

Real Talk #063 – How to talk about being unemployed (ad free)

Episode description

In this Real Talk episode, Andrew and Kassy help you learn how to talk about being unemployed in an optimistic way. They teach you how to discuss your job status in a way that's both positive and professional. You'll learn how to handle conversations about finding a new job or changing career with their helpful explanations!

Fun fact

Many successful entrepreneurs have experienced unemployment before their big break. For example, after leaving Apple, Steve Jobs was unemployed for a period of time before founding NeXT and eventually returning to Apple.

Expressions included in the study guide

- I'm in between jobs at the moment
- I'm taking some time to reassess my career goals
- I'm keeping my options open
- I'm currently on the job market
- At a career crossroads
- I'm viewing this as a period of professional growth



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: Real Talk episode 63, "How to talk about being unemployed." Featuring Andrew and Kassy. You're listening to Real Talk, the Culips series where we teach you the English that you need to know to deal with real, everyday situations. My name is Andrew, and I am joined by my cohost Kassy. Hey there, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey, Andrew, and hey, listeners. We're excited to bring you another episode today that will help your English sound more natural.

Andrew: Yeah, and Kassy, today's topic is particularly useful. It's very useful because we are going to learn how to talk about being unemployed, which is a situation that most people don't like to be in, right? And it can be sometimes a stressful situation or depressing situation, but we're gonna focus on how to talk about it in a positive and natural way in this episode. So, I think this will be a very helpful lesson.

Kassy: Yeah, I agree. A few years ago, when I used to teach adult classes, I had quite a few students who really focused on learning English while they were in this jobless, unemployed period of their life because they had extra time to study. So, it's a perfect topic for us to practice today.

Andrew: And I know sometimes it can actually be a little bit embarrassing, right? Like if you're at a party or something and somebody asks you, "Oh, what do you do?" And you don't have a job, you are unemployed at the moment. Well, sometimes, you know, it can be embarrassing in that situation. So, we're gonna focus on how to talk about it so that it's not embarrassing, so that you can do it in a positive way, and you don't have to worry about that social situation. I know, at least in my life, I've had that time where I'm like, "Oh,

I hope somebody doesn't ask me what I do because I don't actually have a job right now." So yeah, we're going to approach it from that angle. And I do think this will be a great lesson. So, Kassy, what we're going to do here in this episode is we're going to listen to a couple of conversation examples, where one of the characters in the examples doesn't have a job, and we're going to hear how that character talks about that situation. And then after we listen to the example, we're going to break the conversations down and explain the key expressions and help all of the listeners, help all of you guys understand how to use these expressions in these kinds of real-life situations.

Kassy: Exactly, and these expressions that you learn today, you can use when talking with friends, family, or even potential employers. And it'll really help you to explain your employment status in a positive and engaging way, rather than, like Andrew said earlier, a cause for embarrassment.

Andrew: And with that being said, Kassy, let's get started with our first example conversation for this lesson. Let's take a listen now.

Friend 1: Hey, long time no see. How's work going at Times Incorporated?

Friend 2: You know what? I'm actually **in between jobs at the moment**. I left that company a few weeks ago.

Friend 1: Oh, I see. How are you feeling about that?

Friend 2: You know, pretty good, actually. I'm **taking some time to reassess my career goals** and to learn some new skills.

Friend 1: You know, that sounds really positive. Are you looking for something in the same field or something different?

Friend 2: I'm keeping my options open. I'm excited to see what opportunities might come up next.

Friend 1: Well, if I hear of anything, I'll definitely let you know.

Andrew: Well, thanks, I really appreciate that. OK, so Kassy, we just heard a conversation between two friends, and it looks like they kind of ran into each other on the street or something. Like maybe they hadn't seen each other for a while and so they were catching up. And one of the friends asks, how's your job going? How's work going at that company? Times Incorporated, I think was the name of the company. And he said, you know what? Actually, I don't work there anymore. And then they talked about why he doesn't work there anymore and what his plan for the future is. So, let's break down some of the key expressions that we heard in that conversation. And the first one we heard was, **"I'm in between jobs at the moment."** I'm in between jobs at the moment. Kassy, what does that mean?

