

Feel Good English

An Interview with Lindsay McMahon



The transcript to episode #08

The Interview

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Kevin: Welcome to another episode of the *Feel Good English Podcast*. This is your host, Kevin. Today, I have an awesome interview with Lindsay from *All Ears English Podcast*. Today we get into the interview, remember, you can always find transcripts and show notes and more information at *FeelGoodEnglish.com*.

And at the end of the interview, I will talk about the English phrases and phrasal verbs and expressions that you might not know. So, after the interview, listen to that, and then go back and repeat this episode. If you're listening to this five times, that's a good start.

So today, I'm going to interview the lovely Lindsay McMahon from *All Ears English Podcast*. A lot of you have probably listened to this podcast and love this podcast. Lindsay is going to talk about a book that has really impacted her life and it has shown her how to feel alive – how to feel alive, how to feel excited about life.

Well, a little bit more Lindsay, Lindsay is the co-founder and director of *All Ears English*. At *All Ears English*, she provides online materials for upper intermediate adult English learners who are self-motivated, independent learners looking for a new way to learn.

Their core value is connection, not perfection. And all of their material is designed to focus on how to use English to build connections with people. At *All Ears English*, they also focus heavily on IELTS exam preparation through their *IELTS Energy Podcast*, and their *3 Keys IELTS Success System* online course.

So without further delay, let's get into the interview with Lindsay

McMahon.

So hey, Lindsay, how are you doing?

Lindsay: Hey, Kevin! I'm doing great. Thanks for having me on today.

Kevin: Thanks for being here, of course! So, other than what the listeners already know about you – and a lot of them probably already know you from your wonderful, popular podcast, *All Ears English* – tell me about yourself, who is Lindsay McMahon, the English...?

Lindsay: Yeah, I'm called the *English adventurer* on the show. That's right, exactly. That's who I am! I mean, I spent a lot of time working on our podcast, *All Ears English*. And aside from that, I've done a lot of traveling. I did a lot of traveling throughout my twenties which is part of what I inspired me to start the show. I taught English in Japan and I wandered through Latin America for about a year. And then, I moved to New York City and spent some time teaching there. And finally, I ended up here in Boston which is where I think I'll hang out for a while. I like it here.

Kevin: That is definitely the English adventure. How did you get started in this? What brought you first to Japan and then around the world doing English teaching?

Lindsay: I think that I just felt that itch to leave the country. When I finished college, I said, "Whoa! I'm not going to stay in the U.S. my whole life. I need to get out. I need to see another culture."

Japan was fascinating for me. And to be honest, it was a place where it was easy enough to find a job and to make enough money to support myself in a city like Tokyo. So, I was just on the next plane. It was kind of a no-brainer when I was 23 or 24.

Kevin: Wow! Wow! That was pretty courageous of you.

Lindsay: Well, thank you.

Kevin: So, what brought you to the podcast? You have this very popular podcast, *All Ears English*. You inspire English learners from around the

world to connect with other people through language. What brought you to do this? What inspired you to do this podcast?

Lindsay: Yeah! I think I got a smart phone back in 2012, and I realized there was this whole thing called the iTunes store. And so I just started listening to shows that interested me like the podcast that I had mentioned to you before, *The Unmistakeable Creative*. It was one of my first shows. I just really loved that medium, that way of connecting with information. I realized that I was learning things so quickly and I was entertained and informed and educated at the same time.

From there, it was just a natural progression. Why not start my own podcast?

And at that point, I had gone ahead and invited my partner that time to start one together, so we just got started.

Kevin: Yeah, very, very cool. Very awesome. And it's so true. Podcasts are so great because you can learn and be entertained from anywhere during your day. What a great way for English learners to practice English and to learn new things when they can just move around town with great podcasts like *All Ears English* in their ears.

Lindsay: Yeah. No, I think it's fantastic! I'm still in love with this way of learning. So I think we're going to continue for a while here.

Kevin: Awesome! I hope so.

