

Catch Word #235 – Through thick and thin

Episode description

In this Catch Word episode, Andrew and Kassy introduce some vocabulary and expressions about receiving moral support.

Fun fact

You've Got a Friend in Me, the theme song for the iconic Disney/Pixar Toy Story franchise, is a great example of showing moral support. This song conveys the importance of friendship that lasts through thick and thin.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Moral support
- Through thick and thin
- To stick with [someone]
- To be right behind [someone]
- To be on [one's] side
- To come off as



Transcript

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.

Andrew: Hello, everyone. My name is Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And you are listening to Culips.

Andrew: Welcome back to Culips, everyone. You are listening to Catch Word. If you don't know what that is, well, let me explain. Catch Word is the series where we teach you important English vocabulary, such as idioms, phrasal verbs, or just expressions that will help improve your English listening and also help your English speaking sound more natural. And today I'm joined by my cohost, Kassy. Hello there, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey, Andrew.

Andrew: So, Kassy, what are we going to teach all of our listeners today?

Kassy: In this episode, we'll teach you two idiomatic expressions you can use when you receive **moral support** from someone. Andrew, what is **moral support**, exactly?

Andrew: Yeah, so that's exactly right, Kassy, we're going to look at two expressions that we use when talking about giving and getting **moral support**. And **moral support** is when you support somebody, kind of like emotionally. So it's kind of emotional support when you are listening to someone and agreeing with someone and you're **on that person's side**, you approve of what they're doing, this is **moral support**. And it's a little bit different than other types of support, for example, financial support, where you're giving somebody money, right? It's not really that, you're just more being a good friend to someone and supporting them that way. So we'll take a look at these expressions you can use when talking about **moral support** today.

Andrew: But before we do that, there is a little bit of housekeeping that we need to take care of here. And, Kassy, I wanted to start by giving a shout-out to one of our listeners from Chile, in South America, Andrea. And Andrea left us a very kind review recently on Apple Podcasts. I thought I would read it here on the show. So she wrote, "Culips is my go-to resource for learning English. I appreciate the chance to listen to your podcast over the quarantine. It is highly recommended. Andrew, Jeremy, Suzanne, and Kassy, thanks for your great work." And, Kassy, Andrea even spelled your name right. So this is perfect. Thank you, Andrea.

Kassy: Thanks, Andrea.

Andrew: We should also let everyone know, Kassy, that there's a study guide available for this episode on our website, Culips.com. And all Culips members can download it, there's a pdf version, if you'd like to download it and print it out, it's great. Or you can also study along with the mobile-friendly version on your smartphone or tablet. So we recommend following along with the study guide while you listen to us here today.

Andrew: So that takes care of the housekeeping. Let's get on to the lesson. And we'll take a look at expression #1 right now, which is a little bit difficult to say, Kassy. The pronunciation is tricky, isn't it?

Kassy: Yes.

Andrew: It is **through thick and thin**. **Through thick and thin**. **Through thick and thin**. So what does this mean exactly, Kassy, if you are with somebody through thick and thin?

Kassy: If you are with somebody **through thick and thin**, it means you are staying with them or supporting them through the good times and the bad times. If problems arise or you have difficulties in your life, they're gonna **stick with you**.

Andrew: Yeah, that's exactly right. So the easiest way to think about the meaning here is just good times and bad times, thick and thin, the good and the bad. I think in everybody's life, you know, we have these highs and lows. Life is like a roller coaster. There's that famous song about life and love being like a roller coaster, right? Highs and lows. And this is something everybody goes through. And when you have somebody that supports you and is always by your side and never leaves you during these good and bad times, well, then that person is with you **through thick and thin**.

Andrew: Let's take a listen to our first conversation example using this expression **through thick and thin** right now.

Coworker 1: Hey, Carl, do you have any plans this weekend?

Coworker 2: I do. My wife and I are going to be celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary. So we're planning to go out for a fancy dinner downtown.

Coworker 1: That sounds great.

Coworker 2: Yeah, it hasn't always been easy, but my wife is an amazing woman. And she's been with me **through thick and thin**. So we're happy to celebrate together.

Coworker 1: Oh, that's so lovely. Congratulations, guys.

Coworker 2: Yeah, thanks. And what about you, any plans for the weekends?

Coworker 1: You know, probably just the same old, same old. I might meet up with some friends and catch a movie or something

Andrew: OK. In that example, we just heard a conversation between two coworkers discussing their weekend plans. And one of the coworkers, whose name is Carl, is celebrating his 25th wedding anniversary. And he was looking back on those 25 years and thinking about them, and was really proud of his wife for **sticking with him through thick and thin**, through the good times and through the bad times.

