



Life in English Podcast

Transcript

&

Key Vocabulary

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Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

Sep 14, 2021

[00:00:00] Tony Kaizen: Don't be an **ass**¹.

[00:00:04] What's up, y'all. This is Coffee with Kaizen number 23, back with another **thought-provoking**² episode for you today.

[00:00:14] I saw another clip on TikTok that I thought was interesting. So I wanted to share it with you because there's some interesting vocabulary, but also an interesting idea to consider.

[00:00:24] So like always, I'm going to play the clip, explain some vocabulary and then we'll talk about it. And that will be it for this episode, my friend. So we're not going to waste any time. Let's get right into the clip. I'm going to play it now.

[00:00:37] Tim Ferris: Buridan's Ass. It's about a **donkey**³ who is **thirsty**⁴ and **hungry**⁵ and there's water on one side, a few feet away, and hay on the other. And

¹ (in this context) a stupid person

² making you think a lot about a subject

³ an animal like a small horse with long ears

⁴ Needing to drink something

⁵ Need to eat something

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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he can't decide **whether**⁶ to do the hay first or the water, the hay or the water. And he dies of thirst at the end of it. He couldn't do them **sequentially**⁷. **In effect**⁸, you can do almost everything you want in life, but you can't do it at the same time.

[00:01:05] And if you can just dedicate yourself to one thing for even a year, and then the next thing for a year, you can do those 10 things. But if you try to do all ten at once, you're going to be Buridan's Ass. You know, should I do this? Should I do this? Should I focus on this? Or should I focus on this? So don't be a donkey.

[00:01:21] Tony Kaizen: Don't be a **fucking**⁹ donkey. **God dammit**¹⁰. Don't be a donkey. All right, y'all. Hopefully, that clip wasn't too difficult to understand. I know there was some music in the background, but hopefully that didn't **ruin**¹¹ the audio experience for you. All right. So now I'm going to go through and explain the vocabulary that I think is useful.

[00:01:44] So the first one, thirsty. I think he said the donkey was thirsty and hungry. So thirsty is an adjective and it means feeling a need to drink. So when your mouth is dry, you need water. You need something to drink. You are thirsty. T H I R

⁶ (used to refer to one or more possibilities or to express uncertainty)

⁷ in a way that follows a particular order

⁸ Basically

⁹ (in this context) used to emphasize a statement, especially an angry one

¹⁰ An informal exclamation to express anger or irritation

¹¹ to spoil or destroy something completely

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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S T Y. Thirsty. Now, the noun to describe that same feeling is thirst. So the noun is thirst. The adjective is thirsty.

[00:02:12] Next is hungry. Hungry is feeling or displaying the need for food. So hungry means you need something to eat. Thirsty means you need something to drink. And the noun of hungry is hunger. Okay. So again, thirsty, hungry, thirst, hunger. All right.

[00:02:33] Next is whether to do this or that. I don't remember exactly what he said in the clip, but basically the donkey couldn't decide whether to drink first or to eat first. So what I want to bring to your attention is that sentence structure. When we say whether this or that, we use this, when we're expressing **doubt**¹² between two choices.

[00:02:54] So I don't know whether I should eat first or drink first. I don't know whether I should focus on my speaking or my listening skills. We use that word right before we compare to things that we're unsure about, whether we should do this or that. Hopefully, that makes sense.

[00:03:12] So the next thing on the list is died of thirst. And what I want you to pay attention to here is that he said died of thirst, not for thirst or by thirst or with thirst or anything like that.

¹² (a feeling of) not being certain about something, especially about how good or true it is

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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[00:03:24] So when we say to die of something, that's our way of expressing the cause of someone's death, but not just any death normally it's because it's a health issue. Like you die of cancer. Or you die of a heart attack or of thirst or of hunger, but I wouldn't say you die of a car accident. You see what I'm saying?

[00:03:43] When we say to die of something, normally it's some physical condition or some health **issue**¹³ that you had... a **disease**¹⁴ or something like that. All right.

[00:03:53] The next thing was at the end of it. I think he said he died of thirst at the end of it or something like that. And really all that means is at the end of the story or when everything was finished, when it was all said and done. It's all the same idea, at the end of it just means at the end of the story. Okay.

[00:04:10] Next was sequentially. He couldn't do them sequentially. He could not eat and then drink or drink and then eat. So sequentially means by forming or following a logical order or sequence. So, and even more natural way to say that just means in order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. I said those numbers sequentially one after the other, in a sequence, a logical order.

[00:04:36] Next was in effect. He said, so in effect, you can do all the things you want to do, but you must do them one at a time. That was basically the idea. Now this phrase in effect is not so common. So I wouldn't say this is something that you

¹³ a subject or problem that people are thinking and talking about

¹⁴ (an) illness of people, animals, plants, etc., caused by infection or a failure of health rather than by an accident

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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need to learn and focus on and practice all the time, because it's not something that we say all the time. But the basic idea, it's a formal way of saying basically, or a formal way of saying, what I'm trying to say is, or the point is... blah, blah, blah. You see?

