
Back to life, back to reality

Episode description

In this week's bonus episode, Andrew talks about his battle with jet lag and how his house renovation project is going. Plus, in the vocabulary lesson, he teaches you about the expression **to be thrown out of whack**.

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello and welcome to bonus episode number 41 of the Culips English Podcast. My name's Andrew and I'll be your host and your study buddy for this English lesson. So, the plan for today is that I'm going to tell you a couple of stories from my life about what I got up to over the last week and I'm going to also share some updates about what's new with us here at Culips, and then towards the end, I'll teach you about an interesting and useful idiomatic expression. Does that sound OK with you? I hope so.

There's a 100% free transcript that we've made to accompany this episode and I recommend following along with it as you listen and study with me. You can download it as a PDF and print it off, or you can use the interactive version, which is best if you're using your computer or phone to listen and study with me now. To get the transcript, just follow the link in the description or visit our website Culips.com.

So, happy Monday everyone. Welcome to the start of another new week. I hope you're doing well. Last week was a little bit rough for me to be honest. I spent the first few days of last week getting over my case of jet lag. Do you know what jet lag is? It's the tired feeling that you get when you travel from one time zone to another time zone. I actually think jet lag hits me the hardest when I travel between similar time zones. For example, in Canada, we have many time zones and when I lived in Montreal, which is in the eastern time zone, I always had a difficult time when I traveled back to visit my hometown, Kelowna, British Columbia, which is in the pacific time zone. Even though there's only a three-hour time difference between those two places, it would always throw my sleep schedule out of whack for a few days.

Like, for example, I'd be really tired at 8:30pm, and then I'd wake up at 5:30am, and it would take a while to eventually adjust to that time zone change. And then of course, this

always happens, as soon as I would adjust to the pacific time zone, it would be time to return to Montreal. And I have to go through the opposite adjustment, so I'd only get tired around 2:30 in the morning, and then I'd want to wake up late in the morning around 10:30 or 11:00. So, jet lag can be a difficult thing. For those of you who don't know, I just returned from a trip to Canada. I was back home visiting my friends and family, and now I am back here in Seoul where I live. And there is a 17-hour time difference between my hometown and Seoul. So, for example, if it's 12:00pm in my hometown, then it's going to be 5:00pm the next day in Seoul. So, as you can imagine that time difference just really messes with your internal body clock when you travel between the two places. My usual strategy for getting over jet lag is to sleep on the plane as much as possible and then go to sleep around 11:00pm at my destination. So even if I arrive at like 5:00am in the morning, it's my personal rule that no matter how tired I feel I have to stay awake until 11:00pm. And then the idea is I can go to sleep and then wake up the next day and be adjusted to that time zone.

In general, that strategy has worked really well for me. And on my most recent trip to Canada, it worked great for when I went to Canada. I had almost no problems at all adjusting to Canadian time. But when I returned back to Korea, that's when I experienced some jet lag and I suffered from jet lag for several days, even though I followed my plan to a tee. To follow your plan to a tee means to follow the plan precisely and exactly. So, I followed my personal jet lag strategy exactly, but I still suffered from jet lag. So, I guess that strategy isn't so great after all. Now I was lucky enough to arrive in Korea at around 7:00pm. And by the time I got off the plane and then went through immigration, collected my bags from the luggage carousel, and then rode the airport train, and then the subway back to my apartment, it was nearly 10:00pm. So, this was almost perfect, right? I got home, I was tired, it was 10:00pm. I only had to stay up for about an hour and then go to sleep and I could follow my jet leg strategy. So, what I did was I just talked to my wife for a bit, I took my dog for a walk, I was hungry, so I had a light meal, and I was thinking, wow,

this is perfect, I'm going to feel amazing tomorrow and I'm not going to suffer from jet lag. And then when I woke up the next day, I felt great and I was really proud of myself, I felt like I had beat jet lag.