Kassy: This is a really common and natural way to say that you are unemployed without actually saying you are unemployed. It literally means like, you know, you had your previous job, and you have your new job that you might not be quite sure what it is yet, but you are not at either of those. You are currently in between those two jobs.

Andrew: Right. So, by saying that you are in between jobs, you're just communicating that this is a temporary situation. You've left one job and you're on your way to finding another.

Kassy: Yeah, and it's a much more positive way than just saying, "Oh, I'm unemployed." Because by saying you're in between jobs, it means you're one, actively looking and two, optimistic about finding another one.

Andrew: Yeah, and so we add "at the moment" because that just emphasizes that this is a temporary state, right? That you're only going to be unemployed for a little while and that in the near future, you hope to gain another job. So yeah, I actually really like this expression and it's one that I've used in the past as well. **I'm in between jobs at the moment**, rather than just saying I'm unemployed, right? Sometimes that can have more of a negative meaning to it and people will maybe pity you a little bit or they'll feel sad for you if you hear them say that. But if somebody says, **"I'm in between jobs at the moment."** It's more like they're optimistic about their future, they're actively searching for more work. And yeah, it's more likely that the person that hears that will cheer you on. And maybe even like in that example conversation, we heard like, "OI, I'll let you know if I hear of anything" right? If I hear of an opportunity, I'll let you know. And maybe you can even find a connection for new work that way, who knows? I mean, it's case by case, but it could happen. That's just like the slight nuance to me, the feeling.

Kassy: Do you agree with that as well, Kassy? Yeah, I agree. And there's also several other ways that you can say that you are in between jobs without directly saying you are unemployed that we also heard in this conversation. For example, another expression we heard was, **"I'm taking some time to reassess my career goals"** or "I'm taking some time off" is a common phrase you will hear. I really like this phrase because it implies that it was your choice that you were unemployed, even if it wasn't your choice, even if you were let go or fired. By saying that you are actively taking some time off work, it means that you were not satisfied in your previous job, and you actively are choosing to not work so that you can find a place that you like better, or it fits your career goals better.

Andrew: Yeah, I think this is just a nice way to show that you're using your time productively, even when you're not employees. And like Kassy, you said some of your previous students were doing this, right? They were unemployed, but they were taking that time to improve their English skills during that period. And I think that also is nice when you have a job interview, like sometimes if you see some periods of unemployment on your

resume, an employer will ask you like, "What were you doing for this one year when you weren't working?" And you could say, well, you know, I was studying English, or I was taking this course, or I was doing this, I was doing that, I was working on upgrading my skills. And I think that goes a long way in a job interview as well. If you're just like, "I was doing nothing, I was playing video games."

Kassy: "I was really depressed."

Andrew: Yeah, "I was really depressed." Doesn't really show too much growth or movement in your life. So yeah, that's a nice expression to use as well. Kassy, were there any other ones that you heard in that conversation that stood out to you?

Kassy: I think the last good one that I heard was, "**I'm keeping my options open.**" And this phrase suggests that you have a flexibility in what you're looking for and an openness for new opportunities. This person was working at Times Incorporated, but they're saying that they don't have to work at a company that was exactly like Times Incorporated. They are open to new opportunities.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. So, I like that one as well. **I'm keeping my options open.** You can use that for talking about jobs, but really any kind of opportunity as well, right? When you're flexible to any kind of different opportunity that may come into your life, then you could say, "Yeah, **I'm keeping my options open.**" Just meaning that you are openminded to any new opportunity that may come your way. So yeah, I really like that one as well. OK, Kassy, I think we're ready to listen to another example conversation where we'll hear two characters talk about a similar situation, being unemployed, and we'll focus in on how they discuss that topic. So, let's listen to that example conversation now.

Alex: Hey there, nice to meet you. My name's Alex. What brings you to this networking event?

Jordan: Hey Alex, nice to meet you. I'm Jordan. I'm here to expand my professional network. How about you?

Alex: Oh, me too. **I'm currently on the job market** and I thought this would be a great opportunity to make some connections.

Jordan: Yeah, absolutely. What field are you in?