So, what we do here at *Feel Good English*, as my listeners know, is we talk about books and lessons from different people and how these can impact your life, how they can improve your life.

And so Lindsay, I'd like to ask you. I want you to talk about today a book that has really impacted your life and that has made you the person that you are today.

Lindsay: Yeah, sure! I'd be happy to talk about that.

So, the book that came to mind when you told me that we were going to

be talking about some kind of book was Seth Godin's *The Icarus Deception* which came out a couple of years ago (I think in 2013 or 2012).

I actually saw him speak here at MIT when he was just releasing his book. He was on a book tour.

And I've always been fascinated with his work, with Seth Godin's work. I mean, he really is part of the inspiration in our podcast, to start our podcast and to think about changing lives through our podcasts.

But the basic concept behind *The Icarus Deception* goes back to the old tale of Icarus where he was told not to fly too close to the sun because the sun would burn his wings. "Don't fly too high. Don't stand out too much in your work. Don't try to be too amazing. Don't try to achieve too much."

But he was also told, "Don't fly too low." And essentially, that means, "Don't be too complacent. Don't be lazy. Don't try to fit in too much." But that part of the story was not passed on.

So that's the premise behind Seth Godin's book. We've forgotten that piece of the story that we need to make sure that we keep in check with ourselves that we aren't becoming complacent, we aren't becoming lazy, and that we are trying to make a difference in the world, that we're taking risks.

Kevin: Sure! And so, can you think of a time in your life where you thought, "Okay, maybe I'm being too complacent. Maybe I need to step up what I'm doing and to find some challenges and to find some things that are inspiring and giving value to this world"? Can you think of something that comes to mind?

Lindsay: Well, I could be honest. Right now, I feel like I'm sort of hitting a bit of a rut in my life and in my work. And so, I'm thinking about planning a trip this summer to go around the country and do some work in different parts of the U.S., explore different parts of the country and see some of the natural landscape in this country. I've done a bit of traveling around the world, it's time to see more of the U.S.

And when you were on my show a few minutes ago, we talked about how we can find that state of flow. And that inspired me to think about this trip that I'm planning for the summer to get out of my comfort zone here in Cambridge and seed some new things. So, I'm in that place right now.

Kevin: So, that's like flying too low. And this is fascinating, how some people can naturally sense this and be aware of when this happens and then to take action and to find things to do.

Lindsay: Yeah! Yeah.

Kevin: So Lindsay, for you, what gives you that motivation? Or I guess even simpler, what allows you to actually take action and to do these things as opposed to just saying, "I'm fine. I'm comfortable. I'm just going to stay where I am."

Lindsay: Well, it's interesting. Last night, actually, I went to a talk by this woman. Her name is Sarah Marquis. She was talking here at the public library in Cambridge. And she's a Swiss woman who just has walked around the world in three years. In the last three years, she's actually walked the entire planet.

Kevin: Wow!

Lindsay: I almost had tears in my eyes when I was listening to her speak because I felt like this was the perfect time for me to hear her message. She was so alive. She just emanated life from her body. You could tell she was just there and she was so enthusiastic and so close to nature in the way she described.

People asked her, "Did you get scared when you were in the desert in Australia? Did you get scared when people tried to attack you in your tent?" She just seemed so alive. That's the only word I have to describe her.

Whereas she was talking to this audience of people here in Boston, academics, young professionals who I think are just dulled to the world. You know what I mean? We create these barriers with our smart phones

and our computers, and it doesn't feel natural. We need to tap into that and realize when we're in that state of complacency.

Kevin: Sure! And it's true. We can get so caught up in what we think we should be doing, in work, in school and all of these things. We're kind of told this is what we should be focusing our energy on. But sometimes, we don't feel alive. And when you see somebody who just simplifies everything and simply says, "I'm going to walk around the world" – which is obviously not a simple thing. That's extremely challenging – just getting rid of everything and say, "I'm going to do this for myself and to feel more alive," it's really inspiring.

