

Simplified Speech #104 – Are you afraid of the dentist?

Episode description

Everyone has to visit the dentist sometime. And everyone can agree that it's a bit scary! In this episode, Andrew and Kassy share their dental stories and why they're afraid of the dentist.

Fun fact

In the United States alone, more than 3 million miles of dental floss are purchased each year. Yet only 30% of Americans report actually flossing each day!

Expressions included in the study guide

- Every man for themselves
- In the back of [one's] mind
- Religiously
- Torture
- Go for it
- In good hands



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: Hello, everyone. My name is Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Andrew: Hello there, everyone. Welcome back to Culips. This episode is a Simplified Speech episode. Simplified Speech is the series that features clear, natural, and easy to understand conversations that we design to help you boost your English listening skills and increase your knowledge of essential English vocabulary, and, of course, help you to become a better English speaker. And today I'm joined by Kassy, my cohost. Hey there, Kassy

Kassy: Hey, Andrew, how's it going?

Andrew: It's going pretty well. But today's topic is not one that I'm in love with, to be honest with you. How do you feel about our topic today, Kassy?

Kassy: Yeah, I'm not a big fan either. What is our topic today, Andrew?

Andrew: Well, our episode title is Are you afraid of the dentist? And that's what we are going to talk about: visiting the dentist and getting your teeth checked out. And the reason why we are talking about this topic is because we received a message from one of our Brazilian listeners, who is a dentist. Her name is Dr. Alexandra Schreen. And Alexandra wrote. "Hello, Andrew. I'm a huge fan of Culips. These podcasts are simply the best. I'm Brazilian and I like to practice my English with you, 'cause I used to travel abroad three times every year." I guess probably before COVID. "So it's pretty important for me to communicate with foreign people. I'm a dentist, and you guys come with me in my car, sitting by my side every day while I'm driving to my dental office." Cool. So, Kassy, did you know that we are in a Brazilian car right now?

Kassy: That is pretty cool.

Andrew: That is pretty cool. I wish I was there in reality. But, anyway. Alexandra goes on to write, "I'd like to suggest a topic for Culips, which is fear of the dentist. And thank you for everything." So thank you for suggesting this topic, Alexandra. It is a good one. And I'm sorry that Kassy and I have a negative outlook on going to the dentist, but it's true.

Kassy: I think she expects it.

Andrew: Yes, perhaps, perhaps. So we'll get into this topic in just a moment here, everyone. But before we do, I want to let you know that there is a study guide available for this episode for all Culips members. And we recommend studying along with the guide while you listen to us here today. And in the guide, you'll find a transcript, detailed definitions and examples of some of the key vocabulary that you'll hear Kassy and I use. There's a quiz, there's lots of good stuff in the study guide. So to download it, just visit Culips.com.

Andrew: And if you're not a Culips member yet, but you would like to check out the study guides and see what they're like, there are some samples, some free samples, on our website. So if you go to Culips.com and then check out the Study Guide Samples option, you can actually download six study guides for free. So if you're new to Culips, or you're just interested in what our study guides are like, then please check those free ones out.

Andrew: Kassy, maybe we already gave away our answer to this question, but are you afraid of the dentist?

Kassy: In the past, I was very afraid of the dentist and now I just find it very inconvenient to go there.

Andrew: OK, so the name, there is a special word that—it's not a common word in English, but it is a word that exists, which is dentophobia, dentophobia. And this means fear of going to the dentist. So Kassy, I guess in the past you experienced some dentophobia.

Kassy: Yes, that's correct. Andrew, do you have dentophobia?

Andrew: I don't have dentophobia per se, and I don't think I've ever been afraid of going to the dentist. But it's always been uncomfortable for me. I have some bad memories, not bad memories, but just uncomfortable memories of visiting the dentist when I was younger. And I think there are two, two parts of it for me, because although Canada has health care, a good healthcare system that is public and paid for by tax dollars, we don't have a public dental care system, which is so stupid. I don't know why in Canada we have a public healthcare system, which is pretty good, but then dental is private and it's kind of like **every man for themselves**. And it's very expensive to go to the dentist in Canada, actually.

Andrew: So I think part of my negative association with going to the dentist is that it was always a scary financial thing, either for my family when I was younger or, once I became an independent adult, then it was like, oh no, I got a cavity. How can I pay for that? How can I afford that? Because it's not cheap to get it fixed. So part of the reason for my negativity about going to the dentist is partially due to financial stress. And now I don't really need to worry about that now that I'm not a poor student anymore, but still that's **in the back of my mind** going on.

