

## Bonus episode #098 - Lifestyle change

### Episode description

In this episode, Andrew shares a simple yet powerful change he made to his daily routine that has left him feeling more rested, productive, and less stressed. He explains how keeping his phone away from his bed at night and reading a book first thing in the morning has made a big difference to his well-being. Andrew also talks about the Korean book he's currently reading and the inspiring journey of its translator. This episode will help improve your English communication skills in several ways:

1. You'll get great practice listening to and understanding natural, conversational English as Andrew shares a personal story.
2. You'll learn useful vocabulary related to daily routines, reading habits, sleep, productivity, and language learning.
3. By listening to Andrew's story, you'll build your ability to understand spoken English and grasp main ideas.
4. The topic of making positive changes might inspire you to think about your own habits and discuss them with others in English.

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Hello everyone and welcome to bonus episode number 98 of the Culips English Podcast. How's it going? My name's Andrew and I'm happy to be back here with you as your trusted English study buddy for another week. I hope you're doing well. In this episode, I'm going to talk about a slight **tweak** to my lifestyle that I've made over the last month or so, maybe a month to six weeks or so, that I've really found to be beneficial and helpful for me. And I'm thinking maybe you too could try it. I don't know. If you are the kind of person who likes to experiment with their lifestyle a little bit and try to find things that can improve your life, then maybe this episode is for you. Maybe what I will talk about in this episode is for you, but of course, you know, feel free to ignore what I'm talking about as well. It's up to you, but I'm going to tell you at least that little story about how I've been tweaking my morning routine. And I hope that you will find it interesting.

So if you're new to the bonus episode series, let me quickly explain what I do here. Each and every week we have a bonus episode. And in the episode, I tell you some stories from my everyday life as a Canadian living abroad in South Korea. And I hope that by listening to these stories, you will be able to B.I.G.B. That is the slogan, the motto for the bonus episode series. B.I.G.B stands for build your fluency, increase your cultural knowledge, grow your vocabulary, and become a better communicator. So if those are your goals, then you've come to the right place. And of course, for each and every bonus episode, we have a free glossary and interactive transcript that anyone can access. It's totally 100% no cost. But if you are a paid Culips member, then you'll also get a comprehension quiz. And we share the comprehension quiz with our members on our Discord server. So, that is where you can find it. If you are a paid Culips member and you're listening now, just go to the Discord server guys. And that's where you can find the quiz.

Speaking of our Discord server, what a lovely transition there, a lovely **segue**. Our Discord server is the place where our community gathers to practice their English. So at Culips here, we really try and **cover all of the bases** with English education. You can listen to the

podcast to improve the B.I.G.B skills like I talked about earlier. But we also have our Discord server where you can practice your English outputting skills. That is writing and speaking. So our server is awesome. You can, like I said, connect with other members. You can practice speaking in some of the voice chat rooms. You can message back and forth with other members and maybe even make some new friends as well. So the server is free to join. There of course is a dedicated spot for our paid members. And that is kind of the plus feature of the Discord, but it is free and available for everybody to access. So yeah, you can check out the Discord just by following the link that's in the description for this episode. And I think last time I checked, we had almost 5,000 members of our Discord. So that's really incredible people from all over the world. And we'd love to have you join us there as well. So yeah, we'll see you on the Discord.

And finally, if you'd like to support the work that we do here at Culips, then consider becoming a Culips member. When you're a Culips member, you'll get access to the helpful study guides and learning materials that we make for each and every episode, plus so much more like access to the member-only Discord channel and invitations to our monthly live streams. We have our member-only series, the Fluency Files as well. There are so many bonuses and benefits that we give to our members. To join and sign up today, just visit the link that's in the description for this episode or navigate to our website, [Culips.com](https://Culips.com).

