

Bonus episode #136 - Onwards and upwards

Episode description

In this episode, Andrew talks about going to his nephew's elementary school graduation and realizing the power of celebrating small wins. He shares how a graduation ceremony can bring families closer, build confidence, and lead to bigger successes. He also explains why supporting each other's achievements, even when they seem small, can make a big difference. This real-life story will help you improve your English fluency and become a better communicator.



Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: When's the last time you celebrated a small victory in your life? Sometimes these small wins can lead to huge accomplishments, and they make a real big difference. In this week's bonus episode, I'm going to tell you the story about celebrating a **small win** in my nephew's life. My name's Andrew, and I help you improve your English fluency through real-life stories and helpful English lessons. To accompany this episode, there's a 100% absolutely free interactive transcript and vocabulary glossary that you can get just by clicking the link in the description. Also, if you're a Culips member, we'll throw in a comprehension quiz and ad-free audio. Plus, you'll also get unlimited access to all of our learning materials that we've designed to help you improve your English fluency faster and better than ever. To join Culips as a member, just visit our website, Culips.com. So, guys, the story for this week is all about me going to **the burbs** outside of Seoul to check out my nephew's graduation ceremony. He graduated from elementary school and is now going into middle school. And I'm going to talk about celebrating small wins and why I realized they're so important. So, we'll get to that story right now. Here we go!

Chapter 1: The graduation ceremony.

Getting to our nephew's graduation ceremony was **no easy feat**. We had to take three trains and a bus to get there. My brother-in-law and his family, they live a little bit outside of Seoul in one of the suburbs of Seoul. Distance-wise, it's not too far. But when you take public transit, it does take a little while to get there. And it took us even longer than expected to get there because one of our connecting trains we missed by **just a hair**. Just a hair. And to miss something by just a hair means to just barely miss it. And we ran for the train. And as my wife was about to jump into the train and I was right behind her, then screen doors closed, and we were locked out. We couldn't ride that train. So of course, when you miss one train, then it's like a chain reaction. And we were late for the next train. And then we were late for the bus. So, when we finally got to the elementary school where our nephew's graduation ceremony was, we were really worried that we were going to be

late. And as we were getting off the bus in front of the school, we noticed that there were just tons of people coming out of the school. And lots of young students who are wearing their best clothes and their graduation clothes. And we were like, oh no, we think we missed it. So, we ran into the school. And I was expecting that it would just happen in the gymnasium or the auditorium. But in fact, instead of having one big school graduation ceremony, it was class by class by class.

And I don't know about where you come from, but where I come from in Canada, I guess our population is really quite small, especially when I was a student. Because I remember at most having maybe two or three sections for each grade. So, for example, if you were like in grade four, there would be A class and B class, you know, two sections. And I think in my elementary school, we had the English class and the French class because I went to a French immersion option school. So, if you wanted to enroll your kids in French immersion, that was an option. So, there's the French immersion class and the English class.

But back to the present day, when we arrived at our nephew's elementary school, there were many, many sections of grade six. I think up until six different sections of grade six. So many, many students attending his school. So, we looked and we're like, is he section one? Is he section two, section three? Finally, we found what section he was. And his class's graduation ceremony was still going on. **We caught just the tail end of it.** And the tail end of it is an expression that just means the very last part of something. So, we caught the tail end of his graduation ceremony. And we were able to go in and take part in the celebrations, take some photos with our nephew, and talk with the teacher as well. And the teacher complimented the family, my wife's family, my extended family on my wife's side for just being so supportive. And she was happy that the whole family came out. My in-laws were there. My wife was there. My brother's whole family was there. So, it was great to have this big show of support for my nephew's graduation.

Chapter 2: Realizing the importance of small wins.

I was born in the mid 80s and I grew up in the 90s. And back in my day, there were no such thing as preschool graduations or elementary school graduations. Of course, we had high school graduation. And I went to my high school graduation ceremony. But I didn't attend my university graduation or my master's degree graduation when I finished grad school. I guess I just thought they weren't that big of an accomplishment. And I always had in my mind that one day I would do a PhD. And I promised myself if I completed my PhD, then I would go to that grad celebration. I thought that would be a real achievement getting a PhD. And I still hope one day that I will do it in the future. Of course, I'm very busy with my career right now and with other things going on in my life. So, it doesn't seem like it's **in the cards** for me anytime soon. And in the cards means like a possibility. It doesn't seem like it's a possibility for me anytime soon. But I've heard that in Canada, once you retire, if you go back to university, then the tuition is free. So, I always thought like, maybe when I retire, I'll go back to university and get my PhD and study for free. It's a good way to spend your retirement, I think, is studying and learning. Why not?

Anyways, for whatever reason, I don't know. Maybe this is just a me thing. Maybe you agree with it too. Maybe it's a generational thing. Maybe it's my generation and younger folk don't think this way. But I never really thought that graduating was too special. And so honestly, even when my wife told me that we should go to our nephew's graduation ceremony, of course, I said, yeah, let's do it. And on the outside, I was very supportive. But in the back of my mind, I was kind of like, do we really need to do this? Is it really important to celebrate just an elementary school graduation ceremony? However, after attending the graduation ceremony for my nephew, I had a change in perspective. And I thought that actually, it's pretty good to celebrate these little wins. Of course, **in the whole scheme of things**, graduating from elementary school is just a first step in becoming an adult, right? It's like one of the very first steps that you take. It's not like winning a Nobel Prize or anything like that. But it is an important first accomplishment. And to see the joy on all of the parents' faces in the classroom and their encouragement to the students and how much of an effect that had on the students as well, it really reinforced to me that it's important to celebrate the small wins. Even small things can have a big effect.

