

Now, the VOA Special English program Words and Their Stories.

Each week, this program explains the many meanings of English expressions.

Today's expressions include a very important word -- heart.

We will try to "get to the heart of the matter" to better-understand the most important things about words and their stories. So "take heart" -- have no fear about learning new expressions. Besides, popular English words can be fun. There is no need for "a heavy heart." Such feelings of sadness would only "break my heart," or make me feel unhappy and hopeless.

Now, let us suppose you and I were speaking freely about something private. We would be having a "heart-to-heart" discussion. I might speak "from the bottom of my heart," or say things honestly and truthfully. I might even "open up my heart" to you and tell a secret. I would speak "with all my heart," or with great feeling.

When a person shares her feelings freely and openly like this, you might say she “wears her heart on her sleeve,” or on her clothing. Her emotions are not protected.

If we had an honest discussion, both of us would know that the other person’s heart is “in the right place.” For example, I would know that you are a kind-hearted and well-meaning person. And, if you are a very good person, I would even say that you have “a heart of gold.” However, you might have “a change of heart” based on what I tell you -- our discussion might cause you to change the way you feel about something.

But, let us suppose you get angry over what I tell you. Or worse, you feel no sympathy or understanding for me or my situation. If this happens, I might think that you have “a heart of stone.”

And, if you say something to make me frightened or worried, my heart might stand still or “skip a beat.”

Yet, even though you may be angry, I would know that “at heart,” you are a kind person. In reality, you do care. And any argument between us would not cause me to “lose heart,” or feel a sense of loss.

“My heart goes out” to anyone who loses a friend over an argument: it really is a sad situation, and I feel sympathy for the people involved.

I promise that what I have told you today is true -- “cross my heart.

I really wanted to play some music at the end of this feature. In fact, I had my “heart set on it.” So here it is: “Don’t Go Breaking my Heart” by Elton John.

This VOA Special English program Words and Their Stories was written by Jill Moss. I’m Faith Lapidus.

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