

Chatterbox #132 – Death and cultural traditions

Informal Contractions in this Episode

Informal contractions are unofficial short forms of other words, and they're usually only used in casual conversation. For example, when a native English speaker talks casually, they might say *gonna* instead of *going to*, or *whaddya* instead of *what do you*. Even though informal contractions are usually only used in spoken English, we include them in the Culips written transcripts to help you get used to how they're used and what they sound like.

These are the informal contractions used in today's episode, along with their meanings:

- **'bout**: about
- **'cause**: because
- **gonna**: going to

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp.

Andrew: And I'm Andrew. And we're here with another Culips episode.

Harp: Yes. And make sure you check out the website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Because that's where you can sign up and become a member.

Andrew: That's right. And when you become a member, you get access to our Learning Materials, which includes a transcript of the episode, detailed explanations of the key expressions that we talk about in our episode, as well as a quiz. So, yeah, check out the website and sign up.

Harp: Yes. And if you're on Facebook or on Twitter, come on over there and say hi and leave us comments. Or if you have an episode idea, that's a great place to leave it.

Andrew: So, Harp. How are you doing?

Harp: I'm good, I'm good. How 'bout you?

Andrew: I'm doing really well. Actually I have some friends in town visiting for one night only, and I'm really excited to see them.

Harp: Oh? That's cool, but why only one night?

- Andrew: Well, they're actually a band. So they're on tour right now, and they're playing Montreal tonight. So as soon as we're done recording, I'm going to go meet them and see them play so, yeah, I'm excited.
- Harp: Very cool. Now I have questions.
- Andrew: Sure.
- Harp: What is the band name?
- Andrew: The band is called Fountain.
- Harp: Fountain? Very interesting. What kind of music do they play?
- Andrew: Hmm. Kind of like a rock-and-roll band, I guess you could say. Yeah.
- Harp: OK. Cool. And where are they playing tonight?
- Andrew: They are playing at a place called the Drones Club.
- Harp: The Drones Club. I have a feeling that's a pretty small place.
- Andrew: It's a very small, kind of, underground place. But, yeah, it should be a good show, so I am pretty **stoked** to see my friends and to hear them play.
- Harp: Very cool. OK. Well let's get started with today's episode. Today we're going to do a Chatterbox episode, and that's where we chat and we talk about current events or we interview people. We just talk.
- Andrew: Mhmm. So today we are actually going to talk about a very serious topic, but one that's important to talk about, I think. And we're talking about death.
- Harp: Yes. We're going to talk about death, which is a serious topic, but it happens, so we need to have the vocabulary to be able to talk about it.
- Andrew: Right. It's a part of life.
- Harp: So what we're gonna do is we're gonna start with talking about what to do when you find out that someone has died that's close to you. And then we're going to talk about **funerals**. And we're gonna finish with talking about some of our personal experiences.
- Andrew: Mhmm. So today, why we're talking about this is that we had a listener request, actually. And this person emailed us and asked us for some explanations on what you can say when somebody **passes away**, or dies. So that's what we'll start off with today.

- Harp: Yup. So let's get started. OK. So I want to start with talking about some pretty simple, but very important vocabulary, because talking about death is quite difficult and it's awkward. It's awkward for us, so we're going to try to make it a bit easier. And for me, I think, one thing I do when I find out, let's say, a friend's father has died, I always use the expression **pass away**. I'm so sorry to hear your father **passed away**. I don't like to say *dead*. It seems very harsh to me.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. That's a good point. The verb **to pass away** means just to die, but it's much softer and it's a nicer way to express that someone has died, has **passed away**. So, yeah, I would recommend using this verb, **to pass away**, instead of *to die* when you are talking to somebody about a relative or a family member or even somebody that they know that has died.
- Harp: Yeah. Exactly. So, if it happens that someone who I know has **passed away**, I usually contact their family, or if it's a friend that I know, I will contact them to express my **condolences**.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. And what is a **condolence**, exactly? When you express your **condolences**, what are you doing?
- Harp: Well, it's basically an expression of my sympathy, because they've lost someone important in their life, so I'm just expressing my sympathy to them.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. So when somebody **passes away** and you want to reach out... Maybe your friend's mother **passed away**, for example, and you want to reach out to your friend and express your **condolences**, your sympathy, for your friend's loss that her mother has **passed away**.
- Harp: And like I said, these are just awkward conversations to have, but they're really necessary 'cause you want to show your friend that you're there if they need anything so you call to express your **condolences**.
- Andrew: All right. So what we're gonna do right now is just share some expressions that you can say to someone when someone that is close to them has **passed away**.
- Harp: The expression that I usually use is ***I'm so sorry for your loss***.
- Andrew: That's right. ***I'm so sorry for your loss***. And so you're saying that you're sorry. And when we usually use this word, it's because we've done something wrong and we're apologizing, but in this circumstance, it's a bit different, and obviously you're not the one who caused the death so you're not sorry in that way. You just have a feeling of sympathy that you want to express and this is the way that you can do it, with this expression. ***I'm sorry for your loss***.

