

## Bonus episode #069 - Goodbye King Pinky

### Episode description

In this episode, Andrew talks about saying goodbye to his pet dog, Pinky. Plus in the vocabulary lesson, he teaches you the expression **to set off your alarm bells**.

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Hello, and welcome to bonus episode number 69 of the Culips English Podcast. How's it going? I hope you're doing well. My name is Andrew and I'll be your host and your English study buddy for today. And in our bonus episode series, what I do is tell you some stories from my daily life as a Canadian living in South Korea. I tell you about the highs, the lows, and just the everyday things that I get up to. And the goal is that by listening to these stories, you'll be able to improve your English fluency.

Now, for every bonus episode that we produce, there is an absolutely free interactive transcript. And you can access that transcript and follow along as you listen to me today, just by following the link that's in the description for this episode. And we also make a PDF version of the transcript as well. So, if you'd rather go old school and download a PDF file, then that option is available to you as well.

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In this week's episode, I'm going to talk to you about a sad and difficult experience that my wife and I recently had to go through. You know, in many ways, life is like a roller coaster. You've probably heard me use that metaphor before, because roller coasters have ups and downs and twists and turns, and so does life. And I always want to be honest and real with Culips listeners and talk about what's really going on in my life. And that means that from time to time, unfortunately, I'm going to be riding the bottom part of the roller coaster, and I should tell you about that too. And that's kind of where I'm at right now. So, this week's story is going to be an emotional one for me, but I'll try my best to tell it clearly and without breaking down too much. So anyways, without any further introduction, let's get started with the episode, and with this week's sad story.

Have you ever heard the expression rip off the band aid? A band aid is what you put on your skin when you have a little cut, and it protects the wound from getting dirty, and allows the cut to heal and your skin to heal. And after a few days, once your skin has healed, then it's time to remove the band aid. And sometimes the glue on the band aid that attaches to your skin is rather strong. And if you just remove that band aid slowly, then it can be painful as that glue is ripping off of your skin. So instead of going through that discomfort, it's often easier just to quickly remove the band aid and to rip the band aid off of your skin. Well, that's what this expression means. It means when you have some bad news to share with somebody or something unpleasant to talk about. Instead of beating around the bush and avoiding the subject, it's better to directly go ahead and talk about the subject and confront it head on. And so, I'm going to rip off the band aid here and I'm going to tell you the sad story from my life.

So, if you're a regular listener of Culips, you'll know that in November of 2020, we adopted this cute little white dog named Pinky from a shelter. And when Pinky first came to our home, we didn't know really any information about him. We didn't know how old he was. We didn't know that he was deaf, turns out that he was deaf. And so, after we took him to

the vet for the first time, we learned that he was around 13 or 14 years old. So already when we first adopted Pinky, he was quite an old dog. So maybe you can tell where I'm going with this story, but I have some sad news to report and that is our sweet, sweet Pinky Boy passed away on September the ninth.

So, this was heartbreaking for my wife and I, we were so, so attached to Pinky. We loved him so much. We don't have any children. So, in many ways, Pinky was like our child. And I know probably people out there that aren't pet people, or maybe our parents, maybe you think that's a little ridiculous to say. But I guess that's the closest analogy that I could make to describe the relationship that we had with Pinky. Earlier in the year, around May or June, I actually talked about Pinky's health in a bonus episode. And I'll put the link to that episode in the description. In case you didn't catch that one, and you'd like to hear the backstory.

But about three months ago, when we moved from our old apartment to our new home, we had a health scare with Pinky. And we had to go to the animal hospital with him a couple of times and get a bunch of checks and procedures done. And it was at that time that we learned that Pinky had cancer. Now, to be honest with you, I thought that we might lose Pinky at that time, his condition really wasn't that great at all. But he made a miraculous rebound. And he went back to his old normal self. And it was great. We moved into our new house together. And he seemed to adjust to living in the new home without any problems at all. And he was back to his regular self.

Now, of course, he was never really a super energetic dog to begin with. He was always really calm and quiet. And you know, even when we go out for a walk, sometimes my wife and I would complain about how slow he walked, because he was always a very slow walker. And the reason why we would complain is that often when we'd go out for a walk, he would just walk really, really slowly. And it would take us 20 or 30 minutes just to go

around the block. But then as soon as we get home, he'd get really excited and run around the house. And so, we knew that he could move quickly and that he could run and jump if he wanted to. But for whatever reason, when we would go out for a walk, he was always a slow boy, a slow dog, and he took his time.