Kassy: OK, now let's listen to example #2o.

Friend 1: How's your brother doing these days? I heard he was in a car accident recently. Is he doing OK?

Friend 2: Yeah, he's doing much better. Thanks. We were so worried there for a bit. But, thankfully, it looks like he'll recover just fine.

Friend 1: I'm so glad to hear that. I know you two are really close.

Friend 2: Yeah, we really are close. And we've been together **through thick and thin**. So I'm just really thankful that he's gonna be OK.

Friend 1: Well, next time you talk to your bro, tell them I'm thinking of him and I hope he feels better soon.

Friend 2: I'll definitely do that.

Kassy: In this example, we hear about a girl and her brother. The brother recently got in a car accident. And the girl mentions how worried she was about him because they are so close. They've really been together their whole lives, **through thick and thin**. They're always by each other's side.

Andrew: And this is another really common way that we can use this expression is when talking about siblings, because, you know, when we come to think of it, aside from our parents, our siblings are some of the people who we've known for the longest time in our life, right? So, yeah, it's completely normal, that you go through some good times and bad times with your siblings, the thick and the thin of it.

Kassy: OK, then let's move on to our second idiomatic expression, which is **to be right behind somebody**. **To be right behind somebody**. **To be right behind somebody**. Andrew, what does this mean?

Andrew: Yeah, if you **are right behind somebody**, then that means you support this person completely, you give them your full support. Now, again, this is like a **moral support**, right? It's like being a good friend and agreeing completely with what somebody is doing. So it's not, like, that you're giving them money or assistance that way by, like, donating your time or helping them move. OK, it's not this support. It's more like a friendship type of support, **moral support**.

Andrew: And we have some other similar expressions in English, like, you can also have somebody's back, right? If you say, like, she's got my back, or he's got my back, it's very similar. Like, this person will support me and help me when I need help or when I'm in trouble.

Kassy: Yeah, exactly. We also have another one, like, he's **on my side**, or she's **on my side**, kind of like they're on your team. They're there to support you.

Andrew: So in other words, when someone **is right behind you**, it means that person will help you and support you and just be a good friend, in general.

Andrew: So I think we can jump right into some examples using this expression. Let's listen to the first one with **to be right behind somebody**.

Coworker 1: Steve, I heard you're leaving us to move to the New York office.

Coworker 2: Yeah, it's true. I'll be leaving in a couple of weeks.

Coworker 1: No. We're sure gonna miss you around here. Why did you decide to go?

Coworker 2: I just felt like it was time for a change. So I talked things over with my family and they **were right behind me** and encouraged me to go for it.

Coworker 1: Oh, well, that's awesome. I'm really happy for you. But we're sure gonna miss you.

Coworker 2: Thanks. Yeah, I'll miss everyone around here, too. But I'm really excited at the same time.

Andrew: In this example, we heard two coworkers talking, and one of them will be moving to New York. He is going to transfer to the New York office. So he mentioned that while he was making the decision and thinking about leaving to the New York office, he talked things over with his family. So here we see the phrasal verb to talk things over. And this just means to have a discussion and to talk about all the details and, sort of, to get the advice and opinions from his family. And he found out that his family **were right behind him**. So that means they supported his decision to leave and to go to New York, 100%. They were completely supportive. They **were right behind him**.

Kassy: OK, then let's move on and listen to example #2.

Roommate 1: Could I talk to you for a sec?

Roommate 2: Sure. What's up?

Roommate 1: Have you noticed that Becky hasn't been doing her share of the housework these days? I mean, the bathroom's a mess and the kitchen sink is filled with dishes. It's gross.

Roommate 2: Yeah, I have noticed that. Do you think we should talk to her about it?

Roommate 1: Yeah, that's what I was thinking. I'm just worried that'll upset her, you know? I don't want **to come off as** the bossy roommate, but we did all agree to do the cleaning around here and she isn't helping at all.

Roommate 2: Well, whether you decide to talk to her or not, **I'm right behind you**.

Roommate 1: OK, thanks. You know, I think I will try to talk to her later tonight.

Roommate 2: Good luck.

Kassy: In this example, there's a roommate, a bad roommate, Becky, who is not doing her share of the housework. The other roommates are discussing whether or not they should confront her about it. And one roommate says that she **will be right behind him**, whether he decides to confront Becky or not.

Andrew: If he decides to confront Becky and say, "Hey, you got to pull your share around here, you have to do more cleaning." Or whether he just decides to ignore the problem and let it continue. Either way, that roommate will support him. She **will be right behind him** and will agree with whatever decision he decides to make, exactly.

