

Don't Compare Yourself to Others

Announcer: Welcome to the Effortless English Show with the world's number one English teacher, AJ Hoge. Where AJ's more than 40 million students worldwide finally learn English once and for all without the boring textbooks, classrooms, and grammar drills. Here's AJ with a quick piece to help you learn to speak fluent English effortlessly.

AJ Hoge: AJ Hoge, the Effortless English Show. Go to EffortlessEnglishClub.com. Go to the blog for a free transcript of this show, free text for this show. Today on the show we have Tom Shillue. Tom Shillue or Shillue, he has a late night TV show on Fox, I believe it is, it's called Red Eye and late night, like 3am, very late night. He's a comedian who got his own show on Fox and he's got a great video that he did on YouTube that I like quite a lot and it's called, Don't Compare Yourself to Others. We're going to listen to that, I'll teach you some of the vocabulary from that video, and we will discuss the ideas. Now I know you want to speak English confidently, you want to speak fluently, you want to feel relaxed and strong when you speak English, every time you speak English.

You want to understand other people when they speak English, you want to understand American television shows, American movies, all of this. Well, that's what Effortless English is for, to help you speak fluently, confidently. At the advanced levels I help you with pronunciation with my pronunciation course. That's a new course at EffortlessEnglishClub.com. Pronunciation, very, very important because you can't achieve those dreams. I know that using the old methods, using classes, and textbooks and all of the grammar rules, all of that, I know that you have not had success. It's frustrating, you know all these grammar rules you memorized, but when it's time to speak, you can't speak well. My message to you is just to relax and be patient, relax and be patient. Listen to the Effortless English Show every day, that's going to help your listening a lot. It will help your speaking also, eventually.

Now when you're ready to be very serious about improving your English, when you really want fluency, when you're ready to work hard one, or two, or more hours a day, get one of my Effortless English courses. If you are kind of middle, intermediate level, I recommend start with my Power English course. If you are high intermediate, join my VIP program. You can try that program for just \$1 and you can add the Pronunciation course to any other course, because pronunciation is a skill you can always work on. If you're a beginner, if you're intermediate, if you're advanced, you probably need to still improve your pronunciation. All of those courses at EffortlessEnglishClub.com. Tom Shillue, great, great video, Don't Compare Yourself to Others. Let's just go ahead and listen to this video first, then we'll talk about it.

Tom Shillue: Do you ever look at the lives of people around you and say, "Man, I wish that was me?" You know you do, everybody does. I bet you never compared yourself to me. Haven't heard of me? I do have my own TV show in the middle of the night. When I started, I wanted to be as big as Jerry Seinfeld. I'm not and yet, I'm a pretty happy

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guy. Here's why.

AJ Hoge:

Okay. He's just introducing himself. He asked, "Have you ever compared yourself to other people? Have you ever wished that you were like someone else?" You see someone else, they're more successful than you. Maybe they speak English much better than you. Maybe they have more money than you. Maybe physically they're stronger, they look better than you. Maybe they have a girlfriend or a boyfriend and you don't, whatever. Then he says, "I bet, I'm sure you have never compared yourself to me," right? Because he's not super famous this guy. He says, "I have my own TV show, but it's on in the middle of the night." I think it's 3am, actually. He has a small audience, he's not super famous. Actually, I didn't know who he was until I saw his YouTube video. He says, "Even though I'm not super famous, I'm happy." He said, "In the past, he had this goal he wanted to be like Jerry Seinfeld." Jerry Seinfeld is a big, big, big super famous comedian, super rich, but this guy's not that famous. Now he says, he says, "I'm happy though anyway, I'm still happy." Let's listen to why.

Tom Shillue:

I stopped comparing myself to other people. Seriously, that's the whole trick. Here's what I mean. If my happiness were based on being the biggest comedian in the business, I'd be mad at whoever was getting more Netflix specials than me. I have zero. If it were based on having the best TV ratings, I'd be mad at Jimmy Fallon, he beats me every night. If it were based on being rich, I'd be mad at a lot of people. Even if I were rich, really rich, like number ten on the Forbes 400 rich, I'd be mad that there were nine other people richer than me. It never ends.

