

Catch Word #85 – Written all over your face

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: Here bringing you a Culips ESL Podcast.

Maura: Where we teach you different expressions and slang that we use in English very often, almost every day.

Harp: Yes, make sure you check out our website, that's Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because on the website, you can find all our older episodes.

Maura: Yes, and if you become a member, you have access to the transcript, more detailed explanations of the expressions we used, and a quiz.

Harp: And today we're bringing you a Catch Word episode.

Maura: This is where we look at related expressions, we tell you what they mean, and we give you different examples of how and when you can use them.

Harp: Exactly. And Maura, what are we looking at today?

Maura: Well today, we're going to look at expressions related to trying to figure out what someone is feeling or thinking when they don't tell you.

Harp: OK, so English expressions related to how someone's feeling without them saying it.

Maura: Yeah. Because, you know, sometimes people don't tell you how they're feeling but you have an idea of how they're feeling based on how they look or some other kind of non-verbal information.

Harp: Exactly. Should we start with the first expression?

Maura: Yes, the first expression is ***it's written all over your face***.

Harp: ***It's written all over your face.***

- Maura: Right. So you can say that you know something about someone because **it's written all over their face**. So, you know something about how someone is feeling because of their face, because of the expression on their face.
- Harp: So the expression **it's written all over your face** is used when you can guess what someone is feeling or what they're thinking just based on their facial expression.
- Maura: Right. So this person hasn't told you how they're feeling, but because of the expression on their face, you know if they're happy or sad or if they're having a bad day. You know something about what's going on inside of them. And, like we said, you could use this for a whole bunch of different emotions. It could be positive or negative.
- Harp: Exactly. If someone's happy, sad, angry, anything it could be used for.
- Maura: Yeah. So, let's give a dialogue example.
- Harp: Hi Sally. How are you?
- Maura: I'm OK.
- Harp: Are you sure you're OK?
- Maura: Yeah, yeah, I'm fine.
- Harp: You seem really stressed out.
- Maura: Well, yeah, I am a bit busy at work and at home. I'm a bit stressed. How did you know?
- Harp: Well, **it's written all over your face**.
- Maura: Yeah, I haven't been sleeping too well either.
- Harp: Oh no. You should get some rest.
- Maura: Yeah, I've got to take it easy.
- Harp: So in that expression, I knew that you were stressed even though you said you were OK.
- Maura: Right. Because you saw it in my face. You saw it in my facial expression that I looked stressed, that I looked worried or tired, and not happy.
- Harp: Yes.

- Maura: Now, can you think of another situation when you might know how someone's feeling because **it's written all over their face**?
- Harp: Yes. You know, I was thinking about this expression yesterday, because my nephew is in town and he's staying with me. And I told him he shouldn't eat cookies before we had dinner. But then I saw that there was a cookie missing off the plate.
- Maura: So, did you ask him about it?
- Harp: I did. I asked him. I said, "Did you take the cookie?" He said, "No, I didn't take the cookie." I said, "**It's written all over your face**. I know you took the cookie. You look very guilty." He said, "I'm sorry. It looked so good."
- Maura: Yup, for sure. So sometimes, **it's written all over someone's face** when they're guilty. So, like we said, again, it can be for anything. It could be stress, it could be guilt, you could be very happy about something, but you can **tell**, because of the person's face, how they're feeling.
- Harp: Yes. OK, let's go to our next expression.
- Maura: So our next expression is **to wear your heart on your sleeve**.
- Harp: Yes, **to wear your heart on your sleeve**.
- Maura: These expressions today are long, so I'm going to say it again. **To wear your heart on your sleeve**.
- Harp: Yes, and if someone **wears their heart on their sleeve**, it means that they show their emotions, easily and openly.
- Maura: Yeah, so if you **wear your heart on your sleeve**, it's like you put your emotions and feelings on the outside of you for everyone to see, and you're a sensitive person who is affected by what goes on around you.
- Harp: Yes, exactly. And again, like the first expression, this expression, **to wear your heart on your sleeve**, can be about happy emotions, sad emotions, angry, guilty...
- Maura: Right. And this expression is used when you're talking about what someone might be feeling on the inside and knowing what that person feels without them telling you. So, if someone **wears their heart on their sleeve**, it's easy to **tell** how they're feeling, all the time. They're just a certain kind of person who shares how they feel easily, whether it's through what they say, or their

facial expressions, or their general mood.

