

Catch Word #75 – A taste of your own medicine

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone, this is Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: And we're here at Culips, bringing you another fun, free ESL podcast.

Maura: And don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, where you can find the Lipservice for this episode by becoming a member. And in the Lipservice, you have a transcript of this episode, a more detailed explanation of some of the vocabulary and expressions we talk about, and a quiz.

Harp: Yeah, and on the website, you can find lots of old episodes, where we always focus on natural, everyday English.

Maura: Yeah, we've been around for a while now, so we've got a good **bank** of episodes **built up**.

Harp: Lots of interesting stuff for you to listen to.

Maura: Now, today's Culips podcast is the Catch Word episode, where we look at one expression and we give you lots of examples and synonyms and different ways to use it.

Harp: What's our expression for today?

Maura: Today's expression is a bit **dark**.

Harp: Ooh.

Maura: Today's expression is **to have a taste of your own medicine**. It's a long one.

Harp: It is: **a taste of your own medicine**.

Maura: Mhmm. So, this expression is kind of a revenge expression, that one person is treating other people badly, so you treat this person badly so they can understand what it feels like.

Harp: Exactly. So if someone is treating you badly, you treat them badly, **to give them a taste of their medicine**.

- Maura: Right, to give them their own taste of what it's like to be treated badly. And it's a funny expression, because we talk about medicine, but we should remember that most medicine tastes bad.
- Harp: Most of it tastes disgusting.
- Maura: People don't like medicine.
- Harp: Nope.
- Maura: So, by **giving someone a taste of their own medicine**, it's something unpleasant that they won't like.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: Some kind of bad experience, but medicine also helps you.
- Harp: Good point.
- Maura: Makes you feel better, and in the same way, if you taste your own medicine, you don't like the taste, but it could be a good experience to have, because then you understand how other people are feeling.
- Harp: Yeah, so if you **give someone a taste of their own medicine**, maybe they won't treat other people badly.
- Maura: Exactly. It's maybe a way to learn to be a better person.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: Although, like I said, to treat someone rudely or not very nicely in any case is not a nice thing to do.
- Harp: No.
- Maura: But this expression you can hear in movies, TV shows, a lot: **to give someone a taste of their own medicine**.
- Harp: For sure, I think **soap operas** use it a lot.
- Maura: Mmhmm. So, what are some situations when people might want to **give another person a taste of their own medicine**?
- Harp: Yeah. So, for example, my friend Sally, when she was young she kept being

pushed around by this older kid, and then her brother decided **to give this kid a taste of his own medicine**. So the brother went and **pushed around** the **bully**.

Maura: I bet that solved the problem.

Harp: Yup, the **bully** did not **push around** Sally anymore.

Maura: But that's true that a lot of kids might use this expression.

Harp: Yup.

Maura: Another example that I can think of is a person who doesn't listen very well and interrupts all the time. It can be very frustrating if you're trying to have a conversation with someone like that. So maybe you decide to **give them a taste of their own medicine** and the next time you're talking to them, you don't listen and you interrupt them, to kind of show them what it feels like.

Harp: Yeah and hopefully then, the next time you talk they'll listen to you and they won't interrupt as much.

Maura: Yeah, so it is important to learn from the experience. Now there are a couple of other expressions that you might use when you're thinking about **giving someone a taste of their own medicine**.

Harp: Yeah, the first one is ***we'll see how you like it***.

Maura: **We'll see how you like it**. And again, you'll hear this in television and movies. I think they like this idea; they play a lot with getting revenge on other people in the show or the movie.

Harp: Yes.

Maura: And yeah, so they might say, ***we'll see how you like it***, or ***we'll see how she likes it***, right before they switch around that behaviour and start being rude or unkind to another person.

Harp: Yeah, right before they start **giving the person a taste of their medicine**, they could say, ***we'll see how she likes it***.

Maura: Mhmm. Good. And there's another expression, again that people would use when they're going to **give someone a taste of their own medicine**. And what's that expression?

Harp: ***Two can play at that game***.