[00:05:07] So he said in effect, you can do everything you want to do. So another way to say that would be basically what I'm saying is, or the point is you can do all the things you want to do.

[00:05:19] And the last one is don't be a donkey. Donkey, D O N K E Y donkey. Now the scientific name for donkey, the animal is the Latin word asinus, or asinus, I don't know how to pronounce it, which I suppose is why we refer to the donkey as an ass. Because you saw in the title of this episode, don't be an ass. Ass as another word for donkey. Why? I don't know. But like I said, the Latin word for donkey asinus. So you can see, they sound the same.

[00:05:51] Now for whatever reason, the donkey has also become synonymous with stupidity. Somebody calls you an ass or a donkey, this animal has become a symbol or synonym for an idiot or stupid or something like that, right? Just like in Spanish, if you speak Spanish or Portuguese, if you call somebody a donkey, you're calling them stupid, right?

[00:06:14] Now, if you think of the word asinine, which is very similar to asinus, asinine is a Latin, it's not a Latin word, it comes from Latin and it means extremely

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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stupid or foolish. So maybe that's why we call people an... I don't know. Hopefully you can see the connection.

[00:06:30] It made sense in my head when I was preparing this episode, but now that I hear myself explaining it, it's like, I don't know. I don't know if that makes sense, but anyway, you might be able to see the connection and either way, that's not the point of the episode.

[00:06:44] So just to make it even more clear, he started this story or this idea by saying Buridan's Ass or Buridan's donkey. Buridan's Ass is an **illustration**¹⁵ of a **paradox**¹⁶ in philosophy in the **conception**¹⁷ of **free will**¹⁸. It refers to a **hypothetical**¹⁹ situation wherein an ass or a donkey that is equally hungry and thirsty is placed **precisely**²⁰ midway or in the middle of a **stack**²¹ of **hay**²² and a **bucket**²³ of water.

¹⁵ an example that explains or proves something

¹⁶ a situation or statement that seems impossible or is difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics

¹⁷ an idea of what something or someone is like, or a basic understanding of a situation or a principle

¹⁸ the power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate; the ability to act at one's own discretion

¹⁹ imagined or suggested but not necessarily real or true

²⁰ Exactly

²¹ a pile of things arranged one on top of another

²² grass that is cut and dried and used as animal food

²³ a container with an open top and a handle, often used for carrying liquids

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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[00:07:11] So since the paradox assumes that the donkey will always go to whichever is closer, it dies of both hunger and thirst since it cannot make any rational decision between the hay and the water. That's the paradox. I have two choices, they're of equal distance away from me. I don't know which one to do first and I can't decide. So at the end I choose neither. And in this case I die, right.

[00:07:37] And this is something that, uh, I've experienced personally a lot, because like, I mean, just in life in general, but specifically with life in English, because now that I'm taking this thing, basically from a **hobby**²⁴ and **turning it into**²⁵ a business, my **livelihood**²⁶. It's like... it's really difficult because you have to focus on one thing at a time when you're trying to build a business or when you're trying to work for yourself.

[00:08:02] You have to be **laser-focused**²⁷ on your goals, your objectives, and anything other than that is **detrimental**²⁸ to what you're trying to do. It's **counterproductive**²⁹ to try to focus on multiple things at the same time, even though if you're working for yourself or you're starting a business, you have a bunch of different things that you need to do every single day.

²⁴ an activity that someone does for pleasure when they are not working

²⁵ Turn into (sth) - to change or develop from one thing to another

²⁶ (the way someone earns) the money people need to pay for food, a place to live, clothing, etc.

²⁷ To be focused 100% on one single thing with zero distractions

²⁸ causing harm or damage

²⁹ having an effect that is opposite to the one intended or wanted

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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[00:08:25] But that doesn't mean that you can focus on all of them at the same time, obviously. And me, personally, I consider myself to be a relatively creative person. Like, I have a lot of ideas **when it comes to**³⁰, uh, courses, digital products, things that are going to help you improve your English more effectively and in a more interesting way, maybe even faster.

[00:08:47] I have a bunch of different ideas for stuff that I would like to create. But at the same time, I'm just one person, you know? So I have to do the recording, the writing, the editing, the marketing, the graphic design. I mean, all these things. I'm building a new website for a VIP membership that I plan to offer. There's a bunch of stuff.

[00:09:03] But what I noticed is this last month that I've been doing Coffee with Kaizen basically every day, plus the Life in English podcast, plus all this other stuff, it's like... I was going crazy trying to focus on this and that and that and that, and that trying to do everything in one day, every single day.