Harp: Exactly. Maura, did you know that the first written copy of this expression was in **Shakespeare's** Othello?

Maura: That is a long time ago.

Harp: I know.

Maura: Because **Shakespeare** is, I think, probably the most celebrated English author ever. In school, you study **Shakespeare at one point**.

Harp: Exactly, so **to wear your heart on your sleeve** is an old expression.

Maura: Yeah, that's interesting that he first used it to mean that someone is very emotional and shows their feelings very openly.

Harp: Yes. Should we do a dialogue example?

Maura: Let's do it. So, do you know how John's meeting with the boss went?

Harp: Not very well.

Maura: Oh no. Did he get really angry and upset like he always does?

Harp: Yup. The boss said no and he was very angry.

Maura: That guy always **wears his heart on his sleeve**. He gets upset so easily.

Harp: I know. He needs to learn how to not show his emotions so easily.

Maura: Definitely. So, in that example, we were talking about John, who is a sensitive guy and always shows how he's feeling. So we said that he often, or always, **wears his heart on his sleeve**.

Harp: Yes. Maura, do you think that you **wear your heart on your sleeve**?

Maura: You know, Harp, as I was preparing for this episode, I have to admit that I did start to recognize myself. I do **wear my heart on my sleeve** a lot.

Harp: Me too, yeah. I think it's easy for people to **tell** when I'm happy or sad or upset.

Maura: Yeah. Often, if people say, "Hey, how's it going?" I tell them if I'm not feeling good, or I smile more when I'm really happy.

- Harp: Yup. I don't think it's a bad thing.
- Maura: No, I don't think so either. It means that we're friendly and communicative.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: OK, now, the first expression was ***it's written all over your face***, when we can **tell** how the person's feeling. The next expression was ***to wear your heart on your sleeve***, when you're always showing your emotions.
- Harp: Now our last expression is actually the opposite of these expressions.
- Maura: Right, when you're maybe trying to figure out how someone feels, but you have no idea.
- Harp: Yes, this last expression is **poker face**.
- Maura: Yes, **poker face**, which is also a famous song by **Lady Gaga**.
- Harp: It is. What does this expression mean, Maura?
- Maura: Well, it means that you have no expression on your face. You're not really happy or sad and no one can **tell** how you're actually feeling about something.
- Harp: Exactly. So if you have a **poker face**, that means that people don't know if you're happy, sad, upset, angry.
- Maura: Right. And the name comes from the game of poker, because when you play cards, you don't want people to know if you have a good **hand of cards**. You don't want to show that you're excited that you have a really good **hand of cards**, you don't want to show that you're depressed, so you have to keep your face completely neutral, so no one knows how you're feeling.
- Harp: Exactly, and this is why I'm really bad at poker, because I have no **poker face**, and if I get a good card, people can **tell**.
- Maura: That's really funny. I've actually never seriously played poker, so I don't know if I would be able to hide my feelings very well.
- Harp: Oh, I mean in any game. If I get a good card for any sort of game, people know. I can't hide it.
- Maura: You're right. Your face does kind of **light up** when you get excited about something.
- Harp: Yes, so I have no **poker face**.
- Maura: OK, should we use this expression in an example too?
- Harp: Sure. Hey, do you know how things are going with Jill and the new

boyfriend?

Maura: Yeah, I think they're going pretty good. She seems really happy with him.

Harp: Oh yeah? How do you know that?

Maura: Oh, she told me. Yeah.

Harp: Oh, she normally has such a **poker face**, so I can never **tell**.

Maura: Yeah, I know, she doesn't really show when she's excited about a new guy. The only reason I know is because I asked her, **point blank**. And, yeah, she told me that she's happy.

Harp: Oh, that's good. I'm happy for her.

Maura: So, our last expression, **poker face**, is different from the first two, because if someone has a **poker face**, you don't know how they feel. And that **drives me crazy** a little bit sometimes.