Imagine, from her doing this, you even said that it made you feel more alive and inspired you to do things. So, it's great to hear that.

So, yeah, anything else from this book that you think you'd like to talk about or anything that the listeners might need to know?

Lindsay: Well, I read it a while ago. But I think the most important thing really is just the basic philosophy, to take risks in our lives, and especially in our work.

I do think not just about this book, but a lot of Seth Godin's work, he talks about kind of "making a dent in the universe," (I'm not sure if that's his quote or if that quote should be attributed to someone else, but I've heard him use it before) the idea that with our podcast, with *All Ears English*, it's not just about learning English (and I think that our listeners feel that it's about more than that), it's about how can we live a better life. It's about how we feel when we're consuming this material.

It's about connection, not perfection. How can we use English to connect with other people and to kind of throw our old paradigm of being perfect (which, I realize, is not easy for a lot of people because we've grown up in a certain way of thinking about English)?

So, I think on our show, I tried to use those concepts from *The Icarus Deception* every day on our show when we go into different topics, when we think that we're going to take a risk. We don't know how a topic is

going to come off to the audience (we've talked about a few issues like gun control, a few issues about culture), we're not sure, but we try to go ahead and take that risk and see what happens. And that's part of just innovating every time.

Kevin: Sure! And not being afraid to experiment, not being afraid to take a risk sometimes.

Lindsay: Yeah! I think so. Yeah, absolutely!

Kevin: That's great. And I think your listeners get that, a lot of that from you. And that's such an important thing. We need to feel good about what we're doing. We need to have reasons behind what we're doing, not just feel that we're being *forced* to do something. So, that's great.

And Lindsay, in my podcast, this is something I ask all of the guests. You've kind of talked about something already. But for you, what do you struggle most with in life?

Lindsay: Well, for me, I think that, again, it comes back to this concept of not trying to be perfect. In the past, I had a hard time.

Well, when I initially launched the podcast, I was scared of how I would come off behind the microphone. Was it good enough? Was it right? Was it perfect? And then, I realized that I'm on the same journey as my listeners, just not with the English language, but my own professional and creative development, and going after how can I connect with my audience and my listeners and in my life also beyond just the podcast (because it's not my whole life).

Kevin: Sure, sure.

Lindsay: In every moment, how can I look for that connection with someone and come away from my own self-consciousness.

I think that self-consciousness is something that I've struggled with throughout my life. And that's why I feel that our brand, *All Ears English*, is more than just a business for me. It's a real personal message for me. And I

think that that's what brings us together with the audience. That's what keeps us going through 500 episodes.

Kevin: Wow! That's awesome. And that's so true. And we can feel that from the podcast. You're showing yourself in your posts. And your guests bring themselves to that. I hope the listeners of your podcast and my podcast can do that as well and really find themselves through this.

So, that's great, Lindsay. Other than *All Ears English* (which most people probably have heard of, but some people maybe have not), where can people find you online?

Lindsay: Well, Kevin, that's it. *All Ears English* is really the place that they want to go. I don't have a personal blog right now. I don't have time for it. So, you guys can come over to *AllEarsEnglish.com* or you can go into the iTunes Store and check out our podcast, *All Ears English*.

And if you're doing the IELTS exam, we do have the *IELTS Energy Podcast* now. There's about 200 episodes in the Store. And we have an IELTS course as well. You can find more about that at IELTS.AllEarsEnglish.com if you're headed down that path. So that's where we're at.

Kevin: Awesome!

Lindsay: Yeah!

Kevin: Super! I know the IELTS is so important for so many people these days, so it's awesome you're doing that.

Lindsay: Yeah, thank you.

Kevin: Great, Lindsay. So, anything else you want to tell my listeners before we go?

Lindsay: No! I'm excited to hear you getting your podcast going. I just want to wish you the best of luck. I mean, podcasting is truly one of the coolest ways to learn and also to express for your listeners to learn and for you, as the host, to express yourself and to connect with your listeners.

