

Simplified Speech #107 – Homesickness

Episode description

Homesickness is a familiar feeling for everyone, whether you're away for a few days or you moved to a totally new country! In this episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about how they deal with homesickness.

Fun fact

Homesickness isn't new. It has been around since ancient times. It is mentioned in the Christian bible's Old Testament, specifically Exodus and Psalms, and in Homer's Odyssey. Hippocrates, an ancient Greek physician, believed that bile in the blood caused homesickness.

Expressions included in the study guide

- To butcher [something]
- All the comforts of home
- Throw into the mix
- Eat like a bird
- Sink or swim
- Pep talk



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: This Simplified Speech episode is brought to you by all of the Culips members. Without the support of our members, we wouldn't be able to keep the podcast going and keep teaching English to all of our listeners. So thank you so much to all of our members for your continued support and for learning English with us.

Andrew: Hey there, everyone. My name is Andrew.

Kassy: Hi, and I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Andrew: Welcome back to Culips. How is it going? We hope that you are doing really well. Today, I am joined by my cohost, Kassy. Hey there, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey, Andrew.

Andrew: And we have a Simplified Speech episode planned for you all. If you don't know what that is, well, let me explain. Simplified Speech is the series that features clear, natural conversations that are designed to help you boost your English listening skills and increase your knowledge of essential English vocabulary.

Andrew: We make study guides for each of our episodes, guys, and when you're a Culips member, you will get unlimited access to our study guide library. And each guide is designed to help you become a better English listener and a better English speaker. And they're just a really great way to learn with us and we highly recommend following along with the study guide today.

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Andrew: Hey, Kassy, you know, about 2 or 3 weeks ago, I put a call out on our Instagram stories to ask listeners for some topics that they wanted to hear us discuss on Simplified Speech. And we got lots of awesome responses and suggestions. So thanks to everybody who made a suggestion. And one of them was about homesickness. So, Instagram user named Goeunhamy—I think is how you pronounce the username, apologies if I'm **butchering that**, probably am—but she asked us to talk about homesickness. And, Kassy, I think maybe we are more qualified than most people to talk about this topic, since we both live very far away from home.

Kassy: Very far.

Andrew: Very far away from home. So I thought that's what we could chat about today. And so why don't we get started with this topic of homesickness?

Kassy: Sounds good.

Andrew: All right. So, let's begin with a definition of homesickness so everybody knows what we're talking about. When I think of homesickness, I think of just really feeling sad because you miss **all of the comforts of home**. You miss your friends, you miss your family, maybe you miss some food, or some TV, just all of the things that make home a special place for you. What about you, Kassy? What comes into your mind when you think of homesickness?

Kassy: Yeah, I think of that feeling in your chest when, you know, like, your heart hurts, and you feel kind of down and blue. And maybe the place where you are, like, you're having a hard time finding enjoyment in your new place. Maybe the food isn't as delicious as it was when you first got there. Or you don't really want to go out and explore the city anymore. You just want to stay home and, you know, call your family.

Andrew: Mm-hmm. So homesickness, then, is this feeling that you get of longing for, you know, your home or your hometown when you have moved away or when you are spending time in a place that is different than your home. So, in our case, Kassy, you know, we live overseas, right? You're from the USA, but living in Korea, and I'm from Canada, but living in Korea, so we are both very far away from home. But it doesn't have to be this far, right? You could be from, like, New York City and then you move to Miami for work or something and you could still feel very homesick, even though you're still in the same time zone and still in the same country, right?

Kassy: Yeah, I remember when I was a freshman in college, a lot of the kids were only about an hour from home and they were still homesick.

Andrew: Yeah, well, this is one of the times when we can feel the most homesick, actually, is when we move out of our house for the very first time. By the way, Kassy, how old were you when you left your house for the first time?

Kassy: I was, yeah, a freshman in university. So I was 18.

Andrew: Yeah, I moved out during my second year of university. So I went to a local college in my hometown before transferring to a university in a different city that was about 8 hours away from my hometown called Calgary. Calgary, Alberta. So that was the first time I moved out. I was probably 19 or 20 years old. And I think this is probably the average age for a Canadian or an American young person to leave their family house. Would you agree with that?

Kassy: Yes. I do think that a lot of kids also have the opportunity, I guess you can call it that, to experience homesickness even younger than that, in summer camp. I know ever since the age of maybe 9 or 10, I went to a summer camp for a whole week without my family, like an overnight summer camp, and a lot of kids got homesick their first year or two going to those camps.