- Harp: Yes. Exactly. Another phrase you could say is ***my condolences to you and your family.***
- Andrew: That's right. ***My condolences to you and your family.*** A third expression that you could use in this circumstance, especially if you wanted to write an email or a card to the person who is experiencing the loss, you could say ***I'm sending lots of love to you and your family.***
- Harp: Yeah. ***Sending you lots of love.*** It's just a nice thing to write to someone.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. Another way you could express this feeling is to say ***I'm wishing you strength and lots of love to get through this difficult time.***
- Harp: Yup. ***Wishing you strength and lots of love to get you through this difficult time.***
- Andrew: And a final one that is very similar is just ***I'm thinking of you during this difficult time.***
- Harp: Yup. And the last three expressions we said here were more for written, because if you find a phone conversation really awkward so you just want to write them to let them know that you're **thinking of them**. Or they're not close enough to you to call them. So you can use these written expressions.
- Andrew: Yup. Those written expressions are great to know. Like you said, Harp, if you're not that close to the person, sending an email or sending a card is a nice way to express that you're still **thinking of this person** but you don't necessarily need to talk to them to express that.
- Harp: Yeah. If I do have to make the phone call, though, I always go with just ***I'm so sorry for your loss.***
- Andrew: Yup. That's the way to go, for sure. Another thing is that sometimes when somebody has experienced a big loss or a death in the family, they're not always available to talk on the phone. They're really busy and they're with their immediate family, so sending an email is sometimes **the best way to go**.
- Harp: Yup. Exactly. OK. Well let's move on to the second topic, which is **funerals**.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. So we're just going to give a general overview of **funerals** as they happen here in Canada.

- Harp: And with that, though, we'll say that **funerals** can vary depending on family traditions. A lot of it has to do with the cultural background of the person who's **passed away**. Um... So there's no general way that **funerals** are always done in Canada, because Canada is a country full of immigrants and we all have our own traditions.
- Andrew: Absolutely. Yup. So, this is just kind of our understanding of how **funerals** go. And like you said, they can be totally different depending on the person. There's no standard format, I suppose.
- Harp: Yeah. So what usually happens is that there is **a wake**, or **a viewing**, the day before the **funeral**, where people can send flowers and people can gather together. And this usually happens in a **funeral home**.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. So a **funeral home** is a place where the **funeral** ceremony takes place. And the **wake** is, like you said, the viewing of the body. Now I think this is a little strange, to me, personally. I've never been to **a funeral** where there is **a wake** with a body present. Have you seen one like that?
- Harp: I have, and we'll save that conversation for our personal experiences with death in our third topic, but yup. Typically, there's usually **a wake** or **a viewing**, and it can be either **an open casket** or **a closed casket**, where the body is there. But sometimes you actually see the dead person and sometimes you don't.
- Andrew: Right. And I'm sure our listeners are familiar with this from watching movies, because I think... This is how I know this part of **a funeral**, because, like I said, I've never been to **an open-casket funeral**, but you see this on TV and in the movies all the time.
- Harp: Yup. That is true. And then after the **wake**, or the **viewing**, usually there is a day where there's the **funeral**. And it's held either at a **funeral home**, which is becoming more and more popular...
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Harp: Or it's held at a church or a religious...
- Andrew: Place of worship.
- Harp: Yes, exactly. That's the word I was looking for.
- Andrew: Right. It just, like you said, it really depends on the family's background. If they're religious, then the **funeral** will probably take place at a church. If they're not religious, then it's more likely to be at a **funeral home** or a lot of times, even, the family will have a ceremony right at the graveyard where the person is being buried.

