, someone else is praising me. When I feel nervous, I'm also feeling brave in some way. If you tell yourself this, if you allow yourself to experience and explore each side of every feeling, you, you're going to change as a person. It's going to unlock a whole new part of yourself.

So my advice to you is to laugh more and especially laugh when bad things happen.

When something bad happens to me these days, I usually tell myself, Well, this is going to make a great story. Even though it's not so good to experience this now, I'm going to be able to tell a funny story about it later on.

And if you're thinking, well, okay, Ariel, I would love to laugh and have fun with my English learning, but I just haven't found a teacher who's fun in that way. Hey! I could be your teacher. Because that's right, I'm still offering online classes. And look, I don't want to toot my own horn too much. I don't want to talk about how amazing I am. You all know I'm very modest. But I really think I could be the answer to your problems.

Traditional English classes focus on grammar, forcing you to speak, correcting your mistakes, which are not really joyous, happy, laughter-inducing things, right? But in my class, I truly focus on joy. I focus on communication, telling stories, creating stories with you that will not only make you smile and laugh, but will bring out a new level of creativity and language ability.

So, for example, one of my students I'm working with now, we're writing a story about a poor boy who steals toys from the rubbish bins of a rich boy, and then plays with them and makes new inventions, and we're kind of exploring this friendship that slowly grows between these boys as the rich boy observes the poor boy, which, by the way, was entirely my student's idea, I'm just helping him write the story and bring it all together and helping develop his ideas.

With another student, we're writing a story about a messenger who is sent from the sun to bring a message to the world, basically to stop having so many wars.

With another student, I do conversation classes, and we talk about the differences between British and Italian culture and recently we've also been talking a lot about all the stupid things the Pope has been saying.

So as you can see, it's not just about language learning. Right? When we focus so intently on, this has to be about grammar and vocabulary and uh, textbook, textbook, textbook. No. Let's open that box. Let's widen our understanding of what it means to study a language. I really want to bring out the creativity in you as well as the amazing English speaking ability I know you have. And if you think you'll never be able to speak English like that, you're wrong.

And so many students say to me, Oh, but I'm not creative. I'm scared to write stories. It's not going to work. And guess what? Every time we do it, because, hey, I'm here to help you. Inside all of us, there is a beautiful spark, a fire of creativity. And I will not let that fire die. I will light that flame whether you like it or not. Woo.

So, if you want to book a class, go to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Classes](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Classes). And look, I understand you probably have doubts. It's always really hard starting anything new. Maybe you're just anxious about talking to me because you're such a big fan of the podcast, you're such a Goodbody buddy, fictional friend or lovely learner, but in that case, I have the perfect solution for you.

You can book a free 15 minute online talk with me, and we can talk about all of the worries you're having. I can answer your questions, and then you can decide if you would like to take classes with me.

So again, that's at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Classes](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Classes).

So thanks again for listening to this episode of Easy Stories in English. It's a bit of an experiment, as I said. Hopefully you enjoyed it. If it's your first time here on the podcast, say hello in the comments, I'd love to hear what you think.

Woo! Well, not only have I just been to a wedding, but a few days after I record this, I'm heading off to Germany for another family party. I know! So when this episode comes out. I'll already be in Hamburg, but hey, I hope you have a great week and I'll see you soon.