



Vegetarian Vocabulary Lesson

Hello. This is AJ Hoge, Director of Effortless English, with another lesson. This is the vocabulary lesson for “Vegetarian.” And this is a conversation between Joe and Kristin. And they talk about being vegetarian, becoming vegetarian. Both Joe and Kristin are vegetarian and one of Joe’s friends, Peter, recently decided to become vegetarian. Of course, vegetarian means you do not eat meat. You do not eat... If animals were killed, you don’t eat it. That’s basically the rule.

Alright, let’s... let’s start.

* * * * *

Joe says, “Hey, Peter came to me today. He let me know that he’s decided to become a vegetarian.”
And Kristin says, “Oh, that’s great.” “Yeah, he told me he’s finally seen the light.”

To see the light. To finally see the light means to finally understand. It has this idea that before you were in darkness. Before you did not understand and suddenly you see the light. Suddenly you understand. We use it in that kind of situation, when you suddenly understand something that, for a long time, you did not understand. You didn’t understand. You didn’t understand. You didn’t understand. You didn’t understand, suddenly you understand. You say, “Ah, I have seen the light.”

And Kristin asked, “What helped him arrive at that decision?” **And Joe says, “His girlfriend has been a vegetarian for about a year now and I’m sure she probably played a major role.”**

To play a major role means to be a big influence or to be a strong influence. So his girlfriend was a strong influence. She was a strong factor, a strong influence, for this guy Peter to become a vegetarian.

She says, “Yeah, that makes sense.”

That’s understandable.

“He said he wanted to speak with me about it because I was an authority on the subject...” Joe says.

I was an authority on the subject. To be an authority on a subject means to be an expert on a subject. So Joe is a vegetarian. He’s been a vegetarian a long time. So he’s kind of an expert about vegetarianism. Joe is an authority on vegetarianism. He is an expert. An authority on... Usually you use on... an authority on something. An authority on a subject.

And then Kristin says, “Yes, you pretty much are.”

You basically are an expert about vegetarianism.



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“You’ve been one for many years.” Joe says, “Yeah, but, as a rule I usually don’t bring up the topic of vegetarianism with people.”

As a rule means generally. So generally I don’t bring up the topic of vegetarianism. As a rule I don’t bring up the topic of vegetarianism. Generally or usually or most of the time is what as a rule means. Okay, and to bring up a topic means to discuss a topic. To begin a discussion is what it really means. To bring up the topic of vegetarianism means to start a discussion on the topic of vegetarianism.

Okay and Kristin says, “No I don’t like to either.” And then Joe says, “The way I figure it...”

The way I understand it.

“if the person is already a vegetarian, then it’s pretty much preachin’ to the choir.”

Preachin’ to the choir is an idiom or a slang phrase. Preachin’ to the choir means, trying to persuade somebody who already agrees with you. So if Joe’s a vegetarian and he talks to me and says, “AJ, vegetarians are great and being a vegetarian is great, you’ll be more healthy. You treat the animals nice.” Then I might say to Joe, “Joe, you’re preachin’ to the choir. I already am a vegetarian. I already agree with you.” Right, so it means to preach to, or to try to persuade someone who already agrees with you. So it’s not necessary, right. It’s kind of like saying it’s not necessary. I already agree. You are preachin’ to the choir.

Okay, Kristin says, “Um-hm.” And Joe says, “They probably already know a lot of facts as to why we became vegetarian.” Kristin says, “Right, right.” And then Joe says, “And if it’s a person who’s not a vegetarian and they’re not interested, it pretty much goes in one ear and out the other.”

Another idiom... in one ear and out the other... very common phrase. In one ear and out the other means something is ignored. You can say the information went in one ear and out the other. It means the information was ignored. It was not listened to. So you can imagine the information. It’s like it goes into one ear and it doesn’t go into the brain. Instead it continues and it goes outside the person’s head from the other ear. So the information does not stay in their head. So we use this in a situation where you tell someone some information or ideas but they don’t listen to you. They don’t, they kind of ignore it. They pretend to listen but they don’t really think about it. So if someone doesn’t want to listen, or doesn’t want to think about something, then you might say, “Oh, it went in one ear and out the other. I told them, but it went in one ear and out the other.”