I've got a question for you. How often do you read? Are you a regular reader? Are you a **bookworm**? Do you spend time every day reading or do you not spend that much time reading at all or maybe never? If I had to be completely honest, completely, completely honest, I would say that I consider myself a reader. I'm someone who enjoys reading. But if I were to calculate the number of books that I read each year, it probably wouldn't be very many. I know some people like Kassy, my Culips co-host here for example, who reads like I think over a hundred books a year. She said last year she read over a hundred books. That's incredible. And I have other friends who read almost a book a week. But me, I'm probably closer to a book every six weeks, maybe even every two months. So usually

by the end of the year, I only read maybe eight, ten, twelve books, **somewhere in that range**.

Now I do spend a lot of time reading and I'm sure you spend a lot of time reading as well. You see our cell phones, our smartphones, are really great ways to access information. And of course we can go to websites and social media and on those places, even though we think we're wasting a lot of time just maybe looking at pictures or looking at silly things, well actually at the same time we are doing a lot of reading, right? We're reading comments, we're reading captions, we're reading news articles, we're reading Wikipedia. I spend a lot of time reading Wikipedia, one of my favorite websites for many reasons. But yeah, I think, you know, a lot of people think using your smartphone equals just time wasting, but we are reading and learning a lot of information online.

However, at least for me, I'm only speaking for myself. Despite the fact that I am reading a lot every day by using my phone, I feel like I'm not really learning anything or I'm not really becoming a wiser or more knowledgeable person. A lot of the stuff that I do read online is **fluff**. And what I mean by fluff is like it's not that important, right? I'll spend a long time reading the Vancouver Canucks Reddit page about different people's opinions about how well the hockey team is doing and which players are doing well and not so well. And at the end of the day, I don't really think that that has benefited me in too many ways. That kind of feels like a waste of time. Even though it's reading, I'm reading text, I'm, you know, reading what people are communicating. But at the end of the day, I feel like that's just fluff and that's a waste of time.

Now, I recently listened to a podcast and the podcast is called Conversations with Tyler. It's hosted by an economist named Tyler Cowen, who is a pretty accomplished academic and economist and blogger. He runs a famous blog as well. And he has a very unique interview style. His interview style that you can hear him use on his podcast is very direct. He asks many **rapid-fire questions** and he often doesn't ask **follow-up questions**, which is really unique for a podcast, I think. There's no one really out there with the kind of

interview style that he has. I have to say that it is a higher-level podcast. Maybe for a lot of Culips listeners, you might find it difficult to follow. That's OK. I also find it difficult to follow because a lot of the topics that he talks about are academic and he's got a great love of classical music. He'll talk about classical music with his guests and I don't have a deep knowledge of classical music. So, I also at some times find it difficult to follow. But if you would like to check it out, I would recommend Conversations with Tyler. It is a very interesting podcast.

Well, recently on that podcast, Tyler interviewed a writer named Jonathan Haidt, I believe is his last name. And in that conversation, they were talking and really debating because they had differing views, the host and the guest, about the impact of social media on the health and well-being of teenagers, especially in the early teens, around the middle school age. And in that conversation, the guest, Jonathan Haidt, he had an interesting nickname for smartphones. He called them experience blockers. And I really liked that term, an experience blocker. Often we think of our smartphones as being able to help us experience the world more and to get more knowledge and to record memories with our cameras and the video function, right? In fact, I'm using my phone right now to help me record this episode. So, they are extremely useful tools. I don't have to go into why that is. Everybody knows that a smartphone is an extremely useful tool. But I think Jonathan Haidt is right there about them being experience blockers **to a certain extent**. Often we're using our phones instead of enjoying the moment, or maybe even sometimes we're not really being fully immersed in an activity or an event because we're thinking about taking the perfect picture for social media and what we'll post about online later after the event. I know I've had this experience before and I think I'm not alone. A lot of people out there probably can identify and say, yeah, I've been in that situation before as well.

So, with that in mind, that's something that I've been thinking about recently is to **reframe** the way that I see my smartphone and my relationship to my smartphone and think of it more as an experience blocker than something that is going to increase or improve my experience with reality and the way that I navigate through the world. And it's kind of cool

that I listened to that podcast. I think it was just last week or two weeks ago that it came out and I'll link to it in the episode description if anyone wants to take a listen. It was a pretty interesting conversation that they had and yeah, it really kind of **tied into** something that I've been doing lately, this little lifestyle tweak, this little lifestyle change that I've brought into my daily routine. So, that's what I want to talk about today.

