



All Ears English Episode 236:

Warning: Information is Habit Forming, How to Unplug

Lindsay: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 236: “Warning: Information is Habit Forming, How to Unplug.”

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, downloaded more than 5 million times. We believe in connection, not perfection. You’ll finally get real Native English conversation with your American hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Michelle Kaplan, the ‘New York Radio Girl’ coming to you from Boston and New York City, USA.

[Instrumental]

Michelle: Lindsay, Lindsay, it’s time to start the show!

Lindsay: Oh, Michelle, (uh) just a minute. I just got an email and (oh), there’s another. Ding, there’s another.

Michelle: Oh my gosh. Come on!

Lindsay: Just give me one more minute. I want to check my email one more time just to make sure nothing important came in.



Michelle: Okay, well, today you'll hear how information addiction can influence your life and how to unplug.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, Michelle, how are you today? Welcome!

Michelle: Hi, Lindsay. I'm great. How are you?

Lindsay: I'm feeling good today. I'm excited today to mention that, you know, we just held this contest because we wanted our listeners to get to know you. They took an interesting quiz about you, some interesting facts about you and I want to announce our winner.

Michelle: Okay, awesome!

Lindsay: So, our winner was Aresa, and she now gets 15 minutes of free conversation practice with you Michelle.

Michelle: (Ahh) Yeah, no, I'm really excited about it. (Um) Thank you to all the people that entered. That's really exciting. I'm glad that you're, I'm glad that you're excited to hear me.

Lindsay: Yeah, thanks for entering the contest guys and guys if you didn't know about this contest that's because you're not on our email list. So, if you wanna (want to) know about future contests and future opportunities to get in touch and to practice with one of us go to allearsenglish.com/hot, h-o-t. So, Michelle let's jump in to today's topic. What are we talking about today?

Michelle: Okay, so today we are talking about the challenge of trying to unplug from the world, trying to unplug our electronics.

Lindsay: Oh my god, unplug is a great word and it means two things, right? It means literally unplug the plug from the wall and what else does it mean?

Michelle: It means to just get away from electronics, to just get away from, you know, the things that distract you from real life, from real people.



Lindsay: That's right, from real people. I wanna (want to) tell a little story. I'm a little embarrassed to admit this, but you know, you've (you have) got to be honest. On Thanksgiving, I wanted to unplug and I had every intention to just spend time with my family and be present, but I was sitting there on the couch and I was realizing I was reaching for my phone, Michelle. I was like, oh, I wanna (want to) download a podcast. I wanna (want to) learn something and I want to check my email and I want to surf the internet. It was terrible.

Michelle: I complete-, I have been there completely. I know, and it's really hard because you wanna (want to) be present be in the moment and enjoy the holiday, but we just can't get away from phones, laptops, all those things.

Lindsay: Yeah, and it's like this anxiety was building up inside me. Not anxiety, but I would say restlessness. Restlessness is the word. Michelle, what does restlessness mean?

Michelle: It means that you can't rest. Like, you just wanna (want to) do something all the time. Like, I get like that a lot at night actually.

Lindsay: Oh, you do? So does your mind race?

Michelle: Oh my gosh, it's the worst.

Lindsay: Do you sleep with your phone right next to you?

Michelle: No, but (uh) I do sometimes look at it immediately before going to sleep and I think that's bad. In fact, just today, I was talking with my students about leading a healthy lifestyle and one of the things, we were reading an article and it talked about, you know, that you should unplug, like not look at a laptop, a phone or a television two hours before bedtime.

Lindsay: Oh wow!

Michelle: And I thought, I (uh) can't imagine that, and they all agree they can't do that, but why is that? Why can't we just unplug you know?



Lindsay: Yeah, that's a good question. Let's talk about what's going on here because I think our listeners are also experiencing this because our listeners, many of them listen to this show on a smartphone. That means that they carry around their phones every day in their pockets and they probably have this problem too because we all have this problem. So, why does it happen and what can we do about it?