- Maura: I like that you change your voice to be a little bit evil, because these expressions are a little bit evil and nasty.
- Harp: I'm glad you liked it.
- Maura: Right. So the expression was **two can play at that game**. So that means that one person was being not nice and then when you also decide to be not nice, that makes two people so you say, **two can play at that game**.
- Harp: Yeah, let's give an example for this.
- Maura: OK. Hey Jane.
- Harp: Hi.
- Maura: Did you hear that Sue was spreading rumours about you?
- Harp: No!
- Maura: Yeah, she said that your hair colour isn't natural.
- Harp: Well, **two can play at that game**. I'm gonna **give her a taste of her own medicine** and spread some rumours about her.
- Maura: So, in that example, Sue was spreading rumours, and so Jane decided to spread rumours about her in retaliation.
- Harp: Yes, because **two can play at that game**.
- Maura: Mmhmm. Great. Now let's look at another similar expression to **to giving someone a taste of their own medicine**. And that expression is a short expression.
- Harp: Yes, it's **tit for tat**.
- Maura: Yes, **tit for tat**. Really, what this means is that if you treat one person in a certain way, then that person will treat you the same way back.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: Which again, can also be a negative thing, in a negative way.
- Harp: Mmhmm. For sure.

- Maura: So, for example, when I lived with roommates when I was in university, sometimes my roommates were so messy and unclean, it kind of drove me crazy. But what I decided to do was **tit for tat**, and if they were messy, then I was messy too and I didn't clean up. You know, it's not always the best solution.
- Harp: No, because then you live in a really messy place.
- Maura: Right, but it's the way that some people react to a situation like that. And what's another similar expression?
- Harp: Another similar expression is **an eye for an eye**.
- Maura: Yes, **an eye for an eye**. This expression is actually from the Bible; that's where this expression comes from. And the real meaning is that if one person really takes out or destroys the eye of another person, then that person has the right to do the same thing.
- Harp: That's a bit gross.
- Maura: I know, it is, but actually, the full expression goes on longer, but we can say **an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth**.
- Harp: It's interesting, because **the death penalty** is related to this expression. People are given **the death penalty** when they've killed someone, so **an eye for an eye**, a death penalty for killing someone.
- Maura: Right. So really, our whole judicial system is based on this idea. if you commit a really serious crime, you have a longer **sentence**; you spend a longer time in prison. But if you commit a small crime, then your **sentence** is shorter.
- Harp: And like you mentioned before, these expressions are seen in a negative way, especially this one, I would say, **an eye for an eye**, because if you look at it in the violent way, it could get very big and **out of proportion**. So Gandhi, who believed in the non-violent approach to change, he said, "**an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind**."
- Maura: Which is a really smart way to turn that expression around, because if everybody is treating people badly, then that's just going to create a horrible place to be.
- Harp: Exactly. Yeah, so when he says "**an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind**" he's basically saying that if you're concerned with vengeance and if someone does something violent to you, and you have to react in a violent

way, it's gonna make the whole world a bad place.

Maura: Right. Yeah, so I think that was a really smart way of changing that expression around. So I'm glad we could find a way to give this episode a happy ending. And it's also important to note that in a lot of the movies and television shows where this expression is used it's often just in fun.

Harp: Yes, so it's not super serious.

Maura: Right, and it's probably better to follow Gandhi's advice.

Harp: Yes.

Maura: OK great. So remember, what were our expressions today?

Harp: ***A taste of your own medicine.***

Maura: Mmhmm. And in those situations, you might use the expressions ***we'll see how you like it*** or...

Harp: ***Two can play at that game.***

Maura: And a couple of other expressions that are similar to ***a taste of your own medicine*** are ***tit for tat*** and ***an eye for an eye***.

Harp: Exactly. Remember to go to the website, Culips.com.

Maura: And check out all the interesting resources we have there for free.

Harp: Exactly.

Maura: We'll see you later. This has been Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

Maura: Bye!

Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

A bank

A bank is most commonly known as a place to keep your money, but **a bank** can be any place where you keep a lot of something, or it can be the collection of things itself. There is also a verb, **to bank**, which is often used to talk about putting away money, but can also be used to talk about putting things away until the time comes when you need them.

In this episode, Maura says that Culips now has **a bank** of episodes. Culips has many episodes from the past few years, and so there is a collection on our website that people can listen to.

Here are a couple of examples using **bank**, not talking about money:

Ariane: Are you taking a vacation this year?

Sherry: Yes, I have **a bank** of vacation days from last year too so I'm going to use those up and take an extra vacation.

Andy: How do you play this game?

Bruce: Well, the players start with **a bank** of points before the game even begins.

To build up

When we say the something **builds up** it means that it accumulates over time. Something that increases or gets stronger as time passes is said to **build up**. You often **build up** a bank of something, as you continue to put something away to create the bank. Music can also be **built up**, as the music gets louder and more intense we can say it **builds up**. You can also build up a person, making them feel good about themselves.

Here are a couple of examples with **to build up**:

Dean: Have you noticed a difference since you've been working out?

Lauren: Yeah, I have started to **build up** some muscle.

Sarah: I'm working on **building up** a supply of snacks for our trip.

Ken: Good to start early.

Dark

Dark is an adjective that describes something that is not light, like a **dark** colour or a **dark** space. In this episode, the word **dark** was not used like that. **Dark** can also be used to talk about something negative or evil. So, because today's episode is dealing with revenge and bad behaviour, we call it a **dark** episode. We could also say that a movie is **dark** or a song is **dark**. We can even say that a person is **dark** who is negative or evil. Saying that

someone or something is **dark** is a less direct way of saying that it is evil, gloomy, or sinister.

Here are a couple of examples:

Stan: How was the movie last night?

Bill: It was really **dark**, but it was good.

Doug: I just find that Walter is kind of a **dark** guy.

Leanna: I know. He is often depressed and he speaks so negatively.

A taste of your own medicine

To have a taste of your own medicine or to get a taste of your own medicine or to give someone a taste of their own medicine is for one person to treat another person badly, because they were treated badly by that person. For example, Jon's friend Cindy never calls him back, so Jon decides that he will also not return Cindy's phone calls. Jon does the same "bad" behaviour that Cindy does in order for her to understand that not phoning someone back is rude. We can say that **Jon is giving Cindy a taste of her own medicine**.

Like we say in this episode, a way to help remember this expression is to think about how most medicine does not taste good, but that it can be good for you. So when someone **gives you a taste of your own medicine**, it may not feel good, but you might learn to behave better in the future.

Here is one more example with this expression:

Greg: Bob is always making such a mess in the office kitchen.

Karen: I know. Let's **give him a taste of this own medicine** and make his desk all messy.

Greg: OK! I wonder if he'll think it's funny.

A taste

The taste of something is its flavour, but just **a taste** of a meal means just one bite and not the whole meal. To have **a taste** of something means to have a little bit of it, and it doesn't just have to be food. You can have **a taste** of just about anything, but it can only be a small amount.

Here are a couple of examples with **a taste** when we're not talking about food:

Oliver: You've got to hear this new band I love. Here's **a taste**.

Mandy: Oh yeah. That sounds good.

Becky: So, what is the play about?

Charles: If you go to our website and watch the video, you can get **a taste**.

A soap opera

A soap opera is a kind of television show. **A soap opera** is a very dramatic show with many different characters. In these shows there are many different characters who have dramatic lives. **Soap operas** have a lot of love affairs, divorces, deaths, murders, births, and other exciting elements of life.

The reason characters on soap operas would **give someone a taste of their own medicine** is because these characters are often taking revenge on others. One character does something very evil to another and that person does something just as evil, or even more evil in return.

There are many kinds of **soap operas** that play today. They usually play Monday to Friday for one hour during the afternoons. The reason for this is that the target audience was traditionally female housewives. And the name **soap opera** comes from the advertisers who would publicize during the show. Because the show was targeted to housewives, the commercials were often about soap, dish soap, or laundry soap.