So, how did I tweak my morning routine? How have I tweaked my lifestyle? Well, to be honest, now that I'm thinking about it, maybe saying my morning routine is not so accurate. I should be saying my evening routine and my morning routine. What I've done is just a simple little thing and I have to be honest and say that I have tried this before many times, several times, but I've failed after a week or after two weeks. I've already always failed at doing this and have gone back to my regular way of using my phone all the time, but this time now it's been around a month or six weeks or so. I haven't exactly counted, but it's been sticking really well and I hope that it will stick in the future as well.

So, what I've been doing is I have been charging my phone at night way, way, way far away from my bed. That's it. Charging my phone way, way far away from my bed at night. I recently, well, not recently, maybe a year or a year and a half ago now. It's been a while, I guess. Not recently at all. I got a new phone and my new phone has, I think it's called MagSafe, MagSafe charging, which is the ability just to charge your phone through a magnet so I don't have to plug in a wire. And I went down to the local dollar store here in South Korea. It's called Daiso. I went to Daiso and I got this MagSafe charger for, it was just a couple of dollars. And I installed that in the corner of my bedroom, way far away from where I sleep. I put it on the floor and at night, about, you know, 30 minutes to an hour before I'm ready to go down for the night and **call it a day** and go to sleep. I just click my phone on that MagSafe charger. I put my phone into sleep mode, silent mode, so it's making no noises or beeps or distractions, anything like that. And then I don't touch it. I go to sleep like I always do. And after around eight hours, I always try and get eight hours of sleep at night if possible. Then I wake up and I use my wristwatch as my alarm clock.

And here's the thing that is the big tweak to my lifestyle. Before I tried doing this, I would always wake up and what's the first thing I would grab? It would be my phone. I'd grab my phone. I'd check out my messages. I'd go onto my Instagram. I do all of those things that we do on our phone. And my whole morning time would be gone. You know, like it just goes really quickly. You get into the news. I have some newsletters that I subscribe to that send me news updates and articles every morning. And you start reading those, you start doing the **doom scrolling**, right? You read all of the bad news that's happening in the world and it stresses you out. I look at my calendar, all of these things that just would **bite into** my morning routine time.

Well, now I stopped doing that. And it's really helped me. Instead of doing that, what I do is reach for a book. So this is the big lifestyle tweak, I guess, is charging my phone away from my bed, not using it for the immediate time before I go to sleep. And when I wake up, I don't grab for it immediately. I instead grab a book. And I've been doing some reading in the morning. Now, I have to say that I haven't been 100% solid and consistent with doing this every single day. There are some days where I sleep in too long and I don't have time to read in the morning. There are some days where I have something on my schedule in the morning, and it's almost impossible to fit my reading time in. But for the most part, I would say a good four or five days a week, I'm doing this. And it's been really, really wonderful and a very nice addition to my morning routine. I feel like I'm winning the morning. And when I feel like I have a little win in the morning, then it really sets up the rest of my day. And even if the rest of my day doesn't go as planned, well, then I can say, hey, I did that little bit of reading in the morning. At least I did that, right? So it's been nice in that regard.

Lately, I've been trying to do my Korean reading in the morning. I don't know about you if you've ever done any reading in English. But for me, doing reading in Korean has been really, really beneficial. It's helped me to understand the grammar patterns and sentence patterns of the Korean language better. It's helped me to build my vocabulary past some of the everyday basic words that you hear again and again and again in everyday



conversations. But you don't meet as much in those kinds of situations. It's also been a nice way to enjoy some stories that I wouldn't otherwise have been exposed to. And yeah, it's just something that's really nice. It also, from time to time, gives me something to talk about with my Korean friends if we've read the same books.