Andrew: That's true. I remember when I was a young kid going to overnight camp as well. I did the same thing. You know, you'd go away for a week and at first, it's fun. But then after, like, 2 or 3 days, you're just, like, man, I want to go home and play my Super Nintendo.

Kassy: I want to sleep in my bed.

Andrew: Yeah, this bunk bed is no good anymore. The newness wears off. And, yeah, we can experience homesickness in that situation. But of course, that's always a quick remedy because, you know, you're only gone for a week and then you're back at home.

Kassy: That's true.

Andrew: So why don't we talk a little bit about our personal experiences with homesickness? Now I'm positive, I'm sure that you've felt homesickness before. Am I right about this?

Kassy: Of course.

Andrew: It's only natural. Anybody who spends time travelling or living in a different place. Unless you had a terrible home life, but as long as your home life was OK, then I'm sure you've experienced homesickness.

Kassy: I never experienced homesickness going to university or college, but I experienced it pretty bad when I came to Korea for the first time.

Andrew: Yeah, so there is a little bit of culture shock sometimes **thrown into the mix**, too, right? Culture shock is when you spend time in a culture that is very different from your own, or sometimes even very similar to your own. To be honest, sometimes I feel a little culture shock when I go to an English-speaking country like the USA or England, because everything is so similar, but just a little bit different. In the case of the USA, at least, that sometimes—it can be quite jarring.

Andrew: We have that element of culture shock thrown in with homesickness when we move to a different country, like you did coming to Korea. So, Kassy, how did you get through it? What exactly did you feel and how did you get through it?

Kassy: Actually, I didn't get very homesick the second time I came to Korea, where I stayed long term, but I got it pretty bad when I studied abroad here for 5 weeks. So, yeah, I think the hardest part for me of the homesickness was the food, which is so weird to think about. You'd think it would be my family, which of course I missed. But Korean food, while it's delicious, is very different than the food I was used to back home

Andrew: Sure.

Kassy: And I would crave that food during that 5 weeks I was in Korea. Like, I would have killed for a fruit and nut salad. Watermelon that didn't cost \$20. The list goes on.

Andrew: Yeah. Western people are always shocked in Korea that the price of watermelon in the summer is very expensive here compared to the price of watermelon back in America and Canada. So my expat friends and I, we have joked about starting a watermelon importing business into Korea. We could buy low and sell high.

Kassy: I would invest in that endeavor.

Andrew: Yeah. OK, so that's interesting, the food, because I never really had homesickness when it comes to food. It did take me a while to warm up to Korean food, to be honest with you. I think when I first came to Korea, I was a bit of a picky eater. And I remember sort of **eating like a bird** for the first little while. But when I first came here, I lived in a really small, little village in the mountains, and there were not very many options for me. So it was kind of like **sink or swim**. I had to eat or I would just go hungry. So I got used to Korean food pretty quickly and actually started to really love it. And now it's funny to look back and remember that I was such a picky eater for the first couple of months.

Andrew: In my case, it's not that I miss my friends or family. Of course, there are times when I miss them. And it's not really about food. It's more about, like, experiences and things that just aren't available here the way that they are back home. For example, one thing that I really feel homesick about is the Canadian summer. Canadian summer is just the best time of the year in Canada. It's not too hot. It's not too cold. It's not too humid. It's just right. And, of course, I think long-time Culips listeners will know that I love the lake and going to the lake in my hometown and swimming and boating and just hanging out on the beach. And I can do all of these things in Korea, but I can't do them in exactly the same way. So it's just, like, this longing to do those activities during certain times of the year.

Kassy: Yeah, I can totally relate with that. I've had the same exact feelings, maybe each season. In the Christmas season, I want to be making cookies with my family. In the summer season, I want to be boating, like you. In the fall, I want to be drinking pumpkin spice lattes or something.

Andrew: Yeah, or just watching the kids go trick or treating or something that just is a cultural element that doesn't really exist here. That doesn't mean that it's wrong or that I don't like living here. There are awesome benefits to living in a different country, as well. But of course, you know, we miss the cultural things that we grew up with from time to time.

Kassy: Exactly.

Andrew: So, Kassy, do you get homesick often?

Kassy: No. I can honestly say I don't get homesick very often. I think maybe two or three times a year and not like a long period, just, you know, "Ah, I wish I could do this" kind of feeling. But I don't get homesick often. How about you, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, I think I've just kind of made Korea my home for now. It feels like home. And I know that if I went back to Canada right now, then I would feel homesick for Korea. So if I do feel, if I do feel moments of homesick, then I try to remember that like, oh, you should really enjoy the now because, you know, if I do go back to Canada one day, then I'm going to miss this. So take advantage of this life that I'm living right now.

