

## Catch Word #228 – It's really eating me up!

### Episode description

In today's Catch Word episode, Andrew and Jeremy introduce two phrases that can be used when expressing negative emotions. Although we wish life could always be full of happy times, that definitely isn't the reality. Sometimes we have some pretty negative emotions bottled up inside; Andrew and Jeremy are here to help you express those emotions in English.

### Fun fact

Bad feelings are actually good for you! Negative emotions help us to reflect on and evaluate our experiences. Someone who only experiences positive emotions could become complacent in life and ignores key issues in an effort to maintain their constant state of false positivity.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- To eat [someone] up
- High-stakes
- To go with one's gut
- To tear [someone] up
- To spill the beans
- Tearjerker



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## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Hello, everyone. My name is Andrew.

**Jeremy:** And this is Jeremy.

**Andrew:** And you are listening to Culips.

**Andrew:** Hey, friends, welcome back to Culips. You are listening to Catch Word, which is our vocabulary series. And in Catch Word episodes, we teach you really useful English vocabulary that will help you become a more fluent English user.

**Andrew:** Now, before we get started, I wanna let you all know that there is a study guide available for this episode for all Culips members and we'd recommend that you follow along here today with the study guide while you listen. Many of our members have said that the study guides have really helped them to take their English to the next level and have been very, very helpful. So if you'd like to become a Culips member, support us and also support your own English learning, just visit [Culips.com](http://Culips.com) and you can sign up.

**Andrew:** All right, so today, I'm not alone. I'm joined by my cohost, Jeremy. Jeremy, could you let our listeners know what the theme for our episode is today?

**Jeremy:** Today we're going to teach you all two expressions for talking about negative emotions. Negative emotions, like sadness or anger or angst or anxiety, right? Some of these sort of negative emotions.

**Andrew:** You know, I think I'm not alone in this. I think everybody feels this way. But when something bad happens to us, like, maybe, maybe there's an accident or we make a mistake or somebody dies, when something big and traumatic happens in our lives, and that causes us to have a negative emotional reaction, that negative emotion kind of lives inside us, right? For a time, it's a part of us. And I think the two expressions that we'll study today kind of capture this feeling of the emotion, the bad emotion living inside of us.

**Jeremy:** You can't get rid of it. It's not very easy to just wipe away.

**Andrew:** Exactly, which is why there are therapists, right?

**Jeremy:** Yeah. There are people who are professionally trained to help with these emotions.

**Andrew:** Exactly. So let's take a look at the first expression, which is to be eating someone up inside. **To be eating someone up** inside. Or we can also say just **to be eating someone up**. So that inside part is optional.

**Jeremy:** Eating at me, too, that's really eating at me, it's really **eating me up**. I think for this one, it's easiest if you imagine a parasite. A parasite is a bug, usually, some life-form that lives inside of another life-form and eats the insides of that life-form. Kind of a gross analogy here, but this expression really does feel like that. If something is **eating me up** inside, it means that I feel a pain in my stomach, as if there were a parasite in my stomach biting me. It feels painful in the same way that that would.

**Andrew:** So you could think of the parasite as being that negative emotion, right? It is the worry or the depression or the sadness or the anxiety, and it **is eating up your positivity**. It is taking over your mindset from the inside. I get the visual of a Pac-Man character. You know, the video game Pac-Man?

**Jeremy:** Yeah.

**Andrew:** Just this, yeah, this ball of negativity going through and eating up and taking over your mindset and your outlook on life. Of course, if something is **eating you up** on the inside, then you are going through a lot of pain or stress or anguish, right?

**Jeremy:** And you know what, now that I think about it, this expression is usually only used by the person feeling the emotion. I don't think we use it to talk about someone else very much. It's most commonly used when talking about yourself. Would you agree?

**Andrew:** I don't think it's limited just to talking about ourselves. We'll listen to an example here in a moment when we can use it to talk about other people. But I agree that about 80% of the time we use it to talk about ourselves, because, really, we don't know what other people are feeling, right? So it's hard for us to make statements like this about other people unless they've told us how they feel.