AJ Hoge:

Ah, so this is a great point. Let's talk about this for a bit. He says, "I'm a happy guy, but if I compared myself to other people I would not be happy." Then he gives some examples. He said, "For example, I'm a comedian. If I compared myself to other comedians who were more successful, well then I would be unhappy because other comedians have more specials, Netflix specials, or TV specials and I don't have any. Or, what if I compared myself to Jimmy Fallon, he's a famous talk show host." He says, "Well, then I would feel bad also, because Jimmy Fallon has more viewers, a bigger audience than me. What about rich people? What if I compared myself to rich people? Well then also I would be angry at a lot of people, because many, many, many people are more rich than I am, that are richer than I am." Then he gets to really the main point here. He said, "Imagine, what if I was number ten on the richest in the world list? The Forbes, Forbes Magazine richest people in the world." He says, "Imagine I was number ten, I had \$30 billion or something like that."

He said, "I would still be unhappy if I was comparing myself to other people, because even if I was number ten, there would still be nine people above me, so even with \$30 billion, even the tenth richest person in the world, would be miserable, unhappy, if they compared themselves to other people." Ah, this is such a good point, right? There will always be someone more successful than you, more skilled than you, better than you in some area, right? That's why it's crazy to compare yourself to other people, because you'll never be happy, you will never be

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number one in the world at everything. Even if you're number one in the world with money, you're the richest person in the world. Let's say Bill Gates, I can't remember if he's number one or number two now, or Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, one of those guys. They're number one in the world, but even though they're the richest in the world, they're only number one in this one part of life, money, only money. In all the other parts of life, they're not number one. For example, physically their bodies. Bill Gates is a wimp, he looks weak, right? He looks like a weak guy, he's not strong, he's not very handsome, he's kind of a geek, so he's not impressive.

I think I'm stronger and in better shape than Bill Gates is, you probably are too. Even if you're number one on the list, Bill Gates if he compared himself to other people physically, his body, then he would also feel bad and feel like he was not good enough. Even though he's number one with money. Or, you could find the strongest man in the world, power lifter, he might feel good about being the strongest man in the world, but he's not the richest man, so he could still be unhappy if he thought about money and compared himself to rich people. You see, right? There's always ... There are always many areas of your life where you are not as good as other people. The truth is, in all areas of your life you were always better than some people, you're always doing better than some other people. It's not rational, it's not good, it's not smart to compare yourself to other people. It doesn't help you, doesn't help you be happier, doesn't help you to improve and become more successful and lead a better life, doesn't happen, won't make you happy. Let's listen to more of the video.

- Tom Shillue: Comparing yourself to others creates a totally unrealistic measure for what constitutes success and I know, because the entertainment business is all about unrealistic expectations. All through my career I'd meet with satisfied customers after my shows and they'd say, "Hey, you're good."
- AJ Hoge: He's saying that he understands this idea of always comparing yourself to other people, because he's in show business, he's in entertainment and entertainment, the entertainment industry is maybe the worst, right? They're famous for always comparing themselves to other people, always trying to be better than someone else, more famous than someone else. He says, "For example, I would do my comedy and people would say, 'Hey, you're good, but are you going to be better than Seinfeld, are you going to become bigger and bigger?'"
- Tom Shillue: "Maybe some day you'll be successful like Jerry Seinfeld." He's the measure of success? The top guy? When someone tells you they're a doctor you don't say, "Well, maybe some day you'll cure a disease and save millions of lives just like Jonas Salk for polio, or a lawyer. Oh wow, so what's your ultimate goal, the Supreme Court?" Do you see how crazy that sounds?
- AJ Hoge: This is a great example of what he's talking about. He says, "In entertainment, people always ask him if he's hoping to become number one, that you're always compared to the very top person." I see this even on YouTube videos with let's say