So I've been doing my Korean reading time in the morning. But as you guys know, I'm right there **in the trenches** with you as a Korean learner. I am by no means fluent in Korean. I am conversational. I can talk with Korean people in the language. I can read books. But it's not perfect yet. When I speak, of course, I still make mistakes and I have an accent. When I read books, occasionally, not occasionally, actually, I should **scratch that out** and replace it. I often come across words and vocabulary and sometimes even sentences where I'm confused. I don't know what that word means. Or I don't know what this sentence is trying to communicate. And so often in those kinds of situations, what I do is I go online and I use the online dictionary or a tool like ChatGPT, which is quickly becoming a dictionary replacement, I think. And I'll try and find a solution to my problem. I'll try and find an answer to my question using one of those tools. But here's the problem, right? If I'm not touching my phone, how can I do that?

I could sit at my computer desk, but that's not really the most convenient place to read. And also my computer desk is right beside my bed in my bedroom where my wife is sleeping. So I'd have to be quiet and not turn on the light. So that's not really a great solution. But here's my solution to that problem. My wife has an iPad and I've been using her iPad. She's given me permission to use it as a tool for looking in the dictionary and using ChatGPT to help me with my reading. And I came across this kind of accidental **hack**. Like I wasn't planning for this to happen, but I noticed after starting to use her iPad that this is the way to do it. This is the way to do it without touching your phone so that you don't get sucked in to all of the interesting content that's online, right? Because if I were to use my own cell phone, my own smartphone, and just try and be really dedicated like, "OK, I'm going to read this book, but I'm not going to use it to search for anything else that comes across in my mind." It would be impossible because I'd get a notification or just



instinctively like when I'm on my phone, my thumb just moves to certain apps. It just opens Instagram. I can't control it. It just opens Reddit. I can't control it.

So by using my wife's iPad, it's great because I don't care about her Instagram account. I don't care about Reddit on her iPad because she doesn't even have it installed. All of her notifications and stuff don't really matter to me because I'm just not interested at all in her stuff. So I think having either using your partner's device as I'm doing, I guess that probably wouldn't work for everyone, but my wife doesn't really use her iPad too much these days. In fact, I bought it for her as a gift when we first started dating. So it's rather dated and old now, but still works for looking up things in the dictionary. So having either a device that's, you know, like your partner's device that you could use, or maybe having a separate device that doesn't have anything connected on it, no social media, none of your email accounts, anything like that, just a blank device that you can use will really, really help you to stay focused. And I found that when I do my Korean reading in the morning this way. I'm actually getting a lot done and I can spend 30 or 40 minutes, one hour focused on reading. And it's just been awesome. So it's been a huge benefit to me, a great addition to my morning study routine.

And I'm currently reading this book. It's called, the English translation, if I tried to translate it, I guess it would say, "Welcome to the Hyunam-Dong Bookstore." And this is, I think, a pretty popular book in Korea. The reason that I wanted to read this book, and actually my wife bought me this book last year for my birthday, which is in May, and now we're in April. And I thought, oh my gosh, I haven't finished this book. It's just been sitting on the shelf for almost one year. So I picked it up and I've been trying to read it because I'm like, I have to read it before my birthday comes in May. If it goes to a whole year just sitting on the shelf, that would be terrible. I think it's a pretty popular book in Korea. It's a bestseller as far as I know.

I won't go into my thoughts and opinions on this book yet. Maybe once I finish it, I will. I'm not 100% sure if it's my style of book yet or not. There have been a few times where I've

had to kind of motivate and force myself. It's not like one of those page turners for me where I just keep wanting to go to the next chapter, to the next chapter. But the reason why I did want to read this book is that when I first started learning the Korean language way back when, maybe 10 years ago or even earlier than that, and I haven't been consistent with my study for the whole time, but I have been learning for that amount of time. I guess when I first started. There... I mean, back thinking about 10 years ago on the internet was a completely different place. And there was a blog that I used to follow by another student of the Korean language. And she would post little tips about grammar or vocabulary or her thoughts on different Korean dramas, that kind of thing. And I noticed recently that that blogger who I started following her blog way back in the day to get some tips about the Korean language. And then I think she went maybe to Tumblr and now on Instagram. And I've followed her throughout her Korean journey as I've been learning Korean myself. And she was always one of those inspirational people. She was always much better than I was at the language and knew a lot more about it. But I loved following her and using her content as like motivation for my own study.

