

## Real English Conversations: Perfectionism and Procrastination

### Introduction

Hi, Lori here, welcoming you to another episode of Real English Conversations from Better@English.com. In today's conversation I'm joined by my friend Yvette, who is a freelance writer specializing in screenplays. Her educational background is in American Studies, and she's just an all-round energetic and creative person. I hope you'll find her a welcome addition as my conversational partner here.

Our conversation today is about perfectionism and procrastination.

### Conversation Transcript

Lori: Yeah, I was thinking that, that it would be fun to talk about perfectionism a little bit and about being a perfectionist and how horrible that is, and how it...and how it can really hinder you from...

Yvette: Being productive...

Lori: Yeah, being productive and **moving forward** with things that you want to do.

Yvette: Yeah.

Lori: Indeed I know it's something that I struggle with a lot and that I've thought about a lot, and I know in the past we've talked about it **from time to time**, so...

Yvette: Yeah.

Lori: But, perfectionism as we all know and love it...

Yvette: Or hate it! It's terrible!

Lori: Yeah!

Yvette: Well, it makes you not very productive. I mean, I just finished a text yesterday and I spent a lot more time on it than I should have... knowing that I wanted it to be absolutely perfect.

Lori: Mmm hmm.

Yvette: And I knew **at some point**... I just gave up, I, you know I just gave up and thought, "Well, it's **a lost cause**," even though I'm sure it's fine, but err, you just give up.

Lori: Yeah, that's good when you've actually already started working on something...and you're working on it...err, that you can set a deadline for yourself, maybe, and say, "Okay, now I just can't **mess with** it anymore; it has to be finished." But what I find the most **insidious** and really destructive thing about perfectionist tendencies is that they can keep you from even getting started with something.

Yvette: Okay, the **procrastination**.

Lori: Yes. It's very closely **tied in** with procrastination, I find

Yvette: Yeah. Yeah, there's just two things that can happen. You know, you could be suffering from fear of failure or fear of success, one of the two. And err, you know, if you're successful then you're going to deal with, like, an additional amount of information that you need to process later on, and if you're not successful you're just a **loser**.

Lori: Yeah, exactly.

Yvette: At least that's what I have.

Lori: Yeah, I find that, err, for me this idea of perfectionism... it's not so much about striving to be perfect, it's more like you're, you're constantly **beating yourself up** about things never being good enough.

Yvette: Yeah, that's the problem. That's pretty **neurotic**.

Lori: Yeah, it's not that...I mean...you know intellectually that nothing can be perfect and nothing I do can be perfect...but...it's, it's... So you know that on an intellectual level, but somehow it's like you're still struggling with this idea that "Oh, but it's not good enough," or "I've not got all the information I really needed to make the perfect start."

Yvette: That, that is usually the problem that I come up with, is you think you have all the information but you don't, and then you start looking for more and more, and while you're looking for all this extra information you're just, well forget it, you're not going to **make it**.

Lori: Yeah, seven hours on Wikipedia later...  
[Laughter]

Yvette: Right.

Lori: You find you're looking at something completely unrelated to what you started out with...

Yvette: Right. Right, that is the biggest issue is that you start looking for other information and then you discover 15 other things that are maybe also relevant or important, or maybe not, and by the time you're done you figure out that, "Oh, that's totally not what I needed to do."

Lori: Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

Yvette: This is so unimportant, or that... you know, I remember in school that I, err, handed in a paper and it was so good and so well done he's [the teacher] like, "This is way too much work for what was really required. So why did you do all this work?" I'm like, "Well, it had to be good, right?"

Lori: Yeah. Right. Right.

Yvette: So, you spend a lot more time working on something that another person might just **dismiss** more quickly, and nobody notices anything that's wrong.

Lori: That's the thing that...I find that a lot of the things that you worry about a lot **qualitywise** or things that are important to you, when you think about it oftentimes those things.. other people aren't even going to notice those things.

Yvette: That's right.

