

## Catch Word #38 – To push someone's buttons

### Transcript

- Robin: Hello, everyone, and welcome back to our Catch Word podcast at Culips.com.
- Harp: That's C-u-l-i-p-s.com.
- Robin: And if you haven't listened to this before—to these episodes—what we do is take one word and we break down related expressions.
- Harp: Exactly. And if you want more resources, go to the website and check out the Lipservice. In the Lipservice, you can find the Detailed Explanations, a complete word-by-word transcript, and also a quiz.
- Robin: And today, the first expression that we're going to look at is **to push someone's buttons**.
- Harp: Exactly. This is a good one: **to push some buttons** or **to push someone's buttons**.
- Robin: **To push some buttons** or **to push someone's buttons**, absolutely. So, **to push someone's buttons** means **to annoy somebody continuously—over and over and over again**.
- Harp: Yeah, it's not that they're just doing one thing that's going **to annoy** someone. It's that they do it **over and over, again and again**.
- Robin: Consistently.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Robin: And can you give me an example, Harp, of a situation in which we might use this expression?
- Harp: Yeah, I think it's better to explain it with a situation. So, the example that **comes to my mind** is a mother shopping with her children, maybe at a grocery store, and the child keeps saying, "Mom, can I have some candy? Mom, can I have some chocolate?" And the mother says "No, you are eating when we get home. You don't need this." And the child keeps asking, "Mom, can I have this, Mom can I have this." He's **pushing her buttons**. So then

finally, she would say, “Stop **pushing my buttons**, I’ve said no, I don’t want to say this again.”

Robin: So, basically, from that example, **to push someone’s buttons** or **to push buttons**, means you **irritate** them, you **bother** them.

Harp: Yeah, exactly. You **annoy** them, you **pester** them.

Robin: You **pester** them, you **bother** them, you **annoy** them. And oftentimes, after you **push someone’s buttons**, they get upset.

Harp: Exactly.

Robin: They get upset. And there’s another expression that we use when we get very upset, when someone has **pushed our buttons** and we can’t tolerate it any longer. What is that expression?

Harp: This expression is **to have enough** or **to have had enough**.

Robin: Absolutely. **To have had enough**. “I’ve **had enough**, I can’t take it any longer. I’m mad and you’ve **pushed my buttons**.”

Harp: Exactly. So, the mother could say to the child, “I’ve **had enough**. I don’t want to hear this anymore. Stop asking me.”

Robin: “I’ve **had enough of** you. I’ve **had enough of** your complaining.”

Harp: Exactly.

Robin: And oftentimes, when we get upset, there’s different levels of getting upset. You can get **mildly** upset, where you’re just **slightly** bothered, slightly irritated.

Harp: But you can still **remain calm**.

Robin: You can still **remain calm**.

Harp: You’re still in control.

Robin: But our last expression—this is our third expression—that is, **to freak out**, when you **freak out** you’ve **had enough**, but you can’t stay in control.

Harp: Exactly. It’s like you lose control.

- Robin: You lose control.
- Harp: You get very angry and maybe you talk really loud. You just—you're not in control of your emotions anymore.
- Robin: Absolutely. So, **to freak out**, our third expression for the Catch Word episode, it means that you cannot control yourself and you get very angry because you've **had enough**.
- Harp: So, going back to the situation with the mom and the child. When she said she's **had enough**, if she's very upset, maybe she'll **freak out** and she'll start yelling at the child and say: "Stop it! Stop asking me!" She gets very loud, you know?
- Robin: She starts screaming. Maybe she takes the candy and she throws it. It's something like that.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Robin: I think that's about it. Can we **recap** the expressions for today?
- Harp: So, the first expression was **to push someone's buttons**.
- Robin: **To push someone's buttons.**
- Harp: Exactly. The second one was **to have enough of something**.
- Robin: **To have enough of something.**
- Harp: Exactly. And that last one was **to freak out**.
- Robin: **To freak out. To go crazy.**
- Harp: Are you **freaking out**?
- Robin: I'm not **freaking out**.
- Harp: OK, good.
- Robin: Well, I think that **about does it** for this week's episode.
- Harp: I agree. So, that's about it. Check out the website, Culips.com.
- Robin: And, once again, thank you for joining us. This has been Robin ...