Andrew: And then also, I mean, we can get into this in a moment here, as well, but when I was 13, 14, 15, somewhere in there, I had braces, which were really uncomfortable. And I always hated going to get my braces tightened, and they would cut my mouth and it was just not fun at all. So that was a painful time in my life for a couple of years, having my braces on. And so I think those two factors combined together just give me a pessimistic attitude when it comes to going to the dentist.

Kassy: I think another thing is that dental care is one of the few preventative things that still hurt, right? So dental care is meant to prevent future pain, like you're cleaning your teeth now so that you don't get really horrible cavities and necessary root canals in the future. However, when you go to the dentist to get, you know, that scaling, that teeth cleaning, it still hurts because, you know, your gums might be sensitive and they're scratching little metal picks against your mouth or against your teeth and your gums. So preventative measures in medicine are usually, you know, like exercising, diet, more sleep. Like they're annoying, but they're not painful, usually. But the dentist, even if you have perfect teeth, it still hurts a little bit.

Andrew: Yeah, that's a very interesting perspective. I've never thought of that before. But, yeah, I think you're completely right. It's also that, you know, you're on a chair that reclines and you're usually put into a position where you can't really see what's happening. And that can be frightening. And the tools, they make those weird high-pitched sounds. Like the drill sound is something that even is making me shiver just a little bit thinking about it. So I think for all of these reasons, it's kind of natural to have a fear of going to the dentist, and I know many people have this fear.

Andrew: Now I should say that although I don't enjoy going to the dentist, it's something that I don't look forward to doing at all, I still do it. I still go to the dentist when I need to. And that actually reminds me, I got a text from my dentist this week saying it's time to go in for a checkup. So I'll have to book that.

Andrew: Kassy, have you ever had any major dental work done? I mean, your teeth look very good.

Kassy: Yeah, I was very, very, very lucky or I guess I had really good parents who took me to the dentist **religiously**. I did not have even a single cavity until I came to Korea, when I was 22, yeah.

Andrew: Wow. So you managed to go through all of your baby teeth with no cavities. Perfect set of baby teeth. That's good. And then all the way until you were 22. Wow, that's amazing. I had my first cavity when I was, like, 5, maybe? I was pretty young, maybe 6?

Kassy: I also never had braces and I've only had one wisdom tooth pulled. I've been very lucky. I was born with one less tooth on the left side, though. So I had and still have a gap in my teeth in the front

Andrew: Interesting, interesting.

Kassy: But it's very small, so it's not too annoying.

Andrew: OK. Yeah, well, you're lucky that you were born with straight teeth. It might be my British genes, I'm not sure, but I had crooked teeth as a teenager. At least I remember it being at this time in my life. One of my canine teeth—which is one of the teeth to the side of your mouth, and for me, it was the top one—came in crooked and a little bit on top, overlapping some of my other teeth. Or probably only one of my other teeth. I don't think it was that big of a problem. But that's why I had braces. If I recall correctly, my teeth were just too tight on that side. And so there wasn't room for that tooth to come down into its natural spot. So the braces actually created a gap where that tooth could come in. And, yeah, so that was not a fun experience, having to wear braces for several years and a retainer after that. That was the biggest dental work that I've ever had done. Other than that, nothing major. I haven't had, like, a root canal or dental surgery, oral surgery, or haven't had my wisdom teeth removed.

Kassy: Wow, we both haven't, that's interesting.

Andrew: Yeah, the dentist said it wasn't a priority for me, that it didn't have to be done. And so I wasn't going to volunteer to sign up for that.

Kassy: I totally understand why you wouldn't.

Andrew: Yeah, so.

Kassy: Andrew, I have a question about your dentist, dental experience as a kid. In America, you know, they would check your teeth and polish them. You know, take off the plaque that's hanging between your gums and your teeth. But at the end of the visit, they would, in America at least, give us this weird gel that was like a fluoride for your teeth.

Andrew: Uh huh.

Kassy: And it came in a variety of flavours, grape, bubble gum, mint, orange. And they tried to make it sound so cool with the various flavours, but it was always **torture**.

Andrew: Yeah, I remember that. And I remember the flavour of it. Like, I would always choose the bubble gum flavour. And, yeah, I don't exactly remember what that was. Kassy, I think you're right, that it's probably like a fluoride coating that they would put over our teeth at the very end. I always thought that was really weird, like, how they tell you, the dentist and your parents, everybody says don't chew gum, it causes cavities. And then you go to the dentist and they're, like, what flavour do you want, bubble gum? And you're like, OK. Then you put this bubble gum flavour all over your teeth. But, yeah, I do remember that. It's very strange. I wonder what that was, now, in retrospect.