My strategy worked again, I thought. But then a little bit later on in the afternoon around 3pm or so, I felt absolutely exhausted. So tired in fact that I couldn't stay awake, and I had to crash for a bit and take a nap. And then the same thing happened the next day and then the next day. So, I looked online for some advice about how to overcome jet lag and I listened to a podcast about it. And that podcast said that one of the best things you can do to reset your body clock for your new time zone is to control your light exposure. So, that means that in the morning you should make sure to get at least 15 minutes of sunlight into your eyes and then at night you should avoid having lights on in the house. And you should make sure that your house is only dimly lit and that you don't spend too much time staring at screens. So, no bright phone or computer monitor. That advice sounded really logical to me, so I tried my best to get lots of sun exposure in the morning when I took my dog, Pinky, out for a walk. The only issue was that it was pretty cloudy for the first few days when I returned to Seoul, but I did try my best to get some sunlight into my eyes. And I don't know if that strategy worked exactly or if it was just that time passed, and I eventually adjusted to Korean time. But after three or four days my body did finally adjust, and I feel totally great now and like my body clock is back running on Korean time again.

Once I got over my jet lag, then it was back to life and back to reality. Back to life, back to reality. Do you get that reference? It's a famous lyric to a song called *Back to Life (However Do You Want Me)* by a British R&B group called Soul II Soul. You know what? Let me play you just a teeny, tiny little clip from that song, so you can hear how the melody goes. Let's take a listen.

Back to life, back to reality. Back to life, back to reality.

Now the reason why I wanted to play you that clip from the song is because that phrase of the lyrics, "Back to life, back to reality" has become a popular expression. And you'll hear English speakers use it occasionally during everyday conversations, kind of like how I just did. So, if you ever hear someone use that phrase, then they are referencing that song and the phrase is used to describe, you know, that feeling of returning back to normality after a really extraordinary experience. So, after my trip to Canada, that was extraordinary. Now it is back to normal life and back to reality for me.

And something that has been occupying a lot of my time lately, and especially a lot of my wife's time, these days is our house. So, for those of you who don't know, my wife and I, we bought a little house here in Seoul and we are in the process of renovating it right now. So, since we don't have the time or the skill to do the work ourselves, unfortunately, we are working with a design company who is handling the project. Now, we're totally redesigning the layout of the house and this process is time-consuming. Holy moly is it time-consuming. My wife and I have spent hours discussing it, sharing ideas, arguing about it, about whether this design choice is better or that design choice is better, and pouring over blueprints on our kitchen table. And I think we're finally starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel though, and last week we had a meeting with the design company to see a 3D model and walk through a pretty much finalized version of what the house will look like.

Have you ever had this experience before of seeing a 3D model and doing a walkthrough through it on the computer? I have to say it's absolutely incredible. The design company just took this two-dimensional blueprint drawing and transformed it into an ultra-realistic 3D render and it's so cool to see your design come alive like that. It was also really reassuring to feel like we're making progress on the project and that by the summertime we'll actually

be living in a house that looks pretty much identical to what the 3D model looks like. Now, we're not finished yet exactly after seeing the 3D model, we realized that there are still some things that we need to change, but we're trying to be careful and really take our time and think everything over carefully. Since our house is really, really small, each detail has to be considered thoroughly. But at the same time, progress is being made on the project, and we're getting closer and closer day by day. And if everything goes according to plan, we will be finalizing the design layout by the end of the month. And then we have to decide on all of the other details in the house. Like the flooring, the tiling, the windows, the doors, the countertops, the wall colors, all of those things. And then, yeah, there's also like power outlets and lighting to consider. But I'm crossing my fingers that that part of the process will be a little bit easier than the house layout itself. But we'll see. I'm not sure exactly. We'll see when we get there, I guess. But once everything has been decided on, then the real fun starts and construction begins, which hopefully should be starting next month.

