

Mindful English, Mindful Life

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

249 lines

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

I want to start today with a strange question.

Go on.

When was the last time you spoke English and actually enjoyed it?

Hm.

That is harder to answer than it should be.

It is.

And I think most people listening just felt that.

Can I be honest about something?

Please.

Last week I was buying a coffee.

A thirty-second conversation.

Nothing more.

And when I walked away, I realised I had corrected myself — inside my own head — about forty times.

Forty.

Forty.

"Was that the right tense?

Did that sound natural?

Why did I say it like that?"

And here is the detail that matters.

Say it.

You teach this language.

I teach this language for a living.

So if it happens to you, imagine the person who is three months into learning it.

Exactly.



So today is not a grammar episode.

No verb tables today.

Today we are talking about something much quieter.

We are talking about how to learn English without that voice in your head that never stops judging you.

And before we start — one quick thing.

Everything we talk about today, you can take with you.

It's all at yourenglishtoolbox.com.

The vocabulary, downloadable PDFs, little games to practise — in more and more languages, Farsi and German included.

So if a word catches you today, you know exactly where to find it.

Now.

Let's begin.

And we are going to travel a little bit to do it.

We are going around the world, actually.

Because it turns out that almost every culture on earth worked this out a long time ago.

So let's start with the word everyone has heard and nobody can define.

Mindfulness.

Mindfulness.

When people hear that word, they picture incense.

Candles.

Someone sitting cross-legged making a humming sound.

And that is exactly why they switch off.

Right.

So let's strip all of that away.

Please.

Mindfulness is just this: paying attention to the present moment, without judging it.

That's it?

That's it.

You are here.

You notice you are here.

And you don't attack yourself for it.



Okay, but Martin, when I am speaking English, I am not "in the present moment."

I am in the future — worrying about the next word.

Or in the past — replaying the mistake I just made.

And that is the whole problem, isn't it.

That is the whole problem.

You are everywhere except in the actual conversation.

So here is what I find beautiful.

This idea is not new, and it is not owned by anyone.

No. Let's take the trip.

Let's go to Japan first.

Japan gave us a few gifts here.

There is a word — "ma".

"Ma" is the silence between things.

The pause.

The empty space.

And in Japanese culture, that space is not awkward.

It has meaning.

Think about that when you speak English.

When you leave a silence to think, you are not failing.

You are giving the sentence room to breathe.

And there is another one — "wabi-sabi".

The beauty of imperfection.

The English you already speak, with its little cracks, is not broken.

It is human.

So there is your first phrase to keep: "the beauty of imperfection".

Now let's fly north.

To Denmark.

Hygge.

Everybody has seen this word on a candle in a shop.

But underneath the candles, it means something real.



Warmth.

Being present in the small, cozy moments.

And this is a gift for a learner.

How so?

You don't learn English best in an exam room.

You learn it in comfort.

Relaxed.

At ease.

"At ease." That's the phrase.

Learn English the way you would enjoy a warm evening — not the way you'd sit a test.

Now take us somewhere old.

Really old.

Ancient Greece and Rome.

The Stoics.

Ah.

They had a word — "ataraxia".

A calm that comes from accepting what you cannot control.

And you cannot control everything about your English.

You cannot control your accent overnight.

You cannot control whether you sound exactly like someone born there.

So let that go.

"Let it go." Even the Stoics were saying it two thousand years ago.

You control one thing: whether you communicate.

And you can.

Let's keep going east.

Zen Buddhism.

Taoism.

This is where a lot of modern mindfulness actually comes from.

There is a concept in Taoism — "wu wei".

Effortless action.



Flowing instead of forcing.

Every learner knows the opposite of this.

The forcing.

The gripping.

The trying so hard that nothing comes out.

And the Zen side gives us "sati" — simple awareness.

Just noticing.

So two phrases here: "to notice", and "to flow".

When the English flows, stop analysing it.