Kassy: Yeah, that was my biggest memory of going to the dentist as a kid. That gooey, globby stuff at the end of every session.

Andrew: I remember two things about going to the dentist as a kid. One was that my dentist had a TV in her ceiling, so that when we leaned back in the chair, we could watch the TV. So that was pretty cool.

Kassy: Oh, that's cool.

Andrew: Yeah. Although her hands and arms were blocking the TV most of the time. So that was cool. And I also remember that if you did a good job and didn't cry and were a big boy while you went to the dentist, you could choose a toy from this treasure chest that the dentist had. Actually, usually it wasn't a toy, it was like a toothbrush or some floss or something like that. So that wasn't very exciting, really. Exciting to choose the toy, or exciting to choose the item, but not exciting once you saw what it was.

Kassy: Better than nothing, right?

Andrew: True, true.

Kassy: There's one more thing I wanted to mention. I think, as listeners know, we live in Korea. And one interesting cultural difference between American dentists and Korean ones is that, here, whether you're just getting your teeth cleaned or getting a cavity filled, doesn't matter, they're going to cover your eyes when they do it, like with a green tarp. But in America, they never did that.

Andrew: Yeah, that is true. They cover your eyes up, which I actually like. I think that's kind of relaxing, like. Because when you're in Canada and your eyes, or you can just look wherever, but it's kind of like what do I do? I want to shut my eyes anyways, but then it feels strange. So, yeah, I like that part of Korea, they cover up your eyes.

Andrew: And, Kassy, I've also noticed that in Canada, the doctors hand out pain medication really easily. Like, even if it's just a minor thing, they'll numb you up, put you to sleep, whatever you want.

Kassy: Give you some laughing gas.

Andrew: Yeah, give you some laughing gas. But here in Korea, they just **go for it**. And you gotta hope that you don't have too many problems, because when they pick around, it could be quite painful, I imagine.

Kassy: Yeah. I'm curious how, you know, different procedures or protocols that they have in other countries around the world, as well.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So, listeners, please get in touch. And let us know about your experiences of going to the dentist. And thank you again to Dr. Alexandra, who requested this topic. And, again, I apologize that we don't have a very positive outlook for you. I think that's maybe one of the things that a lot of dentists struggle with, is having to calm down and convince their clients and their patients that they'll be OK and that they're **in good hands**.

Andrew: So we'll leave it at here for today. But thank you for studying English with us today, everyone. What you just did right now is what you need to do to be fluent in English. So listening to English, spending some time with it every day. These are the things that will bring you success in your English learning. So we're glad that you showed up and put in some study time with us here today. And to recap this episode, Kassy, we talked about the fear of going to the dentist, and sounds like we are both dentophobes to an extent.

Kassy: I'm sure 95% of the world agrees with us.

Andrew: If you enjoyed this episode, or maybe you didn't enjoy it but you did find it educational or entertaining, well, then, please consider supporting us. You could do that in a variety of ways, such as becoming a paid Culips member. And remember that you can sign up to become a member on our website, Culips.com. Or you could tell your friends who are learning English to check us out and give Culips a listen. You could leave a five-star rating and a positive review on your favourite podcast app, like Apple Podcasts. Or, finally, you could follow us on social media, like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter.

Andrew: So that is it for us, but we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

Every man for themselves Idiom

Every man for themselves means everyone is on their own. The person thinks about their own interests, safety, and wants before those of other people. Essentially, it means that if you don't look out for yourself, no one else will. This is used in any competitive situation when teamwork and helping others is uncommon or even discouraged.

The "man" in this phrase doesn't mean just men have to look out for themselves. It's gender neutral, meaning "everyone" or "every human." You can also say **everyone for themselves**, **every man for himself**, **every woman for herself**, or **everybody for themselves**.

You might see "**every man for himself** and the devil take the hindmost" or "**every man for himself** and God for us all." The first means that the last person will suffer or lose. The second means that God is looking out for everyone.

Here are a couple more examples with **every man for themselves**:

Danielle: How's your job going?

Kuro: Bad. I don't know what I'm doing wrong, but nothing I do is ever good enough.

Danielle: They haven't given you any hints on how to improve?

Kuro: No. Nothing. Just told me I've done it all wrong.