Andrew: But, yeah, homesickness does pop up from time to time. I think social media is a trigger for me. If I see Instagram stories or posts on social media from my friends, sometimes I'm, like, ah, they're all having fun doing this thing that I wish I could be doing right now. So I feel a bit of FOMO, maybe. And that can make me feel homesick. But like you, Kassy, it's very temporary and I just sort of push it aside and get on with my day. I don't let it get me down too much.

Kassy: I think a reason why a listener might have asked this question recently was because of COVID. I think I've probably felt homesickness a lot more this year than I have in the past because there's that element of not being able to go home, rather than just missing it from afar.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. I'm just glad that nothing major has happened to my family or my friends this year because, yeah, we are unable to travel. Now if it was a serious, serious emergency, I think we could go back home, Kassy, but, you know, I usually visit Canada at least once a year and I didn't this year. There are quarantines that I would have to do both in Canada and in Korea, which would mean that I would have to take about a month out of my life just to deal with the quarantines and I don't have that type of free time. So I'm here. But thank God, I don't really suffer from homesickness. Can you imagine if you felt really homesick right now and you couldn't travel? It would be a tough time.

Kassy: Oh, it would be torture. Yeah.

Andrew: It would be kind of like that **sink or swim** situation that I mentioned earlier, where you can't solve it, so you just have to deal with it.

Kassy: Yup. Speaking of deal with, Andrew, when you get homesickness, how do you deal with it? How do you overcome it?

Andrew: Yeah, I think what I said just a moment ago is probably the best strategy for me. That is just to live in the now and be thankful that I'm living in a foreign country, having all these awesome opportunities, getting to experience a new culture, because, you know, I've lived in Korea before and then returned to Canada to go to grad school. And I remember when I was in grad school really missing Korea and feeling homesick for Korea, kind of, as strange as that sounds. So, I know I would miss it. And, also, I just kind of give myself a **pep talk**.

Kassy: **Pep talk**, that's good.

Andrew: Funnily enough, when I do get homesick, it's usually for different places almost at the same time. Like, I'll have a good memory of Halloween, for example. I love Halloween, it's one of my favourite holidays so I have a lot of good memories about Halloween. But I'll have all of my Canadian Halloween memories, compressed into one memory. So I remember a good time when I was living in Montreal, and a good time from Halloween when I was living in Victoria, which is on the totally opposite side of the country. And I remember good memories from my hometown, and from when I was a kid living near Vancouver. So it's like I can't be in all of these places at once anyways, so it's stupid to think like that. I mean, it's nice to take a walk down memory lane, but I just kind of tell myself, you know, shut up, Andrew, come on, get it, get over it. Enjoy the now, live in the now. And that kind of **pep talk** snaps me out of it, I think.

Kassy: Yeah, I think I deal with it a little differently than you. If I experienced homesickness, I will either call my family and, you know, catch up with them for a while. Or if it's a food-related homesickness, I'll, you know, ask some of my American friends that live in Korea to get together and we'll go find a Western-style restaurant together and kind of have an American-style meal together in a foreign country, sharing a piece of our home and culture together abroad.

Andrew: So, everyone, we are going to leave it at here for now. But congrats on making it to the end of the episode and nice job on getting some English practice in today. Guys, you're going to want to keep this up. And if you do, you'll keep moving closer and closer towards your English goals.

Andrew: So to recap this episode, Kassy and I talked about homesickness. That was suggested to us by one of our Instagram followers, and we just chatted about what homesickness is, when we feel homesick, and how we get over homesickness.

Andrew: If you enjoyed this episode and found it educational or entertaining, then please support us. There are a variety of ways that you could do that, such as becoming a paid Culips member. But that's not the only way. You could leave us a five-star rating and a nice review on Apple Podcasts or your favourite podcast app. You can tell your friends about the Culips English Podcast or follow us on social media. We are on Instagram and YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. So just search for the Culips English Podcast and you'll be able to find us.

Andrew: If you have a question or a comment for us, please get in touch. Our email address is contact@Culips.com, C-O-N-T-A-C-T@Culips.com. We'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll catch you then. Goodbye, everyone.