Well, recently, maybe last year, probably around when I received this book as a gift, she was the translator of the English version of this book. So I thought that was so cool how I've been following her progress in the Korean language and how she was able to get to such a high level with the language that she was able to translate the English version of the book. So that was just really awesome for me to see. I've never met this person. I've never communicated with this person at all. But I have been watching her from afar through her online presence.

And yeah, I think we talked about that on Culips before, that kind of relationship. Do you remember? It was from a Chatterbox episode with Anna, I believe, if my memory serves me correctly. But we call that a **parasocial relationship**, where you feel like you have some kind of connection with some online figure or a celebrity because you follow them. But in reality, you've never met them, and they don't even know you exist. So that is the kind of parasocial relationship I have with her.

However, I did think that was really cool. And I wanted to support her and the work that she does by buying the English translation of the book. But because it's a Korean book, first, before I did that, I wanted to read the Korean version. So I asked my wife to buy it for me for my birthday last year, and she did. And then I put it on the shelf and didn't read it. And now I'm finally getting around to it. And I'm going to try and reach out to her, the translator of the book. And guys, I'm really sorry, I'm forgetting her name at the moment. I'll try and look that up and add it into the show notes for this episode. But I'm going to try and reach out to her and see if she would be interested in coming on to Culips for an interview as well. I have no idea if she would be interested in doing that at all or not. But because I have this kind of parasocial relationship with her, where I followed her blog for a long time, and now she's transitioned into being a professional translator with her Korean, from Korean to English, I think that's so, so cool. And I really want to find out what that process of being a translator is like. And I'd like to talk to her about her language journey with the Korean language as well. So I'm going to see if that's possible.

But I want to read both the Korean and the English version of the book. So what I've been doing is spending some time in the morning with this book over the last little while. And yeah, it's all been possible due to the fact that I've been putting my phone in the corner, charging it and not using it in the morning and for that little bit of time when I go to bed at night.

So anyways, I think that's pretty much all I wanted to talk about this week was this little lifestyle tweak. This little lifestyle change that I've made to my daily routine, that honestly has to be one of the biggest benefits I've seen in my just overall well-being recently, I feel more rested at night, I feel more productive in the day. And I feel less stressed out because I'm not doom scrolling on my phone looking at all the bad news that's out there in the world, unfortunately.

So everyone, that's going to wrap it up here for me today. I hope you enjoyed this episode. And I'd love to hear your thoughts. Please leave a comment or a question or your

feedback on our Discord server. Again, it's free for everyone to join and you can do that just by following the link that's in the description for this episode. Do you have a regular reading routine? Or do you have some kind of lifestyle tweak or hack that you could share with our community? We'd love to hear from you. And I'll be waiting for your post on our Discord.

Now I almost forgot but we need to have a completion code for this episode. The completion code is the little phrase or code that you can share on our Discord server or our Instagram page or our YouTube page that will tell me and tell the rest of our community that you've completed studying with this episode. So for this week's completion code, how about we go with the word reading, reading. I'd love for you to make an example sentence using this word reading. And yeah, leave it on our social media or Discord. And that will show that you've completed this episode.

So everyone, have a great week ahead. Good luck with your English studies. Keep going. You're putting in the time you're moving in the right direction. I'm really proud of you for that. But let's not stop here. Let's keep going as always looking forward. And I'll be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode to help you out, of course. So until then, take care and I'll talk to you soon. Bye-bye.