Alex: Well, I've been in marketing for the past five years, but kind of **at a career crossroads** right now.

Jordan: Hmm, interesting. Are you looking to stay in marketing or are you looking to branch out?

Alex: Well, I'm open to new directions and this career break has given me a chance to reevaluate what I want to do.

Jordan: That's a great attitude. Sometimes a fresh start can lead to really exciting new opportunities.

Alex: Yeah, exactly. So, **I'm viewing this time as a period of professional growth** and I'm excited to see where it leads.

Kassy: All right, in this example conversation, we heard some great ways to talk about being unemployed when going to a networking event, but not to make that seem like a negative thing, but to make it seem like a positive thing, you know? Even though you're not currently employed, you're **at a career crossroads**. That's one phrase we heard in this conversation, and you are ready to look for some new and exciting opportunities.

Andrew: Yeah, I like that, "**A career crossroads.**" Kassy, what does that mean? What is a crossroads?

Kassy: A crossroads is literally like an intersection in a road where you could go one way or another or possibly even a third way. And you have to decide which path you're gonna take and your fate might be changed depending on which path you take.

Andrew: Yeah, it's like an intersection, right? Where you have one road that is going in a northsouth direction, and then you have another road that is going in an eastwest direction and those roads cross. And maybe there is a stoplight, or a stop sign at that intersection. And yeah, you can choose. Are you gonna go left? Are you gonna go right? Are you gonna go straight ahead? Are you gonna do a U-turn? If you're in Korea, you can do a U-turn and turn back around. So that just means you're at a moment with your career where you don't know exactly where you're going to go to next, right? You don't know what your next job will be. You don't know where you're going to go in the future. It's just communicating that, "**I'm at a career crossroads.**" Another expression that we heard in that example that I liked is, "**I'm currently on the job market.**" **I'm currently on the job market.** Again, you would only use this expression if A, you are unemployed, or B, you are dissatisfied with your current job and we're looking to leave and find a new job, right? So really, it's an expression that you can use when you're unemployed. But again, instead of saying, "I'm unemployed," and focusing on the negative, you're putting it in a positive light and you're saying, "I'm currently looking for a job. **I'm on the job market,**" means that you're actively seeking new employment.

Kassy: Yeah, you could also use this phrase even if you're currently at a job that you don't like and you could be going to networking events and saying, "You know, **I'm currently on the job market.** I am not satisfied with my current position and I'm looking for an upgrade."

Andrew: Yeah, exactly. The final expression that stood out to me, Kassy, was this phrase, **"I'm viewing this as a period of professional growth."** And again, that's just a way to positively talk about being unemployed, right? You're saying, "OK, I don't have a job right now, but I'm using this time to upgrade my skills, to make new connections." Because the character that we heard in the example was at a professional networking event and so he was meeting new people, trying to make some new professional connections and he's thinking of this period of unemployment in a positive way, not a negative way.

Kassy: Exactly. Yeah, all of these phrases that we learned today, such as, **"I'm in between jobs at the moment,"** or, **"This is my period of professional growth,"** or, **"I'm at a career crossroads** right now," they are all really great and optimistic ways of talking about being unemployed without actually saying it.

Andrew: Exactly. So, Kassy, I think we're almost at the end of today's episode, but before we finish, let's summarize what we've covered.

Kassy: Great idea. Today we learned how to talk about being unemployed in a positive and natural way.

Andrew: Yeah, so that's right. Our first key expression was, **"I'm in between jobs at the moment,"** which is a great way to describe unemployment without using that word, "unemployment."

Kassy: We also learned several other phrases like, **"I'm on the job market,"** or, **"I'm at a career crossroads** "and **I'm taking time to reassess my career goals."**

Andrew: And finally, we talked about the phrase, **"I'm viewing this as a period of professional growth,"** which just is an expression that you can use when you'd wanna

talk about positively using your time off when you're in between jobs to work on yourself, to improve your skills, or maybe to make new connections and meet new people who could help you find a job in the future.

Kassy: Exactly. All of these expressions that we learned today help to frame unemployment as a temporary situation and as an opportunity for growth and possibly finding a new direction or career path.