In Culips news, we released a brand-new Chatterbox episode last week about the life of Queen Elizabeth II. In that episode, you'll learn about her life story, and then my co-host Anna and I talk about the impact of her death and what her legacy will mean for British people. Now, I know that there are a lot of Culips listeners who are anglophiles, people who love the UK, and are fascinated by its culture. So, if this topic sounds interesting to you, then I really recommend checking it out. And of course, there's an interactive transcript and helpful study guide to accompany that episode that's available to all Culips members. Speaking of Culips members, Kassy and I will be hosting the February edition of our monthly member live stream on Tuesday, February 28th at 8:00pm Korean time. I hope a lot of our members can join us to hang out and practice English together, and to participate in the live stream, you just need to log in to your Culips account and follow the link from the Dashboard and I hope to see you there.

And now it's time for this week's vocabulary lesson.

A little earlier I talked about jet lag and how traveling threw my internal time clock out of whack. It threw it out of whack. That's the expression that I'd like to teach you about in a little bit more detail right now: to throw something out of whack. Before I tell you about what it means and how we can use it, why don't we rewind and go back to when I used the expression a little bit earlier and listen to that part a couple more times so we can hear how I used it in context again. Here we go.

Even though there's only a three-hour time difference between those two places, it would always throw my sleep schedule out of whack for a few days.

Now let's talk about what throw out of whack means. And by the way, whack is spelled W-H-A-C-K. Whack. So, the throw out of whack is an idiom that means to disrupt or disturb or essentially cause something to become out of order or not working properly or out of balance. So, when I traveled from Canada to Korea, I experienced jet lag because my internal body clock was thrown out of whack. In other words, my body was confused about what time it was because I had traveled across different time zones. Here's another example. Let's say you have a computer that is working perfectly fine. But then you decide to make some little adjustments to the computer, maybe you install a new hard drive or some new RAM or something like that, and then the computer doesn't work properly. Well, in that kind of situation, you could say that you threw your computer out of whack. Similarly, if you have a routine or schedule that is working well for you, but then some unexpected event or change happens and it disrupts your schedule and makes it difficult to follow, well then you could say that that change in your schedule has thrown your routine out of whack.

So essentially, to throw out of whack just describe something that was previously working OK and functioning correctly, but now is not working or operating as it should and it has become disordered or disorganized. So now that we know what to throw out of whack

means, let's take a listen to some example sentences so we can learn how to use it in a natural way in our own speaking and writing. So, here we go! Let's listen to example sentence number one right now.

Example sentence number one.

Skipping breakfast throws my whole day out of whack.

Let's break this example sentence down. In this example, the speaker says that skipping breakfast, so not eating breakfast, throws his whole day out of whack. So, I guess he has a very rigid schedule for eating his meals and if he doesn't eat breakfast in the morning, well then, he just doesn't feel right and his whole day is difficult.

Example sentence number two.

When you stay up too late, it can really mess with your body's natural rhythms and throw you out of whack.

Let's break this example sentence down. In this example, we hear that staying up too late can throw your natural body rhythm out of whack and your sleep schedule out of whack, and I think everybody can relate to this, right? We've probably all had a time in our life where we've stayed up too late one night, and then the next day, we feel tired all day because our sleep schedule was disrupted and thrown out of whack.

Example sentence number three.

I forgot to add the salt when I was cooking, and it threw the whole dish out of whack. It ended up just being so bland that I had to throw it out, unfortunately.

Let's break this final example sentence down. In this example sentence, the speaker talks about an error he made when he was cooking, he forgot to add salt to the dish that he was making. And as a result, the dish tasted really bland. It was thrown out of whack. There was no balance to the flavor in the dish. And because of that, he ended up just throwing the dish out. It was a complete failure.

Well, that brings us to the end of this week's bonus episode. And if you made it all the way to the end here, congratulations on completing another English study session with me, and thank you for listening all the way to the end. That's amazing. I'm gonna go now, but I'll be back a little later on this week with a brand-new Culips episode. Until then, take care, bye-bye.

Episode credits

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