**Jeremy:** Or unless you know them very well.

**Andrew:** Right, exactly. But I agree, most of the time we use this to talk about ourselves and to express our emotional health and condition to other people.

**Andrew:** All right, why don't we take a listen to a couple of conversation examples using this expression, **to be eating someone up** inside.

**Friend 1:** How did the test go today?

**Friend 2:** I think I blew it.

**Friend 1:** Oh no!

**Friend 2:** Yeah. I just totally lost focus and couldn't concentrate. If I fail this test, it's going to really **eat me up** inside. I need to pass this test.

**Friend 1:** Don't stress out about it yet. I'm sure you did just fine.

**Friend 2:** Yeah, right.

**Andrew:** So we just heard a conversation between two friends. And one of the friends was talking about a test that he wrote and he said, it's going to really **eat me up** inside if I fail this test. So he's not really talking about his emotional state right now in the present. He's talking about how he will feel in the future if he fails the test. So the kind of more advanced way to talk about an emotional state in the future, right? It's a conditional sentence, but we can still get the feeling that this test is super important to him, right? It's a very **high-stakes** test, as we say. If he fails it, he's going to be really stressed out and really worried.

**Jeremy:** And often we really do feel stress and worry in our gut, in our intestines. Recently, they have found out, scientists have studied the gut and they found that there are a lot of brain cells in the gut. So we do think with our gut, in a way. We also say, in English, I have a gut feeling about this.

**Andrew:** **Go with your gut.**

**Jeremy:** **Go with your gut.** Yeah, we do have—and gut means intestines or stomach area. So I think we all really do feel our emotions in our stomach and intestines area. So that's part of why this expression is so accurate in describing that feeling, that emotion.

**Andrew:** Yeah, it kind of works on two levels, right? You have the first layer, which is the eating imagery, and then you also have this feeling that most people have that we feel these negative emotions in our stomach area, in our gut. So it's very accurate expression. I agree.

**Jeremy:** And then at the very end there, one of the guys said, yeah, right. Yeah, right. This is a common expression, but it is often sarcastic. So it is often used to mean the opposite. And the tone is important. So if Andrew asked me, “Hey, is your name spelled J-E-R-E-M-Y?” I would say, “Yeah, right.” In that one, I’m not being sarcastic. I am just confirming yes, that is correct. But if Andrew says, “Hey, can I borrow \$20,000?” I say, “Yeah, right.” And, in that situation, I am being sarcastic. I’m saying, no way, not possible. Why are you even asking? And usually this is done to be funny. So yeah, right, is the expression there.

**Andrew:** Yeah. So be very careful, everyone, tone is important with yeah, right. It’s like yeah, right—if you say it like that, it’s very sarcastic. Yeah, right.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, right. Yeah, right.

**Andrew:** If you say yeah, right, or that’s right, then we’re just saying that it’s correct. Good point, Jeremy.

**Andrew:** Why don’t we move on now to example #2 with this expression?

**Friend 1:** We should give Paul a call and see how he’s doing.

**Friend 2:** Last time I talked to him, he said that he can’t sleep at night and he just lies awake thinking about the accident over and over again.

**Friend 1:** Sounds like it’s really **eating him up** inside.

**Friend 2:** Yeah, I can’t even imagine how he must feel.

**Friend 1:** Me neither. Let’s take him out for coffee and cheer him up a bit.

**Jeremy:** In this example, two friends talk about Paul, their friend, who is going through a difficult time. They talk about how he cannot sleep at night and he is thinking about the accident over and over. We can guess that this might be a car accident, or some sort of traumatic event. And, as a result, they guess that it is **eating him up** inside.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I think it’s particularly accurate to use this expression when we’re thinking about remorse, or when we’re feeling remorse or regret, right? It’s like I should have done that differently. Or I can’t believe I made that mistake. It’s **eating me up**. You can’t come to terms with it, you can’t reach peace.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, I think you’re right on that one, because the past is something we cannot change. And for that reason, we can’t get rid of the emotion. If I got in a car accident and hurt someone else, I can’t go back and fix that. So I’m always going to feel that painful emotion every time I think about that accident. So this is a very good expression for this kind of situation, some past thing that you cannot get over or that you cannot resolve.