Andrew: Yeah, I think in this kind of situation, it's really easy to feel depressed and pessimistic, but as much as you can, try to stay positive and focus on the future when you are discussing your employment status, and that will go a long way. Well, Kassy, that's gonna bring us to the end of today's episode. So, thank you everyone for listening. We hope that you found this lesson useful. So, guys, we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode coming up soon, but until then, please take care. Bye bye.

Kassy: See ya.

Andrew: That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye.

Detailed Explanations

I'm in between jobs at the moment Phrase

In the first example conversation, Friend 1 asks, "How's work going?" In response to that, Friend 2 says, "**I'm actually in between jobs at the moment.** I left that company a few weeks ago" to explain that he does not currently have a job.

The phrase "**I'm in between jobs at the moment**" is a way to say that you don't have a job right now, but you are looking for one or waiting to start a new one. It's a nice way to talk about not having a job without using the word "unemployed," which can sometimes sound negative.

Andrew and Kassy explain that the phrase "**I'm in between jobs at the moment**" is a friendly and positive way to say that you do not currently have a job. Kassy explains that this phrase means you are between your last job and your next job, which you might not have found yet. Andrew adds that saying "**I'm in between jobs**" is better than just saying "I'm unemployed" because it sounds more optimistic. It shows that you are actively looking for a new job and are hopeful about finding one soon.

For instance, if someone asks you what you are doing for work, and you don't have a job at the moment, you might say, "**I'm in between jobs at the moment.**" By using "at the moment," you emphasize that this situation is temporary and that you expect to find a new job soon. This makes the phrase sound more positive and can help others feel more supportive and encouraging toward your job search.

Here are a couple more examples with **I'm in between jobs at the moment**:

Christian: Hey, it's been a while! How's everything going with you? How's work?

Maggie: Hey! It's good to see you. Well, **I'm in between jobs right now.** I left my last position a few weeks ago and have been taking it easy while looking for something new.

Christian: Oh, I see! I hope you find something that's a great fit for you soon.

Stephanie: You're here at the gym during the day? Did you switch your work schedule?

Leo: Not quite. **I'm in between jobs at the moment.** I've got some extra time now, so I'm trying to stay active and healthy while I job hunt.

I'm taking some time to reassess my career goals

Phrase

In the first example conversation, Friend 2 says, "**I'm taking some time to reassess my career goals** and to learn some new skills." This phrase is a thoughtful way to explain why he's not working right now. Instead of just saying that he's unemployed, Friend 2 is showing he's actively working on his future.

Andrew and Kassy explain that "**taking some time to reassess my career goals**" means that you are using your time away from work to reflect on what you want to achieve in your career. It suggests that you are not just waiting for a new job but are actively thinking about and planning for what you want in your next role. This makes it clear that you are making good use of your time off.

For instance, if you're at a job interview and the interviewer asks about your current employment status, and you're not working but want to show that you're making the most of your time, you might say, "**I'm taking some time to reassess my career goals.**" This response shows that you're not just unemployed, but actively considering what you want to achieve in your career and preparing yourself for the next opportunity.

Similar phrases include "I'm taking some time off to reflect" or "I'm evaluating my career path." These expressions also show that you are not currently employed but are using your time to make important decisions about your career.

Here are a couple more examples with **I'm taking some time to reassess my career goals**:

Volunteer Coordinator: It's great to see you here. What's your current work situation?

Volunteer: **I'm taking some time to reassess my career goals.** I recently left my job and am using this time to explore different opportunities and gain experience through volunteering.

Volunteer Coordinator: Very good. How do you think this will help with your career?

Volunteer: It's helping me learn new skills and make useful connections.

Lauren: I heard you left your job recently. What are you up to now?

Kevin: **I'm taking some time to reassess my career goals.** Just figuring out what I really want to do next.

I'm keeping my options open

Phrase

In the first example conversation, Friend 2 says, "**I'm keeping my options open**" when asked if he's looking for a job in the same field or something different.

Andrew and Kassy explain that this phrase shows you are flexible and ready to consider many options. Andrew says that you can use "**I'm keeping my options open**" not just for jobs but for other chances or possibilities in life too. Kassy adds that this phrase means you are excited to see what new opportunities might come up and are not limiting yourself to only one choice. It's a positive way to show you are open to many possibilities and not stuck on just one idea.