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

To butcher [something]

Verb

To butcher [something] means to do something very badly or to make a mess of something. When someone **butchers something**, they have ruined or spoiled it completely. They could be **butchering it** intentionally or unintentionally. In this episode, for example, Andrew apologizes if he was **butchering** the pronunciation of Goeunhamy. He wasn't physically cutting up the name; he was saying the name wrong. He also didn't mean to say it wrong.

Here are a few more examples with **to butcher [something]**:

Hamza: How was the concert last night?

Aleena: Ugh, I don't want to talk about it.

Hamza: Oh no, was it that bad?

Aleena: I mean, they did the big songs and those were fun. But they **butchered my favourite song!** The one I bought the tickets for in the first place!

Ryou: Can you believe her?

Satomi: Who?

Ryou: Evangeline! The way she delivered her lines. She's **butchering my script!**

Satomi: I thought her take on the character was pretty good.

Ryou: No! She's making her character sound whiny and juvenile, not at all how I wrote it.

Michiko: Did you see the report George handed in?

Leia: Yeah. It was terrible.

Michiko: He really **butchered it**. I'll talk to him tomorrow and give him some tips on how to prepare these reports so that next time will be better.

All the comforts of home

Idiom

All the comforts of home are all those things that make your home comfortable. These could be your pillows, your bed, all of your things in their proper places—the things that make your living space a home. You could also say **comforts of home**, **home comforts**, or **creature comforts**. Anything that makes being in your own home comfortable is considered a **comfort of home**.

This idiom is different from “in the comfort of one’s own home,” which means to be able to do something from home.

Here are a couple more examples with **all the comforts of home**:

Wesley: Have you been to Shouta’s dorm room yet?

Jackson: No, why? Is it somehow special?

Wesley: It’s amazing, like walking into a real house. He’s got it set up with **all the comforts of home**. He’s even got a microwave!

Jackson: No way! Are we allowed to have microwaves in our dormitory rooms?

Wesley: I don’t know, but I know where I’ll hang out as often as he’ll let me.

Alyssa: So you’re saying your parents never took you on vacation outside of the country?

Violet: Nope. My parents really appreciate **all the comforts of home**. They don’t like being away for more than a night or two.

Alyssa: Is that why you travel so much, because you never got to when you were young?

Violet: Maybe! I just know that I want to see the world.

Throw into the mix

Expression

Throw into the mix means to add to a group. This can be adding a new idea to an ongoing discussion or bringing a new person into a group of friends. When the expression is used for ideas, the idea you're mentioning will introduce a new viewpoint or fact that will have an impact on the discussion. In this case, mix refers to a specific line of thought or specific items, and you're adding something new or different. To throw in means the new idea may or may not be important.

You can also use **throw into the mix** in a more literal sense. If you're making soup, you could **throw some carrots into the mix**. Or if someone is picking out new clothes, the salesperson might **throw a few shirts into the mix**. In this case, mix refers to actual things: soup and clothes. Really, you can use **throw into the mix** whenever you're adding something to an ongoing process.

Here are a couple more examples with **throw into the mix**:

Yori: What an exhausting day.

Ayano: Busy at work?

Yori: I wish. No, half the day was spent in a meeting brainstorming our new product marketing and the people who would buy it. I spent most of the meeting doodling in my notebook.

Ayano: Nothing to contribute?

Yori: Oh, I tried to **throw a few thoughts into the mix**. The marketing team was already building on their own ideas, though, so I figured I'd just keep my mouth shut.

Brian: You like this band?

Archie: Yeah! Heard about them a year ago. They say they're rock, but they're so much more than that. They **throw a little classical music into the mix** and it makes their songs so different.

Brian: I know, right? I've been listening to them for a month now and the way they blend the two is just amazing.

Eat like a bird

Idiom

Eat like a bird means to have a small appetite and eat only a little. It could mean that someone eats small portions of food, that they don't eat much at all throughout the day, or that they pick at their food the way a bird pecks at its food. In this episode, Andrew mentions that he **ate like a bird** for his first little while living in Korea. He means that he didn't eat very much.

This idiom is based on the wrong assumption that birds don't eat much. In fact, birds eat quite a bit for creatures of their size. An idiom that means the opposite of **eat like a bird** is eat like a horse.

Here are a few more examples with **eat like a bird**:

Jasmin: Ready for lunch?

Crystal: You bet I am. I'm starving!

Jasmin: Ha, sure. Then we get there and you'll only eat the fries. I don't know how you stay healthy; you **eat like a bird**!

Crystal: Hey, now! I will definitely eat my burger and fries. I'm that hungry.