**Andrew:** All right, well, I think, on that positive note, we should move on to our second expression for today, which is very similar to the first one in meaning and also in form, because it is a phrasal verb. Both of these expressions today, everyone, are phrasal verbs, which means we have a verb plus a preposition. So to be **eating someone up**, eat up.

**Andrew:** And now expression #2 is **to tear up**. **Tear up**, OK, **to tear up**. So, Jeremy, could you explain what **to tear up** means?

**Jeremy:** **To tear up** or it's really **tearing me up** or **it tore him up**, it usually means that something caused someone a great deal of pain, sadness, distress, or guilt. The feeling we talked about before, with the previous example, like a parasite eating your insides. It's a very similar feeling to your insides being torn, tearing them, like tearing a piece of paper, pulling them apart. It's very painful. So this expression is pretty much the same as the previous one in usage and meaning.

**Andrew:** Would you say that this expression is stronger? Do you feel a stronger negative emotion with tearing? Is tearing stronger than eating?

**Jeremy:** I mean, in real life, both would be very painful. But I can see how **tearing up** could be stronger. But also the tone of voice the person uses when they say it affects how strong the meaning is. So, oh, it's **tearing me up** versus, yeah, it's **tearing me up**, right?

**Andrew:** Right.

**Jeremy:** The first one is much stronger.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I agree. And, in my opinion, both of these expressions are about the same strength. I don't think there's a big difference in meaning between the two. I don't think one is really stronger than the other. They feel about the same.

**Andrew:** With that being said, why don't we listen to some examples with this expression, **to tear up**?

**Friend 1:** What's the saddest movie you've ever seen?

**Friend 2:** Have you ever seen Simon Birch? I think that's probably one of those saddest movies I've ever seen.

**Friend 1:** Oh, yeah, that one really **tore me up**.

**Friend 2:** Me too. It was a real **tearjerker**.

**Jeremy:** In this example, two friends talk about a movie called Simon Birch. This movie is very sad because one of the major characters dies. And, as a result, anyone who watches the movie will likely feel that sadness. So the two friends here agree that this movie was a **tearjerker**, meaning a movie that pulls tears out of your eyes, sort of.

**Andrew:** That makes you cry, right?

**Jeremy:** Yeah, makes you cry. Yeah, it pulls the tears out. Jerk, to jerk is to pull in that sense. And that, this movie really **tore him up, tore me up**. It left you an emotional wreck.

**Andrew:** Jeremy, we should maybe talk quickly about the spelling here of **tear up**. **Tear up** is T-E-A-R. But we also heard the expression **tearjerker**, and tear is also spelled T-E-A-R, so tear and tear. And to make things more complicated, we also have the expression to tear up, which means to start crying.

**Jeremy:** That is confusing.

**Andrew:** It's very confusing. This is one of the big problems with English is our spelling system is not very good.

**Jeremy:** Yes.

**Andrew:** And so context is very important for determining what the pronunciation will be.

**Jeremy:** And for this reason, I always say that English is a language that must be learned through sound. You can't learn English just through text, because this expression is spelled exactly the same way as to tear up, which means to start crying or for your eyes to fill with tears. And a reader of this text would not know which meaning this expression had. But today you are listening to a podcast and we are telling you in sound, so you know the difference. So for this reason, it's very important that you use podcasts like Culips to study English.

**Andrew:** I always tell my students they have to learn with their ears and not with their eyes.

**Jeremy:** Yes, so true.

**Andrew:** All right, let's take a listen to the second example with this expression.

**Brother 1:** Hey, bro, Mom's so funny these days.

**Brother 2:** I know. She's so bad at keeping the secret, right?

**Brother 1:** I know. You could just tell she's dying **to spill the beans** about Dad's surprise party.

**Brother 2:** Yeah, it's just **tearing her up**. Do you think she'll be able to keep the secret?

**Brother 1:** I mean, I hope so. But maybe not.

**Andrew:** So in this example, we heard two brothers talking about their mother. And their mother is bad at keeping a secret. I guess she is planning a surprise party for her husband, the brother's father. But it's difficult for her to keep the secret, it's **tearing her up**. This means that she's feeling distress and stress about keeping the secret from her husband. She's dying **to spill the beans**. Jeremy, this is an interesting idiom, too, **to spill the beans**. This means to tell some secret information.