Anyways, after that health scare and when we moved into the new house, he seemed to be totally fine. Well, fine until he wasn't. I should say that Pinky is the first dog that I've ever had, as an adult. My family had a pet dog when I was a child, but I was too young to really clearly remember what it was like to lose that dog. So, this is the first time I've had a pet dog where I had to go through the death process with that dog. And the same goes for my wife as well. So, like I said, Pinky was fine until one day he wasn't. One day, he just woke up and didn't seem to have as much energy as usual. And he wasn't really interested in eating food, but that didn't really set off our alarm bells too much, because that wasn't super unusual for Pinky. Throughout the time that we had him. Occasionally, he'd be a little sleepy and would sleep for most of the day or wouldn't eat food one day, that wasn't really out of the ordinary for him. He would do that from time to time. So, we weren't too alarmed or surprised when he did that.

And to be honest with you, Pinky was never interested in food, he was never a big eater. It's so strange, you know, you think that a dog would love to eat just almost any kind of food, right? Most dogs are like that. But Pinky was totally not like that. He wasn't interested in snacks, he wasn't really interested in any kind of dog food. In fact, we often had to encourage him to eat. And the only thing that he seemed to enjoy to consume was a kind of dog milk, he really would always drink up the dog milk, if we gave it to him. And I guess that was a kind of dairy beverage. It's not milk from a dog. It was some kind of other dairy beverage that he enjoyed. So, we often give that to him.

And in fact, that was one of the signs that showed us that something was up with Pinky because the next day we tried to get him to drink some dog milk even, and he wouldn't touch that. So, my wife and I suddenly got worried. Pinky was more lethargic. And lethargic means that you don't have energy. So, Pinky was more lethargic, didn't seem too interested in food, didn't seem too interested in drinking water at all, either. So we went to a vet, we took Pinky to the vet, and the doctor gave us some medicine and said just to monitor his situation, and hopefully he would improve. So, we brought him home and we did that and unfortunately Pinky's condition did the opposite. It didn't improve at all. It just seemed to deteriorate and deteriorate and deteriorate.

So, another day went by, and my wife started to get very concerned about Pinky and I was as well. So, we took him to the vet again, this time, we actually went to a different hospital that had a bit of a better setup. And unfortunately, at that hospital, they confirmed that Pinky's cancer had spread throughout his body. And his prognosis didn't look good. And in fact, he was probably in pain.

So, the doctor gave Pinky a patch to put on his skin to help ease the pain, and also gave him some pain medicine. And at that point on, it was a kind of hospice situation. We took Pinky home. The doctor told us that Pinky would probably pass in the next few days, and so just to bring him home and make him as comfortable as possible and to enjoy the last few days that we had with him. So, we brought Pinky home. And that's what we did, we tried to make Pinky as comfortable as possible. Again, he was pretty lethargic, he would stand up and walk around for a little bit, but most of the time, he just lived down and was sleeping. And really, you could just tell that his condition was not so good at all. He didn't look good, he was losing weight. He hadn't had anything to eat for several days. Although my wife and I tried everything we gave him, every kind of food we could think of, we tried many different ways to feed him, he just wouldn't eat. And so, we knew the time was coming, where we'd have to say goodbye to Pinky.

Now, about 24 hours after we got back from the hospital, and we were into the hospice phase of things, Pinky started to act like he was in pain. And when we were talking to the doctor, you know, the doctor said that it's very likely that Pinky is in pain. And so that really broke my heart and my wife's heart to think of our poor little dog in pain in the last part of his life. And so, my wife and I had a discussion about whether we should let Pinky pass in our home and just wait for nature to do its thing, and take him naturally, or if we should put him down.

Now to put an animal down. Or even I guess you could use this for a human as well. But in most situations, this expression is reserved for animals. To put an animal down means to euthanize the animal. So, to give the animal an injection that kills it. So, my wife and I had a discussion about whether we should euthanize Pinky and put him down in the evening, and we said we'd sleep on it and make a decision the next day.

Well, that night, we didn't sleep at all, because Pinky was in a lot of discomfort that evening. He cried for the first time. I had never heard him cry before, he was always a really silent dog. I think maybe I've even talked on Culips about how we only heard Pinky bark one time ever in his life. So, he was always a really, really quiet dog. And to hear him cry, like that was just so heartbreaking. And it happened at night. So, there wasn't really too much that we could do for Pinky other than to give him the medicine that the doctor had prescribed. But my wife and I were up all night trying to console Pinky and make him comfortable. And thankfully, the medicine that we gave him finally kicked in, and he was able to sleep a little bit. But we came to the decision that it didn't look like Pinky would be able to peacefully pass in our house. And we didn't want to put him through any pain. So, we decided that as soon as the animal hospital opened the next morning that we would take him there to put him down.