And really, to be honest with you, all of these big life accomplishments, something like winning a Nobel Prize, like I just mentioned, it just doesn't happen **out of the blue** randomly, right? It's a series of small accomplishments and building and building and building and building until you achieve that accomplishment. And if you don't have people **in your corner** cheering for you and motivating you and inspiring you and pushing you on, then you might not hit those big steps later on. And life is a series of chain reactions. And by attending that graduation ceremony, I realized that, yeah, it's important to celebrate the small wins. If we just **brush them off** and ignore them, and to brush something off just means to put it aside, like it's not important, as if you had some dust on your shoulder and you just brushed the dust off of your shoulder to make sure your jacket or your shirt was clean, right? To brush something off. So, I realized that instead of just brushing off these small celebrations, that instead they should be embraced, and we should do them. And especially for younger folks in our lives, it's important to be encouraging and to show our support so that they'll be more motivated in the future to achieve bigger and better things.

Chapter 3: After the ceremony.

So, **after the ceremony was all said and done**, then it was time to celebrate some more. With a delicious lunch. So, we all went to a restaurant together, my in-laws, my wife, my brother-in-law, and his side of the family. We had a delicious lunch, and then we hit up a cafe and had some coffee and just sat around talking and chatting and catching up, doing that kind of family thing. And yeah, celebrating our nephew's graduation from elementary school. And then it was time for my wife and I to make the long trip back to Seoul. Bus, train, train, train. By the time that we finally got home, I think we were pretty exhausted, and we called it a day.

Well, guys, that's going to bring us to the end. I guess in this week's episode, I just wanted to reflect on this breakthrough I had in my thinking that celebrating small wins is important because they can fuel greater and bigger accomplishments down the road. So, in my life, in the future, when I have a small win, I think I'm going to take some time to celebrate it, and I hope you do as well. Now, before I let you go, I have to share this week's completion

code with you. You can leave an example sentence or just a one-word comment using the completion code and share it in our Discord community or our Instagram page or our YouTube page. And that will signal to me and our entire Culips community that you finished the whole entire episode, that you made it all the way to the end.

So, for this week, our completion code is going to be Milestone. Milestone. M-I-L-E-S-T-O-N-E. And a milestone is a marker of an important event or moment in your life. So, for my young nephew graduating from elementary school and moving on to junior high school, that's an important milestone in his life. So, I'm looking forward to reading your comments with this word milestone. Also, don't forget that there's a free interactive transcript and vocabulary glossary for this episode for everyone. The link to that is in the description for this episode. Plus, if you're a Culips member, you'll also get a comprehension quiz and ad-free audio, plus all of the other helpful learning materials that we give to our members to help them achieve their fluency goals with English faster and better than ever. Today's a great time to sign up and become a Culips member. For all of the details, just visit our website, Culips.com.

Well, I'm going to take off now. Thank you again, and I'll talk to you in the next episode. Bye-bye.

Glossary

1. **The burbs** means the suburbs, which are areas just outside a big city. Andrew traveled from Seoul to "the burbs" to attend his nephew's graduation. *Example: My aunt and uncle live in the burbs because they like having a bigger yard and a quieter neighborhood.*
2. **A small win** is a little success or achievement that feels good, even if it is not a huge deal. Andrew talks about how celebrating small wins, like his nephew's elementary school graduation, is important. *Example: Finishing my book report early was a small win because it gave me extra time to relax over the weekend.*
3. **No easy feat** means something is difficult to do. Andrew says getting to his nephew's graduation was no easy feat because they had to take multiple trains and a bus. *Example: Climbing to the top of the mountain was no easy feat, but the view was totally worth it.*
4. **Miss by just a hair** means to almost succeed but fail by a very small amount. Andrew and his wife missed their connecting train by just a hair when the doors closed right before they could get on. *Example: I missed winning the race by just a hair because my friend crossed the finish line less than a second before me.*
5. **To catch the tail end of [something]** means to see or experience the last part of an event. Andrew and his wife caught the tail end of his nephew's graduation ceremony, arriving just in time for the final moments. *Example: We got to the concert late, but at least we caught the tail end of the main singer's performance.*
6. **Not in the cards** means something is unlikely or impossible in the future. Andrew says that getting a PhD is not in the cards for him right now because he is too busy with other things. *Example: I really want to travel to Europe, but since I am saving money for college, it is not in the cards right now.*
7. **In the whole scheme of things** means looking at the big picture or the overall importance of something. Andrew says that in the whole scheme of things, an elementary school graduation is just a small step in life, but it still matters. *Example: Losing one soccer game is not a big deal in the whole scheme of things because we still have a chance to make the playoffs.*

8. **Out of the blue** means something happens suddenly and unexpectedly. Andrew explains that big accomplishments, like winning a Nobel Prize, do not happen out of the blue. They come from many small wins. *Example: Out of the blue, my friend called and invited me to a concert that same night.*
9. **To have people in your corner** means to have friends or supporters who encourage and help you. Andrew says that having people in your corner to cheer you on is important for achieving big goals. *Example: My teacher believed in me when I doubted myself, and it felt great to have someone in my corner.*
10. **To brush off** means to ignore something or act like it does not matter. Andrew realized that instead of brushing off small wins, it is important to celebrate them. *Example: When my little brother made fun of my new haircut, I just brushed it off and did not let it bother me.*
11. **After [something] was all said and done** means after everything is finished. Andrew says that after the graduation was all said and done, they went out to celebrate with a nice lunch. *Example: After the science fair was all said and done, we cleaned up and went out for ice cream to celebrate.*

Episode credits

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