- Harp: Yup. That's true. That's an option as well. And there are usually prayers or speeches, depending, again, on the family.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. Now, what type of clothes are appropriate to wear to **a funeral**?
- Harp: See, now this is an interesting question 'cause typically I would say black.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. I think that's the traditional, sort of, North American way is to wear black, but I know in your culture, it's different, I think.
- Harp: Yes. It is different. We wear white. But, again, I'm going to save that for our last topic.
- Andrew: Sure, yeah, so all the **funerals** that I've been to, I've always worn black, and most people wore black. And this just sort of expresses your sadness. We can think of black as being sort of a depressing or a sad colour, and so to show that you're sad, that you've lost this person who's important to you, you wear black to reflect that.
- Harp: Definitely. That's very traditional.
- Andrew: And so, a lot of times, people would give flowers to the family who lost the person. But like you said, now a lot of times it's more common to donate money instead of to send flowers.
- Harp: Yup. I've seen that more and more, where the family has written on the invitation *we're accepting donations in this person's name **in lieu of** flowers*. Like, please don't send us flowers.
- Andrew: Right. I think especially when the person has **passed away** from a disease that there's no cure for yet. So we could say, maybe, cancer. If the person has died from cancer, the family will often ask for donations to a cancer research charity where they're looking to find the cure.
- Harp: **Yeah, no.** That's a very good point. It's usually related to the cause of death.
- Andrew: Yup.
- Harp: OK. Well let's move on to our third section today, which is about our personal experiences with death.
- Andrew: That's right. So now we're just going to talk about the **funerals** that we've attended in the past and what we've experienced while we were there.

- Harp: Yup. For myself, thankfully, I haven't been to too many **funerals**. It's usually my friends' grandparents, the ones that I've been to. And they're tough. The first one I went to, I was 21 or 22, and I was a mess. I was crying the whole time. I had taken a box of Kleenex. It was my friends' grandmother, and it was just so, so sad and I didn't know how the **funeral** was gonna be and what to say and... They're tough.
- Andrew: Yeah. Very difficult. And where did this **funeral** take place? Was it at a church, or at a **funeral** home?
- Harp: That one was actually in a church.
- Andrew: **Mkay.**
- Harp: Yeah. I've been to a couple of others, and most of them have been in **funeral** homes, actually. The thing, from my experience, is that... I'm Indian, so we have very different traditions. And, for example, we don't wear black. We wear white. For us, uh, in the Sikh religion, we believe in wearing white as a colour of death, and that's pretty much all across India, is that they wear white. So we've carried that tradition on here. I'm noticing at some of the **funerals** I've been to recently that people are starting to adapt the black, as well, so you can wear pretty much white or black, but white is definitely the traditional colour. And we actually do cremation. We don't bury our dead. So we don't ever go to a graveyard. It happens at the **funeral** home, usually.
- Andrew: OK. Yeah. And I think, actually, this is becoming more and more common for all types of **funerals**, is to just cremate the body, which means to... really, essentially, to burn the body after the person has **passed away**, and then you can do whatever you'd like with the ashes. You could bury them. Some people keep them in their house. And there are all sorts of things that you can do.
- Harp: Yup. We spread the ashes, usually in a body of water. That's very traditional for us. And another part that we always do is we have something called *afsos*, which means, basically, **condolences**. That's what it translates to. And it's after someone has **passed away**, you go back after the **funeral** to visit the family to just express your sympathy one more time, and just be with the family and make sure that they're OK. Usually, you'd take some food or something with you.

- Andrew: **Mkay.** And I guess I'm similar to you, in that I haven't been to that many **funerals**, thankfully. So, one thing that I have noticed, or that I have experienced, though, with the **funerals** that I've been to, is that afterwards, there's always a gathering. And I don't want to call it a party, but a lot of times, it almost has, like, a party-like atmosphere. Because, um, the **funeral** itself is so sad, people are crying, and then afterwards, you have this, sort of, life celebration ceremony, where you're really just remembering the person who **passed away**, telling stories about them. There's usually lots of food and they end up actually being sometimes kind of fun, because you remember the person and you laugh and share with all the other people who are at the **funeral**. And it can kind of be fun in a weird way to go to that.
- Harp: I know exactly what you mean. And I have to be honest, I hope my **funeral** is more where they're talking about the celebrating of my life than mourning, you know? I hope that I live a life... a long life, where it's OK if I've **passed away**.
- Andrew: Yeah. I hope the same for me. And I think, um, I think that's another thing, a new trend in **funerals**, is they're trying not to focus on the negativity of the loss, but really focusing on celebrating the person's life and remembering the good times that that person had while they were here.
- Harp: Yup. Exactly. OK. So I think that about wraps it up for today. We started with talking about some phrases that you can use when talking about death.
- Andrew: That's right. And then we talked about different types of **funerals** that happen in North America. And then we talked a little bit about our own personal experiences attending **funerals**. And, so, yeah, this is a difficult topic to talk about, death. It's something that I think everybody feels a little uncomfortable talking about. But we tried our best here to share our knowledge about **funerals** with you today.
- Harp: Yes. So thanks always for listening, and make sure you check out the website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.
- Andrew: Bye bye everybody.
- Harp: Bye.