Danielle: What about your coworkers? Can you ask them for help?

Kuro: No! It's **every man for themselves** at this place. They refuse to help me!

Danielle: Seriously? Wow, that really sucks. Maybe you should look for a new job.

Suzume: Wanna come to the big sale with me on the weekend? It's supposed to be great.

Brianna: Uh, no thanks. At those sales, it's **every woman for herself** and I can't compete.

Suzume: Ah, man. You were my last hope. Now I'll have to go alone!

In the back of [one's] mind

Idiom

When something is **in the back of your mind**, it's always present in your thoughts. You aren't always consciously thinking about it, but you're always aware of it. This can be a thought, feeling, or memory.

For example, in this episode, Andrew says the cost of going to the dentist is still **in the back of his mind**. Even though he doesn't have to worry about the cost, his past experiences mean that he subconsciously worries about it.

When something is **in the back of your mind**, it often affects how you behave or act without you realizing it. In Andrew's case, his worry about the cost might mean he goes to the dentist less often than he should.

Here are a couple more examples with **in the back of [one's] mind**:

Saskia: You remember that guy from last night?

Airi: The cute one you were chatting with the whole time?

Saskia: Yeah. Well, the whole time I knew somewhere **in the back of my mind** that I'd met him before. And this morning I remembered!

Airi: Really? Who is he? Where'd you meet him?

Saskia: He was a teacher's assistant for one of my university math classes! So crazy, seeing him again after all these years.

Airi: It's such a small world!

Junpei: How much is the bus now? \$2.50?

Doug: It's \$3, but why do you need to know? Don't you have a car?

Junpei: I'm heading downtown tomorrow for some shopping and I don't want to take my car. Whenever I park there, the fear of getting a ticket is always **in the back of my mind** and I can never just browse the shops.

Doug: Understandable—plus parking is so expensive. It's way cheaper to take the bus.

Religiously

Adverb

Religiously means to do something regularly and consistently. When you do something **religiously**, you do it at regular, consistent times and at the same frequency. This is often used to describe an action that can be relied on to happen. The activity doesn't need to be religious in nature for you to do it **religiously**. You can use this for any activity, whether it's watching a TV show or drinking tea every afternoon.

For example, Kassy mentions that her parents took her to the dentist **religiously**. This means her parents took her to the dentist every year, no matter what was happening in their lives. Another example is flossing. If you always floss your teeth at night, no matter how tired you are, you floss **religiously**.

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

Zac: Hey, girl! It's been ages.

Patricia: It really has been too long.

Zac: Also, you look fantastic. What have you been doing?

Patricia: Thanks! I've been doing yoga **religiously** every morning since we graduated. Decided I needed to be healthier after all that junk food we ate in college.

Zac: Well, it's worked. Maybe I should take up yoga!

Harris: Who's that?

Kyoko: Who? The tall guy? That's Steve.

Harris: OK ... And Steve is?

Kyoko: Oh, he's a regular, comes in **religiously** every morning for a large black coffee and then sits there reading the newspaper for an hour. He's a decent tipper, as long as you're nice to him.

Harris: Noted. I will always be nice to Steve.

Torture

Noun

Torture is severe mental or physical pain, or something that causes intense pain. But when it describes something in everyday conversation, it is metaphorical. **Torture** is an extreme exaggeration to make a point or add emphasis.

In this episode, Kassy says that having to use the fluoride gel at the dentist was always **torture**. She means this in an exaggerated sense. She wasn't actually **tortured** by the dentist; rather, she meant that she hated the experience because it was uncomfortable and unpleasant.

Here are a few more examples with **torture**:

James: Excuse me? When will the doctor see me? My appointment was 4 hours ago.

Receptionist: I'm very sorry for the wait. The doctor is a bit behind schedule today, but he will see you as soon as he can.

James: A bit behind schedule? That's an understatement! I've been waiting for hours and it's **torture**!

Receptionist: I'm sorry to hear that, sir. If you'll just have a seat, it won't be much longer.

Hyeon-Jeong: You're taking chemistry this semester? I had it last semester. Who's your teacher?

Wei: Mr. Brown.

Hyeon-Jeong: Oh, yikes. That sucks.

Wei: Why?

Hyeon-Jeong: He sounds like nails on a chalkboard. Listening to him is **torture**.

Ayumu: Have you ever been to the Fitness Express gym on Main Street?

Seth: Nope. I can't go to gyms. Exercising in public is pure **torture**. Why?

