



ESL Podcast 702 – Finding Other Singles

GLOSSARY

single – not involved in a romantic relationship; not married or dating anyone

* Which bar in town is the best place to meet other singles?

to pair up – to become involved in a romantic relationship with another person and no longer be alone

* When Janet was younger, she was never very interested in dating, but once she turned 30, she became very interested in pairing up.

to be left hanging – to remain wanting to have, do, or know something, especially if other people have, do, or know it; to be unsatisfied in some way, especially when everyone else is satisfied

* We went to a book reading, but the author only read the first part and left us hanging. She said we'd have to buy the book and read it if we wanted to find out what happens at the end.

to cruise for – to go to a nightclub, dance hall, bar, or a similar place, looking for a new romantic partner or sexual partner

* Are you going to go cruising for women dressed like that? You'd have more luck if you wore nicer clothes and combed your hair.

lonely heart – a person who is single but feels alone and unsatisfied and wants to find a romantic partner

* Not everyone who is single is a lonely heart. Some people just prefer not to date.

needle in a haystack – something that is very difficult to find, usually because it is very rare or uncommon

* Searching for a lost wallet at Disneyland is like looking for a needle in a haystack. There's no way you'll find it.

strategy – a plan for how one will do something

* The company is trying to develop a creative marketing strategy for its newest product.

to hit on – to suddenly find, discover, or realize something

* After thinking about the math problem for hours, Sebastian finally hit on the correct answer.



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to congregate – for large numbers of people or animals to meet in one place; to gather

* About 3,000 people congregated at the federal building, protesting the new proposed taxes.

to show up – to appear; to attend something, especially without planning it ahead of time or making special arrangements

* Is it okay to just show up at the dinner even though I forgot to tell them I was coming?

wild goose chase – an effort to do something when one cannot succeed because it is too difficult, foolish, or impossible

* He spent his life on a wild goose chase, looking for the fountain of youth.

to give (something) a shot – to try to do something even though one is unlikely to succeed; to try to do something even though one doesn't expect to succeed

* I'm a horrible baker, but I'm going to try to make her a birthday cake anyway. I'll at least give it a shot.

grand entrance – the act of entering a room at a certain time or in a certain way so that one can attract everyone else's attention and make a strong impression

* Meghan's grand entrance was ruined when she accidentally tripped and fell while walking through the door.

shock of (one's) life – a very strong, powerful, and unexpected surprise

* Winning one million dollars in the lottery was the shock of his life!

all right – a phrase used to emphasize that something is true, correct, and believable

* - Are you sure you saw Greg?

- It was him all right. There's no doubt about it.

dinner date – an invitation to eat dinner at a restaurant with another person, usually in the hopes of beginning or strengthening a romantic relationship

* Over the past month, Damian has asked 13 women to go out with him on a dinner date, but none of them have said yes.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does he want to find a girlfriend?
 - a) Because his friends recommended it.
 - b) Because he doesn't want to be the only single person.
 - c) Because he's getting too old to be single.
2. What does he mean when he says, "I was willing to give it a shot"?
 - a) He was going to look at pictures of women who could be his next girlfriend.
 - b) He was going to try to find a girlfriend, even though his plan might not work.
 - c) He was going to visit a shooting range to find a girlfriend.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to cruise for

The phrase "to cruise for," in this podcast, means to go to a nightclub, dance hall, bar, or a similar place, looking for a new romantic partner or sexual partner: "How do you have time to study if you spend every evening cruising for cute girls?" The verb "to cruise" also means to move at a steady, unchanging speed: "The police officer gave us a ticket for cruising on the freeway at 100 miles per hour." "Cruise control" is a car feature where the car keeps going at a set speed, without the driver doing anything: "Using cruise control is great, because you don't have to keep your foot on the gas pedal." Finally, a "cruise" is usually a vacation holiday spent on a very large boat: "They're saving their money to go on a Caribbean cruise."

all right

In this podcast, the phrase "all right" is a phrase used to emphasize that something is true, correct, and believable: "My plan will work all right. I'm sure of it." The phrase "all right" can also mean without any problems: "Do you feel all right?" Or, "Katy left the meeting in tears. Can you check to see if she's all right?" The phrase "to do all right" means to be successful, especially professionally, and have enough money: "He's been working as a stock broker for years, so I'm sure he's doing all right financially." Finally, the phrase "it's all right for (someone)" is used when one is jealous or envious of another person: "It's all right for her to wear short skirts to work, because her legs are perfect, but what about the rest of us?"