Lori: You know, the things that you've worked so hard on, the little details that are so important to you...and then other people don't even notice, and then you can wonder "What's the **point**?" and "Why spend so much time on all these little things?"

Yvette: Yeah, or you see someone else's texts or something, like, some...you know, as a writer, you read about stuff and there's all these errors in it, and I'm thinking "Is there really a... does it really **bug** me so much that this is happening; is it really a problem for me that there are all these errors there?" And I'm thinking, "I don't really think that this person is doing a bad job," I may think, "Ooh, that's **shoddy**," but oh well. You know.

Lori: Yeah, yeah.

Yvette: I'm not as **harsh** on other people's work as I am on my own, I think, or I hope.

Lori: I know for me I'm harsh on my own, but I'm pretty mean and vicious about other people as well...I think maybe that's why I'm so worried about what people will think about my own things, because I'm so horrible and vicious [laughs] myself.

Yvette: [laughs] you will destroy them all. Oh, yeah. Now I used to, I used to correct people all the time when they made errors...

Lori: Uh huh...

Yvette: Just because, you know, I knew. I just know... "You just made an error...ha ha!" Look at me being all clever. And they hate you for that, so...

Lori: Yeah, people really don't appreciate **unsolicited** correction.

## Final Words

Okay, that wraps up today's Real English Conversation. We'll continue with this topic in the next episode. Before I sign off, I just want to thank all of you who have emailed me this past year asking when new episodes would be posted. It feels really great to know that there are listeners out there who look forward to each new episode. Unfortunately, I can't promise to post episodes as frequently as you might like because of my other time commitments. But you can be sure that I'll do what I can to give you as many new episodes as possible for 2010! Bye for now!

[Vocabulary notes on next page]

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## Vocabulary notes

<b>moving forward</b>	In this context, <i>to move forward</i> means to make progress.
<b>from time to time</b>	If something happens <i>from time to time</i> , it happens sometimes but not often. This is one of the many vague time statements that appear in this conversation.
<b>at some point</b>	In this context, point means a particular time or stage reached in a process. Compare with the other usage of point below.
<b>a lost cause</b>	If someone or something is a lost cause, that has no chance of succeeding.
<b>mess with</b>	In this context, to mess with something means to try to change or repair it, but not carefully and usually without success.
<b>insidious</b>	If something is insidious, it gradually or secretly causes you harm.
<b>procrastination</b>	If you procrastinate, you delay something that you have to do, because the idea of doing it makes you feel anxious or uncomfortable.
<b>tied in</b>	To be <i>tied in with</i> something or <i>tied in to</i> something means to be connected or related to it.
<b>loser</b>	A <i>loser</i> is someone tends to be unsuccessful at things they try to do.
<b>beating yourself up</b>	If you <i>beat yourself up</i> about something, you criticize yourself and tell yourself hurtful things that make you feel bad.
<b>neurotic</b>	<i>Neurotic</i> is originally a term from psychology with a very specific meaning. But in general conversation, as used here, <i>neurotic</i> refers to someone who behaves in an overly anxious or worried manner.
<b>make it</b>	In this context, to <i>make it</i> means to finish a project on time.
<b>dismiss</b>	If you dismiss someone or something, you decide that it isn't important or worth considering.
<b>qualitywise</b>	Adding the <i>-wise</i> suffix to a word adds the meaning of "relating to" or "in the manner of" to the word. There are some established words with the <i>-wise</i> suffix that you can find in your dictionary, for example <i>clockwise</i> , <i>lengthwise</i> . But native speakers often create their own words by adding the <i>-wise</i> suffix whenever it suits them.
<b>bug</b>	If something <i>bugs</i> you, it annoys or irritates you.
<b>point</b>	The <i>point</i> of something is its purpose or usefulness.
<b>shoddy</b>	If something is <i>shoddy</i> , it was badly or carelessly made.
<b>harsh</b>	If someone is harsh, they are (usually unnecessarily) unpleasant, unkind, or cruel.
<b>unsolicited</b>	If something is <i>unsolicited</i> it means you didn't ask for it or request it.