Kassy: I think this is a great example, right? I mean, when you face confrontation, you really need people, like, that have got your back, who **are right behind you**. Have you ever had an experience like this, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, this example really rings true for me, because when I was in my second year at university, I lived in a house with three other dudes. So you can imagine four guys that are, like, 20 years old, living in a house together.

Kassy: So dirty.

Andrew: It was kind of wild. Yeah. A little wild and not the cleanest environment. But it was OK, except for one roommate had some issues with taking care of the household chores, which we all agreed to divide up between us. So, yeah, this really does ring true for me, and exactly in the same situation. You know, we had a kind of roommate meeting. We all said, we **are behind each other**, we should confront the situation and try and solve the problem. And I'm happy to report that after our little roommate meeting, things improved and our house was much, much cleaner.

Kassy: Woohoo!

Andrew: Well, that brings us to the end of today's episode. Thank you, everyone, for listening and for learning English with us today. We hope that you can add these two idiomatic expressions to your English vocabulary and improve your English listening and speaking with them.

Andrew: So, to summarize what we looked at, we took a look at two expressions that are used when talking about giving and receiving **moral support**. The first expression was **through thick and thin** and the second was **to be right behind somebody**.

Andrew: If you enjoy Culips, if you learn a lot with us and like studying English with us, then please support us. There are so many ways that you can do that. The best way is to sign up and become a Culips member on our website, Culips.com. And by becoming a member, you'll get full, unlimited access to our study guide library. We produce a study guide for each Culips episode and it's a fantastic resource. You'll also get exclusive access to our Fluency Files series and so much more. So please visit our website, Culips.com, to learn about becoming a member and to sign up.

Andrew: But that's not the only way you can support us. You could follow us on social media or tell your friends who are learning English about us or even leave us a nice review and five-star rating on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts, just like Andrea did. Thank you again, Andrea.

Kassy: And if you have any questions or comments, you can send us an email at contact@Culips.com.

Andrew: We'll be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode and we'll talk to you then. Bye.

Kassy: See you around.

Detailed Explanations

Moral support

Noun

Moral support is support or help that you give to someone you care about that is more psychological than physical. **Moral support** is usually support of a person through words, actions, and trust.

There are many different kinds of support. When one receives financial support, they receive money to help them in some way. When one receives emotional support, they receive sympathy, empathy, and advice to deal with some tricky emotions or trauma.

Moral support is when one receives words of encouragement or approval to gain confidence in any given situation.

Here are a couple more examples with **moral support**:

Harry: Oh, hey, Lance. Nice to see you here. Are you joining the race today?

Lance: No, I got injured a few weeks back. I'm just here as **moral support** today for my friend Steve. This is his first marathon.

Harry: That's a shame, considering you were the winner of the race last year.

Lance: Yeah, but it's all right. I'll come back twice as strong and ready to run next year.

Rosie: I don't think I can do this. There are so many people in the audience. What if I fall on my face or forget my lines?

Summer: Don't worry, girl. You're gonna do great! Everyone in the family's here tonight for **moral support**, so if you're feeling nervous, just look towards the right. We're all sitting over there ready to clap the hardest when you kill this performance. You can do it!

Rosie: Thanks, Summer. I really appreciate it. Well, here I go. Wish me luck.

Summer: Good luck! Knock 'em dead!



Through thick and thin

Idiom

The expression **through thick and thin** means no matter what. So to stick with someone **through thick and thin** means to support someone no matter what happens, to stay by them through the good, the bad, and the ugly. Some friends are only around when times are good and then disappear when you really need them. Other friends are there to support you when you are in trouble, but fade away when you no longer need help. Friends that are there **through thick and thin**, however, are always there, in the good times and the bad.

Here's one more expression with **through thick and thin**:

Heather: I can't believe Sophie is gone.

Mom: She really was an amazing dog.

Heather: She was. She was with me **through thick and thin**. She was there when I started kindergarten, when I was nervous about moving to a new school in the 5th grade, when I broke up with my first boyfriend, when I graduated high school ... I can't imagine life without her.

Mom: Oh, sweetie. Her memory will live on in your heart even if she's not around anymore.

Heather: You're right. I'm just really going to miss her.

To stick with [someone]

Phrasal verb

To stick with someone is to continue to show support and loyalty to someone, especially when times get tough. It is implied that by **sticking with someone**, one person will protect and support the other person. The phrase **to stick with someone** is often used simultaneously with the expression through thick and thin. To **stick with someone** through thick and thin means to stay by someone's side and support them no matter what, through the good times and the bad.

To **stick with someone** also means to stay close to someone without leaving their side. **Sticking with someone** implies that one will be safer with that person than going out alone.

Here are a couple more examples with **to stick with someone**:

Dad: Are you ready to spend an awesome day at the theme park?

Johnny: Yeah! I can't wait!

