



All Ears English Episode 166:

3 Ways Your Apartment Can Make You Successful in the US

Gabby: This is an All Ears English [Podcast], Episode 166: “3 Ways Your Apartment Can Make You Successful in the US.”

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, where you’ll finally get real, native English conversation with your hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Gabby Wallace, the ‘Language Angel’, from Boston, USA.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: So Gabby, a lot of our listeners are asking where they can see and get the transcript from this podcast.

Gabby: Right, because reading while you listen to the episodes will help you improve your listening skills even faster. And we do have text transcripts of every single episode. So if you haven’t seen those yet, don’t miss out. You can find them at AllEarsEnglish.com/Conversations. That’s c-o-n-v-e-r-s-a-t-i-o-n-s.

[Instrumental]



Lindsay: In today's episode, you'll learn how to make the right choices when it comes to your home to be successful in your job and your life in the US.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby. How are you doing today?

Gabby: Oh, I'm doing great. How are you?

Lindsay: Excellent. I am so excited because today we have Dr. Anne Copeland from the Interchange Institute in Boston. So Anne conducts research on what makes international professionals and families abroad successful when they go abroad. How are you doing today Ann?

Anne: I'm fine. How are you? Hi, Lindsay. Hi, Gabby.

Lindsay: Excellent. Thanks for...

Gabby: Hi. Doing well.

Lindsay: Thanks for joining us. And I think today you're gonna (going to) share some tips with us about how international professionals and families can think about the layout of their home or the, the way their home is setup to be successful when they're abroad. Is that right?

Anne: That's right. I thought I'd share with you some of the findings of a research study that I did.

Gabby: Excellent.

Anne: It's called *At Home Abroad*.

Lindsay: Okay.

Anne: And it was based on, (um), information that I got from 130 people living in 148 countries. They were from 24 different countries. So, it was quite international. I heard from people all over the world.

Gabby: Oh, wow!



Anne: I got interested in this, (um), topic about how changes in a home affect family relationships.

Gabby: Wow!

Anne: One, one time a couple of years ago, I had two teenage daughters...

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Anne: ...and their job was to clear the table after dinner and fill up the dishwasher.

Lindsay: Okay.

Anne: And we both – and then we had it all worked out and it all worked pretty smoothly. But one day, I bought some new cereal bowls...

Gabby: (Huh).

Anne: ...empty cereal bowls didn't fit in the dishwasher the way the old ones did. In fact, five or six of them filled up the whole top of the dishwasher.

Gabby: Ah!

Lindsay: Oh.

Anne: The ripple effects of this were so many; it was so funny to me. Suddenly, they couldn't run the dishwasher after dinner, and so the dishes didn't get done, and so they started to blame each other, and so...

Lindsay: Oh, no!

Gabby: Wow!

Anne: We had to reorganize our whole family because we got five new cereal bowls. And I started to think, 'Man, when people move to a new country...'

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Anne: "...think of all the changes and, and typical architecture that they encounter.'



Gabby: Yeah.

Anne: I started to thinking about my friends, (uh), around the world who suddenly have more space, or less space, or shared bedrooms...

Lindsay: Ooh!

Anne: ...living on two floors. And so that's, that was the basis of my...

Lindsay: Oh.

Anne: ...wanting to do this research.

Gabby: Fascinating.

Lindsay: That's interesting. It's so important.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: (I mean), looking at the little details and just the thought of the fact that these little details can affect our lives on such a large scale. It's incredible.

Gabby: Yeah.

Anne: That's right. So...

Gabby: Fascinating.

Anne: So, I set out to learn from the real experts and – in this area, which of course, are the people who are doing the moving themselves.

Gabby: Right.

Anne: So I – I, (um), this is an internet survey...

Lindsay: Okay.

Anne: ...study that I did and I asked people, (um), a lot of questions about – these are all people who were living in a new country for them...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).



Anne: ...or ex-patriots [04:28].

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Anne: And I asked them about their new houses layout and design. And I told them I was interested in what, if anything, made a difference in, (um), their settling in process and their assessment of their new lives.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Anne: So, (you know), I was just up front with them. I said to them, sometimes a change in a home has an impact on how families and couples interact with each other.

Gabby: Yeah.

Anne: So if you have any examples of that.

Lindsay: For sure.

Anne: For example, maybe somebody – everyone used to have their own computer and TV...

Lindsay: Ah.

Anne: And now they only have one. This is what one person said.

Lindsay: Yeah, that's a good example.

Anne: Suddenly, they were all gathering in the kitchen and she was seeing her teenage kids more often.

Gabby: Wow!

Lindsay: Oh, interesting.

Anne: Yeah. Or maybe it's the opposite. Maybe now they have a lot more space...

Gabby: Yeah.

Anne: ...and everyone is their own room and so, suddenly they don't see each other very often.



Lindsay: (Mm).

Anne: So, they, they wrote wonderful things. It was really interesting. (Um), and as a psychologist, I got interested in coding from their responses, something that family psychologists called centripetal and centripetal forces.