Ayumu: Oh, well, I'm thinking of joining. I'll ask someone else.

Go for it Verb

Go for it means to do anything you have to in order to get or achieve something. You can also say **goes for it**, **going for it**, **went for it**, or **gone for it**. There are two ways to use **go for it**. The first is as an exclamation of encouragement. It means that the person you're speaking to should do the action. It's the same as saying, "Go ahead, give it a try!"

The second is when you're describing someone's actions. If someone just **went for it**, that means they did what they needed to do without thinking about it first. For example, Andrew says that dentists in Korea just **go for it**. This means they start working without considering the numbing process or the pain of the patient.

Depending on the context, when someone just **goes for it**, it might mean that they did hesitate before deciding to act. If, for example, Andrew had said that the dentists reviewed the chart before just **going for it**, then that would mean they hesitated or paused before starting work.

Here are a couple more examples with **go for it**:

Dale: Dude, you should have been there last night!

Noriaki: Was it a good night?

Dale: So good! We were at this bar, right, and there was karaoke up on the stage. You know Alan, right? He's got all the confidence in the world but, like, no skill.

Noriaki: Oh no, I think I know where this is going.

Dale: You know it. We're all sitting there, right, wanting to go up and sing something ridiculous, but no one has the guts—except Alan. He just **went for it**! Hopped on stage and sang some pop song and it was amazing! He sounded so awful.

Tamara: So I'm thinking of asking Pearl out on a date.

Casey: Yes! **Go for it**!

Tamara: But what if she says no?

Casey: And what if she says yes!

In good hands

Idiom

In good hands means to be in skilled, competent, or safe care. When someone is **in good hands**, they can relax and know that they will not be harmed and will be well cared for. When an item is **in good hands**, the owner knows that their item will remain in good condition. If the item is being shipped, it'll arrive safe and undamaged. You can also say **in safe hands**.

Here are a few more examples with **in good hands**:

Masao: Boss, are you sure you wanna leave right now? I've never run the shop alone before.

Boss: I'm sure, Masao. I'll only be gone for a half an hour and I'm confident you can handle things while I'm gone. The shop will be **in good hands** with you in charge.

Masao: Oh, OK. Thanks, boss. I'll do my best.

Sayaka: I heard you enrolled your daughter in elementary school this year! Congratulations, that's big.

Tanya: Yeah. I'm so worried about her. What if she gets a bad teacher? Or what if the other kids are mean to her?

Sayaka: Worrying is part of being a parent, my dear. I can't say what the other children will be like, but I know the teachers are all very good at their jobs. Your daughter is **in good hands**.

Katherine: How's your father doing? Nancy told me he had to go to the hospital.

Juan: Yeah. He was having really bad dizzy spells. They're keeping him overnight for observation.

Katherine: That's a good thing. They'll be able to find out what's wrong. It's a good hospital, he's **in safe hands**.

Juan: I know. But I won't be able to stop worrying until he's back at home.

Quiz

- 1. Which of the following is a way to emphasize that a situation was extremely uncomfortable, boring, painful, or unpleasant?**
 - a) it was fun
 - b) it wasn't fun
 - c) it was torture
 - d) it wasn't torture

- 2. If someone claims that it's every man for himself, what do they mean?**
 - a) there is a team of people to help
 - b) everyone has to look out for their own interests
 - c) everyone has to stand alone in a room
 - d) there is only one person in the situation

- 3. What does it mean when you do something religiously?**
 - a) you do it at a place of worship
 - b) you do it consistently and with regular frequency
 - c) you only do it because it's part of your religion
 - d) you don't do it at all

- 4. Which of the following means you will be safe and taken care of?**
 - a) you're in trouble
 - b) you're in the good place
 - c) you're in bad hands
 - d) you're in good hands

- 5. What does it mean when you have a feeling in the back of your mind?**
 - a) you feel that way sometimes
 - b) you need to turn around to understand the feeling
 - c) you're always aware of the feeling, even if you aren't always thinking about it
 - d) you don't feel that way at all

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Describe a situation you've experienced where it was every person for themselves.
2. Have you ever had a thought or feeling in the back of your mind? What was it?
3. Talk about something you do religiously every day and why you do it.
4. Describe a time when you decided to go for something. Did you hesitate first?
5. When was the last time you were in good hands? What made you feel safe?

Quiz Answers

1.c 2.b 3.b 4.d 5.c

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Kassy White

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Lisa Hoekstra

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox

Image: H Shaw (Unsplash.com)