When you hear someone say, "**I'm keeping my options open**," it means they are not focusing on one specific thing but interested in exploring various options. You can use this phrase when you want to show that you are open to different possibilities when talking about a job, a new project, or any other opportunity.

For example, if you're planning a vacation, saying "**I'm keeping my options open**" means you are considering different places to visit rather than choosing just one destination. You might be thinking about going to the beach or exploring a city, and you're still looking at different choices before making your final decision.

Other ways to say this include "I'm open to different possibilities," "I'm flexible," or "I'm exploring different opportunities." All these phrases show that you are open to different choices.

Here are a couple more examples with **I'm keeping my options open**:

Cole: So, you're going to college next year! Have you picked a major yet?

Ava: Not yet. **I'm keeping my options open**. I'm interested in both psychology and business, so I'm taking some classes in each to see which one I like better.

Cole: Good idea! You want to make sure you're choosing something you enjoy.

Max: So, have you decided which car you're going to buy?

Lexie: Not yet. **I'm keeping my options open** and checking out a few different models to see which one I like best.

I'm currently on the job market

Phrase

In the second example conversation, Alex says, "**I'm currently on the job market**" when talking about his reasons for attending a networking event. This means Alex is actively looking for a new job.

When you say you are "**on the job market**," you are telling people that you are open to finding a new position and that you are interested in exploring new opportunities. It does not matter if you are currently employed or not; it simply means you are looking for something new.

For instance, if someone asks why you are updating your resume, you might respond, "**I'm currently on the job market** and trying to improve my chances of finding a new position." This shows that you are looking for a new job and explains why you are updating your resume.

Another example could be if you are at a career fair, you might introduce yourself by saying, "Hi, **I'm currently on the job market** and looking for positions in marketing." This tells the people you meet that you are seeking new job opportunities and are interested in discussing potential roles.

A similar way to express the same idea is to say, "I'm job hunting right now." You can use this phrase to let others know you are actively searching for a new job. For example, if you are talking to a career counselor, you might say, "I'm job hunting and would like some advice on how to find opportunities in my field."

Here are a couple more examples with **I'm currently on the job market**:

Vince: How's work going? Are you still at your old company?

Mary: Actually, I'm not. **I'm currently on the job market** and exploring new options.

Vince: That sounds like a big change. What kind of job are you looking for?

Mary: I'm interested in positions that offer more growth and new challenges.

Gus: So, Diana, what do you do for a living?

Diana: **I'm currently on the job market**, so I'm exploring new career options.

At a career crossroads

Phrase

In the second example conversation, Alex mentions, “I’ve been in marketing for the past five years, but I’m kind of **at a career crossroads** right now.” This means Alex is facing a decision about his career path and is uncertain about the next steps to take.

When someone says they are “**at a career crossroads**,” it means they are considering different career options or are unsure about the direction their career should go. For instance, if you’ve been working in a specific job for several years and are unsure whether to continue in that field or switch to a new one, you might say, “**I’m at a career crossroads** and not sure if I should stay in my current job or explore new opportunities.” This shows that you are evaluating your career options and planning your future.

Another way to use this phrase is when discussing your future plans with a mentor or a career counsellor. You could say, “I feel like I’m **at a career crossroads** and could use some advice on which direction to take.” You could say this to communicate that you are seeking guidance as you decide on your next career move.

A similar way to express the same idea is by saying, “I’m considering a career change.” You can use this phrase when talking about being unsure about your career path. For example, if someone asks why you’re thinking about taking a new course, you might respond, “I’m considering a career change and want to learn new skills.”

Here are a couple more examples with **at a career crossroads**:

Cecily: What did you think of the conference?

Nick: It was inspiring! **I’m kind of at a career crossroads**, and hearing about different journeys has given me a lot to think about.

Bookstore assistant: Can I help you? Are you looking for books on a particular subject?

Customer: Well... **I’m at a career crossroads right now** and I’m looking for books on career development and self-improvement.

