

Real English Conversations: *What was he thinking?*

Introduction

Hi there! Lori here, welcoming you to another edition of Real English Conversations at betteratenglish.com. Thanks to everyone who's answered my question about the vocabulary notes in Better at English transcripts. Your answer is an overwhelming "Yes, we need the vocabulary notes." So to help you learn English, as time permits I will continue to post transcripts and vocabulary notes for all Better at English podcasts. However, there is something you can do to help: if you are feeling generous, you could always support my work by making a donation. Just click the "donate" button on the website, www.betteratenglish.com, to learn about how you can help.

Warning: some of you might find today's conversation topic somewhat offensive, because Michael and I talk about a rather vulgar and disturbing video that we saw on the Internet, and a related story on the BBC website. It's about people doing amazingly stupid things to their own bodies, and involves talking about a body part that is considered rather vulgar. So if you are sensitive or easily offended, you should not listen to this conversation. For those of you who are not easily offended, there are links to the video and the BBC article on the website. And as always, the full conversation transcript and accompanying vocabulary notes are also available on the website.

So hey ho, let's go!

Conversation transcript

Lori: Do you remember a while back there was this horrible video **going around**, you know one of these, umm, video links that friends pass around in **email forwards**?

Michael: Mmm hmm

L: And the video was of...I think it was a teenage guy who took a rocket...

M: a firework

L: a firework rocket, and put it in a very, very sensitive area and actually lit it, and you could just see him running around and screaming and, and the flame and...do you remember that?

M: That, I have, umm, the image of that is **burned in my memory, no pun intended**.

L: Yeah, and it makes you, you know, the whole **Darwin Awards** thing, like, so that?

M: That was actually...Interestingly enough it was **Bonfire Night**, November the fifth, as we call...Bonfire Night in England just recently, and I saw on the BBC a news report that somebody had done something similar just recently. I mean this is, what, you know...ten or eleven days ago... that someone had done the same thing with a firework, a rocket, and, uh, **inserted** it into, uh, ...

L: An area that doesn't normally **see the sun**.

M: Yes! That's a good way of putting it. But the difference here... and I remember the video that you mentioned, I remember seeing that, where the rocket as it was, the firework was **facing** outwards.

L: Uh huh.

M: Okay? This guy had put the rocket facing inwards.

L: Ooooooh!

M; I think the idea was ... yeah the idea was...

L: To shoot it?

M: Well, I think he wanted to make it look like "Hey, look I've got, ummm, I'm a rocket-powered guy!" You know...

L: Oh dear!

M: ...it was **propelling** him forwards, but unfortunately it didn't quite **work out** and the rocket propelled itself into him.

L: Okay so he wanted to make it look like he was shooting flames out of his **nether regions**...

M: That's right, that's right but...

L: And it actually went inside and...

M: It went inside him, yeah.

L: **Oh my gosh!**

M: And this, I mean, this was on the national news in England, I mean how embarrassing would that be?

L: Oh yeah **did they have his name?**

M: Ummm...

L: Can you imagine applying for a job after something like that, if your name had been...? And, umm, 'cause that's the kind of thing people will **pass around** as well, "Oh look at the stupid thing THIS guy did!"

M: Well I'm never going to forget that, that's

L: Yeah that's **horrifying**. I mean even the first one was **horrible**, I mean...how, why do people do such stupid things?

M: That was the...yeah...The thing that really **struck** me is "What were they thinking?"

L: Yeah, what were they thinking? And how can you even get past the age of... three... and not understand that **sticking** a firecracker or rocket, you know, up your...

M: Up your bum.

L: Yeah! That's just not a good idea! How does this happen?

M: Well, I don't know I think, ummm, I mean, it's okay in **cartoons!**

L: Is that it? That they can't, that they really just don't have a concept of, "Wow, these are flames and, and, you know, flames can burn you, and this is a sensitive area, and even a tiny, tiny little flame would just really not be very nice to have...?"

M: Well, when you were, when you were young, at sch- I mean at school, ummm didn't you ever have, ummm, things like the **fire brigade** come and tell you about these things? Because...

L: Oh yeah, yeah, the **firefighters** would come.

M: Because we have, ummm, Bonfire Night every year, traditional for **letting off** fireworks November the fifth... Just a few days before, the fire brigade for the different local fire brigades would **go around** to all the schools in Britain and you would have a lecture and they would show a video or slides, a slideshow, showing you the dangers of fireworks. And they would really **hit it home**. I mean we were told year after year after year that you...all these **ground rules**...and I can still remember them now. I mean, that you never hold a firework, you know, when you light ... you don't...If you light a firework and it doesn't **go off**, you don't **go back** to it.

L: Oh right, yeah.

M: You know, you leave it, because, just because you can't see the flame burning on the blue **touchpaper** doesn't mean it's not going to go off.

L: Right

M: You never carry fireworks in your pocket. You never throw fireworks

L: Right

M: This stuff, you know, they couldn't have been **stricter** about it. I guess they still do that now; they must do that now.

L: Mmm

M: But maybe people just think they're **invincible**.

L: Yeah, I guess so, because that to me is just so obvious that that's just not a good idea.

