

Why Your Words Are Casting Spells

English learning resource · EN

Key words & expressions · English

20 learning entries

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

1

a sting of guilt

DEF

A sudden, brief feeling of guilt or regret.

Sting suggests a sharp emotional pain rather than a long period of sadness.

She felt a sting of guilt after repeating the rumour.

A sting of guilt made him apologise.

2

to snap at someone

DEF

To speak to someone suddenly and angrily.

It usually describes a short, sharp reaction caused by stress or irritation.

I am sorry I snapped at you this morning.

He tends to snap at people when he is under pressure.

3

to carry something with you

DEF

To continue thinking about or feeling the effect of an experience.

This figurative use describes emotional weight, not physical transport.

Do not carry that criticism with you all day.

She carried his kind words with her for years.

4

impeccable

DEF

Without faults or mistakes; of an extremely high standard.

In the book, it also carries the ethical idea of not using your words against yourself.

Her pronunciation was impeccable.

Try to be impeccable with your word.

5

self-destruction

DEF

Behaviour that seriously harms your own wellbeing, success or relationships.

It may be physical, emotional or psychological.

Constant negative self-talk can become a form of self-destruction.

He recognised the pattern of self-destruction.



6

gossip

DEF

Informal conversation about other people's private lives, often involving unverified information.

Gossip can be a noun or a verb and often carries a negative judgement.

Office gossip damaged their trust.

They were gossiping about a colleague.

7

to talk behind someone's back

DEF

To criticise or discuss someone negatively while they are absent.

The expression implies that the person cannot respond or defend themselves.

She refused to talk behind her friend's back.

If you disagree, speak directly instead of talking behind my back.

8

to be in the know

DEF

To have special or private information about what is happening.

The phrase often suggests insider knowledge.

Ask Maya; she is usually in the know.

He enjoyed the feeling of being in the know.

9

to form your own opinion

DEF

To decide what you think after considering the evidence yourself.

It contrasts with simply accepting another person's judgement.

Meet him first and form your own opinion.

Students should learn to form their own opinions.

10

to cast a spell

DEF

Literally, to use magic; figuratively, to exert a powerful influence.

The episode uses the image to describe how repeated words can shape beliefs.

The story seemed to cast a spell over the audience.

Negative self-talk can feel like casting a spell on yourself.

11

worth sitting with

DEF

Deserving time for quiet thought rather than an immediate reaction.

This modern reflective expression is common in discussions of difficult ideas.

That question is worth sitting with.

Her observation was uncomfortable but worth sitting with.



12

to breathe down someone's neck

DEF

To watch or pressure someone very closely.

It often describes an impatient manager or someone demanding rapid progress.

I cannot concentrate with my boss breathing down my neck.

The deadline was close and the client was breathing down our necks.

13

a verdict

DEF

An official decision in court; figuratively, a firm judgement about someone or something.

A criticism is one person's reaction, not necessarily a final verdict on your ability.

One bad result is not a verdict on your future.

The jury returned its verdict.

14

to take something personally

DEF

To interpret another person's words or actions as a personal attack.

The phrase is especially useful when the behaviour may reflect the other person's circumstances.

Try not to take his bad mood personally.

She took the feedback personally.

15

projection

DEF

The act of attributing your own feelings, fears or qualities to another person.

In psychology, projection can make a judgement reveal more about the speaker than its target.

His accusation may have been a projection of his own insecurity.

Not every opinion is objective; sometimes it is projection.

16

self-worth

DEF

The sense that you have value as a person.

Unlike confidence in one skill, self-worth concerns your broader personal value.

Do not base your self-worth entirely on praise.

Healthy boundaries can protect your self-worth.

17

to let something roll off your back

DEF

To remain unaffected by criticism, insults or minor problems.

The image is of water rolling away without being absorbed.

She let the rude comment roll off her back.

Learning to let small mistakes roll off your back reduces stress.



18

to take the high road

DEF

To respond to conflict with integrity and restraint.

It means choosing the more honourable response even when retaliation is tempting.

He took the high road and did not insult her back.

Taking the high road protected the team's relationship.

19

to rub someone the wrong way

DEF

To irritate or make someone feel uncomfortable, often unintentionally.

It may describe a person's tone, manner or habitual behaviour.

His impatient tone rubbed me the wrong way.

She sometimes rubs people the wrong way without realising it.

20

to hold your tongue

DEF

To stop yourself from saying something.

It often implies that speaking would cause conflict or reveal something unhelpful.

I disagreed, but I held my tongue.

He found it difficult to hold his tongue during the meeting.

