

## Simplified Speech #216 – Connecting with your inner child

AD-FREE

### Episode description

Have you ever felt like a kid again while doing something fun? In this episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about how we all have a child inside us. They share stories about playful moments in their lives and discuss why keeping a sense of fun and wonder is important, even as adults. Andrew and Kassy also talk about how staying connected to your inner child can reduce stress and improve mental health. They share fun ways to bring more playfulness into your daily life, including hobbies, sports, and creative activities.

### Fun fact

Scientists say that learning new hobbies, playing games, and doing things just for fun can make you feel younger – both mentally and physically. Even small things, like using your non-dominant hand for a task, can boost brain flexibility.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- Doozy
- To weigh down
- Self-conscious
- To go off on a tangent
- To mix up [something]
- To take a step back



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## Transcript

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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.

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**Andrew:** Joining me now as my co-host for this episode is Kassy. Kassy, how's it going? How are you doing?

**Kassy:** Hey, Andrew. I'm doing well. How about you?

**Andrew:** I'm doing great. And Kassy, we have a **doozy** today. We have a **doozy** of a topic. Could you tell everybody what that means? What does it mean if I say we have a **doozy** of a topic?

**Kassy:** You know, I haven't really thought about it much. It means like a big one, an exciting one, a unique one, kind of.

**Andrew:** A good one.

**Kassy:** A good one? Yeah.

**Andrew:** Yeah. It just means something is really positive, good, special, big. It's that kind of emphasizing word. So, we have a **doozy** of an episode topic today because we are going to talk about the child within us. The child within us. And this was a suggestion that came from one of our Discord community members by the name of Colibri25. And Colibri25 left a little message in our episode suggestion channel and wrote the following message. "I would like to suggest the following topic, the child within us. I believe it is a theme that addresses many aspects such as creativity, joy, the things we buy, the activities we engage in, and much more, including mental health itself." So Colibri25, thank you for that amazing topic suggestion. And guys, if you have a suggestion that you would

like to hear us talk about on Culips, feel free at any time to go over to our Discord community and leave us a suggestion in the suggestion channel. And we'll definitely try our best to make it become a reality. And I really, really like this topic, Kassy. I think it's an interesting one that I probably wouldn't have come up with on my own, to be honest with you. And I'm looking forward to our conversation about it. So, we might as well jump in and get started. And maybe I'll throw things over to you first, Kassy, and just ask you to break this down for us. What exactly is this topic about? What does the child within us mean?

**Kassy:** The child within us, otherwise known as your inner child, I think is this feeling you have or these emotions you have that are related to your childhood, even as an adult. You know, you go through a big transformation between childhood and adulthood. The way you see the world changes, your interests change, and you're bogged down by a lot more responsibilities as an adult. But focusing on your inner child, that child within you, you focus on things that you wouldn't necessarily have time for as an adult. Like your creative side, or your innocence, or you know, your sense of wonder and excitement for the little things in life.

**Andrew:** I like that phrase, your sense of wonder. And that's a great quality to have, even when you're an adult. It's great for children to have. It's great for adults to have. And that just means that you get really enthusiastic and amazed by things we learn and things we experience in life. I don't want to go right into the deep end right away, Kassy. And "Going into the deep end" means to get into a very serious philosophical discussion right at the start. But hearing that explanation of yours, I was thinking, do you think that every person does have a child within us? I mean, this is not really a scientific thing, right? We can't, like, take an x-ray of our bodies and see a little child inside. So, this is maybe not a scientific thing. It's more like a theory about the world or just a feeling about the world that we all still maintain a sense of our childhood within us. I feel that it's true for me. I feel like maybe somewhere there's a little piece of my childhood that's still remaining and influencing how I live as an adult. And I think from hearing you talk about it, Kassy, you

also feel that way. Please correct me if I'm wrong, but it feels like you also feel that way. But do you think this is true for everyone or is it just some people?

**Kassy:** I do. And I also think that it comes out more again as you get older. I think between the years of maybe, oh, I don't even know, maybe 25 and honestly, probably 65, it's not there as much. You have a lot more responsibilities. You're really focused on your career, maybe raising your own kids, and you don't have as much time for that whimsical innocence. But after you retire, you have a lot more free time and you have to kind of discover yourself once again. You have less responsibilities and you have more time for inner reflection. And also, you might have grandkids that you don't have to take care of directly, but you can hang out with them. So, I really do think that the older generations, the grandparent type of people in the world have a lot of that inner childhood come out. But I do think it's a bit more suppressed for the working generations.