I just want to say, "Enjoy it!" I wish you all the best.

Kevin: Awesome! Thanks, Lindsay. Thanks a lot. And we'll talk again soon, okay?

Lindsay: Alright! Thanks so much.

Kevin: Alright, bye bye.

Lindsay: Bye.

Kevin: So, in this episode, you heard the word *medium*. *Medium* in this case is like a platform. What is the medium you're using to communicate? What is the medium I use to communicate with you? I use the medium of a podcast. It's sort of the platform, the method.

There's actually a very popular site now called *Medium* online which is owned by Twitter. That's a place for people to blog and to write and share content called *Medium*. Check it out!

Another word you hear a lot in this episode is *complacent* or *complacency*. *Complacent* means to accept what's happening to you in almost a lazy method, in a lazy way. You're being complacent. You're not taking action. You're not doing things that you need to *to* change your situation. You're just accepting in a negative sense, *complacent*.

Another one, a great expression, Lindsay says is "to keep in check," monitoring something like monitoring yourself, making sure I'm keeping myself in check. I'm monitoring myself. I'm making sure that I am where I need to be. Or maybe you're a teacher, you need to keep your students in check. You need to monitor them, keep them appropriate. Got it?

Another great phrasal verb, "to step up." "To step up" is to take action, to put yourself in a position where you're going to take on responsibility for something. "Who's going to step up and take care of this? Who's going to take responsibility for this? Who's going to step up?" if you can imagine somebody literally stepping up.

Another very cool expression Lindsay says, "hitting a rut." A rut, think of a

hole. You're hitting a rut means you're kind of stuck. You're not progressing. You're not moving forward. *Stuck* is the best word. So, you're hitting a rut. You're kind of in a hole and you need to get out of it.

Maybe at work, you're not progressing, you're not moving up, you're not being creative. You're stuck in a rut. You've hit a rut. Both of those work.

Another one, "dulled to the world." It's hard work to say "dull", D-U-L-L. "Dulled to the world," *dull* is like boring. So, you're bored with the world or maybe somebody's dulled. "That person is very dull. He's a boring person – not a lot of energy, not a lot going on there. That person's pretty dull." That's a tricky word to say, but D-U-L-L, *dull*. And in this episode, "dulled to the world," kind of bored with life. Got it?

Another one, phrasal verb, "to come off." "To come off" is to – how do I come off in this? How did I appear? Did I come off as being angry? Did I come off as being too aggressive? How did I appear to other people? How did I look? How did I come off? So, in this case, that's what we mean. "How did I appear? How did I look? How did I come off?" We can say, "Oh, go talk to your boss, but don't come off too desperate. Don't come off too desperate. Don't look/don't appear too desperate."

And the last one, "get caught up." "To get caught up" in something, to become totally absorbed in something. "I'm totally caught up in this right now. I'm completely absorbed. I'm completely surrounded by this," *caught up*.

Caught up has other meanings as well. But in this episode, we hear "to get caught up" in something is to get totally absorbed. Got it?

In here, what you can see is the difference between "caught up in" and "caught up with." It makes a big difference. "Caught up with" something means you are to where you need to be at that time. You have done the work, you are on time. You are not late. So, you are "caught up with."

Here, we have "caught up in." See the difference? The little stupid prepositions, how they can change things? "Caught up in" or "caught up with," which one is it?

So, that's it for today, folks. I want to thank Lindsay McMahon from *All Ears English* for being here with me today and giving her wonderful message on not flying too close to the sun and also not flying too close to the ground, taking risks in your life, getting out of your comfortable. Why? To bring you more happiness.

Alright! Well, see you guys next time. Don't forget to go to FeelGoodEnglish.com. You can get transcripts to this episode for free by becoming a Feel Good member.

To find out more information, go to FeelGoodEnglish.com. Find me on iTunes, give me a review if you love me. Even if you hate me, give me review.

We'll see you next time! Bye.