Harp: And Harp.

Robin: And we're signing off.

Harp: Bye, everyone.

## Detailed Explanation

### To push someone's buttons / to push some buttons

*To push someone's buttons* means that you do something that is annoying to another person and it results in an emotional reaction from them, normally anger. This can be done intentionally or unintentionally. The person may be trying to get a reaction from the other person.



In the example we give about the child asking for candy, the child repeated annoying behaviour because he wanted candy. The result was that the mother got angry. This is not the result the child was hoping for. He was hoping for candy.

In other cases, the person who is pushing someone's buttons may be trying to make the person angry. For example, an employee who doesn't like his boss may do things that he knows will annoy this boss. In this way, he is intentionally pushing his buttons.

Here are some more examples of situations where one person pushed another person's buttons.

- A liberal person could continually challenge a conservative person with liberal ideas that the conservative person gets angry in trying to argue his point.
- In a relationship, one partner could talk about a subject that upsets the other partner. Therefore, the first partner pushes the other partner's buttons.

Here's another example:

Jill:                Whenever my mother-in-law comes to visit, she always pushes my buttons.  
                         She is always telling me what I am doing wrong!

We can also say to press buttons or to press someone's buttons.

### Annoy, bother, pester and irritate

Annoy, bother, pester and irritate are all synonyms. They all can mean to upset someone in a negative way. When someone's buttons have been pushed, they are annoyed, bothered, pestered and irritated.

Here are some more examples:

Billy:              Sometimes my mom doesn't let me have cookies before supper. But I just keep pestering her until she lets me have some.

- Jonah: I know it irritates her when I talk about my past. Sometimes I need to talk about it though.
- Sylvie: I don't want to annoy you, but I have to ask you again if you have finished the report. We really need it.
- Diana: Please don't bother me right now. I am busy working on an important project.

### Over and over / again and again

We use the expressions *over and over* and *again and again* to emphasize repetition. We can simply say *to do something over* or *to do something again* and this means to repeat the action more than once. We repeat the words for extra stress on the repetition. We can even say *over again* together.

Here are examples using these expressions:

- Paula: When I was practicing for my concert, I sang my song over and over right until the show started.
- Jon: He kept asking me again and again to go to the movies with him, so I finally said yes.
- Oscar: My teacher told me that I didn't do the assignment right, so I had to do it over again!

### Comes to mind

Harp says, "The example that comes to mind is..." *To come to mind* generally means that an idea or memory enters into your mind in one moment. So in one moment, Harp has the idea for the example of the child asking his mother for candy.

Here is an example with thinking of an idea:

- Patrick: How can we solve this problem with the system?
- Anita: The only thing that comes to mind is getting a new system.



Here is an example with thinking of a memory:

- Justine: Who was at the party last night that I know?
- Ben: The only people that come to mind are Sarah and Melanie.

To have enough / to have had enough

After someone has pushed another person's buttons, in some cases they cannot tolerate the behaviour anymore. *To have enough* or *to have had enough* means that you can no longer accept the behaviour or you can't take it. *Can't take it* is a synonym for *to have enough*.

When someone has had enough, they may say, "I have had enough" or they may yell, get upset, walk away from the situation, or a variety of other things to stop the behaviour that they do not like.

*To have enough* is used to talk about something generally true. This expression is in the simple present tense so it follows the same rules of that verb tense.

Katie:            Every time she has enough, she just walks away!

*To have had enough* is the present perfect tense, which we can use to talk about something that started in the past and continues up until the present moment. So if you started bothering me five minutes ago, then your bothering me started in the past and continued until now (present perfect). Then I say, "I have had enough of your behaviour."