And so that's what we did. And it was maybe one of the hardest things that I've ever had to do in my life. I guess in a way, I'm lucky to be able to say that, because I haven't really experienced a lot of loss in my life with close family members. Of course, I've had loved family members pass away in the past, and I've had to go through that, but nothing on this scale. And I didn't really even know how attached I was to Pinky. Like I knew I loved Pinky, and I enjoyed having him around so much. And he was a real source of joy in my life and my wife's life. But I didn't realize just how attached I was to him until it was the end and seeing him go through the final stages of his life was really, really tough. My wife and I were just a mess. Crying so much at home, when Pinky was sick, crying on the way to the animal hospital, sobbing in the animal hospital. It must have been quite the sight.

And I joked to my wife that if you were to combine all the times in my whole life, and I'm 39 years old, all of the times that I've cried in my whole life up until now based on family members passing away, or based on breaking up with ex-girlfriends, or based on watching a sad movie or reading a sad book, based on anything that has caused me to cry in my life. If you added all that up, and then added up all of the tears that I've shed over Pinky, well, then I've probably cried about 10 times more over Pinky than I have about anything else in my whole life. It was just a really heartbreaking experience.

But I'm glad that in the end, we were able to hold Pinky in our arms as we put him down. And as people here in Korea like to say he crossed the Rainbow Bridge. So, we'll miss Pinky so much. Like I said, he was a real source of happiness in our lives, and our house feels empty without him. To be honest, coming home just isn't quite the same, when Pinky Boy isn't here to greet us. And, you know, we adopted Pinky during the height of the pandemic. And during a lot of that time, my wife and I both worked from home, and my wife is actually still working most of the time from home. So, during the whole pandemic, we were with Pinky Boy, every day. He was around every day, he was a part of our life



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24/7. And so now that he's gone, things just don't feel the same, our house feels empty. And it also feels like a part of my heart is empty as well.

But it's only been less than two weeks since Pinky passed. And I've been reading online about pet grief, pet grief is a real thing. And a lot of the posts that I've read have said things like when you think about your pet, in the moment, right now, you'll just be sad. And that's how I feel right now when I think of Pinky, I get really sad, and I miss him. But in the future, when I think of Pinky, according to these posts, I'll just remember the good times that I've spent with him and all the memories that I have with him and with my wife. The three of us together. So, I know time heals all wounds and things will be OK. My wife and I will be OK. But it was just a difficult experience that we had to go through.

And it's part of the process that you have to go through when you have a pet. And the reality of it, and it sucks but it's true, that dogs and cats, or really most pets that humans raise unless you're a keeper of parrots or tortoises, I guess, that our pets, they just don't live as long as we do. So, it's part of the process of having a pet. And we had to go through it. But I'm glad that in the end, we were able to give Pinky a happy home. I don't know too much about the start of Pinky's life. I know he was in a shelter, and he went from home to home to home and kind of temporary situations. I don't know too much about his life pre coming to our house. But I do know that for the final bit of his life, Pinky had a happy environment, he was well cared for. In fact, he was spoiled. I would often joke to my wife that we should call him King Pinky, because he lived the life of a king for the last few years in our home. So, I can rest assured knowing that Pinky had a good end of life and was able to pass on to the other side peacefully.

So, rest in peace to my sweet dog, Pinky. And thanks to all the listeners out there who asked about Pinky over the last little while, it was really reassuring to us to know that he had supporters and people cheering him on from all around the world. And I'll make sure

to post some of my favorite Pinky pictures over on our Instagram as well. So, if you'd like to check those out, just navigate over to the Culips Instagram page, and I'll put the link in the description for this episode.

Anyways, that was one of the difficult things my wife and I had to go through recently. But I've also had some pleasant surprises in my life. And I'm going to tell you some happier stories next week. So, stay tuned for those.

And now it's time for this week's vocabulary lesson.