Harp: I know. I agree. It's so difficult when you can't **tell** how someone feels.

Maura: Yeah. And considering we admitted we're people who **wear our hearts on our sleeves**, we can find it frustrating when we don't know how someone feels.

Harp: Yes, definitely.

Maura: So, that's it for us today, we hope you enjoyed this episode, and don't forget to go to our website, where you can listen to all our past episodes, you can become a member, or you can donate to help support us.

Harp: Yes, for sure. Check out the website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: We'll talk to you later. Bye!

Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

To be written all over your face

If something is **written all over your face**, it means that the way you are feeling can be seen in your face. When we are feeling sad or happy, it is often expressed in our faces. The emotions are not literally written, but the expression is used to mean that the person's feelings are very obvious. They are so obvious and clear that it's as if you're reading them. And **all over** means that your whole face is expressing how you feel, that every part of your face is revealing your feelings.

There are so many feelings or emotions that can be **written all over a person's face**. Some common emotions that can be seen on someone's face are included in the following list:

- Sadness/happiness
- Excitement
- Nervousness
- Guilt/innocence
- Anger
- Being in love

To wear your heart on your sleeve

This is another expression that can be used when talking about a person's feelings. When someone **wears their heart on their sleeve**, it means that the person shows their emotions openly. They are a sensitive person who is affected by others' actions.

The heart, in many ways, is a symbol of love and emotion, and the sleeve is the long part of a shirt that covers the arms. **To wear your heart on your sleeve**, then, is to expose and reveal your feelings openly to everyone. It's as if you wear your heart on the outside of your body, unprotected.

You could use this expression to describe a person in a specific situation or you could also use it to describe someone in general. Harp and Maura say that they are generally people who **wear their hearts on their sleeves**.

Here's another example with this expression:

Gina: Hilda is really upset. Her new boyfriend broke up with her.

Olivia: Oh, that's too bad. They weren't together long, but I had a feeling she was going to get hurt. She always **wears her heart on her sleeve**.

Gina: I know! She has to learn to protect herself.

Shakespeare

William Shakespeare is probably the most respected writer in the English language. He is especially known for his plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*. He also wrote over a hundred sonnets.

There is also much debate about him, including whether he is actually the person who wrote all the work attributed to him.

At one point

This expression, **at one point**, means *at one time* or *at a certain moment*. In this episode, Maura says that **at one point**, many students study Shakespeare in school.

Here is another example with **at one point**:

Jasper: **At one point**, I will buy a house, but now I don't have the money, and I'm not ready for a big responsibility like that.

Chris: I hear what you're saying.

Poker face

A **poker face** is a neutral face with no emotion shown. This expression comes from the actual game of poker. When you play poker, you don't want the other players to know whether you have good or bad cards, so you need to keep a face that doesn't show any emotion.

Now, this expression can be used at any time, not just when you're playing a game.

Here is another example with this expression:

Victoria: How did he take the news?

Owen: I think he was upset, but he had his **poker face** on. It's always hard to tell with him.

Close synonyms to **poker face** are *blank face* and *straight face*.

Lady Gaga

Lade Gaga helped to popularize the expression *poker face*, and to make it known even by people who don't speak English. In her song *Poker Face*, she compares love to a game of poker. She then sings that the guy she likes won't be able to tell how she feels about him because she has a **poker face**, so shows no emotion.

A hand of cards

There are many uses for the word **hand** other than the two parts of the body attached to your arms. When playing a card game, the set of cards that each player is given to play with is also called a **hand**. This might be because the players hold the cards in their hands. You can say **hand of cards**, or simply **hand**.

Here is an example of **hand** meaning **hand of cards**:

Lois: Let's deal again. I don't have a good **hand**.

Oscar: OK, fine. But this time we play no matter what your **hand** looks like.

To tell (to know for certain)

There are so many ways to use the verb **to tell**. One way that it is used in this episode is to mean *to know with certainty* or *to be sure*, in addition to the other most common ways to use it. **To tell** is used to mean *to know with certainty* a few times in this episode.