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some group, some musical group that has a nice song, or something. Then people in the comments will say, "Oh, but they're not as good as someone else," right? The very best, like a guitar player, they say, "Not as good as Jimmy Page, or Jimi Hendrix." I mean, the two greatest guitarists of all time. Always comparing them to the very, very, very, very best, the top one or two people. Then he says, "Think about how crazy that is." He says, "Think about a doctor, if you meet a doctor, someone who's a doctor. What if they said, 'I'm a doctor,' and instead of saying, 'Oh, that's good.' They're doing good work, they're helping people maybe. Instead, you ask them, 'Oh, well are you going to become the number one doctor in the world?' Only compare them to some super famous doctor who cured polio, who cured a disease and saved millions of people," right? We don't do that.

If someone's a doctor we kind of feel like, "Oh, they're already kind of successful just by being a doctor." Or, a lawyer, he said, "Imagine if you meet a lawyer and instead of just accepting them as they are, you ask them, 'Well, are you going to become like the number one lawyer in America, you're going to be on the Supreme Court, the top court, the top judge in the whole country?'" Right? It's crazy. Only one person can be at the top, so if you're not number one it doesn't mean you're a failure, there's nothing wrong with you.

Tom Shillue: Professional success is about making a living, pursuing excellence and finding meaning in what you do. When I first started doing standup, I was a nobody. It took more than a decade playing in front of tuned out crowds before it started paying the bills. Ten years is a lot of time to tell jokes for no money to people who aren't laughing.

AJ Hoge: Okay. He says that professional success is about doing good work, about working towards excellence, to become excellent, and to contribute, help other people. Not about being number one, not about comparing yourself to others. He gives an example from his own career. He said, "I spent ten years, ten years in comedy clubs telling jokes to people who were not laughing, who weren't interested, making no money at all. Ten years of making no money as a comedian." He says, "That's a long time, a decade, ten years." A decade is ten years. He says, "That's a long time, ten years to be working, and working, and working, and working and getting nothing, no money, no fame, nothing at all."

Tom Shillue: In those days, I spent a lot of time thinking about the comedians I admired. The guys at the top. I wanted those big sold out houses I wasn't playing, the big pay days I wasn't making, the TV specials I wasn't doing. Not just their success, their talent. I'd look at comics like George Carlin, Robin Williams, and Louis C.K., they were all able to turn their dark personal struggles into brilliant comedy. I envy their talent, but I wouldn't want the dark personal struggles that went along with it.

AJ Hoge: Okay. Then he talks more about his early days and how in those days, those early days, he would constantly think about his heroes in comedy, his favorite comedians, the really big famous guys and he wanted to have the same success. Thousands and thousands of people coming to see him and lots, and lots, and lots

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of money, and being famous, and he thought about it a lot, and a lot, and a lot. He also thought about and looked at their talent, their ability, their skill and he realized that they had brilliant comedy, really great comedy and that was enviable. Meaning, something to admire. He also realized that these famous great comedians, a lot of them they had talent, but they also had a dark side, they kind of had a dark side in their personal lives. Robin Williams we know that, for example, Robin Williams killed himself. He was a great comedian, he was famous, he'd got lots of money, but ultimately, finally obviously he was not a happy person, he killed himself. Tom Shillue here in the video he's saying that, "Well yes, I certainly admire and like all that big success that they got, that they have, but I don't like the dark side of their lives, that I don't want that."