Earlier in the episode, I told you that when Pinky first started acting lethargic, it didn't set off our alarm bells. That's the expression that I'd like to teach you about today, to set off your alarm bells. You know, I think there are several different kinds of idioms and expressions in English. And I think you'd probably agree with me there. There are the kinds of expressions that maybe you don't technically know. But then once you hear them, then you instantly can understand what they mean. But even though you understand the expression you would never think to use it when you're speaking English because you didn't know it existed in the first place. On the other hand, there are expressions that you don't know and then when you hear them you can't understand them, and you would never be able to use them in your own conversation for those reasons. Then, of course, there are also idioms and expressions, and I think especially our listeners who speak European languages can sympathize with me here, that are exactly the same as expressions and idioms that already exist in your native language. And so, using them and understanding them are pretty simple.

Well, I think that this expression 'to set off your alarm bells' is probably one of those expressions that you can easily understand just from hearing it. But without knowing of its existence, it's probably not one that you would ever use yourself. Well, now that you know

that it exists in English, let's work on adding it to your productive vocabulary, so that you yourself can use it in your future English conversations to make your English sound super fluent and natural. Now, before we talk about exactly what this expression means, when it should be used, and how it can be used, I want to rewind and listen to the part of the story where I used this expression. And I said, to set off our alarm bells, just a couple of more times, so we can get some context. So, let's rewind, go back, and listen again now.

And he wasn't really interested in eating food, but that didn't really set off our alarm bells too much, because that wasn't super unusual for Pinky.

OK, and now let's get into the nitty gritty and talk about what this expression means. So, if something sets off your alarm bells, then it means that something is worrying you and is a sign that a bigger problem is about to happen. Now I use this expression in the negative. I said that when Pinky first started ignoring his food, it didn't set off our alarm bells, meaning that it didn't worry us too much. So that's good to know, you can use this expression to express that something isn't worrying you and also that something is worrying you. It works both ways. I should also point out that this expression can be used with many other verbs, but the meaning is still the same.

So, you could say, to raise the alarm bells, to ring the alarm bells, to set off the alarm bells, to sound the alarm bells. There are many variations, there might even be some that aren't coming to mind right now. But the meaning is still the same. Something happens and that triggers a strong feeling of warning or concern in you. And we often use this expression when something happens or is said that makes us feel worried or uneasy or suspicious. So as always, I've prepared three example sentences for us to listen to and learn from so that we can see how a native English speaker would use this expression in a normal way in their everyday speaking. So, let's listen to the first example sentence now. Here we go.

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**Example sentence number one.**

When Jenny missed her curfew by three hours, it really set off the alarm bells for her parents.

Let's break this example sentence down. So, in that example sentence we hear about a family and the alarm bells were set off for the parents of that family. The parents became worried and concerned. Why? Because their daughter, Jenny, missed her curfew. And a curfew is a time limit where children well, more specifically teenagers usually have to come home by. So many families will have you know like a 10pm curfew or 11pm curfew, depends on the age of the kid. But there is a time where that kid must come home by that is what we call a curfew. And so, the daughter, Jenny, missed the curfew by three hours and that really set off the alarm bells for her parents. Her parents became very concerned.

**Example sentence number two.**

The recent increase in online scams has set off the alarm bells for many internet users who've become more cautious.

Let's break this second example sentence down. So, in this example sentence, we hear about internet users who have become cautious because their alarm bells have been set off. Why? Because there are more and more scams online these days. So, when we use the internet, we have to be careful. I don't know what your email inbox looks like. But my email inbox is always filled with spam from people who are trying to scam me out of my money. So, when more and more online scams happen, well then that sets off our alarm bells and we become more cautious when we use the internet.

## Example sentence number three.

Hearing about Jason's sudden engagement after only a month of dating, really set off the alarm bells for everyone in our friend group.

Let's break this final example sentence down. In this example sentence, we hear about a guy named Jason and Jason got engaged to his girlfriend after only dating her for a month. And because of that short romance time, well, that set off the alarm bells for everyone in the example sentence speaker's friend group. So, you could imagine that his friends were a little bit worried like, hey, maybe shouldn't you date her for a little bit longer before getting married. Because you're making a very big decision after only a little bit of time, and if things don't work out, well, that could be messy.

So that's it for this episode, everyone. Thank you for listening all the way to the end. And also thank you for being a kind, listening ear for me. It was helpful for me to talk about some of these difficult emotions that I've experienced over the last little while. And of course, also, congratulations on finishing an English study session as well. You did a great job. So that's it for now. But I'll be back next week with some happier stories, I promise. And I'll talk to you all then. Take care, and bye.

## Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

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