



# Effortless English

## Our Universal Journey

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**incurable:** cannot be cured

**tenuous:** uncertain; easy to change

**fragile:** easy to break, breakable

**unpredictable:** cannot know the future; unable to know (future)

**tumultuous:** quickly changing; full of conflict, change, and/or emotion

**subject to:** possible to be affected by; susceptible to

**fatigue:** tiredness (longterm)

**have a handle on it:** control it; are successful with it

**tough:** difficult

**intellectually:** mentally; with ideas

**impermanent:** not permanent, always changing

**instinctively:** deeply; emotionally; biologically

**persist:** continue; don't quit

**manipulate:** control; influence

**have a strong influence on:** can affect; can change somewhat

**the case:** the situation

**manipulation:** attempt to control

**best laid plans:** best thought

plans for the future; best plans

**catastrophic:** disastrous, terrible

**security:** safety; changelessness; safe and without change

**conceivably:** in theory; possibly

**in the blink of an eye:** suddenly; instantly

**appropriately:** correctly

**catastrophe:** disaster; total failure

**failure of nerve:** fear; worry; failure of courage

**adaptability:** ability to change with the environment

**self-reliance:** ability to depend on yourself; ability to help yourself

**obsess over:** think only about

A cat with an "**incurable**" kind of cancer. A job that is always **tenuous**. Human relationships that are **fragile, unpredictable**, and sometimes **tumultuous**. My own body, seemingly healthy- but still **subject to** disease, **fatigue**, and aging.

Life is unpredictable. However much we think we **have a handle on it**, the truth is we never really know what's to come. Everything can change in an instant. This is a **tough** truth to accept, for though we know **intellectually** that all things in life are **impermanent**, we often don't feel it **instinctively**. We **persist** in our attempts to control life- we imagine that we can predict and **manipulate** future events. We imagine that we control, or at least **have a strong influence on**, external events.

But this is not really **the case**. In fact, all that worry, **manipulation**, and attempted control is mostly wasted energy. We are not the masters of the external world. We cannot predict the future. Our **best laid plans** are always subject to **catastrophic** failure.

There is no **security** to be found in the outside world. There is no secure job, or relationship, or situation of any kind. Everything changes. We can, **conceivably**, lose them all **in the blink of an eye**. Where then is true security to be found? Certainly not in the external world, but rather, internally.

"Trust yourself to react **appropriately** when **catastrophe** happens.

**Failure of nerve** is really failure to trust yourself." -- Alan Watts

This is the only true security- the security of trusting yourself, the security of flexibility and **adaptability**, the security of spiritual and emotional **self-reliance**. Rather than **obsess over** external events, we better serve ourselves by obsessing over our inner resources. Our security and happiness come from our inner peace-- our ability to accept any situation, adapt to it, use it, learn from it, and (perhaps)

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**overcome:** beat, defeat; solve (a problem)

**confident:** strong (mentally); feeling good about oneself

**sense:** feeling

**circumstances:** situations

**implies:** suggests

**task:** job

**to seek out:** to look for; to try to find

**capacity:** ability; potential

**potentially:** possibly

**challenging:** difficult

**expands:** grows; makes bigger

**concentrated:** intensive; powerful

**mythologist:** person who studies mythology (spiritual stories)

**the common thread:** the common idea, the same idea

**mythological journeys:** spiritual travels

**symbolic:** representative of

**face:** encounter, meet

**challenges:** problems, difficulties

**wisdom:** deep knowledge, deep understanding

**universal:** for all people; in all places

**overcome it.**

The more we do this, the more **confident** we grow and, in time, we develop a true **sense** of security in our lives... one that is completely independent of external **circumstances**. Practically, this **implies** that our **task** is **to seek out** new experiences and build our **capacity** to adapt to them. This is the reason I think of travel as a **potentially** spiritual practice. Travel-- especially long, **challenging** journeys-- **expands** our ability to accept and adapt to the unexpected and the unknown. This kind of travel is a **concentrated** training exercise in impermanence and change.

Joseph Campbell, the famed **mythologist**, identified **the common thread** running through the **mythological journeys** found in most cultures. He noted that while these stories are always presented as external journeys, they are in fact **symbolic** of the inner journey we must all make.

In the end, we must all leave home (the safe and comfortable), we must all **face** life-changing **challenges**, we must all face loss, and we must all arrive at our own understanding of impermanence, and our own **wisdom**. This is the **universal** journey.

**Learn More:**

[The Joseph Campbell Foundation](http://www.jcf.org/index2.php)

<http://www.jcf.org/index2.php>

[The Hero With A Thousand Faces \(Wiki\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hero_with_a_Thousand_Faces)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Hero\\_with\\_a\\_Thousand\\_Faces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hero_with_a_Thousand_Faces)

[Alan Watts](http://www.alanwatts.com/)

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