**Andrew:** Maybe it is a thing, like, it's just the responsibilities that we have as adults from, you know, when we're a teenager all the way until we're retired. You know, those responsibilities **weigh down** on us so heavily and they take up so much of our time, and attention, and effort that we don't have the chance to let our child, our inner child, be free. And we can't really display our inner child. But once you retire, then some of those burdens go away. Of course, that's not for everybody. But for some people, some of those stresses and burdens go away. And then that inner child can come out as you don't have to spend so much of your mental effort and time thinking about going to work or doing the house chores or something like that, right? Raising the kids. Once you're a grandparent, you can see them on the weekend or something like that. The grandkids on the weekend, you don't have to spend all day, every day raising your children. So yeah, I think that's a great point. And why don't we transition a little bit now into talking about ourselves? So, I'm really curious, Kassy, in which ways you personally connect with your inner child. How does that come out for you?

**Kassy:** The two biggest ways that I connect with my inner child are one, when I play with, well, my son now and also my cousins. My cousins are a lot younger than me. And whenever I'm with them, I can really easily revert back to my, my inner child and, you know, act silly and goofy and make weird noises that I wouldn't make in my everyday life. Sing silly songs, you know, things like that. And then the other time that I think my inner child really comes out, and I was talking with you a bit about this before we started recording, is when I spend time with my husband. I think when you find a life partner, it doesn't have to be a husband or a wife. It could be just your boyfriend or girlfriend, whatever. When you find someone that you just really trust and you spend time with them every day and you're living with them, you build a connection with them similar to the connections that you had with your parents growing up or your siblings. And so, you have this trust, and you can let go of your insecurities. And that's why I think a lot of couples have pet names for each other, like Honey or Pumpkin or Boo Boo. I don't know. And oftentimes couples have their own, like, secret dialogue that only those two know with their own inside jokes and, you know, silly phrases. And I think that comes about because you're letting your insecurities go and focusing on your inner child.

**Andrew:** I love that. That's a really, really good point. And I completely agree with you that in those kind of very, very trusting relationships, often that inner child comes out. And I think that's totally true for me as well, because I was thinking about like, what are some of the qualities that children have that we lose as we're adults? And I think one of those things is a sense of shame or the feeling that you're being judged by other people for the way that you behave. And kids just don't care, right? You'll see kids, and maybe here we need to say, younger children, because I think probably by the time, you're 9, 10, 11 years old, and Kassy, I know you're a parent, but your son is still quite young. So, you probably haven't hit this point yet. So maybe the other parents out there in the audience who are listening can chime in and let us know what they observed with their own kids. But I have a feeling that once you're around that 9- to 11-year-old mark, then you start to be more **self-conscious**. And **self-conscious** means you're more aware of the people around you and how other people are judging you or perceiving you. And so, you know, really young kids

will have no problems at all just doing anything in public, singing, dancing, and they just don't care what other people think, right? And that's a wonderful thing. I wish we could retain that more as adults. I wish I could keep that more as an adult.

But one way that that does come out, and it often doesn't, but one place it does is, like you said, Kassy, in these very trusting relationships. And to sort of share an embarrassing story from my life this week, my wife put on a record to play some music in our home. And it was like a compilation of old jazz music. And it was like one of the songs, I can't even remember what the title of the song is now, but it's like an old Broadway standard. And of course, my wife is just listening to the jazz song. I don't even think she knew that it was like a show tune, but it's like a famous show tune or Frank Sinatra song or something. It's like one of those songs that all English speakers know, and we just know the lyrics because it's in the popular culture. So, when this song was on, then I started like singing the song in my Frank Sinatra impersonation and doing a stupid little like showtime dance, like a Broadway dance in front of her. Like I was a member of the Rat Pack or something. I know I'm **mixing up my cultural references** here with Frank Sinatra and Broadway kind of different scenes. But yeah, anyways, my wife was laughing and was like, does your mom know you act like this sometimes? Like, does your mom know that you're so silly? And I was thinking like, no, I would be kind of embarrassed probably to do this kind of thing in front of my mom even.