Okay, and then Kristin says, “Right, right, I don’t like preaching to someone either.” And Joe says, “I think that’s a really good point actually.” And then next Kristin says, “Like what?” And Joe says, “Well, he wanted to know how I actually became a vegetarian.” Kristin says, “What’d you tell him?”

And Joe says, “I began to think back to when I was in college, I first started to learn about



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vegetarianism..."

Or being vegetarian.

"by word of mouth."

Word of mouth... common phrase. Word of mouth just means to hear it from other people. Something you hear from other people. Not by reading, not by advertising, not by television, not by radio. Another person tells you. That's word of mouth. We use this in business a lot. Word of mouth. A company likes word of mouth marketing, for example. It means their customers tell other people about the company and then those people also buy. Right, so word of mouth is this kind of, y'know, one person tells another person and then they tell another person and they tell another person. So that's word of mouth. So Joe just heard about being vegetarian word of mouth. People talked to him about it. Different people just told him.

"And they told him why they stopped eating meat, but he wasn't interested at that time." And Kristin says, "Mm-hm." And then Joe says, "But, y'know, as I got older I became more curious. And I started to read some literature on my own." And he says, "At that point I began to weigh the pros and cons of meat eating."

To weigh the pros and cons, another common phrase. It means to think about the positive sides and the negative side. Think of all the positive things about a topic and compare them to all the negative things. And then you make a decision. Y'know, overall, total, is it more positive or more negative. So Joe started to think about the pros and cons of meat eating. Maybe positive, "Oh I like the taste. But negative, It's very unhealthy." And you know, positive, negative, positive, negative. And he looked at the whole thing and he decided, "Oh, eating meat is mostly bad and being vegetarian has more pros."

Okay, and he found there were a lot of good reasons to go vegetarian. Kristin says, "Yeah, yeah." Joe said, "Y'know, there are environmental reasons. There are also health reasons obviously. It reduces the risk of heart problems and reduces the risk of high blood pressure." Kristin says, "Yeah." And Joe says, "...y'know, as you know, high blood pressure runs in my family. So I've needed to be careful about that."

Another common phrase... runs in my family. Runs in my family means, is common in my family. So high blood pressure is common in Joe's family. High blood pressure runs in his family. Common in his family. It runs in his family.

And Kristin says, "Right." And Joe says, "Um, another thing for me that really struck a chord was that I just didn't think it was a practical approach to solving world hunger."

It means eating meat. He didn't think eating meat was a good solution for world hunger. And this idea struck



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a chord with him. Okay, to strike a chord with someone, or sometimes we say struck a chord in someone. Struck a chord in me, struck a chord with me. It means it... it means an idea or an action or an experience. So it struck a chord, past, it struck a chord means it created some emotion. Or it connected emotionally with me. Right, so maybe this idea of people being hungry, it made him feel, for example, very, very sad. So this issue struck a chord with Joe. It connected emotionally. It triggered a strong emotion in him. It created a strong emotion in him. It struck a chord with him.

Alright, and Joe says, "I mean the land that's being used to raise animals could actually grow a lot more crops. A lot more rice and wheat and soybeans and vegetables." And Kristin says, "Now that's a particular aspect of going vegetarian that I'd never thought of before."

So Kristin didn't realize that raising animals was less efficient for the land. Just raising plants is much, much more efficient. You can feed more people with vegetables than with meat.

And Joe said, "Yeah, that's an important one to me."

So that's an important reason for Joe.

And then he says, "I think just as important to me was the fact that I... that it was really inhumane to the animals."

Okay, the word inhumane means cruel. Cruel, unkind, it can have the idea of violence sometimes. Certainly in this case it has the idea of violence and cruelty. Causing suffering, all those ideas mean inhumane. Inhumane. So these animals that are raised for meat, y'know cows, pigs, chickens, they are treated very inhumanely. Right, very, very inhumanely. Very cruelly, they suffer so much.

And Joe said he read literature that talked about how these animals are treated and the chemicals that get injected into them. And all of this, the suffering, and the pain and the cruelty and the chemicals, it was a real turnoff to him. He said, "That for me was just a real turnoff."