**Jeremy:** Yeah, that's a good idiom to know, **to spill the beans**.

**Andrew:** So, in this example, it's **tearing her up**. It's not really a negative emotion, right, that's bothering her.

**Jeremy:** It's more like it's overwhelming. It's an overwhelming feeling. For example, if you have a plastic bag, like the kind you get from a grocery store, and you put 200 pounds of metal inside of it, the plastic will tear, right? It's an overwhelming weight for the plastic to hold. So in this situation, **tearing up** is referring to an overwhelming emotion, something she cannot carry.

**Andrew:** That's a funny image. Two hundred pounds of metal in a plastic bag.

**Jeremy:** I don't know, I've been working with metal lately. So it's top of mind for me.

**Andrew:** It works. The imagery works.

**Jeremy:** The first expression we talked about in this episode wouldn't be as fitting for this situation. I think when we talk about an overwhelming emotion that is positive, I don't think we would say it is eating at me. I think it makes more sense to say it's tearing, it's **tearing me up**. For example, there's a very famous song, pop song from the 90s, I think, and by—is it NSYNC?

**Andrew:** NSYNC, yeah. It's ***Tearin' Up My Heart***.



**Jeremy:** **Tearing up my heart**, right? And **tearing up my heart**, love is a positive emotion, the most positive. But this song is talking about how, girl, when I'm with you, it's **tearing up my heart**. I feel I love you so much that it is overwhelming. It's very different from **eating me up** in that sense.

**Andrew:** Right. So **tear up**, then, is a little more versatile. We can use it with a wider range of emotions.

**Jeremy:** Yes, if that emotion is overwhelming, whether it's negative or positive, as long as it's overwhelming, then this one makes sense.

**Andrew:** All right, guys, well, thank you for listening today. I think we will wrap it up here. Don't forget that the study guide for this episode is available on Culips.com. Again, in the study guide, there is a transcript and detailed vocabulary definitions and example sentences and dialogues that you can use to study with. There's also a quiz. So lots of good things in the study guide. So check that out.

**Andrew:** We're also all over the place on social media. And if you want to stay up to date with Culips news, you can follow us on social media. We are on Instagram and YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. So just search for the Culips English Podcast and you'll be able to find us.

**Andrew:** And we love it when you guys send us a message and contact us. We read all of your emails. And we also respond to all of your emails, but sometimes it takes us a long time. And I'm a little bit behind in my emailing right now, guys, so please be patient with me. But I still love to hear from you. So if you have a topic that you'd like to suggest to us or a question or a comment, just shoot us a message. Our address is [contacts@Culips.com](mailto:contacts@Culips.com).

**Jeremy:** It would be great if you could leave us a five-star review in iTunes Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, or on whatever podcasting app you use. It would really help us out. And it would help other people to find Culips and benefit from all the content that we have created over the years. So please leave us a review, if you can. Thank you.

**Andrew:** We'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll catch you then. Goodbye.

**Jeremy:** Take care, everyone.

## Detailed Explanations

### To eat [someone] up

Phrasal verb

**To eat [someone] up** is the first expression of today's episode, and it means that something is dominating one's focus and thoughts. Usually the thoughts that **eat someone up** are related to negative memories, things that bring that person sadness or feelings of extreme guilt. For example, if a boy sees his friend cheating on a math test, it might **eat him up** inside. He would have a hard time deciding if he should keep his mouth shut, thus keeping his friend safe from getting scolded, or if he should tell the teacher that his friend was cheating, thus clearing his guilty conscience.

Here's one more example with **to eat [someone] up**:

**Sarah:** What's the matter? You look awful.

**Diana:** Ugh, I don't know what to do! Britney told me something and she told me to keep it a secret, but it's really awful.