**Kassy:** And you probably did it all the time when you were a kid, though.

**Andrew:** Yeah, yeah, probably I would have. So, I think you're absolutely right that in these very, very trusting relationships, our inner self comes out. And I would be probably mortified to do that in front of other people.

**Kassy:** Well, we love the story, nevertheless.

**Andrew:** Kassy, what kind of child were you? Were you like a shy child, an outgoing child? What kind of ways did you like to play as a child?

**Kassy:** In school, I was a bit shy, but at home I was a total weirdo.

**Andrew:** How so?

**Kassy:** I don't know. I was... I was just so goofy. I loved to make my family laugh. I don't know how I did it. I don't think I was actually funny, but I think I thought I was so funny that everybody else just laughed at my attempts. But I was always trying to make a joke, and I loved making silly impressions. I have an embarrassing story I can share from my childhood.

**Andrew:** I love it.

**Kassy:** One time, my sisters and I, we went to a hunting lodge with my... my father and my uncle. He was part of the lodge, and we weren't there to hunt, of course. We were young. But on the off season, we could go and ride the four-wheelers and hang out in the lodge and watch movies. One night, my father and uncle and their friends were watching some really boring war movie, and my sisters and I were not interested at all. There weren't a lot of toys in the lodge, so we decided to become superheroes. But we did not have the proper clothes or attire, so we took our underwear, and we tied it around our heads, and then we took some of our jackets and made capes. And we were called... Do you know Captain Underpants, the comic? Yeah, we were like the Captain Underpants sisters or something or other, and we just ran around the house in our underwear. I just remember having the best time, and we were, like, dancing in front of the TV to distract our father from the boring movie. And it's a memory that I cherish with my sisters. You know, now we live far apart, and we don't get to spend as much time together, but when I think back on that memory, I remember all the great times we had and our close bond.

**Andrew:** Wonderful, yeah. I mean, it's amazing how kids really don't need too much to entertain themselves. That's another wonderful thing about childhood is that, you know, your parents might buy you the most expensive toys out there. You might have a huge toy

room filled with just lovely, high-quality toys, expensive toys. But then maybe the most entertaining toy could be just, like, a cardboard box or something. I remember growing up, I didn't come from a rich family where we had a big toy room or anything like that, but I also didn't lack for toys. I had lots of great toys. My parents were very generous, and other family members always gave us lots of stuff, so I grew up very privileged in that way, always having lots to play with. But some of the toys that I remember the most, like I remember once my folks got a new fridge or a new stove, some kind of appliance that comes in a big cardboard box. And that was one of the best days. My brother and I built a fort in the cardboard box, and then after we used the cardboard to like toboggan outside, I remember doing that as well. Just super, super fun, and you can play with it in so many interesting ways, just using your imagination and playing make believe, right? We have this expression "To play make believe" and that just means to use your imagination to create your own fictional world, imaginary world, maybe your own game with new rules. And kids are just so amazing at playing in that way. So, the sense of play, as you mentioned earlier, that sense of wonder is something that children have that we lose, unfortunately, as adults.

**Kassy:** Yeah, **on a tangent** to that, Andrew, do you think that people who create for a living, such as, you know, movie makers, or book writers, or artists, do you think they are closer to their inner child, or do you think their creativity is a lot different than it might have been when they were kids?

**Andrew:** That's a great question. I don't think I have an adequate answer for it. To an extent, I do creative work for a living. I do a lot of creative stuff for Culips. Kassy you as well. Teaching is very creative. We have to think about how we're going to deliver lessons, the materials we're going to make to teach our students. New ways to connect with our students. So maybe we're not creating art, but we are still creative. And I think, for me, I can't speak for other famous directors or amazing musicians, and I would love to hear some really, really high-level artists talk about that. That would be interesting. But I think for me, yeah, it is a way to connect with your inner child. And I think that being creative is



an outlet where we have to make ourselves vulnerable, right? We have to say, I'm going to make this thing, and I'm going to share it with the world. And I hope other people will like it and connect with it. And in a way, we have to do what children do, right? Children are just spontaneous, and they make something and put it out there, and they don't really care what other people think too much. And as adults, we have to go through that similar process, except we are very conscious. I guess the end result is like kids make something, and they throw it out in the world, and they don't care what response they get back from the world. But as adults, we do the same thing. We just care more about the opinions of others. We want people to love our creative output and not criticize it. So yeah, that's a really interesting question, and I would love to hear if I had a chance to talk with some movie directors about that. It would be fascinating to hear what they have to say. We just need Culips to get a little bit more famous, and then I can invite, you know, James Cameron onto the show or something.