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CULTURE NOTE

Other Uses of the Word “Single”

When people refer to “singles,” they’re usually talking about unmarried people, or people who are not involved in a romantic relationship. But in different “contexts” (situations), the same word can have very different meanings.

In sports, for example, “singles” can refer to people who compete on their own against another individual, such as tennis or ice skating. “Doubles” in those sports refers to “pairs” (groups of two people) who are competing against other pairs.

In baseball, a “single” refers to the act of hitting the ball and successfully running to “first base” (the first place a hitter may go to and stop safely) without being “thrown out” (forced to leave the field because one’s ball was caught or because one was touched by someone on the other team holding the ball).

When talking about money, a “single” is a one-dollar “bill” (paper money) rather than a larger “denomination” (the value shown on a coin, bill, or stamp). A person who needs “change” (smaller bills or coins) might ask someone if he or she has five singles and offer to “trade” (exchange) them for a five-dollar bill.

In the music industry, a “single” is an individual song “as opposed to” (contrasted against) an “album” (a collection of songs released at a single time and sold together). A “hit single” is a song that makes a singer or a musical group very popular, especially if their other songs are less well-known and less popular.

Finally, when “booking a room” (making a reservation) at a hotel, a “single” can refer to a room with one small bed for one person, and a “double” can refer to a room with two beds for two people.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – b



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 702: Finding Other Singles.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 702. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Support this podcast by becoming a member of ESL Podcast. When you do, you'll receive a Learning Guide for each episode that will help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is called "Finding Other Singles," people who do not have a romantic partner. Let's get started.

[start of story]

I was tired of being single. All of my friends had paired up and I was left hanging. Like everybody else these days, I tried using the Internet to find other singles, but I never had any luck. Cruising for my ideal woman among a bunch of lonely hearts is like looking for a needle in a haystack. I needed another strategy.

I finally hit on a brilliant idea. I would find places where single women naturally congregate and simply show up. It may turn out to be a wild goose chase, but I was willing to give it a shot.

That's how I decided to take a jewelry-making class at the community center. I may not know much, but I do know that two things that naturally go together are women and jewelry.

I got to the class a few minutes late so I could make a grand entrance. But when I walked in, I got the shock of my life. The room was full of single women all right, but not one of them was under the age of 70!

They were definitely glad to see me. I even received a couple of invitations to dinner that day. But to be honest, that wasn't the kind of dinner date I had been looking for!

[end of story]



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Our episode begins with the person in the story, not me, talking about how he's tired of being single. "To be single" means not to be married or dating anyone, not involved in a romantic relationship. I am married, "happily married" we'd say, so this isn't me, but the person in the story says that all of his friends had paired up. "To pair (pair) up" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to become involved in a romantic relationship, to no longer be single. The person in the story was left hanging. "To be left hanging" means to remain wanting to do something or have something but you don't have it; other people have it, but you don't. So, everyone in your group gets a ticket but you don't; you're left hanging, you are the one who doesn't get what everyone else gets. He says that like everybody else these days (nowadays; during this time), "I tried using the Internet to find other singles, but I never had any luck. Cruising for my ideal woman," he says, "among a bunch of lonely hearts is like looking for a needle in a haystack." "To cruise (cruise) for women" is a term that used to mean only you were looking to find women for a sexual relationship. It, here, is used a little more broadly, a little more generally, to mean trying to find a woman who will be your new romantic partner. You could go to a bar or a disco – do we still call them discos? A dance club, I guess we call them. I guess I'm really old, calling them discos! Uh...anyway, going to places where young, single women might be, and trying to find one of them, and hope that one of them becomes a romantic partner.

The person in the story, who really needs a name don't you think? Let's call him Bill. Bill is saying that he doesn't want to cruise for his "ideal" or perfect woman among a bunch of lonely hearts. The term "lonely" means alone, by yourself; "lonely hearts" refers to people who are single, but they feel alone and they want to find a romantic partner. They're not happy being single. "Lonely hearts" is a old term, but it's still used.