Tom Shillue: If you don't factor in everything about whoever you're comparing yourself to, you're playing a sort of mix and match game that doesn't exist in the real world. Here's one of life's little truths. Everyone is a package deal, you can't view one element of someone else's life in isolation, that's-

AJ Hoge: Okay. You can't view one element, one part of someone else's life in isolation. In isolation means, alone, separately. He says, "Everybody is a package deal." Package deal, it means a whole, not separate, not a small part, but a whole. He says, "When you look at someone else, you can't just look at the good part, the success, and ignore all the other stuff. That's not realistic, it's not fair to yourself," right? Like looking at Robin Williams and saying, "Oh, oh, he's so great, he's so famous." If you only look at the good part, then you think, "Oh, his life is so much better than mine," but you're ignoring a lot of stuff. You're ignoring all his pain, all his unhappiness, his loneliness that eventually caused him to kill himself. He's like, "You have to look at the whole thing." This is true for lots of famous people, lots of performers, a lot of them have a dark side, a lot of them have very tough struggles and difficulties and pain in their life. It's not all great and wonderful. We kind of, we only see publicly the wonderful great part and then we think, "Oh, I'm not as good as them," but that's not fair, that's not realistic.

Tom Shillue: Cheating. You can't say, "I want Louis C.K.'s money and fame, Jay Leno's car collection, and Tom Shillue's wife and kids." That person doesn't exist. If he did, he'd be pretty cool. I would definitely want to hang with him. Everyone has pain in their lives. Think of anybody who you know really well, you know the awful stuff they've had to deal with, the demons they battle. How many dead rockstars, movie stars, and yes, comedians does it take to convince us all that everyone's life is hard?

AJ Hoge: Ah, so he's saying, "See, everyone has pain in their life. Everyone's life is hard," right? He says, "Think about all of the dead rockstars, dead comedians, dead actors." Or, if you can see on the celebrity news all of the obviously unhappy celebrities who are miserable, all of the divorces that they have, all of the craziness in their lives, the drug addictions, the alcoholism. He's like, "If you just focus that they have a lot of money and 'Oh, that's so great, oh I'm not as good,' and you're comparing yourself to that, but you're not also looking at the rest of it. Because if you really were looking at the whole thing, you might realize, 'Well, they have more

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money than I do, but I'm happier. I have a better family, I have a more relaxed life, right? That you've got a lot of things that are better than any celebrity that you might admire." Anybody you see publicly that seems to be doing great, they seem like they're "Better than you," you have to realize that they also have pain in their life. It might not be obvious, it might not be public, they might not talk about it, but it's there.

Tom Shillue: Face it, you really don't want someone else's life. You want your own life, only better.

AJ Hoge: Ah, this is the key point. You don't want someone else's life, you don't. You would not be happy with someone else's life. You want your own life, but better, right? It's about improving your own life, not about being someone else, or copying what someone else has.

Tom Shillue: That's the thing, you can make your life better by not doing something, comparing yourself to other people. Back when I was a nobody, I wanted to sell out the biggest venues and have a primetime TV show with millions of viewers. Now I sell out small venues and I'm on in the middle of the night with half a million viewers and I appreciate every one of them. I guess when I compare myself now to myself then, I'm doing okay. You should try it. I'm Tom Shillue for Prager University.

AJ Hoge: Okay then, so that's the end of it. He says that back when he was younger and just starting, he wanted to have a primetime TV show. Primetime is like 6:00, 7:00, 8:00 in the evening, right? It's the biggest time for a TV show and he wanted to have lots and lots of money and sell out big venues. Means like big stadiums, big clubs. He says, "Now, now he does have a TV show, but it's not primetime, it's the middle of the night, 3am. He doesn't have a super huge audience, but he's got a nice audience, he's on television." Half a million people, that's still quite good. He doesn't sell out super big huge arenas, venues, clubs, but he sells out small ones. Then he says, "If I compare myself now, my life now, to my earlier life, I'm doing very well. It is much, much better than it was ten years ago and that's why I'm happy." Very, very, very, very good. This is so powerful.

The reason I'm focusing on this topic is because I get messages often on Twitter, Facebook, even when I'm talking to Effortless English members sometimes, and they will be upset because their English is not as good as someone else's. They'll say, "Oh, my friends speak English better than I do." I've even had people ... This has happened actually quite often, where someone says, "Oh, my friends, they laugh at my English, they make fun of my English, they criticize my English, because my English is worse than my friend's English," right? They're unhappy because they're comparing themselves to other people, or even worse of all, the worst thing is, they compare themselves to a native speaker like me. "Oh, my English isn't very good. Oh, I've got a terrible accent. Oh, when will I sound like a native speaker?" They make themselves unhappy, they make themselves miserable, very, very unhappy by constantly comparing themselves to others who are better than they are.