**Kassy:** Wow, James Cameron! Andrew, kind of **going off a different tangent** here, but a similar idea, working with our inner child. Are there any items or hobbies that you indulge in now as an adult that you think reflects your inner child?

**Andrew:** Unfortunately, I don't have as much time as I would like to indulge in this hobby, but I do think the way I did it as a child and the way I still do it now are pretty much exactly the same. And that is creating music or playing music. I did take music lessons when I was younger. I took piano lessons. I took some drum lessons. Studied drums for several years, in fact. But I always had music teachers that focused on just creating music, and you can kind of learn how to play as you create. The way that I studied music was really my teachers sort of just encouraged me to create my own music and learn through that process rather than the standard learning the theory, learning the... the correct way to play. And in a lot of ways, I wish that I learned that way now. But I don't know because it's a totally interesting and unique way to approach music. And I can give one example here, and that is my wife plays piano, and she has a piano in our home. And recently, she's been practicing piano a lot. It's lovely. She'll play, and she's really good. She's way better

than me, and she can go to the bookstore and buy sheet music and then put it in front of the piano and then play this classical music, which is really, really impressive. It's amazing. However, if I close the sheet music and I say, "Just play something, just play." And she's like, "Oh, I don't know how to play anything." Right? It's like the way that she learned how to play music was focused on replicating the technique that had been developed by other composers and pianists.

However, in the opposite way, if I sit down on the piano and she puts this sheet music in front of me, I will struggle just to slowly read the notes, and then I don't really know how to play it at all, right? I can just barely understand it at all. However, if she told me, just play, then I could create some song. I would just go solely off my creativity or my ear. And maybe I could figure out the same melody just by using my ear and figuring it out that way, but I can't read sheet music or anything at all. So, I think the way that I learned music when I was younger was just to go channel that inner sense of music that I have within me, and it's still that way now. So, when I play piano or play guitar, I'm just sort of making things up as I go along and creating that way. And yeah, that's one good example that I have something that I did as a hobby when I was younger, and I still do now to an extent, that hasn't changed over time. How about you, Kassy? Do you have an example from your life?

**Kassy:** I think my three main hobbies that I love, and I think all listeners know, reading.

**Andrew:** Reading, reading, and reading, right?

**Kassy:** Reading. I really like baking and playing boardgames. I do them all the time. And I think all three of those activities stemmed from my love of doing them as an inner child. And whenever I feel stress in my everyday life and I need an escape, I do one of those three activities. You know, making the kitchen extremely dirty with all my flour, and butter, and crazy concoctions might make somebody else stressed because they have to clean it. But for me, it is so cathartic. I love it. I dance around the kitchen. I eat cookie dough off the

spoon. So much fun. And even though the board games I play now are much more intense. A lot of the times I like the big ones with tons of pieces and rules. I still get that feeling of competitiveness, but also community because, you know, I'm playing with my friends or family. And I realized that I'm investing so much time and energy into something that honestly doesn't matter technically in the real world. Like, I'm not making money. I'm not, like, making myself better in my everyday life. But it really helps my mental health, and it helps me detach from the quote unquote real world and just go with the flow for a few hours.

**Andrew:** Yeah, that's amazing. I love that. And that sort of connects with the point that Colibri asked us about in the request, because they asked us to talk about mental health and how the inner child is connected to mental health. And it seems like, from hearing that answer, when you take part in these hobbies that you have baking, for example, you're acting like a child while you're baking. And I imagine that's got to be really good for your mental health as well. Like, I'm sure, you know, from time to time you think back, you have flashes back to the real world and maybe you get stressed like, oh, I have that appointment next week or I have to do this, I have to do that, right? But it allows us to disconnect, to relieve stress. And yeah, I think anytime that we can act like a child and connect with that inner child, that's going to be really good for our mental health because it allows us to disconnect from the things that worry us and cause us to think negative thoughts, that kind of thing. And I think that's true for me as well. Does that ring true for you? Do you think I'm on to something there?