So, to say *have had enough* is more common. Here are a couple more examples:

Charlotte:      Why don't you try to talk to him again?

Donna:          I have had enough. I can't take it anymore.

Jamie:           I have had enough of your excuses.

Percy:           Sorry, I will do better next time.

In the examples above with Jamie and Percy, Jamie says, "I have had enough of..." We can say *to have had enough of* when we are specific about what we cannot tolerate.

Mildly/slightly

*Mildly* and *slightly* are synonyms that mean *to a small degree* or *a little bit*. For example, "She was mildly upset" can be replaced with "She was a little bit upset." *Mildly* and *slightly* are adjectives, but they come from the words *mild* and *slight*.

Here are some examples:

Helen:           I was sick over the weekend and today I am finally feeling slightly better.

Bob:            So does that mean you are only mildly contagious?

Gene: How was the party?  
Liz: I was slightly uncomfortable because I didn't know anyone.

### Remain clam

People often give this advice in the case of a crisis: Remain calm. If you read the instructions for what to do in the case of a fire or emergency, it often tells you to remain calm. In this case, Robin and Harp use it to talk about staying calm when someone is pushing your buttons.

### Freak out

First, someone pushes your buttons and then you have enough of it. Next you might freak out because it is so annoying or upsetting.

*To freak out* can actually be positive or negative. Someone may freak out when they win concert tickets to their favourite band. In this case, they are freaking out because they are happy.

In this episode, when we talk about *freak out* it is not positive. *Freak out* in this case is a synonym with *lose control* or *get upset*. Something makes you have an extreme emotional reaction that is visible to anyone close to you. If you freak out, you may yell or scream or cry and, in a very extreme case, become violent.

Here are a couple examples with *freak out*, positive and negative:

Samatha: She completely freaked out when he called her.  
(There is no context so it could be positive or negative.)

Samatha: She completely freaked out when he called her.  
Carmen: Wow! She must have been so happy to hear from him.

Samatha: She completely freaked out when he called her.  
Carmen: She must be mad that he won't stop calling her.

### Recap

At the end of this episode, Robin asks about a recap. *Recap* is actually short for *recapitulation*, but most people just say *recap*. A *recap* or *to recap* is *to review* or *talk about a summary*.

At the end of all our episodes, we review the expressions that we talk about. That is our recap.



That about does it

This expression symbolizes the end of something. People say *that about does it* to say that something is finishing or that the end is near. Robin says *that about does it* because it is the end of this episode.

Here are a couple examples:

Tour guide: That about does it. We hope you had a great time!

Boss: That about does it for today. Let's complete any more work tomorrow.

Maura: That about does it for this Detailed Explanation!

**Quiz** (see the answers at the end of this Lipservice)

1. ***To push someone's \_\_\_\_\_ is the expression that means to do something annoying that results in an emotional response.***

**Please fill in the blank.**

- a) bellybuttons
- b) buttons
- c) keys
- d) knobs

2. ***Annoyed, bothered and pestered are all synonyms for each other. What is the fourth word with the same meaning?***

- a) anointed
- b) bored
- c) irrigated
- d) irritated

3. **Edwin:        We have to keep practicing \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Please fill in the blank.**

- a) again and again.
- b) under and under.
- c) repeat and repeat.
- d) close and close.

4. ***What is the expression that means to think of an idea or to remember something?***

- a) to come to brain
- b) to go to head
- c) to come to mind
- d) to go to mind

5. Shaun: I \_\_\_\_\_ your arguing. Please stop!

Please fill in the blank.

- a) have had enough of
- b) have enough of
- c) have had enough
- d) enough of

6. Announcement: There has been an emergency. Please \_\_\_\_\_.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) maintain calm
- b) remain calm
- c) be still
- d) move quickly

7. Myron: She freaked out because she never expected a gift.  
Brad: Yeah, she couldn't stop smiling.

Was *freaked out* used in a negative or positive sense?

- a) negative
- b) positive
- c) we don't know

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