Dad: OK, I have only one rule. There are going to be a lot of people there. You need to **stick with me** so you don't get lost, all right? No running off, you hear?

Johnny: OK, Daddy. I won't. I'll stay next to you the whole time.

Dad: Great, then let's go have some fun.

Johnny: Yippee!

Announcer: OK, everyone. Now it's time for me to introduce today's award winner: Miranda Wilcox!

Miranda: I am so honored to be here tonight. First, I want to thank my partner, Tony. Without him, I wouldn't be standing here today. He **stuck with me** and kept me going even when I wanted to give up. Let's give a toast to Tony.

Everyone: To Tony!

To be right behind [someone]

Phrasal verb

To be right behind [someone] is to support and help someone in their plans, goals, and aspirations. This phrase is similar to and interchangeable with the phrases to stick with someone and to be on [one's] side.

Here's one more example with **to be right behind [someone]**:

Andy: I don't wanna go to gym class today.

Logan: Why not? You love gym class.

Andy: Yeah, I used to. These days, though, every time we play dodgeball Bradley chases me and hits me harder than anyone else in the class.

Logan: What a bully! Don't worry. I won't let that happen today. I'll **be right behind you** making sure he doesn't do anything mean.

Andy: Thanks, Logan. You're a good friend.

Logan: Anytime, pal!



To be on [one's] side

Idiom

To be on [one's] side is to support someone in his or her opinions, actions, plans, and so on. Like the phrases to stick with [someone] and to be right behind [someone], **to be on [one's] side** is to support someone even, or especially, if they meet opposition from others or if problems arise.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be on [one's] side**:

Frank: Are you and Kadi still fighting?

Aradthia: Yup. She hasn't apologized yet, so, yeah, we're still fighting.

Frank: Don't you think you're getting a little too worked up over this?

Aradthia: No, I totally deserve to be angry! Whose side are you on?

Frank: I'm not **on anyone's side**. This is between you and Kadi. I just hope you make up soon. You guys are best friends; you shouldn't be fighting like this.

Gym teacher: OK, everyone, it's time to start class. Today we will be playing volleyball.

Ian: Yeah, I love volleyball! Who wants **to be on my side**?

Gym teacher: Ian, I'm happy you're enthusiastic, but I'll be picking the teams.

Ian: Aww, man. That's no fun.

Gym teacher: Maybe it's not as much fun, but it's fair.

To come off as

Idiom

To come off as is to appear or to seem to be something, even though sometimes the opposite may be true. For example, a man who stands alone at a party might **come off as** arrogant and cold, but really he's just shy and nervous around new people. Or a class clown might **come off as** silly and irresponsible, but maybe he really just likes the attention at school and acts more seriously at home.

Here are a couple more examples with **to come off as**:

Clara: How did your date go yesterday?

Melissa: Oh, I don't know. He's handsome and polite, but he **came off as** a little bit boring.

Clara: Maybe he was just nervous.

Melissa: Yeah, that could be right. I told him I'd go out with him again this Saturday. Then I'll know for sure if he's more interesting or just as boring as he seems.

Clara: That's a good idea. Let me know how it goes!

Daniel: How do I look for my interview today?

Jorge: Jeans and a button-down shirt? Isn't that a little casual for a job interview?

Daniel: Yeah, but it's at a new tech start-up. I wanna **come off as** young and carefree instead of as a corporate businessman, you know?

Jorge: I guess that makes sense.

Daniel: I think this is just the kind of style they're looking for. Anyways, wish me luck.

Jorge: Good luck. Knock 'em dead!

Quiz

1. Complete the expression: When you support someone, you have someone's

_____.

- a) hand
- b) shoulders
- c) ear
- d) back

2. A clown comes off as _____.

- a) serious
- b) angry
- c) foolish
- d) depressed

3. Which phrase has a similar meaning to through thick and thin?

- a) no matter what
- b) while the going is good
- c) across the universe
- d) with much difficulty

4. Which of the choices below is an example of moral support?

- a) money
- b) words of encouragement
- c) a wheelchair
- d) a psychiatrist

5. Why might someone find it hard to stick with their friend?

- a) the friend is so nice
- b) the friend has many other friends
- c) the friend likes to spend time together
- d) the friend lied to them

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Who in your life has been with you through thick and thin? Describe your relationship.
2. Was there a time when you required moral support? Describe this time.
3. Have you ever met someone who came off as a snob but turned out to be very friendly? Describe this person.
4. When people you know are in the middle of a conflict, do you usually pick a side or do you stay as neutral as possible?
5. Have you ever stood behind someone to give them moral support? How so?

Quiz Answers

1.d 2.c 3.a 4.b 5.d

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