To be pushed around

To push someone around can have the literal meaning that one person pushes another person. It can also mean that one person is mean to another person and tells them what to do, treating them badly.

In Harp's example, she talks about a young friend **being pushed around**. In this case, Harp probably means it literally and also that the older kid was being mean.

Here is another example using **to be pushed around** not literally:

Ted: The new guy at work is really bossy. He's always **pushing me around**.

Jason: Well you can't let him do it. You've got to stand up to him.

Bully

After Harp speaks about the kid who was pushing around her friend, she calls the kid **a bully**. **A bully** is someone who pushes around and is mean to another person or people, often repetitively.

This word has been talked about a lot recently because in schools around North America **bullying** is a problem. **A bully** can cause serious problems for someone who is being **bullied** every day. **To bully** is also a verb.

Bullies are most often talked about among kids and teenagers, but adult **bullies** can also exist.

We'll see how you like it

When one person wants to **give someone a taste of their own medicine**, they might say, ***we'll see how you like it***. It implies that the person saying it didn't like the behaviour, and that they don't think the other person would like it either.

When this expression is used, there is an emphasis or stress on the person who will not like it. For example, ***we will see how you like it***, or ***we'll see how she likes it***.

Here is an example with this expression:

Orlando: I'm so tired of Elise's complaining all the time.

Vince: Me too. Let's complain to her tomorrow and ***we'll see how she likes it***.

Two can play at that game

This expression is used when one person is treating another person just as they were treated by them. This expression can be used just like **a taste of your own medicine**. The person who says ***two can play at that game*** is the person to return the rude behaviour.

Here is another example with ***two can play at that game***:

Regan: Travis is always so rude to me.

Paula: Well, you should just be rude back.

Regan: You're right. ***Two can play at that game!***

Tit for tat

Tit for tat means that exchanges between people should be equal. So this means that if one person is rude to a second person, the second person can be rude to the first person. Equal exchanges between people are fine if everyone is treating each other kindly, but ***tit for tat*** can be vengeful like the other expressions when people are not acting kindly.

Here is an example with ***tit for tat***:

Carol: It's going to be ***tit for tat***.

Serena: That's right. Show him how careless he's been.

An eye for an eye

This expression is also a proverb that was originally in the Bible. ***An eye for an eye*** means that a person should experience the same pain they have caused another person. It is used in the same way as ***tit for tat***, and the other expressions in this episode.

The full expression is ***an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth***. The meaning does not change, but is stressed even more by including the second part.

There is a movie called *An Eye for an Eye* in which one person takes revenge on another person throughout the entire film.

A prison sentence

When most people think about **sentences**, they think about grammar! But **a sentence** can also be the amount of time that you will spend in prison. If a person commits a crime and is going to jail, they will get a sentence.

An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind

The expression ***an eye for an eye*** was extended by Mahatma Ghandi to be ***an eye for an eye to makes the whole world blind***. What he means to say is that treating people badly who have treated you badly is not a good way to live. The best way is to be kind to people, even people who have been unkind to you.

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this Lipservice)

1. What word can also be used to describe something evil?

- a) light
- b) dark
- c) grey
- d) sunny

2. To give someone a taste of their own _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) drink
- b) cooking
- c) joy
- d) medicine

3. What kind of shows are soap operas?

- a) comedies
- b) dramas
- c) thrillers
- d) documentaries

4. What is a bully?

- a) someone who pushes other people around
- b) someone who gets pushed around
- c) someone who like to be silly
- d) someone who gives people a taste of their own medicine

5. In the expression *we'll see how you like it*, which word is stressed?

- a) like
- b) it
- c) how
- d) you

6. Two can _____ at that game.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) run
- b) play
- c) talk
- d) laugh

7. What is the amount of time that a person goes to prison called?

- a) a gerund
- b) a sentence
- c) a participle
- d) a verb

8. Who said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind"?

- a) Jesus Christ
- b) Britney Spears
- c) George Bush
- d) Mahatma Ghandi

Answers: 1.b 2.d 3.b 4.a 5.d 6.b 7.b 8.d