**Kassy:** If I had a piece of advice for someone who wants to reconnect with their inner child, it just popped into my brain now, but I can't stop thinking about it. When I was in Thailand, one thing that made me so happy was trying a bunch of different new sports with my friends that I made there. I was terrible at them. I tried pickleball, rock climbing, sand beach volleyball, and yeah, some of them were really good at it and others in our group were just the worst. Like, we missed every single time somebody hit the ball towards us, but we laughed, and we had an amazing time and there was no stress. You know,

sometimes when you join an adult sports league, it's really competitive or you feel like, oh, I can't join this because I don't know how to play, and I'll let everybody down. But, if you can find an adult league of something that is not competitive in the slightest and maybe pick something where all of you suck, you're just all bad, and you play for a few hours, you can have such a fun time. And I think that's what kids do a lot. They don't know how to play sports. They're all bad. They hit the ball and it goes flying everywhere, but they do it every single day because they love it.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I think that's amazing. That sounds like a lot of fun. I think I would like to hang out with that group of friends and do all those new activities. Sounds really, really cool. But I think that's a great lesson too, that if we can take that sense of play and put it into other areas of our life as well, in our relationships, in our professional lives, I mean, that could be really great too. Of course, you still have to be serious, but introducing an element of play is a great idea. And I think even with learning English too, right? A lot of people feel stressed about learning English. Kassy, probably you and I could talk about, for hours, all the stress that we receive about trying to learn Korean language, right? It can be stressful. You want to level up your fluency as fast as possible. And we put a lot of this pressure on us to try and learn and to become better as soon as possible. And maybe if we just **took a step back** and introduced some elements of play and fun into the process, I mean, I think that would be good even, I'm not a cognitive scientist, but I could see there being some kind of mental advantages to that. Where if you're taking some of the stress out of doing something difficult, like learning a second language and introducing some elements of play, having fun with it, you're not as stressed. Maybe your mind is more open to learning and you're learning in a more natural way, that maybe that result that you want, the learning quicker and faster and improving quicker and faster, maybe that would come as a result. I'm not sure. I'd have to look at the literature. I'm sure there's been some psychologists that have studied it, some linguists who have studied it, but I think that makes sense to me. So, I'm going to take some inspiration, some motivation from this episode and going forward, maybe try to introduce some elements of play into my Korean learning.

**Kassy:** Me too. I completely agree with you. And Andrew, I think it's funny. Before we started recording this episode, I think you and I kind of struggled at first to think about what we were going to talk about, maybe because we're tired or a little bit bogged down in our adult lives. But after we started talking about this topic more, I feel really elevated and kind of excited to get back and experience my inner child. So, this was a really great episode.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I love this one too. And I also feel like my inner child has awoken a little bit. So, it's great. It's great. It was really fun to talk about this topic. And I'd love to continue the discussion with everyone. I'm sure listeners out there, you have a lot to say about this yourself. So just like Colibri did by participating on our Discord server, we'd love for you to participate on our Discord as well. We have over 7,000 people over there who are improving their English every day by using English. So, our Discord server is a great, friendly place filled with learners from all over the world who just practice using English in a really natural and fun way. So, head on over, we'll put the link in the description for this episode. Of course, it's free to join. And we'll be continuing the discussion over there. And we'd love to hear your thoughts and opinions about this topic, the child within us. Also, guys, please don't forget there is an interactive transcript and helpful study guide that is available for this episode for all Culips members. So, if you'd like to support the work that we do here at Culips, and also get great learning materials at the same time, then just head on over to our website, [Culips.com](https://www.culips.com). You can sign up and become a member today for an affordable price. Well, Kassy, we'll leave it here for now. But thank you for talking about this topic with me. It was super interesting conversation, and we'll talk to you soon.

**Kassy:** Yep. See you guys. Bye.

## Detailed Explanations

### Doozy

Noun

The word **doozy** is used to describe something that is extraordinary, extreme, or impressive. In the episode transcript, Andrew says, “We have a **doozy** today. We have a **doozy** of a topic.” He means that the topic they are discussing is exciting, special, or unique. People often use **doozy** to talk about things that are either really amazing or really difficult. It can describe a big challenge, an intense experience, or something surprising.

You can use **doozy** in many situations. For example, if you take a really hard test, you might say, “That test was a **doozy**!” If you experience a huge thunderstorm, you could say, “That storm was a **doozy**!” If someone tells you an unbelievable story, you might react by saying, “Wow, that’s a **doozy**!” The word adds emphasis and makes it clear that something was not ordinary.