Maura and Harp talk about **telling** how a person feels because of the expression on their face. Sometimes it's used in a positive way, and sometimes it's used in a negative way, like, you can't **tell** how someone feels. Maura and Harp use **to tell** about eight times in this episode to mean *to know with certainty*.

Here are a couple of examples with **to tell** meaning *to be sure*:

Nathan: Could you **tell** he was going to like the food you made?

Hank: Yeah, I just had a feeling he was a vegetarian.

Brenda: I can **tell** he likes you!

Isabel: How do you know?

Brenda: I just know this kind of thing.

To light up

To light up is to illuminate something. In this case, we are talking about people. Whenever people are described as light or bright, it's always positive. When someone is said to **light up**, it means that they get happy or excited about something, and this happiness or excitement can be seen in their face.

In this episode, Maura says that Harp's face **lights up** when she gets excited about something. This means that her face shows how excited she is about something.

Here are a couple more examples with **to light up**:

Greg: Jonathon really **lights up** whenever he sees his daughter.

Eduardo: Yes, you can tell that he really loves her.

To light up is different from *to lighten up*. *To lighten up* means not to be so serious.

Point blank

If you ask someone a question that is very direct, we can say you asked **point blank**.
When you tell someone news very honestly, it can be said that you told them **point blank**.

This expression is usually used when the question or news is difficult in some way. Instead of trying to talk about the difficult topic in an indirect way, you say it in a completely honest way.

In this episode, Maura says in an example dialogue that she asked Jill about her boyfriend **point blank**. Maura directly asked Jill if she was happy with her new boyfriend. She did not ask a more indirect question like, "How's it going with your new boyfriend?" to see if she could find out some information.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Tom: How's the situation with your roommate going? Any better?

Sean: Nope. I told him **point blank** that I need to move out or get a new roommate, because living with him is not working for me.

Alex: Just ask me whatever you want to ask me.

Cynthia: OK, I'm just going to ask you **point blank**. Would you like to go on a date with me?

To drive someone crazy

This is an expression that comes up every now and then at Culips, not because so many things **drive us crazy**, but because it is such a popular expression. If something or someone **drives you crazy**, it means that it makes you feel frustrated or irritated.

In this episode, Harp and Maura agree that not knowing how people feel can sometimes **drive you crazy**. This might be especially true when you don't know how the person feels about you.

Here is an example with this expression:

Yasmina: My colleague at work **drives me crazy** sometimes. He is lazy with his writing, so I always have to edit the work he does when we work on a project together.

Ralph: Yeah, that is annoying.

Quiz

1. What is the first expression looked at in this episode?

- a) It's said.
- b) It's said all over your face.
- c) It's written all over your face.
- d) It's written all over you.

2. To wear your heart on your _____.

Please fill in the blank to make the expression that means to show how you feel and not hide your feelings.

- a) shirt
- b) sleeve
- c) back
- d) shoulder

3. According to Maura, who is the most respected and well known English author?

- a) Kurt Vonnegut
- b) William Wordsworth
- c) Mark Twain
- d) William Shakespeare

4. What expression is used to describe the face of a person whose feelings you cannot determine?

- a) Poker face
- b) To wear your heart on your sleeve
- c) To light up
- d) Lady Gaga

5. Katherine: I couldn't tell how they felt about the work I did.

Which is definitely true for Katherine?

- a) She thought they liked her work.
- b) She thought they didn't like her work.
- c) She wasn't sure if they liked her work or not.
- d) She doesn't care if they liked her work.

**6. Jared: You look so happy. Your face seems _____
whenever you talk about your new boyfriend.
Shannon: I guess I can't hide it.**

Please fill in the blank.

- a) to lighten up
- b) to spark
- c) to spark up
- d) to light up

7. If you ask someone a question point blank, what does that mean?

- a) You ask the person a simple question.
- b) You ask the person in a very direct way.
- c) You ask the person in a very indirect way.
- d) You ask the person by using their name.

8. Joan drove Bob crazy.

What does this mean?

- a) Joan loved Bob.
- b) Joan annoyed and frustrated Bob.
- c) Bob annoyed and frustrated Joan.
- d) Joan drove Bob to work every day.

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