Let it flow.

Now India.

There's a word I love — "santosha".

Contentment.

The feeling of "this is enough".

Enough.

Your English today is enough to start a conversation today.

It doesn't have to be finished to be useful.

"Enough." Keep that one close.

Let's go to Africa.

Because this one changes everything.

Ubuntu.

"I am because we are."

A language is not a test you pass alone.

It is a bridge to other people.

When you speak English, you are not being examined.

You are reaching someone.

You are not alone in it.

"You are not alone." That is the phrase from Ubuntu.

Two more, quickly, because I don't want to lose them.

The Arabic-speaking world.



Sufi tradition.

There's a word — "sakina".

A serenity that settles over you.

Stillness that arrives on its own.

You cannot chase it.

You make space, and it comes.

"Stillness." Same as before — you can't force it, you invite it.

And finally, Hawaii.

Aloha.

And "ho'oponopono".

Aloha is presence and love.

Ho'oponopono is about releasing — letting go of what weighs on you.

Including the shame of an old mistake.

"To release." That's the last phrase.

So look at what just happened.

Japan, Denmark, Greece, China, India, Africa, the Arab world, Hawaii.

Completely different places.

Different centuries.

Different gods, even.

And they all said the same thing.

Happiness isn't in getting more.

It's in the stillness.

In being here, without judging it.

Now — here is the turn.

Here's where it becomes about you and your English.

Because there is a mistake that almost every English learner makes, everywhere in the world.

Everywhere.

It doesn't matter what country you're in.

You treat English like a permanent exam.

An exam that never ends.



Every sentence is graded.

Every word is watched.

You are hyper-alert.

You correct yourself in real time.

And underneath it all, there's a quiet fear: "someone is going to notice I got it wrong."

And here is the cruel part.

Tell them.

That state — the alertness, the fear, the judging — is the exact opposite of the state where a language is learned.

This is real, by the way.

This isn't a nice metaphor.

It's not.

When your brain feels safe and calm, it moves into what scientists call an alpha state.

Relaxed, but awake.

And that is when your memory opens up.

That is when new words actually stick.

So the fear isn't just unpleasant.

It is literally getting in the way of the thing you want.

Stress narrows you.

Calm opens you.

So mindfulness, applied to English, is very simple.

Lower the alert.

Tolerate the mistake.

Learn from a place of calm.

Okay.

But people want something to do.

Give them something to do.

Fair.

Three small things.

Anyone, anywhere.

Number one.



Have one conversation a day where you do not correct yourself.

Not once.

Let the mistakes live.

Just communicate.

Number two.

Number two.

When you feel something, name it in English instead of hiding it.

"I'm nervous." "I'm not sure how to say this." "This is hard for me."

That is real English.

And it is honest.

Number three.

Before you speak — don't rehearse the perfect sentence.

Just breathe once.

One breath.

Then speak.

You'd be amazed how much comes out when you stop gripping.

Now.

We've talked a lot today.

We have.

We've talked about all of it.

But talking about calm and feeling calm are two very different things.

They are completely different things.

And this is where we hand you over.

Because we can explain this to you.

Peter can make you feel it.

If you don't know the STILL series yet — go and find it.

Peter doesn't talk about stillness.

He takes you into it.

It is English learning, but it is also — genuinely — a few minutes of peace.

Learn the words while your whole body slows down.



That is the other half of this episode.

Go and let Peter give it to you.

And one last thing before we go.

Everything we mentioned today — the vocabulary, the phrases from around the world —

you can go deeper on all of it.

Everything lives at yourenglishtoolbox.com.

Downloadable PDFs, detailed vocabulary, even little games to practise.

And it's not only in English.

We're translating into more and more languages — Farsi, German, and more on the way.

So wherever you are, and whatever language you think in —

there's a version of the toolbox for you.

Be kind to yourself this week.

Mindful English.

Mindful life.

See you next time.