A turnoff is something that makes you feel negative. Something that makes you feel very negative about a certain subject. A turnoff means something that makes you not want to do something. It kind of turns you off. It turns off your desire. Something that turns off your desire. And it depends on the situation. It could be any kind of desire. So here he's talking about the desire to eat meat. So in the past he had a desire, he wanted to eat meat. Then he learned about the animals suffering and the violence and the cruelty and the chemicals and it was a turnoff. It turned off his desire. So after this he did not want to eat meat again. He had no desire to eat meat. So the information was a turnoff. It was a turnoff to eating meat.

Okay and Kristin said, "Yeah, for me as well."



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So it was also a turnoff to Kristin.

And then Joe asked her, “Why did you become a vegetarian?” And she said, “What led me to it was a series of things.” She said, “Number one, my uncle for example has been a vegetarian as far back as I can remember.”

For a long, long time her uncle has been a vegetarian.

“So it wasn’t a new concept to my family.”

It wasn’t a new idea to her family.

She says, “I can remember when I was in high school I just started losing the taste for meat...”

To lose the taste for something means you really don’t enjoy eating it anymore. The taste isn’t very good anymore. So she started to like meat less and less and less in high school.

“Especially red meat and chicken.” Okay and Joe says, “Yeah.” And she said, “So....” And then Joe says, he laughed and he said, “that wasn’t the case for me. I ate everything but the kitchen sink when I was in high school.”

And that’s a common phrase, everything but the kitchen sink. It’s kind of a joke. It’s a little bit of slang, a little bit of an idiom. It just means everything possible. I ate everything possible when I was in high school. So it means I ate lots and lots and lots of different things. Everything but the kitchen sink. So everything but the kitchen sink means everything possible.

Okay, and then Kristin laughs and she says, “Well, yeah in college it was pretty much just seafood I was eating.” And then she graduated from college, she said, “I was dating a guy, living with him and he decided to become a vegetarian and wanted me to become one. Even though I’d been thinking of becoming a vegetarian, I didn’t want to... I wanted it to be my own decision.”

So she was already thinking about being a vegetarian but she didn’t want her boyfriend at that time to pressure her.

So she told him, “Look, it’s fine. I’m not gonna ask you to cook meat, but I’m not giving up seafood.”

To give up means to quit.

So she said, “If we go out and I go to a restaurant I might choose to eat seafood.” And Joe said, “Okay, that was the first step.”



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So she stopped eating everything except seafood, continued to eat fish. All other meat she stopped eating. That was her first step.

And then she says, “So I would say though, that the straw that broke the camel’s back...”

Hey, there’s another phrase. The straw that broke the camel’s back.

“was going out on a deep sea fishing trip with a friend.”

Okay, let’s back up a little bit. Straw that broke the camel’s back. It means the last reason, the last event. So it’s this idea that you have a lot of reasons to do something but you don’t do it. But finally one final experience, one small thing, it’s the last thing that finally changes your mind. So maybe you have many, many reasons to do something but you’re still waiting. I don’t know, I don’t know, I don’t know and then finally one little extra thing happens and then suddenly, boom, everything changes. We call that last little experience the straw that broke the camel’s back. You can imagine a camel it’s carrying a lot of heavy stuff. But it’s okay and then you add more, you add more, you add more, oh the camel’s, oh my god. Its back hurts and then you add one little straw, one little tiny piece of something. It’s the last little thing and the camel’s back breaks. It’s that idea... it’s the last little thing that finally causes a big change. Okay, so the little thing that caused a big change for Kristin was a fishing trip.

And her friend was fishing and he brought in the big fish. It was flopping around and they clubbed it to death.

A club is like a wooden stick, and they beat it. They beat the fish to death.

And Kristin saw them killing this living creature. It really disturbed me.

It really upset her. It was the final incident that made her make a big change... caused her to change and become vegetarian. Because she realized oh my god, this thing is alive and meat is alive if they are living creatures. And they’re killing them and I don’t like to cause that.

She said, “From that point on...”

From that point forward.

“I thought, ‘I’m totally giving up seafood as well. I’m not gonna eat anything anymore that has been alive.’”

Meaning an animal.



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Okay, so that is all of the vocabulary lesson for “Vegetarian.”