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Well, let me tell you something. Someone will always be better than you, no matter how much you improve, there will still be other people who speak English better than you do. Especially, native speakers. You'll never be number one, so it's crazy, it's crazy to compare yourself to other people. Don't focus on that. That makes you miserable. Here's the problem too. First of all, it makes you have an unhappy life, that's not good. It also hurts your success, because when you compare yourself to others and when you become unhappy about that, you lose your energy, you lose your motivation. Then you enjoy English less. You feel frustrated, you feel negative. Then you don't want to listen so much, you don't want to try so much, your energy is lower, you're not as happy, so you learn less, you improve more slowly. It hurts your success. On the other hand when you feel great, when you're just happy to be improving, then your energy goes up, you're excited about it because every month you're getting a little better.

No, you're not as good as everyone else. So what? You're getting better, you're improving a little bit, so then you get more excited, then you improve some more. Your energy goes up, and up, and up, you get better, and better, and better and you're happy. You're happy the whole time, you feel good, you enjoy it. This is true for English, but it's also true for all areas of your life. I mean, money is such a common one. People, oh, they compare themselves to other people with money. It causes so much of unhappiness. "Oh, I don't have as much money as they do. They have a better car, or cars. They have a bigger house, a nicer house. Better clothes." That's crazy. So what? So what? I mean, do you have a comfortable place to live? Are you safe, you warm in the winter and cool enough in the summer? Do you have food to eat? You're okay. You don't need a big house, you don't need an expensive car, you don't need expensive clothes. Stop comparing yourself to other people, it wastes your energy and it makes you powerless. It takes away your power when you compare yourself to others.

You become more powerful when you focus just on yourself, just on improving yourself, just being a better person, having more skill, more discipline, more effort. You have control over those things. That gives you power, which gives you greater success and greater happiness both. Now I know that it's sometimes difficult, because you see we have an enemy, we have a few enemies. The two big ones are schools and media, schools and media. See, schools and media are always trying to make us compare ourselves to others, right? Think of all the advertising in media that shows people who are super successful and super happy and super handsome, sending the message that, "Oh, you're not as good as them. You're not as good as them. You're not as good as them." Constantly trying to get you to compare yourself to others. The schools, yes, my number one enemy, the schools. Grades, tests, what's that about? It's all about comparing yourself to other students, right?

Making the students compete with each other, compare with each other. If you get a B, "Oh, you're not as good as the students who get an A," and then it creates a lot of jealousy. The ones who get A's they feel like they're superior and everybody else feels inferior and weaker and frustrated. Doesn't help, doesn't help you learn

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better. Those grades don't make learning anymore effective. Certainly not. In fact, it's the opposite. I understand, you're kind of trained quite young to compare yourself to others. Parents can do this too. Parents can ... They think they're helping by trying to push you and compare you to some other kid, or kids, or people thinking they're going to help you, but they're not helping you, they're not. I understand where it comes from, but we've got to get rid of it. You got to get rid of this idea, comparing yourselves to others.

I'll give you an example from my own life. Now, I started my company, Effortless English, about ten years ago. At that time I was working part-time in a school in San Francisco, not making much money. More importantly for me, I was frustrated. I was very frustrated because I wanted to teach creatively, I wanted to try my new ideas, I wanted to use my new methods and techniques, the Effortless English System. I was tired, I was tired of having a boss, I was tired of a boss telling me to use a textbook, which I knew was not effective, not useful. I was just sick of it, I was sick of it, and honestly too, I was sick of being poor all the time. Ten years ago I started Effortless English, became a success quite quickly in just six months. I quit my job and I have never worked again for someone else since then.