Lindsay: Well, I think part of it, Michelle, is about fear of missing out. We call it FOMO, right?

Michelle: Yep, oh yeah, that's definitely, I think that's the whole thing.

Lindsay: Yeah, do you ever experience FOMO? I mean, is that the reason that you reach for your phone or your Facebook or your email?

Michelle: Yeah, I mean, I think that, first of all, I'm really glad we're talking about that phrase 'cause (because) I think it's actually a really popular slang. (Um), so, it's really good to use, Fear Of Missing Out, definitely. I notice that (uh) I mean, you wanna (want to) be up to date, like, you wanna (want to) look at Facebook, you wanna (want to) look at your email, you wanna (want to) make sure that you're not, like, missing anything. What if I get something important? Well, chances are at midnight you're probably not going to. So, you know, things can wait. It's this obsession like that, you know, nothing can wait until an appropriate time. We have to constantly be checking, and especially if your phone automatically updates you when you have an email. It's like...

Lindsay: Oh, terrible.

Michelle: Oh my gosh, and you hear that beep or your phone buzzes and oh my god what is it, what is it, what is it, you know?

Lindsay: Yeah, and I was doing a little research to prepare for today's episode and I realized what I learned is when that happens Michelle, that phone goes beep, that's actually a dopamine rush that we get in our brains and it's not taking pleasure in finding the information, it's taking pleasure in seeking the information out, like wanting to get the information.



Michelle: Mmmm. That makes a lot of sense. That makes a lot of sense.

Lindsay: Oh my gosh, and sometimes I'll wake up and I'll have, you know, 30 new emails and even though I know I can't do anything about those emails. I'll open them. And it's like I wanna (want to) open the next email and it's like an addiction.

Michelle: I completely agree, yeah. I can't not. If my phone buzzes there's no way I can just leave it. Like, you know, I think what if it's something important or, or just, you know. I mean, usually, probably 90 percent of the time, it's nothing that, you know, needs to be addressed right now at that time.

Lindsay: I know, so let's see if we can come up with some actionable solutions. Like, I know our listeners are struggling with this problem too and I know this probably affects our ability to learn languages.

Michelle: Mmmm, yes.

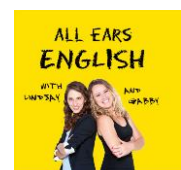
Lindsay: Not to be able to focus on one thing. You know, one thing that I do also is I always go back and forth between internet windows, you know browser windows. Oh god, it's incredible.

Michelle: Yeah, it's so easy to just press right click open new window and then by the time you're finished you realize you have 30 windows open and you don't even know what you're doing to start off with. And I think this (uh) idea of seeking out, what you said before with the dopamine, I mean, that happens to me all the time. I look at one article. It leads me to something else, like everything leads to another place and I feel like your brain is just craving that like (uh) where am I going to go next, even when you just, you know, have you ever had a night where you just like with your friends just watch some viral videos on YouTube...

Lindsay: Oh yeah.

Michelle: And then, oh you see something else along the side and that's I guess that's probably why they have that there.

Lindsay: Oh yeah.



- Michelle:** Because they know that you're enticed to click on another video even if you didn't want to watch it at all, but then you click on one video and it's another video and another and you can take up a whole night like that.
- Lindsay:** It's terrible. Or, or series, like (uh) let's see Orange is the New Black is one that...
- Michelle:** Oh, yeah.
- Lindsay:** I got addicted to that one weekend and I think I watched an entire season.
- Michelle:** Yeah, I know. It's disgusting. I actually have five episodes of that to watch now and I haven't been able to watch it for several days and I feel like oh my gosh, how am I gonna (going to). And then you start to think, well, what am I going to do when it's over, right? I only have five more episodes, like, how will I handle myself?
- Lindsay:** Yeah, like, okay, we know there's a problem. Right? There's a problem. So Michelle, what is the solution? We're not neuroscientists here. We're not doctors, but I think we can throw out a couple of ideas and maybe our listeners also have some ideas. So I'm going to encourage our listeners, guys, if you have any ideas of how to overcome this problem come on over to allearsenglish.com/236 and leave a comment. But Michelle, what's one idea for how we can start to overcome this dopamine, this sort of chasing after the dopamine rush that we do.
- Michelle:** Mm-hm. Well I think that the first step is even just talking about it, just like, that we are now. Like, what do they say, the first step to fixing a problem is recognizing you have a problem.
- Lindsay:** Okay, that's right, that's right.
- Michelle:** Just so we talk about it, but, so, I mean, try and find some solutions, right? Once you realize that you're addicted don't let it beat you, right? Like, I think one thing that you could do is try and make some time where you say, you know, I'm not gonna (going to) look at my email today.
- Lindsay:** Right, right.