M: Sure, I mean, the guy in the video actually pulled his pants down, and...

L: Yeah I remember.

M: Terrible.

L: That was, it was so horrifying to watch, I remember...

M: Yeah yeah

L: ...just thinking, "Oh my god," and "What happened to the **poor** guy?" And at the same time **it serves him right**, you know, for being such an idiot.

M: I still can't believe he actually did it.

L: I know, me neither!

Final words

Thanks for tuning in to this edition of Real English Conversations at BetterAtEnglish.com. Remember, I love your feedback: you can email me at [email address], or call the voice mail line at 206 350 2283 and leave a message, ask a question, suggest a topic, or whatever you like. And remember, if you get value from my work, then share the love by leaving a donation. Don't leave it up to other people...be the first to show your generosity! If enough people donate, I can use a transcription service to reduce my workload and post more frequent podcasts. Heck, if all subscribers donated 10 dollars per YEAR, I could quit my day job and do B@E full time. Hmm, a girl's gotta dream a dream...

going around

If something is *going around* it is being passed from person to person or from place to place.

email forwards

emails that people copy and send to their friends, usually because they are funny, entertaining, or interesting

burned in my memory

If something is *burned in/into* your memory (or mind), you have a strong, vivid memory of it.

no pun intended

If what you say is a [pun](#) that you didn't intend, you excuse yourself by saying "no pun intended."

Darwin Awards

An organization that "salute[s] the improvement of the human genome by honoring those who accidentally remove themselves from it ... ensuring that the next generation is one idiot smarter. *Of necessity, this award is generally bestowed posthumously.*" See <http://www.darwinawards.com>. In short, an award for killing yourself by doing something ridiculously stupid, thus removing yourself from the human gene pool (so you can't pass on your stupid gene to your children).

Bonfire Night

Another name for Guy Fawkes Night. "In Britain, the evening of November 5th when models of men, called [guys](#), are burned on large fires outside and there are firework displays. This is in memory of the failed attempt by Guy Fawkes to destroy the Houses of Parliament in London in 1605 with explosives."

Inserted

If you *insert* A into B, you put A inside B.

see the sun

In this context, *to see the sun* means *to be exposed to* sunlight. In Western culture, the buttocks (bum (Br. E), rear end, posterior, derriere, butt, etc.) are usually covered by clothing (that is, not exposed to sunlight). Because the buttocks are usually not considered polite to mention, there are lots of euphemisms for talking about that body part. You might also hear the phrase "stick it where the sun don't shine." This does not mean "put it in your pocket"; it is a rude and vulgar way to angrily disagree with someone.

facing

If A is *facing* B, is turned toward(s) B.

propelling

To *propel* something means to push it or move it somewhere, usually with a lot of force.

work out

In this context, *to work out* is a phrasal verb meaning *to be successful* or *to achieve the desired result*.

nether regions

A euphemism for the male and female body parts that are usually covered by underwear (the buttocks and genitalia).

Oh my gosh!

An informal exclamation of surprise or other strong feelings.

did they have his name?

Did they have his name? in this case means *Was the man's name published in the news article?*

In authentic, natural conversations, speakers often omit details because they assume that their interlocutor (the person they are speaking to) has enough background information to fill in the blanks.

pass around

In this case, *pass around* means *be inclined to talk or gossip about*.

horrifying

If something is *horrifying*, it makes you feel a strong sense of horror or shock.

horrible

If something is *horrible*, it is very unpleasant or bad.

struck

(From the verb *strike*) If something *strikes* you, it causes you to feel strongly about it, to think deeply about it, or to remember it.

sticking (sth up)

In this context, *to stick something up something* means to insert it into certain bodily orifices. The man in the BBC story *stuck* a rocket *up* his rectum. You often see little children *sticking* their fingers *up* their noses. But you *stick something in* your mouth or ear.

cartoons

Usually funny or amusing films made using animated (drawn) characters and images rather than real actors.

fire brigade

(Br. E). The organization that is responsible for stopping unwanted fires. In Am. E, *fire department*)

firefighters

(Am. E.) A firefighter is a man or woman whose job is to stop unwanted fires (usually as part of the fire department or fire brigade). It is the gender-neutral form of *fireman*. Apparently, the term *fireman* is still quite common in Br. E.

letting off

To *let off* a firework or rocket means to fire it or make it explode.

go around

To travel from place to place

hit it home

If you *hit something home* it means you make your point about something in a way that makes people understand it. If something *hits home* for you, it means that caused you to realize and understand it.

ground rules

Basic principles or rules about something, usually about how you are supposed to behave.

go off

In this context, to *explode*. If a firework doesn't *go off*, it doesn't explode.

go back

To *go back to something* means to *return* to it

touchpaper

(Br. E.) a small piece of (usually blue) paper on one end of a firework, which you light in order to start the firework burning. In Am. E this is usually called the *fuse*.

stricter

If you are *strict* about something, you make it very clear that there will be severe consequences if someone disobeys you or doesn't follow your rules.

invincible

impossible to defeat, harm or injure

poor

In this case, an adjective that shows that you think the person (or thing) you are describing deserves sympathy.

it serves him right

If you say *it serves somebody right*, it means that you think the person deserved what happened.