Lindsay: Okay.

Anne: (You know), centripetal force is when you put water in the bucket...

Lindsay: Right.

Anne: And you spin it around and around your head and the water doesn't come out of the bucket.

Lindsay: Okay.

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Anne: It's, it's, (uh), pushed against the back of the bucket.

Lindsay: Okay.

Anne: Well, in a family, or in a house, a house that pushes people away from each other...

Gabby: (Mm).

Anne: ...we call centripetal.

Lindsay: Ooh!

Anne: So...

Gabby: Interesting!

Anne: ...if, if houses have, suddenly, more space, separate rooms, more computers, more TVs, things that push the family members away from each other...

Lindsay: (Mm).



Anne: ...I coded that as centripical.

Lindsay: Okay.

Anne: And then, (you know), opposite of that is centripetal, with a 'p'.

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Anne: And so those are home features that bring families together.

Gabby: Yeah.

Anne: Maybe a one big kitchen living room area, so everyone's really in the same room or...

Lindsay: Right.

Anne: ...(um), an attractive outdoor sitting area that everybody loves. So suddenly the teenagers, and the little kids, and the parents are all spending more time together.

Both: Aw!

Anne: So that's what I was – so this is one of the findings that I found. People described this. They didn't know – of course they didn't use that vocabulary...

Gabby: Yeah.

Anne: ...but they were describing this kind of difference in their home and what I found was that the people who describe their houses as pulling themselves, pulling their family members in, that is centripetal...

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Anne: ...forces. (Um), even if they complained about them, they were happier **[indiscernible 07:08]**, they liked their homes more, they said they'd choose the same home again.

Gabby: Wow.



Anne: [crosstalk] all of my measures, they were the ones who were happier. They were the ones who described their homes as pushing family members...

Lindsay: Interesting. And did – one quick question. Did that translate in terms of – to the length of time that the family stayed abroad, did that translate to, (like), tenure abroad?

Anne: (Um), I, I didn't ask that question, so I don't know if that's the case.

Gabby: (Mm).

Anne: But I do know that I – that this centripetal, centripetal finding was a better predictor of whether they'd choose the same house again and were happy than – I asked them do you like the house, do you have more space, and was it good for entertaining. All those things weren't related to their adjustment, but this, this thing that is the aspect of the architecture that had such an influence on family dynamics was really powerful.

Lindsay: Oh, wow!

Gabby: Yeah. That is interesting. I think this is a topic that you don't always think about when you're moving to a new country. (I mean), maybe you think about where am I going to live. What's the location going to be?

Anne: Right.

Gabby: But maybe you don't consider the layout, and it seems like a very important part of our everyday lives because of course we're, we're sleeping in the house, we're waking up in the house. We have a lot of our daily activities inside our house or apartment. And so the layout or the, the just – the way that you set things up, as you said, they have a big impact. So, yeah this is...

Anne: And I...

Gabby: ...such an interesting topic.

Anne: I think that's exactly right and, and it did – I, I think it's something that we don't usually think about but we can. (I mean), I think it's an, an idea that



people really can work with. So, (you know), when you're choosing your home, think about how your family likes to interact with each other...

Gabby: Right.

Anne: ...and will this home facilitate that?

Lindsay: Okay.

Gabby: That's an excellent point.

Anne: Where will people sit? Where are you gonna (going to) sit in the evening? Who will have an easy time talking to somebody?

Gabby: (Mm-hm).

Lindsay: Oh, that's so key.

Anne: Will the, will the amount of privacy be good or bad?

Gabby: (Um), right.

Lindsay: I would think this would be especially important if you have teenage kids (right). So I'm imagining...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...an international family coming here to Boston, for example, and the kids are in school every day and they're learning English and they feel like maybe English is really cool or something...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...and they start to (kind of) ignore their parents or look down on their parents if they're speaking their native language in the home. And that would be a way to bring the family's apart, so having that family room in the evening...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...would be really key to maintaining that relationship.



Anne: That's right.

Gabby: So...

Anne: That's right. So I think it's been – it, and, and the interesting thing is it's not, it's not that, (you know), the -- that I think Americans tend to think the bigger the house, the bigger the space.

Gabby: Yeah.

Anne: It's really not that.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: No.

Anne: it's not about that.

Lindsay: Oh, yeah.

Gabby: Sounds like it's more about having that central gathering area that's a comfortable and, and beautiful place where people want to come together.

Anne: That's right.

Lindsay: Oh.

Gabby: So, my mind is (kind of) wandering a bit away from the family life to what if you're a single person, (um), moving abroad and you're interested in meeting new people. Maybe you're living alone and I was thinking about this. Maybe, (you know), not only thinking about the layout of your apartment, (um), to facilitate maybe, (um), having, (um), (you know), maybe friends from abroad come stay with your or even, (you know), renting out a room or something, but also, (um), the layout of the building itself and is there a common area where people from your building might gather...

Lindsay: (Mm).