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## Glossary

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1. **Segue:** A smooth transition from one topic to another. Andrew uses a segue to transition from talking about bonus episodes to mentioning the Culips Discord server. *Example sentence: The presenter used a clever segue to shift the discussion from the company's history to its future plans.*
2. **Cover all of the bases:** To thoroughly address all aspects of a situation. Andrew explains that Culips covers all the bases by providing podcasts for listening and a Discord server for writing and speaking practice. *Example sentence: Before launching the product, the team made sure to cover all of the bases by conducting market research and quality testing.*
3. **Bookworm:** Someone who loves reading and spends a lot of time doing it. Andrew is a reader but not a bookworm like his co-host Kassy, who reads over a hundred books a year. *Example sentence: As a child, Emily was a real bookworm, always eager to visit the library.*
4. **Somewhere in that range:** Indicates an approximate area within certain limits. Andrew reads around 8-12 books per year, somewhere in that range. *Example sentence: The concert tickets will cost somewhere in the range of \$50 to \$75.*
5. **Fluff:** Content that is not educational or important. Andrew feels that much of what he reads online is fluff and not beneficial. *Example sentence: The article contained a lot of fluff and didn't provide much useful information.*
6. **Rapid-fire questions:** A series of questions asked quickly, without much time for detailed responses. Tyler Cowen asks rapid-fire questions in his interviews. *Example sentence: The quiz show featured a round of rapid-fire questions to test the contestants' knowledge under pressure.*
7. **Follow-up questions:** Additional questions asked to obtain more information or clarification. Tyler Cowen often doesn't ask follow-up questions, which is unusual for a podcast. *Example sentence: The journalist asked several follow-up questions to better understand the politician's stance.*
8. **To a certain extent:** To a limited degree. Andrew agrees that smartphones can be experience blockers to a certain extent. *Example sentence: I enjoy movies based on true stories, but I understand they are fictionalized to a certain extent.*
9. **To reframe:** To change one's perspective or approach towards something. Andrew is reframing his relationship with his smartphone, considering it more as an experience blocker. *Example sentence: Instead of viewing the setback as a failure, she reframed it as an opportunity to learn.*

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10. **Tied into:** Closely connected or related to something. The idea of smartphones as experience blockers tied into the lifestyle change Andrew had been making. *Example sentence: The novel's themes of love and sacrifice tied into the protagonist's personal struggles.*
  11. **Tweak:** To make small adjustments or modifications. Andrew tweaked his morning routine by charging his phone away from his bed and reading instead. *Example sentence: The chef tweaked the recipe by adding a pinch of cinnamon.*
  12. **Call it a day:** To stop working or end an activity for the day. Andrew puts his phone on the charger before he's ready to call it a day and sleep. *Example sentence: After a productive meeting, the team decided to call it a day and head home.*
  13. **Doom scrolling:** Continuously scrolling through negative news on social media or online platforms. Andrew would doom scroll, reading bad news that stressed him out. *Example sentence: To avoid doom scrolling, she limited her time on social media.*
  14. **Bite into:** To take up or consume a significant portion of something. Checking his phone in the morning would bite into Andrew's morning routine time. *Example sentence: The unexpected traffic jam bit into our sightseeing time.*
  15. **In the trenches:** Actively involved in a difficult or challenging situation. Andrew is in the trenches with Culips listeners as a language learner, not yet fluent. *Example sentence: As a new parent, she felt like she was in the trenches, dealing with sleepless nights.*
  16. **Scratch that out:** To remove or delete something, often in writing or speaking. Andrew says "scratch that out" to retract his statement about occasionally encountering unknown words in Korean. *Example sentence: I thought the meeting was at 2 PM, but scratch that out – it's actually at 3 PM.*
  17. **Hack:** A clever tip, trick, or shortcut to make something easier. Using his wife's iPad to look up words while reading was an accidental hack for Andrew to stay focused. *Example sentence: She shared her favorite study hack: creating flashcards with mnemonic devices.*
  18. **Parasocial relationship:** A one-sided relationship with a media figure or celebrity one has never met. Andrew has a parasocial relationship with a blogger he's followed for years. *Example sentence: Fans often feel a strong parasocial relationship with their favorite YouTubers.*

## Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

## Notes

1. Listen to Jonathan Haidt on Conversations with Tyler here:  
<https://conversationswithtyler.com/episodes/jonathan-haidt-anxious-generation/>
2. “Welcome to the Hyunam-Dong Bookshop” was written by Wang Bo-Reum and translated by Shanna Tan. You can find Shanna’s language learning blog here:  
<https://www.hangukdrama.com/>