The company has been and continues to be quite successful. Imagine, imagine if I compared myself and my business, Effortless English, to Apple or Microsoft. Well, then I would feel small, I would feel like a failure, "Oh, my business is nothing. Apple makes billions of dollars and has thousands of employees. Bill Gates is one of the richest people in the world. God this sucks, I'm poor, my life's terrible." Right? That's crazy, that's totally crazy. It would be crazy for me to compare myself to Steve Jobs or Bill Gates. No, but if I compare myself to my earlier life ten years ago, wow, so much better. I have so much freedom, financially doing well, have great Effortless English members all around the world, friends around the world, it's great. I get to teach creatively, exactly how I want to, helping lots, and lots, and lots of people become successful English speakers. It's fantastic. That's the key point. Only compare yourself to yourself, that's all, not other people. That is a secret to happiness and a secret to success.

All right, let's go to Twitter, my Twitter is AJHoge, A-J H-O-G-E, AJHoge. That's also my YouTube channel, AJ H-O-G-E. Take a Twitter question from [Ibrahim Ali 00:35:09]. He asks, "AJ, Hi AJ, how many times should I listen to the podcast? I understand 65% when I listen the first time." This is a good question. See, with my courses, with my Power English course, Pronunciation course, VIP program, I tell you to learn deeply, so you repeat every lesson for seven days, at least seven days. More if possible. It's deep learning and lots of repetition, that's the key to mastery, to being great, to excellence, it's deep learning. The podcast however, this podcast, I recommend you just ... Once is fine, you can listen one time and it's enough. The podcast is more about wide learning, right? The podcast is just something extra I'm giving you. Gives you 30 to 40 minutes, sometimes more, of extra English listening. It will help to improve your listening, you'll learn some vocabulary words. Mostly, when you listen to the podcast, do it for fun.

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Just relax and enjoy it, enjoy the ideas, focus on the ideas I'm talking about not on the vocabulary and grammar. Really, the podcast and the courses work together quite well. What I would really recommend is you get a course and you do a full unit every day. You do your unit every day, that's about one hour of listening. If you have more time you could do it twice a day, that would be two hours of listening. Then, if you still want to listen to more English, listen to the podcast for a variety so you don't get too bored with the course, right? If you repeat it too many times per day you'll start to get a little bored. You do one unit from a course, you listen to it, it's about an hour. Then if you have more time, you want to do more listening, well then add a podcast episode, that's why I'm doing them every day. Every day it's a new one, so every day you have something new. Then you get the repetition, the deep learning from a course, and then you get some fun, interesting variety from the podcast, so no boredom.

It's a good combination, try that. You'll see a lot of success by combining a course with the podcast that way. Effortless English is a family. We have an international family, a community. It's something special, it's not just about learning English. You can see that just about the topics we talk about. We're trying to be better people, yes better English speakers, but better people in general. Happier, more successful, more helpful. We have a very special community, we have Effortless English members in almost every country in the world of all different religions and no religion. Gay, straight, women, men, all ages, we have teenagers and even some older children and we have people in their 70's and even 80's, and everything in between. We have a very, very positive, supportive community, that's what makes us special because we have these values. We do the best we can, we do the right thing, we show each other we care. That's our code, our very simple basic code for the Effortless English family, those three.

We do the best we can, not comparing ourselves to others, not perfect, do our best, try hard. We do the right thing, we don't cheat, we don't steal, we don't lie, that kind of thing. We show each other we care, we help each other, we support each other, we encourage each other. You will see this on my Twitter, many Effortless English members connect with each other on Twitter. They message each other on Twitter, they message me on Twitter, they're very, very positive, very helpful, they will encourage you. We don't correct each other's mistakes, it's wonderful, it's very special to have all these people from so many cultures, and countries, and religions, and philosophies all helping each other, all very positive. That is the Effortless English family and you are part of it and I thank you for joining the Effortless English family. Thank you for adding to our international family, our international community. Go to Effortless English Club for a free transcript of this show. See you next time, bye for now.