Mom: Please eat some roast beef. You've barely touched your plate.

Son: I'm not hungry.

Mom: Oh, come now. You'll never grow big and strong if you **eat like a bird**. It's not healthy.

Dad: Is your friend staying for dinner tonight?

Daughter: Yeah, but don't worry about making extra food. She **eats like a bird**.

Dad: I'll make a little extra, just in case she's hungry today. We can pack it up for lunch tomorrow if she doesn't eat it.

Sink or swim

Idiom

Sink or swim means to succeed or fail by your efforts. It can be used as a verb or a noun. If you say someone will have to **sink or swim** (verb), you mean that they will have to figure out how to make it through a situation. For example, if you have a test that you're not sure you'll pass, you have to **sink or swim** during the test. If you say a situation is **sink or swim** (noun), that means it is one in which a person must save themselves or fail. In this episode, for example, Andrew says, "So it was kind of like **sink or swim**. I had to eat or I would just go hungry." The situation was **sink or swim**.

This idiom dates back to witch trials, when people would throw a woman who was suspected of being a witch into the water. She would have to **sink or swim**: if she sank, she wasn't a witch. If she swam, she was a witch.

Here are a couple more examples with **sink or swim**:

Akane: Welcome to the company. Here's your desk. Can you just log in with the details your received when you arrived?

Kara: Right, of course! And there we go.

Akane: OK, so all our interns have to complete a project before we start the training. We like to see if you **sink or swim**. Most interns fail, so don't worry about succeeding just yet. We're more interested in seeing how you work and how you approach projects like these. Ready?

Kara: Uh, yes.

Hikari: How are your kids doing now that school has started up again?

Elise: They're doing well, I think. Yours?

Hikari: My eldest is having some issues with another student. It's heartbreaking, but I find it's best to let my children **sink or swim** in most things in life. And I think this is one of those situations where she'll need to figure it out on her own.

Elise: I totally understand. My boy had a tough time last year. Staying out of it was the hardest thing I ever had to do, although I was always ready to help when he asked.

Pep talk

Noun

A **pep talk** is an intense, emotional speech given to make someone feel more confident, courageous, or enthusiastic. It can be given to a single person or to a group of people. **Pep talks** should encourage the audience to do something positive. That could be to work harder, win a game, or even have a more positive outlook on life. It is like a motivational speech, although motivational speeches tend to last much longer. **Pep talks** are usually short conversations.

Pep means personal energy or spirit. You can tell someone to have more pep or to put a little pep in their step. This means they should be more energetic and positive. A **pep talk** raises the audience's spirit or energy—its pep.

Here are a couple more examples with **pep talk**:

Yun: Our team was really far behind at half time. I can't believe they caught up and won after that terrible first half.

Richard: It's their coach. I bet he took them back to the dressing room and gave them a rousing **pep talk**, one that got them playing extra hard in the second half.

Yun: I'm really glad the school hired him to coach. He's going to take our team to the finals, for sure.

Josie: I'm worried about Alex. He's seemed a little down lately.

Kumiko: Yeah. He's been stressing out about his course choices for next year. Art and English are at the same time, but he wants to take both and can't decide.

Josie: Obviously he should take art. Sounds like he's confused.

Kumiko: I think he needs a **pep talk**. Do you want to do it, or shall I?

Josie: I have practice tonight, so you're up.

Kumiko: Consider it done. I'll take him out for coffee after class.

Quiz

1. What could you call your bed, TV, couch, and shower?

- a) all the furniture you own
- b) all the places you go
- c) all the comforts of home
- d) all your comforts you own

2. Soo Lin eats like a bird. Which of the following best describes the way she eats?

- a) she eats very little
- b) she only eats poultry
- c) she only eats bird feed
- d) she eats a lot

3. What would you give someone to raise their spirits?

- a) alcohol
- b) pep talk
- c) tarot cards
- d) greeting card

4. If Jeanette's hairdresser butchered her hair, how does her hair look?

- a) short
- b) long
- c) beautiful
- d) terrible

5. Which of the following means to succeed entirely through your own efforts?

- a) sour or sweet
- b) sink or swim
- c) shrink or swell
- d) stink or sag

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever butchered the pronunciation of someone's name or a word in another language? What was it and how did you learn to say it properly?
2. What are the comforts of home that you miss the most when you are away?
3. Describe a time when you gave or received a pep talk. Did it help?
4. Do you know someone who eats like a bird? What types of things do they usually eat?
5. Have you ever had a sink or swim moment? What happened?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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