Some synonyms for **doozy** include “big deal,” “whopper,” “beast,” and “humdinger.” These words all describe something remarkable or extreme. One thing to remember about **doozy** is that it can be used in both positive and negative situations, so you need to listen to the context. For example, “That roller coaster was a **doozy**!” sounds exciting, but “That headache was a **doozy**” means it was really bad. Also, **doozy** is an informal word, so it is best used in casual conversations rather than in formal writing or business emails.

To help remember **doozy**, think about something so extreme that it makes your head spin, like a roller coaster or a huge storm. You can even connect it to the word dizzy – if something is a **doozy**, it might feel overwhelming, just like when you feel dizzy!

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

**Sophie:** I just got off the phone with my landlord. That was a **doozy** of a conversation.

**Tyler:** Oh no. Rent increase?

**Sophie:** Yep, and they won’t fix the leaky sink unless I sign another year-long lease.

**Emily:** Our math test today was a **doozy**. Half the class didn’t even finish.

**Brian:** I knew I should have studied more!

**Emily:** I just hope we passed!

## To weigh down

### Phrasal verb

When talking about the responsibilities of adulthood and how they affect people, Andrew says, “Those responsibilities **weigh down** on us so heavily.” In this context, Andrew is explaining why people lose their sense of fun and playfulness as they grow older. He suggests that from a young age until retirement, people are often so focused on work, raising families, and daily tasks that they don’t have time to enjoy life in the same way they did as children. These responsibilities act like a heavy weight, making people feel stressed, tired, and unable to fully relax.

The phrase **weigh down** can refer to both physical weight and emotional burdens. If you are carrying a heavy backpack, you might say, “This bag is **weighing me down**.” This means that the physical weight is making it hard to move. However, the phrase is also commonly used for feelings and stress. For example, “All this homework is **weighing me down**,” means that the work feels overwhelming and difficult to handle. People also say, “He was **weighed down** by guilt,” meaning that the guilt was making him feel heavy inside.

Some synonyms for **weigh down** include “burden,” “drag down,” and “overload.” These verbs all describe something that makes a person feel heavy, tired, or stressed. It is important to remember that **weigh down** can be both literal and figurative, so you need to listen to the context. If someone says, “This coat is **weighing me down**,” they mean it’s physically heavy. But if they say, “These worries are **weighing down on me**,” they mean they are feeling stressed or sad.

A helpful way to remember **weigh down** is to imagine carrying a big, heavy backpack full of rocks. Every rock represents a worry or responsibility, and the more you have, the harder it is to move. When you hear someone say they are being **weighed down**, picture them struggling under this heavy load.

Here are a couple more examples with **to weigh down**:

**Stephanie:** You’ve been so tense lately. Is everything okay?

**Jake:** Honestly, work has been **weighing down on me**. I have deadlines piling up, and I don’t know how to manage it all.

**Toby:** I still feel terrible about what I said to Sarah yesterday.

**Jasmine:** Don’t let it **weigh you down** too much. Just apologize.

**Toby:** You’re right. I need to fix this before it gets worse.



## Self-conscious Adjective

In the episode, Andrew says, “Once you're around that 9- to 11-year-old mark, you start to be more **self-conscious**.” He is talking about how, as children grow older, they begin to worry more about how others see them. Younger kids usually don't care if they look silly, but as they grow up, they become more aware of their actions, appearance, and how other people might judge them. This feeling of worrying too much about what others think is called being **self-conscious**.

**Self-conscious** is an adjective that describes a person who feels nervous, embarrassed, or uncomfortable because they think other people are watching or judging them. A person might feel **self-conscious** about their looks, their clothes, the way they talk, or even how they act in social situations. For example, someone who is **self-conscious** might not want to dance at a party because they think people will laugh at them.

We use **self-conscious** to describe people who feel shy, nervous, or awkward because they think others are judging them. For example, she felt **self-conscious** about her new haircut because it was shorter than she expected. Another example is, someone might get **self-conscious** when he has to speak in front of a big crowd. In both cases, the person feels uneasy because they think others are noticing them in a negative way.

A simple way to remember **self-conscious** is to think of a person standing in front of a big mirror. They keep looking at themselves and worrying about how they look. That's how **self-conscious** people feel – they think others are watching them and judging them, even when they might not be!