**Sarah:** Well, if it's so awful that it's **eating you up** like that, you should really tell someone.

**Diana:** But Britney will hate me forever! Also, she'll probably get into serious trouble.

**Sarah:** Telling the truth isn't easy, but whatever the secret is, it's probably **eating Britney up** too. If you are really her friend, it might be best to tell someone and try to solve the problem with some professional help.

**Diana:** Yeah, maybe you're right. I wish she'd never even told me about it.



## High-stakes

### Adjective

The adjective **high-stakes** was originally used in gambling. When gambling, the money you bet is known as your stake. Therefore, when the stakes are high, it means you are betting a lot of money, which could lead to a big win or a big loss of money.

Anything that is risky for one's physical or financial well-being could be described as **high stakes**. For example, at the end of high school, students often take **high-stakes** exams. They put a lot of time and effort into studying for the exams, because if they do well they have a greater chance of being accepted into their favourite university. If they get a low score, though, they have a significantly lower chance of getting accepted.

Here are a couple more examples with **high-stakes**:

**Lucy:** I feel like we never spend any time together.

**Drew:** Lucy, things are really busy at work right now.

**Lucy:** I know. I just miss you.

**Drew:** I know. I promise we can have a nice weekend away as soon as this merger goes through. We're in the middle of a **high-stakes** negotiation. If we pull this off, my company will double in size.

**Lucy:** I'm proud of you, I am. I just hate that this merger is taking up so much of your life.

**Roger:** Are you sure you wanna do this? In terms of crazy experiences, this one is pretty **high stakes**. It's literally life and death.

**Dexter:** I've wanted to skydive for ages now. Let's do it!

**Roger:** Let's hope this isn't the last thing we ever do together.

**Dexter:** C'mon, man. We'll be fine!



## To go with one's gut

### Idiom

**To go with one's gut** is to follow one's instincts or one's heart when deciding something, instead of following the opinions or influences of others. For example, when people are deciding on whether or not to get married, they have to **go with their gut**. No one is marrying your partner but you, so you have to listen to your heart and follow your instincts to decide if he or she is truly the right person to share the rest of your life with.

Here are a couple more examples with **to go with one's gut**:

**Rebecca:** Are you sure you want to hire Tony to work at the store? Didn't he go to jail?

**Frank:** Yes, he did. So what?

**Rebecca:** I mean, how can you trust that he won't steal anything or take advantage of you?

**Frank:** I'm **going with my gut**. From what I can see, he's a good guy who made some bad decisions in his youth.

**Rebecca:** All right. If you wanna give him a chance, I won't say no. But keep a close eye on him!

**Ryu:** Hey, Mike, wanna grab a beer after work?

**Mike:** Sorry, man, I can't. I've gotta go pick up this fancy purse my wife asked me to get her for Christmas. What did your wife ask for?

**Ryu:** Oh, I didn't ask her what she wanted this year. I'm just **gonna go with my gut**.

**Mike:** Uh oh. That doesn't sound like a good idea.

**Ryu:** Why not? You don't think I know what my wife likes?

**Mike:** No, that's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying, from experience, that it's usually better to ask what your wife wants rather than risk disappointing her.

## To tear [someone] up

Phrasal verb

**To tear [someone] up** means that something causes someone to feel an excessive amount of pain, sadness, distress, or guilt. The expression **to tear [someone] up** is very similar to our first key expression, to eat [someone] up.

Both expressions **to tear [someone] up** and to eat [someone] up give the impression that the person is being affected by a lot of negative emotions. The only difference might be in the imagery of these two expressions. The expression to eat [someone] up gives the impression that something is causing someone's insides to be eaten up due to pain, stress, or guilt. On the other hand, **to tear [someone] up** gives the impression that something is causing someone's heart to literally split in two due to pain, stress, or guilt.

Here's one more example with **to tear [someone] up**:

**Miguel:** I heard your girlfriend dumped you. Are you doing OK?

**Alejandro:** I mean, not really. It's just really **tearing me up** inside thinking about what I did wrong or what I could have done better. I screwed up big time, man.