- Gabby:** ...or, or is there (some-), something in the building like a, (um), like a gym or, (you know), a common area where you might meet your neighbors.
- Anne:** That's a really, really good point. And there are some architects who are thinking about living, community living and its impact on (um), on interactions like this. And I think it's so important. You, there – you, and you named a couple of them. Are there communal areas? What, where do people go to get their mail?
- Gabby:** Yeah.
- Anne:** (Um), how long are the hallways? These kinds of things have such a profound impact, (uh), on, on our lives.
- Lindsay:** Yeah.
- Gabby:** Well, even is there a park nearby...
- Lindsay:** Right.
- Gabby:** ...(um) where I – yeah, I'm currently living right across the street from a park and it's so nice to be able to socialize out there and you see the same people walking their dogs or playing soccer and it's, it really facilitates meeting your neighbors.
- Lindsay:** Yeah. Yeah. So this is something...
- Anne:** Exactly. That, that was one of the other, (uh), quick findings that I thought I...
- Lindsay:** Sure.
- Gabby:** Yeah.
- Anne:** ...would mention. I, I asked people, (um), what they did when they first moved to, to settle in and there was a long list of, (you know), unpacking boxes, and...
- Lindsay:** Okay.



Anne: ...hooking up the computers and all those things.

Gabby: Yeah.

Anne: And then I, I compared that to how quickly they felt settled and how well adjusted their mental – I had a quick mental health measure and how loyal they felt to their employer and, of course, you, it wouldn't be too surprised to you, but there were some things that were more important than others in settling in, and meeting neighbors was one of the most...

Lindsay: Ooh!

Gabby: Interesting.

Lindsay: More important than unpacking the i-iron for example.

Gabby: Yeah.

Anne: But a good thing that – and this is a very practical tip. I, I found it in three or four of my different research studies, people who hang their family photographs and artwork on their walls quickly say that they're happier.

Gabby: Oh, my gosh.

Lindsay: Okay.

Gabby: That's a great tip.

Lindsay: So, oh when they family is back home?

Gabby: No, no.

Lindsay: Or when they're -- Okay...

Gabby: No.

Lindsay: ...the whole family...

Gabby: When you move.

Lindsay: ...come over. I see.



Gabby: No, no, no, no. No, when you, when you move, you put pictures on the wall.

Lindsay: Okay.

Anne: You build your nest. You build your nest.

Lindsay: (Mm).

Gabby: Yeah, that's a fantastic point because it might not seem essential, (like), (you know), (um), unpacking your clothes that you're going to wear the next day...

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: ...that's pretty essential, but pictures build that sense of 'this is my home'.

Lindsay: I like that. I like that.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: That's key. So it's really all about -- it sounds like the overarching theme here is really all about the relationships.

Gabby: (Mm-hm).

Lindsay: Establishing those relationships. Well that's...

Anne: That's right.

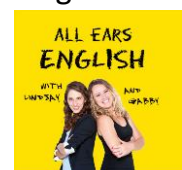
Lindsay: Excellent. Okay.

Gabby: This is a fascinating topic.

Lindsay: I love it.

Gabby: I love the tips.

Lindsay: So I'm just gonna (going to) do a quick recap if that's okay. So what we've talked about today – so we've talked about the importance of when we select a home, when we move abroad, looking at a place where there's a central room where we can come together with our family on a regular



basis. And we talked about how important it is to meet our neighbors instead of (kind of) unpack our clothes, things like that. And, also to put, (you know), pictures of the family on the wall. I like that. Is there any final (kind of) piece of advice, Anne, that you could give to our listeners if they're getting ready to move abroad to the US?

Anne: I think it's just to be very thoughtful about – on the one hand, you want to look for a home that you think will be just right for you and at the same time, you have to be very flexible because, (you know), you may live in a suburb in New Jersey and you're moving to Paris and maybe you're gonna (going to) live in an apartment in downtown. So it may be not exactly like what you've had before.

Lindsay: Okay.

Anne: (Um), like if you can think more abstractly about what's important to you and your family and how you live...

Lindsay: Oh.

Anne: ...and, and compare the homes that you're considering against that list.

Lindsay: I like that. That is awesome.

Gabby: Great.

Lindsay: Wow. Thank you so much Anne. So if our listeners want to learn more about your research or get more tips, where could they go online to find you?

Anne: Our website is www.InterchangeInstitute.org. That's all one word, InterchangeInstitute.org. And if you click on research, you'll find this whole *At Home Abroad*, (uh), study report as well as several of our other reports, (uh), in full, for free on our website.

Gabby: Wow!

Lindsay: I love it, I love it.



Gabby: What a great resource.

Lindsay: Thank you so much for coming on the show today. This has been really valuable and I think our listeners are gonna (going to) really appreciate it.

Anne: My pleasure.

Gabby: Thanks Anne.

Lindsay: Thanks a lot. Take care.

Anne: Bye.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you wanna (want to) put your ears into English more often, be sure to subscribe to our podcast in iTunes on your computer or on your smartphone. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.

