

Real English Conversations: Don't step in the dog doo (part 3 of 4)

Hi! Lori here, welcoming you to another episode of Real English Conversations from betteratenglish.com. In today's conversation, which is part 3 of 4, my British friend Michael and I continue our discussion on dogs and cats, focusing on the way that human beings tend to get emotionally attached to their pets. As always, you can find the full transcript and vocabulary notes on our website, www.betteratenglish.com. OK, here we go!

Conversation Transcript

- Lori:** Well, do you...you don't have a dog now though, right?
- Michael:** No, not personally, no.
- L:** Would you consider getting a dog?
- M:** Well, that's a good question. I mean, I do love dogs. But they really are a **commitment** and a responsibility, of course. And that isn't to be **taken lightly**. But...
- L:** A lot of people do, a lot of people...especially in the States. People here in Sweden seem to treat their dogs much better overall than people in the States. But you see...I've seen the most horrible things back in the States. People get a dog and, you know, they're all excited about it at first, and then they just, you know, the **novelty wears off**...
- M:** Right.
- L:** And the poor dog just spends its life out in the back yard chained up somewhere, **barking its head off**, and...
- M:** Right.
- L:** You know, that's really sad.
- M:** Now that's a real shame, that's a real shame.
- L:** Yeah, yeah...
- M:** But I think that... this is kind of a **morbid** thing, but, you know, dogs die.
- L:** Yeah.
- M:** You know, their **life expectancy** is, what is it—about, maybe about ten years, depending on the breed?
- L:** Yeah.
- M:** And that's something that, you know, you're a lot more likely to **go through** that... and if you have another dog, you know, it's something you're going to be experiencing several times in your own lifetime, and that's traumatic, if you, you know, regard the dog as a family member.
- L:** Yeah, you do get quite attached to your pets.
- M:** Yeah, oh yeah. So, you know, I mean a friend of mine, her dog died just recently, and that was terrible.

- L:** Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that.
- M:** That was really bad; you know, I mean the dog was 18 years old, I mean, it was a very long-lived dog. But, you know, that's...for her it was half her life, you know, so a terrible trauma to go through. So I'd rather not go through that, you know, I think?
- L:** I don't know. I think the benefits of having a dog, I mean, as long as you can handle the responsibility and have, you know, a good place for the dog...I don't think, you know, a German shepherd or a Great Dane would do very well in someone's tiny little apartment.
- M:** No, for sure.
- L:** But as long as you can handle that, I think the benefits of having a dog would outweigh the sorrow of when the dog finally, you know, gets old and dies. But I guess everyone is different. I would love to have a doggy, I really would. A small one. A little one.
- M:** OK, but aren't you allergic to dogs.
- L:** Yeah, that's why I can't have one! I'm too allergic and also I'm not really sure my life is organized enough to be fair to a dog, or that it would fit in with my...with my life.
- M:** Is that because you don't have a regular schedule for things, or...?
- L:** I don't have a regular schedule and sometimes I do work really, really long days and I wouldn't be able to take the dog with me, so I'd have to leave it locked up in my apartment all day long. And, you know, the poor thing, you know, it would need to go to the bathroom or would just be lonely. I'd have to leave it alone so much that it just wouldn't be fair.
- M:** Right. It would probably tear the place up. I think, yeah.
- L:** Because they are social animals, you know. They're **pack animals** so they really don't do well when left all alone for long periods.
- M:** Right. Right.
- L:** So it's rather cruel. But I would love to have a little doggy, a little Border Terrier.
- [laughter]
- M:** Oh yeah.
- L:** Yeah, but I would worry about getting a purebred dog because sometimes they're so **inbred** that they're completely **crackers**, and completely free of all intelligence.
- M:** Yes. I know what you mean. Yeah.
- L:** I think **mutts** are generally much more **robust** and tend to have better personalities 'cause of the...they have a much more varied **genetic makeup**.
- M:** Right. Right. Well that's what they say when it comes to genetics that you should be spreading the genes apart and not...
- L:** **Hybrid vigor!**

- M:** There's a good reason why you're not allowed to marry members of your own family.
- L:** Yeah. Yeah.
- M:** Let's tell the British royal family that.
- L:** Oh, no! Naughty!
[laughter]
- M:** Well they're all related on some level or another you know.
- L:** Oh my god. Yeah. Oh I don't want to be **dissing** the royal family so we'd better not go there. Seriously, I would love to have a cute little doggy that I could take with me everywhere...

[This conversation will continue in part 4 of 4]

Final Words

That's all for today. We'll be back soon with part four. If you found today's topic interesting, we'd love to hear your comments. You can leave a comment at our web site, www.betteratenglish.com, or e-mail us at info@betteratenglish.com. Bye for now!

(see next page for vocabulary notes)

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Vocabulary notes

commitment	A <i>commitment</i> is a promise to give your time, money or loyalty to a specific plan, idea, or person. For example, <i>Having a child is a serious commitment.</i>
taken lightly	If you <i>take something lightly</i> , it means that you are not serious about it, or don't give it enough thought.
novelty wears off	If the <i>novelty of something wears off</i> , it means that over time you lose the excitement or interest you had when it was new. For example, <i>Once the novelty of my new iPhone wore off, I hardly used it.</i>
barking its head off	If a dog is <i>barking its head off</i> , it is barking excitedly for a long time. This construction can be used with other verbs, most frequently <i>laugh</i> or <i>cough</i> , for example, (1) <i>The Seinfeld episode last night was hilarious; I was laughing my head off the whole time</i> or (2) <i>I was at the cinema last night, and this man behind me kept coughing his head off – it was so annoying!</i>
morbid	If something is <i>morbid</i> it is characterized by gloomy feelings related to death, disease or other unwholesome things.
life expectancy	A person or creature's <i>life expectancy</i> is the measure of time that he, she or it is expected to live, based on statistical averages.
go through	To <i>go through</i> something means to experience it.
pack animals	<i>Pack animals</i> are certain canine species that, when in the wild, tend to live in social groups called <i>packs</i> . Dogs and wolves are examples of pack animals.
inbred	<i>Inbreeding</i> is breeding (sexual reproduction) between close relatives. An <i>inbred</i> person or animal has parents that are closely related to each other. Over time, inbreeding can lead to reduced health and fitness of the offspring.
crackers	<i>Crackers</i> is a synonym (informal, colloquial) for crazy.
mutts	<i>Mutt</i> is an informal term for a dog that is not a purebred.
robust	If an animal is <i>robust</i> , it is strong and resistant to illness and disease.
genetic makeup	<i>Genetic makeup</i> is a vague term used by laypersons to describe the genetic constitution of an individual. In the science of <i>genetics</i> , more specific terms are used.
hybrid vigour	In this context, a <i>hybrid</i> is a cross between different breeds of dog. <i>Hybrid vigor</i> is a term to describe when a hybrid offspring of two different breeds has characteristics that make it somehow better than the parents, for example stronger or more resistant to disease.
dissing	If you <i>diss</i> someone (informal, slang) you speak or behave rudely toward them, or show them a lack of respect.