Bookstore assistant: We have a great section on changing careers, personal growth, and building new skills. It’s just over here, to your left.

Customer: Thanks so much for your help! I appreciate it.

I'm viewing this as a period of professional growth Phrase

In the second example conversation, Alex says, “**I’m viewing this time as a period of professional growth** and I’m excited to see where it leads.” This means Alex sees his current situation as an opportunity to learn and develop his career, rather than just a break or a challenge.

When someone says they are “**viewing this as a period of professional growth**,” they are recognizing that a particular time in their career is valuable for learning new skills, gaining experience, and improving their professional abilities.

Andrew explains that the phrase “**I’m viewing this as a period of professional growth**” is useful when you want to talk about using your time off positively when you’re in between jobs. It means you’re focusing on improving yourself, growing your skills, or making new connections that could help you find a job in the future. This perspective helps turn a challenging time into an opportunity for personal and professional development.

For instance, if you are taking a break from work to explore new career options, you might say, “**I’m viewing this time off as a period of professional growth** because I am learning new skills and gaining new insights.” This means that you are making the most of the time to advance your career.

Another way to use this phrase is when you are changing jobs. You could say, “Even though this career change feels challenging, **I’m viewing it as a period of professional growth** and am looking forward to what I’ll learn.” This shows that you are focused on the positive aspects of your career change.

Here are a couple more examples with **I'm viewing this as a period of professional growth**:

Mark: How’s job hunting going?

Julie: It’s been a challenge, but **I’m viewing this as a period of professional growth**. I’ve been attending workshops and networking events to prepare myself for the next opportunity.

Karen: I see you’re not currently working. How are you spending this time?

Rob: **I’m viewing this as a period of professional growth**, so I’m reflecting on my career goals and learning new skills to improve my chances in the job market.

Quiz

1. What does “I’m in between jobs at the moment” mean?

- a) I’m working at two different jobs at the same time.
- b) I’m currently unemployed and looking for a new job.
- c) I’m on vacation from my job.
- d) I’m trying to decide between two job offers.

2. Which of the following phrases means that you’re reviewing your career plans?

- a) I’m taking some time to reassess my career goals.
- b) I’m keeping my options open.
- c) I’m job hunting right now.
- d) I’m currently on the job market.

3. Which of the following shows someone who is “keeping their options open”?

- a) Rachel is getting ready to start her new job next week.
- b) Paul is going to the gym every day to train for a marathon.
- c) Laura is planning a surprise party and has already chosen the date and location.
- d) Emma is applying to multiple universities and hasn’t chosen one yet.

4. Anna has just finished her studies and is looking for her first job. Which of the following describes her situation best?

- a) She’s at a career crossroads.
- b) She’s in between jobs at the moment.
- c) She’s currently on the job market.
- d) She’s taking some time off.

5. True or false? If you’re at a career crossroads, it means you’re considering a career change.

- a) True.
- b) False.

Comprehension Quiz

6. Why is it useful to learn how to talk about being unemployed, according to Andrew?
7. According to Andrew, what is a benefit of describing your situation as “**in between jobs**”?
8. In the second example conversation, what is Alex's reason for attending the networking event?
9. How does saying “**I’m viewing this as a period of professional growth**” affect how people see unemployment?
10. What is the main message that Kassy and Andrew want listeners to take away from the episode?

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been **in between jobs**? How did you describe your situation to others, and what strategies did you use to stay positive?
2. What are some ways you can use a period of unemployment to **reassess your career goals**? Can you think of specific actions or activities that might help?
3. In what ways can being **at a career crossroads** be a positive experience? Can you share a personal story or an example where a career change led to something beneficial?
4. What are some common reactions or misconceptions people might have about being unemployed? How can you address these in a positive way?
5. Have you ever used networking events to find new job opportunities? What strategies or approaches did you use to make the most of these events?

Quiz Answers

- 1.b 2.a 3.d 4.c 5.a
6. It helps you avoid embarrassment and discuss your situation positively.
7. It implies a temporary situation with a positive outlook.
8. To make new connections while being on the job market.
9. It shows the person is using the time to improve their skills and career.
10. To view unemployment as an opportunity for personal and professional development.

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