Here are a couple more examples with **self-conscious**:

**James:** I hate speaking English in front of native speakers. I feel so **self-conscious** about my pronunciation.

**Rachel:** Don't worry! Everyone makes mistakes. They'll just be happy you're trying.

**Nathan:** You're so quiet today. Everything okay?

**Tina:** I feel really **self-conscious** in big groups. I don't know what to say.

**Nathan:** No pressure! Just listen and jump in when you're ready.

**Tina:** Alright, I'll do my best...



## To go off on a tangent

Idiom

In the episode, Kassy says, “Yeah, **on a tangent** to that, Andrew, do you think that people who create for a living...?” Here, she is introducing a new idea that is not directly connected to the main topic of conversation. When someone **goes off on a tangent**, they start talking about something unrelated or only loosely connected to the original topic. This often happens in casual conversations when people change the subject unexpectedly.

**To go off on a tangent** means to start talking about something different from the main topic. People usually do this when they remember something interesting, get excited, or lose focus. For example, if a teacher is explaining history but suddenly starts talking about their vacation, they have **gone off on a tangent**. Sometimes, tangents can be fun and interesting, but other times, they can distract from the main conversation.

The phrase **go off on a tangent** comes from geometry. In math, a tangent is a line that touches a curve at just one point but then goes in a completely different direction. The idea is the same in conversation – when you **go off on a tangent**, you touch on the main topic briefly but then move away from it.

Some synonyms for go off on a tangent include “get sidetracked,” “wander off topic,” and “lose focus.” The opposite would be “stay on track” or “stick to the point,” which means to keep talking about the main subject without distraction. One thing to remember is that **going off on a tangent** is usually not planned – it happens naturally when someone remembers something or gets excited about a different idea.

A simple way to remember **go off on a tangent** is to imagine a road that suddenly turns in a different direction. Instead of continuing straight on the main path, it curves away unexpectedly – just like a conversation that changes topics without warning!

Here are a couple more examples with **to go off on a tangent**:

**Nina:** I’ve been meaning to say, let’s maybe not discuss quarterly reports in the break room.

**Chris:** Speaking of the break room, have you seen the new coffee machine?

**Nina:** Chris, you’re **going off on a tangent** again. Let’s stay on track.

**Alex:** I love talking to Grandpa, but he always **goes off on tangents**.

**Sarah:** Oh yeah, I asked about his job once, and he spent an hour talking about his old dog.

## To mix up [something]

Phrasal verb

In the episode, Andrew says, "I know I'm **mixing up my cultural references** here with Frank Sinatra and Broadway kind of different scenes." He is talking about how he confused two different ideas – Frank Sinatra's music and Broadway musicals – even though they are not exactly the same. He realizes that he is combining two cultural elements that don't fully match. This is a good example of how **mix up** is used when someone mistakenly connects two things that are different or confuses details while talking or thinking.

**Mix up** is a phrasal verb that means to confuse or mistake one thing for another. It can be used when talking about words, numbers, people, places, or concepts that get wrongly combined or misidentified. For example, if someone confuses two celebrities and says, "I always **mix up** Matt Damon and Leonardo DiCaprio," they mean that they have trouble telling them apart.

We use **mix up** when referring to simple mistakes or confusion. For example, "I **mixed up** the meeting times and showed up an hour early." Another example is, "She **mixed up** the sugar and salt while baking." This phrase can also be used when things are physically or mentally disorganized, like "The teacher **mixed up** the test papers and gave everyone the wrong one." In all of these cases, **mix up** means accidentally confusing things.

Some synonyms for **mix up** include "confuse," "mistake," and "jumble," while antonyms include "sort out," "organize," and "clarify." One thing to remember is that **mix up** usually refers to accidental mistakes, not intentional ones.

A simple way to remember **mix up** is to think of mixing ingredients in a recipe. If you **mix up** the sugar and salt, your food won't taste right – just like when you **mix up** information, it doesn't make sense!

Here are a couple more examples with **to mix up [something]**:

**Ben:** Are you ready for the concert tomorrow?

**Mia:** What? I thought it was next Saturday!

**Ben:** Nope. Looks like you **mixed up the dates**.

**Daniel:** I always **mix up** "affect" and "effect."

**Emma:** Same! English is so confusing sometimes.

## To take a step back

### Idiom

In the episode, Andrew says, "Maybe if we just **took a step back** and introduced some elements of play and fun into the process, I think that would be good." Here, he is talking about learning English and how sometimes, instead of feeling stressed, learners should **take a step back** and try to enjoy the process more. He suggests that when something feels overwhelming, it can help to pause, look at the situation from a different perspective, and approach it in a more relaxed way.