He thinks, Bill, that cruising for ideal women on the Internet was like looking for needles in a haystack. The expression "to find a needle (needle) in a haystack" means to find something very difficult, something that's very difficult to find because it isn't very common, it's very rare. A "needle" is a small piece of metal you use, for example, for sewing, when you are repairing a piece of clothing. Or, a "needle" is also what we call the thing the doctor puts in you to give you some medicine; they stick the sharp, thin, long needle into your arm, or somewhere else, and they are able to give you the medicine that way. So, a "needle" is very small, very thin, very difficult to find. A "haystack" is a large pile of hay. "Hay" is dry grass or other kinds of plants that you will find usually on a farm. The hay is all put on top of each other, and, of course, to try to find a needle, if you put it into the haystack, would be almost impossible. So that's the expression, "to find a needle in a haystack."



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So, what Bill is saying is that cruising for his ideal woman among a bunch of lonely hearts is like looking for a needle in a haystack; it's almost impossible. He says, "I needed another strategy," I needed another plan, another approach. "I finally hit on a brilliant idea." "To hit on (something)" here means to find someone, to discover something, or to realize something. Usually it's used when talking about an idea or a solution to a problem. Ironically, there's another meaning of "hit on," which is when a man or a woman tries to get another man or a woman interested in them romantically. They start talking to them and smiling at them and making jokes. This could be a way of hitting on a woman. But here, we're not talking about that informal use of the expression; this is a phrasal verb meaning to suddenly find a new idea or a solution to a problem. Bill says, "I would find places where women – single women naturally (or normally) congregate and simply show up." "To congregate" is when a group of people come together. We talk about the members of, for example, a church as a "congregation," they all come together; they all meet at a certain place.

Bill is going to try to find places where single women would go, and he will then simply show up. "To show up" is a phrasal verb meaning to go somewhere without plans, without making special arrangements, often without getting the permission of the people who are there. They don't know you're going to be there; suddenly you "show up," you arrive, you appear. It doesn't always have to be unplanned; you could say, "I went to the café to meet a woman I found on the Internet, but she never showed up." Actually, it wasn't a woman, it was a man; you just didn't realize it because it was the Internet. You see, you got to be careful!

Anyway, this is Bill's great idea. He says that it may turn out – it may result that this is a wild goose chase, but he was willing to give it a shot. The expression "wild goose (goose) chase" (chase) means to try to do something that you are not successful in doing because it is difficult or impossible or was a bad idea or strategy to begin with. In other words, you never should have tried to do it; it was an impossible task. A "goose" is, you may know, a kind of bird. Bill says that he was willing, however, to give it a shot. The expression "to give (something) a shot" means to try to do something even when you know you probably will not be successful, or when you don't expect to succeed or to do it. He says that he decided to take a jewelry-making class. "Jewelry" is like rings and necklaces, things that you would wear. He's taking a class on how to make your own jewelry, and he says that since women love jewelry this is a great place for him to find single women, and therefore to try to find his ideal woman.

He arrives at the class a few minutes after it starts so he could make a grand entrance. "To make a grand entrance" is to enter a room at a certain time or in a



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certain way so that everyone notices you. This is true if you are going into a room where there are a lot of people; you will do something so that everyone knows that you are in the room or that you are coming into the room. Bill says when he walked in, however, he got the shock of his life. “The shock of your life” is some very unexpected, powerful surprise, something that surprises you in a big way. He says that the room was full of single women all right, meaning it was definitely full of single women. The expression “all right” (two words) is used to emphasize that something is true or correct. Take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional uses of this term or based on this term. So Bill is saying yes, there were a lot of single women there, but none of them was under, or less than, the age of 70; they were all 70 years old or more.

He says they were definitely glad to see him. He even received, or got, a couple of invitations to dinner; the women asked him to go to dinner with them. He says, “But to be honest, that wasn’t the kind of dinner date I had been looking for!” A “dinner date” is an invitation to eat dinner with another person, often hoping that this will be something that will begin a romantic relationship or make your romantic relationship stronger. Obviously, Bill was not interested in dating women over the age of 70!

Now let’s listen to the story, this time at a normal speed.

[start of story]

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[end of story]

The best strategy to learn English is to listen to the dialogues and stories written by our own wonderful Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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