Detailed Explanation

Stoked

To be **stoked** means to be very excited or happy about something. In this episode, Andrew tells us that he is **stoked** to see his friends' band play a concert. This expression is very informal and should be avoided in professional or serious writing and conversation.

When someone is **stoked** about something, it means they are enthusiastic or excited about it. This expression was first used in the 1960s in the USA. Surfers used it to describe the exciting feeling of riding a big wave. Eventually, more and more people started to use the word **stoked**, and it is still commonly used today.

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

Joel: I can't wait to go camping this weekend. It'll be great to get out of the city for a bit.

Pauline: Yeah, me too. I'm super **stoked**.

Olga: Did you see the look on Jon's face when he heard the news that his family was coming to visit him?

Frank: He was so **stoked**! You know, he hasn't seen his family in over 5 years.

Olga: I know! It must be hard living so far away from them.

Frank: I'm sure he'll have a great time hanging out with them during their visit.

To pass away

To pass away means to die. Often, we use **to pass away** instead of *to die* because *to die* sounds too harsh and direct. To show respect for the deceased and to be polite to people who have lost someone they love, we instead use **to pass away**.

When you talk to someone who has recently had someone close to them die (like a relative or a close friend), it is best to use **to pass away**.

When you talk to someone who still feels a lot of pain over the loss of someone close to them (even if a lot of time has passed since their death), it is best to use **to pass away**.

When you talk about the death of someone who you or the person you are talking to did not know well, then it is OK to use either *to die* or **to pass away**.

When you talk about the death of someone close to you, but a lot of time has passed since their death, and talking about their death isn't an overly sad or emotional event, then it is OK to use either *to die* or **to pass away**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to pass away**:

Marco: Mr. Smith, I need to take the next week off work.

Mr. Smith: You just returned from vacation a month ago. Why do you need more time off?

Marco: Unfortunately, my mother **passed away** last night. I need to go home to attend the funeral.

Mr. Smith: I'm so sorry to hear that. Of course you can go home. Take all the time you need.

Marco: Thanks for understanding. I'll see you again in a week.

Donna: I get a little sad every June when Father's Day rolls around.

Sergi: Really? Why?

Donna: Well, even though my father **passed away** when I was young, I still miss him a lot.

Sergi: Oh, I didn't know that you had lost your dad. Well, that is an understandable reason to feel sad. Don't beat yourself up over it.

Expressions to use when someone has died

It is always difficult to know what to say when you talk to a person who has lost a loved one recently. Here are some expressions that we can use when we find ourselves in this situation:

My condolences

This expression communicates that you feel sympathy and sadness about the death of someone. It is a thoughtful expression that is mostly used in writing. However it is possible to use the expression when speaking too.

Here's an example with ***my condolences*** used when speaking:

Kiki: I just wanted to let you know that I'll be out of town for the next few days because I have to attend my grandma's funeral.

Farhi: I'm sorry to hear that. Please accept ***my condolences***.

I'm sorry for your loss

This is another common way to express empathy when you hear about the death of someone.

Here's an example with ***I'm sorry for your loss***:

Gene: Hey, Lucy. I just heard the bad news about your brother passing away. I just wanted to call to let you know that ***I'm sorry for your loss***. He was a great guy and he'll be missed.

Lucy: Thanks so much for calling Gene. That means a lot to me.

Sending you lots of love

This is another popular way to tell someone that you care about them and are thinking about them while they go through the painful process of losing a loved one. This is a written expression, and is usually used to end a letter or email.