**Take a step back** means to pause and look at a situation from a wider or calmer perspective. It can be used when someone is too emotionally involved, stressed, or focused on small details, and they need to rethink or evaluate the bigger picture. For example, if a person is arguing with a friend, they might **take a step back** to calm down and think about the situation more clearly. Similarly, when working on a difficult problem, **stepping back** can help you find a better solution.

We use **take a step back** when giving advice or suggesting a more thoughtful, less emotional approach. For example, "Before making a decision, **take a step back** and consider all your options." Another example is, "She was so frustrated with her project that she decided to **take a step back** and try again later." This phrase is often used in work, problem-solving, relationships, and emotional situations where people need to stop, reflect, and make a better choice.

A simple way to remember **take a step back** is to imagine looking at a puzzle too closely. If you're standing right next to it, you might not see how the pieces fit together. But if you step back, you can see the whole picture and figure out where the pieces go.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take a step back**:

**Leo:** I don't know if I should accept this job offer or stay where I am.

**Lina:** Well, **take a step back** and think about what you truly want long-term. More money? More flexibility? A better work environment?

**Leo:** That's a good point. I need to stop stressing and look at the bigger picture.

**Abby:** I've been working out every day, but I'm not seeing any progress.

**Seth:** Maybe your body needs rest. **Take a step back**, focus on recovery, and switch up your routine.

**Abby:** I guess I've been pushing too hard. I'll try that.

## Expressions Quiz

**1. If responsibilities are weighing down on you, how do you feel?**

- a) Stressed and overwhelmed.
- b) Excited and energized.
- c) Confident and ready to relax.
- d) Completely indifferent.

**2. What might make a person feel self-conscious?**

- a) Relaxing at a quiet beach.
- b) Watching a funny movie alone.
- c) Wearing comfortable clothes at home.
- d) Speaking in front of a large audience.

**3. Which of the following is an example of "going off on a tangent"?**

- a) A friend follows the GPS exactly while giving directions.
- b) A manager discusses the meeting agenda step by step.
- c) A teacher starts explaining a math problem and suddenly begins talking about their vacation.
- d) A student takes detailed notes and stays focused during class.

**4. Which of these sentences correctly uses "mix up"?**

- a) The chef mixed up the ingredients perfectly to make the cake taste great.
- b) She mixed up her flight times and missed her plane.
- c) I mixed up the puzzle pieces and now it's easier to solve.
- d) He mixed up his shoes before putting them on correctly.

**5. If a coach tells an athlete to "take a step back" before making a decision, what does he mean?**

- a) Stop playing the sport forever.
- b) Try to move faster.
- c) Think carefully before deciding.
- d) Move backward physically.

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## Comprehension Quiz

6. What embarrassing story does Andrew share about himself?
7. How did Andrew's wife react to his singing and dancing?
8. What does Kassy say about how adults can reconnect with their inner child?
9. Why does Andrew say that taking a step back can help with learning English?
10. How does Andrew suggest people can overcome feeling self-conscious?

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Do you think it's important to stay playful and connected to our inner child as adults? How would you recommend doing it?
2. The episode talks about how people become more **self-conscious** as they grow older. Do you agree? At what age do you think people start worrying about how others see them?
3. The episode touches on how responsibilities can **weigh** people **down** as they grow up. What are some ways people can balance responsibilities and enjoyment in life?
4. Have you ever **mixed up** two similar things, like names, dates, or words? What happened?
5. Why do you think it is sometimes helpful to **take a step back** when facing a difficult situation? Can you give an example from your life?

## Quiz Answers

1.a    2.d    3.c    4.b    5.c

6. Andrew tells a story about how he started doing a Frank Sinatra-style dance and singing in front of his wife when a jazz song came on.

7. She laughed and jokingly asked if his mom knew that he acted like that sometimes.

8. She shares that trying new, non-competitive sports with friends helped her feel like a kid again.

9. He believes that taking a step back and adding fun to the learning process can reduce stress and help people improve more naturally.

10. He suggests that in trusting relationships, people feel safe enough to be silly without worrying about judgment.

### Episode credits

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