Michelle: I'm not gonna (going to) be checking Facebook today. And you know, just try it even for one day and see how you feel. You'll probably enjoy it.

Lindsay: Yeah, absolutely. And some practical solutions to make that day easier would be, for example, turning off your auto notifications, you know, turning off your ability to check your email on your phone with that icon, right? You can disable that icon. (Uh), that helps. Or, for example, I like to take regular vacations where I have a week at a time where I am just totally away. Back in August I had an amazing week where I went to Cape Cod and I went to the White Mountains in New Hampshire and I just didn't touch my email. The first two days I wanted to. I had that addiction. And then I noticed that addiction went away.

Michelle: Right.

Lindsay: It was amazing.

Michelle: That's great. I've taken a couple cruises and on a cruise you know, you can't really check the internet unless you want to pay a lot of money and it always seems frustrating, like oh god I wanna (want to) know what's happening, and then you realize, you know what, it's not that important. And (um) actually I was disappointed because I heard a recent news story that some cruise ships are going to be more wi-fi accessible.

Lindsay: Uh, oh god.

Michelle: And I thought that's really a shame because then it's just going to take away from the experience. You know, sometimes you just need to unplug.

Lindsay: Yeah, I start hearing about these new places that are typically like kind of a refuge, you start to hear oh they're getting an internet connection. And I say, oh god.

Michelle: Right, right, right. It's like it makes your life easier in some ways, you know, some things if you, but I don't think it really does.

Lindsay: That's right. Maybe in the end it makes your life harder because I think it leaves a shallow thinking. That's what this is about, it leads to shallow



thinking where we can't go in depth on anything on any one topic and I want to go in depth when I think.

Michelle: Right, right, yeah.

Lindsay: So do you have one more solution, one more trick or tip that you could suggest to our audience to get over this problem?

Michelle: Mmm-hmm. I think that you should step away from the computer and your phone. Leave your apartment, leave your house, take a walk outside, right? Don't bring everything with you. Take a walk in nature. And (um) meditation is a good thing.

Lindsay: Yeah, that helps me a lot. I try to meditate twice a day and when I finish a meditation session I really don't want to pick up my phone. It's a shift in the way I think.

Michelle: Yeah, that's wonderful. I don't meditate but I probably could use it.

Lindsay: Hahaha, I think we all could right. This is really interesting, but we really want to hear from you guys our listeners. Let us know if you're struggling with this and let us know if you've found a solution. So come on over to allearsenglish.com/236 and let's have a conversation in the comments section. So thanks Michelle. Thanks for talking about this. I think we're going to come back to this topic another time another day because it's a big deal.

Michelle: Thanks Lindsay. Yeah, I completely agree. I think it's really interesting and (um) I think everyone can relate to this.

Lindsay: I think so too. Alright, have a good day.

Michelle: Thank you. You too Lindsay.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey guys if you wanna (want to) be an insider with All Ears English then you need to get on our email list to hear about contests or special deals



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[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you believe in connection, not perfection and you wanna (want to) put your ears into English more often, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes on your computer or on your smartphone. And hey, if you liked today's show please let us know with a review in iTunes. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.