Here's an example with ***sending you lots of love*** used in an email:

So sorry for your loss

Paul@gmail.com

So sorry for your loss

Dear Paul,

We recently heard the news about your mom. We're so sorry to hear that she has passed away. She was a wonderful woman and will be sorely missed.

Sending you lots of love,
The Culips Team

Wishing you strength

Having someone close to you pass away is a difficult experience. It is a very emotional time that can have negative consequences on your health and personal well-being. To show that we care about the physical and emotional health of someone, we can use the expression ***wishing you strength***. This is a written expression too.

Here's an example with ***wishing you strength*** used in an email:

So sorry for your loss

Tina@hotmail.com

So sorry for your loss

Dear Tina,

We just found out about your sister's passing. We're so sorry to hear that she is no longer with us. We'll miss her greatly.

Wishing you strength during this difficult time,
The Culips Team

I'm thinking of you

This expression is common in both writing and speaking. It is used to express that you care about someone while they go through the process of saying goodbye to a loved one who has recently passed away.

Here's an example with this expression:

Lena: How are you holding up, Greg?

Greg: Even though it has been two weeks since Diane passed, I'm still having a tough time dealing with her death.

Lena: Well, just know that **I'm thinking of you** a lot during this tough time.

Greg: Thanks so much Lena. I really appreciate your kindness.

The best way to go

We can use the expression **the best way to go** when we want to suggest the easiest or best method to do something. In this episode, Andrew says that sending an email to express your condolences to an acquaintance who has recently lost someone close to them is **the best way to go**. In other words, Andrew thinks that an email is the best method for sending condolences.

Although the exact origins of this expression are unclear, it is very likely that it was first used to give directions. **The best way to go** was used to mean the best route to take. Eventually, this expression worked its way into other areas of the English language and can now be used to suggest the best way to do anything.

Here are a couple more examples with **the best way to go**:

Phoebe: We have so much work to do. How are we going to finish everything today?

Brandon: We just need to get organized, make a plan, and then get started. We should be able to get everything done.

Phoebe: You're right. I think **the best way to go** is to start by writing the report, then finish the presentation, and then set up the meetings with our New York clients.

Brandon: I was thinking the same thing. Let's do this! We don't have any time to lose!

Scott: If you're thinking about buying a new TV, **the best way to go** is to get a high-definition flat-screen TV.

Wes: Why do you think that?

Scott: The picture quality is fantastic and they have really come down in price recently.

Wes: That is good information to know. Thanks for your advice!

A wake/a viewing

The terms **a wake** and **a viewing** are sometimes used interchangeably in North American English. However, depending on the context, they can also refer to two separate and distinct types of gatherings.

A **wake** is a type of gathering that happens shortly before or after a funeral, where the deceased is remembered and celebrated. During a **wake**, the family and friends of the person who passed away meet up and share stories and memories of the deceased person with each other. **Wakes** can occur at funeral homes or in the homes of family members or friends.

On the other hand, a **viewing** is an event where friends and family of the deceased go to a funeral home, church, home, or grave yard to view the dead person's body before it is buried. Before a **viewing** occurs, the funeral home prepares the body so that it can be presented. The purpose of a **viewing** is that friends and family can say one last goodbye to the deceased. It is also thought that seeing the deceased can help in the grieving process.

Here are a couple of examples with these expressions:

Brenda: I was so sad to hear about Tom's death.

Ron: Me too. He was a really great guy.

Brenda: I heard his **wake** will be held on Friday afternoon, right after the funeral.

Ron: I'll be there for sure.

Brenda: Me too.

Sally: Have you ever been to a funeral?

Kim: Just a couple. When I was a kid I went to my grandparents' funerals.

Sally: Oh really? I've never been to a funeral, luckily.

Kim: I have never been to a **viewing** though. I think the idea is super creepy and my mom agreed. She said I could skip the **viewings** and just go to the funerals, so that's what I did.

Open-casket and closed-casket funerals

A *casket* is another word for a coffin. It is the long box that a dead body is placed in before it is buried.

There are two types of funeral services: **open-casket services** and **closed-casket services**. It is up to the family or friends of the deceased who plan the funeral to decide which one is most appropriate for them.

An **open-casket funeral** is one where the casket is kept open so that the dead person's body can be seen one last time before it is buried. Some people believe that viewing the body of the deceased a final time before burial helps with the grieving process.