**Miguel:** Have you tried talking to her since she dumped you?

**Alejandro:** Yeah, but she hasn't answered my calls. I think it's over—she's done with me.

**Miguel:** Well, it sucks now, but you can learn from this and do better with the next girl you meet.

**Alejandro:** Yeah, I know. That's not really helpful, though, until I get over loving this girl. Ugh. I'm such an idiot.

## To spill the beans

### Phrase

**To spill the beans** means to reveal secret information about someone or something, either intentionally or by mistake. A great example of **spilling the beans** is when a group of people plan a surprise party for one of their friends, but someone accidentally lets the friend know about the party. Therefore, that person **spills the beans**: the secret is out and the party is no longer a surprise.

There is an expression with a similar meaning that has become more common in the last few decades. **To spill the tea** is another way of saying to tell a secret, like **to spill the beans**. **To spill the tea** also means to share some gossip. The phrase originated from the expression **to share the T**, with T meaning truth.

Here are a couple more examples with **to spill the beans**:

**Lacy:** OK, c'mon girl. **Spill the beans**. What's going on with you and Drake? Are you guys a thing now? Are you dating? Or are you guys just hanging out?

**Francine:** Hey, I'm not keeping secrets from you. We're just hanging out!

**Lacy:** Do you want to date him?

**Francine:** I mean, yeah, but we haven't officially talked about that yet.

**Lacy:** Well, tell him how you feel! You're not getting any younger.

**Courtney:** So how did Dave react to the tickets you got him for the basketball game?

**Arlene:** Ugh, my mom totally **spilled the beans** before I had a chance to give them to him!

**Courtney:** Your mom?

**Arlene:** Yeah, she asked what I got him for his birthday, and she accidentally mentioned it when she saw him at the grocery store last night.

**Courtney:** What a bummer. He liked them, though?

**Arlene:** Of course—he loved them! But I still wish I could have seen his initial reaction.

## Tearjerker

Noun

A **tearjerker** is something that causes someone to tear up or cry. Usually this phrase is used to describe sad or heartbreaking movies, TV shows, or books. Anything that causes its audience to feel sad, emotional, or sentimental, or to shed tears could be described as a **tearjerker**.

Here are a couple more examples with **tearjerker**:

**Lauren:** Have you seen the movie Marley & Me?

**Jazzy:** No, I don't believe I have. Is it any good?

**Lauren:** I mean, it's good, but it's a real **tearjerker**. I bawled for like an hour straight after watching that movie.

**Jazzy:** No way! You almost never cry.

**Lauren:** Yeah, I know, but this movie was like a punch right to the heart.

**Jazzy:** I need to watch this.

**Lauren:** Don't forget to prepare some tissues before you do!

**Denny:** Are you all right? You look like you've been crying.

**Bud:** Yeah, dude. I'm good. I just finished this book and it was a **tearjerker**. I couldn't help but shed a few tears when my favourite character died.

**Denny:** Whoa, I didn't know you were so sensitive.

**Bud:** Everyone's got sensitive side, even professional bodybuilders like me.

## Quiz

**1. Which phrase has a similar meaning to the phrase to eat someone up?**

- a) to break someone up
- b) to tear someone up
- c) to suffocate someone
- d) to fill someone up

**2. In the expression to spill the beans, what do the beans represent?**

- a) food
- b) money
- c) secrets
- d) time

**3. Which is a type of movie?**

- a) rippusher
- b) tearjerker
- c) tearpuller
- d) crybouncer

**4. If someone goes with their gut, it means that they are following \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a) their instincts
- b) logic
- c) their closest friends
- d) chance

**5. Which of these is an example of a high-stakes situation?**

- a) choosing between pizza or hamburgers for dinner
- b) getting a new haircut
- c) taking a new route to work in the morning
- d) quitting a job to start one's own business



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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had something eat you up inside? What was the occasion? Was it due to sadness or guilt?
2. Have you ever spilled the beans by accident? What happened as a result?
3. What is one of your favourite tearjerker movies? Why?
4. Have you ever done anything that you considered high stakes? What happened? Did something good come out of it, or did you lose in a big way?
5. Do you usually follow your gut when making decisions, or do you like to get the opinions of others?

## Quiz Answers

1.b    2.c    3.b    4.a    5.d

### Episode credits

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