[00:09:21] And you just get **burnt out**³¹, man, you realize that, trying to do everything at once or focus on a bunch of different things, having a bunch of different ideas in your head all the time... isn't good for anybody.

³⁰ We use this phrase to introduce a more specific topic or area that we want to talk about.

³¹ ill or very tired from working too hard

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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[00:09:32] Because you might work 10 minutes on this and then you get distracted **'cause**³² you have another idea. Then you work 20 minutes on that. And then, oh, I remember I got to do this. Then you work 30 minutes on that and five minutes here, then you get **stressed**³³. So you just walk away from everything.

[00:09:46] It's just, you're constantly **resetting**³⁴ your focus, you never get into this **groove**³⁵ or this **flow state**³⁶ where you can just focus on that and do that with a hundred percent of your effort and attention. You know?

[00:09:57] You're always giving them 5% to this, 10% to that, 20% to that. And that's never a good idea. I think if you're going to do something, give it a hundred percent every single time. In my experience, that's the best way to do it. You know?

[00:10:11] So, trying to bring it back to you, not just talking about myself, I would say it's the same thing for your English, but just life in general, man.

[00:10:19] If you find yourself in situations where there's so many things you want to do, let's say with your life in general, you have a lot of dreams and goals and things you would like to do. It's easy to say and not so easy to do sometimes, but you gotta choose one. Just one.

³² An informal way of writing the word 'because'

³³ worried and unhappy because you have too much work or too many problems to deal with

³⁴ Adjusting and aligning again

³⁵ an established routine or habit; or a rhythmic pattern

³⁶ describes a feeling where, under the right conditions, you become fully immersed in whatever you are doing

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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[00:10:37] And that could be for two hours, you focus on one thing. It could be for two days, two weeks or two years, but you can only focus on one thing at a time. I'm not sure it's humanly possible to truly focus on more than one thing. I really don't think it is.

[00:10:54] A lot of times we think we're capable of, like, **multitasking**³⁷... doing this and this at the same time. But when you're doing this, you might be aware of this thing over here, but you're not focused on it, you know?

[00:11:04] And I think it's the same thing when you have to make choices on how you're going to spend your time or which direction you're going to go in. You can't go in two directions at the same time. Can't do two things at the same time. Right? You can't have two thoughts at the same time. So focus is the key to achieving what you want to achieve.

[00:11:22] Because like.. like he said, you can do it all, but you can't do it all at the same time.

[00:11:27] So don't be a fucking donkey.

[00:11:41] OUTRO MUSIC

[END OF PODCAST]

³⁷ (of a person) dealing with or doing more than one task at the same time

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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Key vocabulary

ass: (in this context) a stupid person

Thought-provoking: making you think a lot about a subject

Donkey: an animal like a small horse with long ears

Thirsty: needing to drink something

Hungry: needing to eat something

Whether: (used to refer to one or more possibilities or to express uncertainty)

Sequentially: in a way that follows a particular order

In effect: basically

Fucking: (in this context) used to emphasize a statement, especially an angry one

God dammit: An informal exclamation to express anger or irritation

Ruin: to spoil or destroy something completely

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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Doubt: (a feeling of) not being certain about something, especially about how good or true it is

Issue: a subject or problem that people are thinking and talking about

Disease: (an) illness of people, animals, plants, etc., caused by infection or a failure of health rather than by an accident

Illustration: an example that explains or proves something

Paradox: a situation or statement that seems impossible or is difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics

Conception: an idea of what something or someone is like, or a basic understanding of a situation or a principle

Free will: the power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate; the ability to act at one's own discretion

Hypothetical: imagined or suggested but not necessarily real or true

Precisely: exactly

Stack: a pile of things arranged one on top of another

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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Hay: grass that is cut and dried and used as animal food

Bucket: a container with an open top and a handle, often used for carrying liquids

Hobby: an activity that someone does for pleasure when they are not working

Turning it into: Turn into (sth) - to change or develop from one thing to another

Livelihood: (the way someone earns) the money people need to pay for food, a place to live, clothing, etc.

Laser-focused: To be focused 100% on one single thing with zero distractions

Detrimental: causing harm or damage

Counterproductive: having an effect that is opposite to the one intended or wanted

When it comes to: We use this phrase to introduce a more specific topic or area that we want to talk about.

Burnt out: ill or very tired from working too hard

'Cause: An informal way of writing the word 'because'

Coffee with Kaizen #23 - Don't Be An Ass

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Stressed: worried and unhappy because you have too much work or too many problems to deal with

Resetting: Adjusting and aligning again

Groove: an established routine or habit; or a rhythmic pattern

Flow state: describes a feeling where, under the right conditions, you become fully immersed in whatever you are doing

Multitasking: (of a person) dealing with or doing more than one task at the same time