Before an **open-casket funeral**, the dead person's body must be prepared. The body is embalmed (processed with chemicals that prevent it from decaying) and restored to look life-like. The person who prepares the body is called a mortician or an undertaker.

Some people, due to cultural or personal values, may instead wish to have a **closed-casket funeral service**. This is a funeral where the body of the deceased is not on display and cannot be seen by the funeral attendees. Sometimes, a **closed-casket service** is the only option available if the dead body cannot be restored to a life-like condition by the mortician.

Here's an example with these expressions:

Corrine: When I die, I want to have a **closed-casket funeral service**.

Alisa: Me too. When my grandfather died, we had an **open-casket service** and I found the experience very traumatic. After that, I decided to have a **closed-casket service**.

Corrine: A similar experience made up my mind too. I made an appointment for next week to meet with my lawyer so we can update my will.

Funerals

A **funeral** is a ceremony before a dead person's body is buried or burned (this is called cremation).

Funerals are very personal, and are carried out according to the religious, cultural, or personal beliefs of the deceased. We can't say that there is one type of **funeral** ritual that occurs in Canada, because Canada is a multicultural country and each culture or family has a different **funeral** tradition that they follow. In this episode, we hear about the traditions that are familiar to Harp and Andrew.

In Western culture, it is traditional to wear black or dark clothing when attending a **funeral**. The black clothing symbolizes that you are in mourning (sad because of someone's death). In this episode, Harp tells us that it is customary in Sikh culture to wear white to **funerals**.

A **funeral** service can sometimes have as many as four different parts. The first part is the wake or visitation. As mentioned earlier, this is a ceremony where people can pay respect to the family of the dead person, and sometimes view the dead person's body to say goodbye. The wake or viewing usually occurs at a **funeral** home or the home of one of the deceased's family members.

The second stage is the **funeral** service. The **funeral** service is usually held 3 to 5 days after someone has died. The ceremony usually follows the religious customs of the person who has died. Sometimes the **funeral** occurs at a place of worship, like a church or temple. Other times they happen at **funeral** homes. During the **funeral** service, people often give speeches about the dead person. It is also common for poems to be read or music to be played. If the **funeral** is an open-casket service, then near the end of the ceremony, **funeral** guests can pass by the coffin to view the body a final time before it is buried or cremated.

The final stage of the **funeral** process is the burial ceremony. Usually, the burial happens immediately following the **funeral** service. The body of the deceased is transported from the **funeral** service to a graveyard in a special type of vehicle that can carry coffins, called a hearse. At the graveyard, a few family members and close friends might stand beside the grave while the coffin is put into the ground. Some people may choose to say a few last words to the dead person before the body is buried.

A burial service does not occur if a body is cremated (burned). Instead, the body is taken to a crematorium and burned. Sometimes the family or friends of someone who has been cremated may choose to have a special ceremony where the ashes of the deceased are spread (this might take place somewhere outdoors that the deceased really liked, like a beach or a mountain).

In lieu of

In lieu of means instead of. In this episode, Harp mentions that it is common for people to give a donation of money to a charity on behalf of the deceased **in lieu of** sending flowers to the family. This means that instead of giving flowers to the family, people often give money to a charity in memory of the deceased person.

Like many English words and expressions, this phrase is borrowed from French. However, it is pronounced differently in English. The English pronunciation of **lieu** rhymes with words like *who*, *blue*, and *you*.

So an alternative way to say *instead of* is to use the expression **in lieu of**.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Glen: My son won a bunch of money on a scratch ticket the other day.

Nikki: Really? Do you mind if I ask how much?

Glen: Well, he actually won a brand new car. But since he already has a car, he decided to take some prize money **in lieu of** the car. He ended up getting around \$10,000.

Nikki: Wow, that's great. Tell him I say congratulations!

Yeah, no.

It is becoming more and more common for English speakers to use the expression **yeah, no** in conversation. This expression is believed to originate in Australia, and is now being used throughout the English-speaking world.

It is a confusing expression and its meaning really depends on context. However, it is most commonly used to stress that you agree with someone, to show humility after receiving a compliment, or to politely refuse someone's offer, request, or suggestion.

Yeah, no is sometimes also used to help keep the flow of a conversation going, and can demonstrate that you are actively participating in a conversation.

In this episode, Harp says **yeah, no** after Andrew mentions that donations are often given to a charity that is trying to find a cure for a certain disease after someone you know passes away from that disease. So Harp uses **yeah, no** to show that she is active in the conversation and also to agree with Andrew's statement.

Yeah, no is an expression that is best learned through examples. So here are a few more examples for you to check out:

To show humility:

Mike: Congratulations on winning last week's company golf tournament. You're a great golfer.

Laura: Wow! **Yeah, no**, thanks! I appreciate that. I really just got lucky out there though. I'm usually not that good.

To be polite while disagreeing with someone:

Sarita: You should buy the blue shirt. I think it looks great on you.

Jim: **Yeah, no**, I think I like the red one more.

To agree with someone:

Matt: The reason our economy isn't performing better is because the government isn't doing enough to stimulate job creation.

Eva: **Yeah, no**, you're totally right. If the government created more jobs, everyone would be better off.

Mkay

Mkay is an alternative way to say OK. It means the same thing, and is used to show that you agree with a statement someone else has made or that you are actively listening to something that someone is saying.

Mkay is a blend of *mmhmm* and *OK*. These two expressions are both said when you agree with someone. **Mkay** is also easier to articulate or say than *OK*, and because of this, speakers tend to use it in everyday conversation.

Because this is a very casual expression, it should be avoided in writing. However, it is often used in formal situations (like an academic debate, for example) because it is a common way to show that you are actively listening to someone else and agree with what that person is saying.

In this episode, Andrew uses **mkay** twice. The first time, he uses it to signal that he is actively listening to Harp, and the second time he uses it to agree with a statement that Harp has just made.

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

Stephanie: We're going running together tomorrow, right? How about we meet at 10am?

Tyler: **Mkay**. Sounds good.

Sunny: Could you give me directions to your place?

Bob: Sure. It's really easy to find. Drive down highway 99 and take exit 14.

Sunny: **Mkay**.

Bob: Then take a left turn at the second set of stop lights.

Sunny: **Mkay**.

Bob: Then turn right on Oak Street. Our address is 2145 Oak Street.

Sunny: Awesome. That sounds easy. I'll see you tomorrow!

Sikh funeral traditions

In this episode, Harp tells us that her family's background is Indian, and that they carry out funerals according to the Sikh religion. Here is some information about what Sikh funerals are like.

Public displays of emotion (like crying or wailing) are usually discouraged at Sikh funerals, and are kept to a minimum.

People of the Sikh faith who pass away are cremated. The deceased are not memorialized with gravestones because the religion views the body as only a shell, and the soul as the genuine spirit of a person. Once death occurs, the spirit travels on its journey to God.

A cremation ceremony is held at a Sikh place of worship, which is called a gurdwara. Hymns are sung, scripture is read, and speeches are given during this ceremony.

After the ceremony, the ashes of the deceased are spread in a body of water.

Quiz

1. What do we call someone who works at a funeral home and prepares dead bodies for open-casket funerals?

- a) a maintainer
- b) a mutant
- c) a mechanic
- d) a mortician

2. If you are very excited about something, you are _____.

Fill in the blank.

- a) stoked
- b) stroked
- c) stacked
- d) sacked

3. The expression *in lieu of* is borrowed from which language?

- a) Dutch
- b) French
- c) Spanish
- d) Portuguese

4. Which of the following expressions is NOT commonly used to express your sympathy to someone after someone close to them has passed away?

- a) I'm sorry for your loss.
- b) I'm sending lots of love.
- c) I'm thinking of you on this special day.
- d) I'm keeping you in my thoughts.

5. The expression *the best way to go* originates from which activity?

- a) giving condolences
- b) giving instructions
- c) giving directions
- d) giving a helping hand

6. All of the following expressions mean to die, but only one is polite. Which is the polite one?

- a) to croak
 - b) to bite the dust
 - c) to kick the bucket
 - d) to pass away
7. **What is the name of the event where people gather at a relative's house to pay their respect to the family of the deceased and to socialize with other mourners?**
- a) a wake
 - b) a burial
 - c) a funeral
 - d) a baptism
8. ***Yeah, no* can mean many different things, depending on the context. Which of the following purposes is it NEVER used for?**
- a) to show humility
 - b) to start an email
 - c) to show polite disagreement
 - d) to agree with someone
9. **True or false? There is one type of funeral tradition that is practiced by all Canadians.**
- a) true
 - b) false

Answers:

1.d 2.a 3.b 4.c 5.c 6.d 7.a 8.b 9.b