

SPEAKING GYM · PUBLISHED 2026-08-28

Career growth or work-life balance?

Build a clear answer about ambition, boundaries and the price of getting ahead. Three questions, model answers and phrases you can make your own.

B1–B2 · level guide

12 min video

6 words · 4 expressions · practice transcript

First, watch the episode. Then make the English your own.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfZszQPpXw>

01 Words worth keeping.

Vocabulary from the episode. Every “Example” below is a new practice sentence.

deliberate adjective

Done intentionally, after thinking about the choice.

EXAMPLE Taking a quieter job was a deliberate decision to spend more time with family.

exhaustion noun

An extreme state of physical or mental tiredness.

EXAMPLE After a week of late nights, he could hardly hide his exhaustion.

expertise noun

Deep knowledge or skill in a particular area.

EXAMPLE Her expertise in design helped us improve the product.

leverage noun

An advantage that helps you influence a situation or achieve a goal.

EXAMPLE Learning another language gave her more leverage in salary discussions.

boundaries plural noun

Limits that define what you will accept or allow.

EXAMPLE I set clear boundaries about answering work messages on weekends.

repetitive adjective

Involving the same action or task again and again.

EXAMPLE Listening to music makes some repetitive household tasks more enjoyable.

02 Borrow these expressions.

The expressions are quoted from the episode. Meanings and examples are learning notes.

01 “To be honest”

A phrase that introduces a frank personal opinion.

EXAMPLE To be honest, I would prefer a shorter commute to a larger office.

02 “starting out”

Beginning a career, activity or stage of life.

EXAMPLE When I was starting out, I learned a lot by asking questions.

03 “pay off in the end”

Produce a worthwhile result after time or effort.

EXAMPLE Practising a little every day can pay off in the end.

04 “push your limits”

Try to do more than you normally find comfortable or easy.

EXAMPLE A challenging project can help you push your limits.

03 · YOUR TURN

A thought worth saying.

Choose a question. Speak for 30–60 seconds. Try one word or expression from this pack.

- Would you accept a demanding job for one year if it taught you valuable skills? Name the boundaries you would keep.
- Think of a time extra effort paid off, or failed to pay off. What would you do differently now?

A useful starting point: “I think... because... For example...”

Levels are editorial estimates to help you choose a lesson, not a formal language assessment.

04 Listen. Read. Connect.

Questions and model answers from the video. Repeated shadowing rounds and coaching instructions are omitted. Read along, then listen again with the page closed.

DAVID

Should young professionals intentionally sacrifice work-life balance to accelerate their early career growth?

TOM

To be honest, I believe that making a deliberate sacrifice early in your career is genuinely worthwhile. When you are first starting out, building deep technical skills quickly gives you massive career leverage later. For example, junior developers who tackle complex projects upfront usually gain immense trust within just three years. That steep learning curve opens up leadership doors that would otherwise take a full decade to unlock. So while permanent exhaustion is destructive, a focused early sprint can secure your future balance.

DAVID

How would you respond to critics who argue that early burnout damages long-term health?

TOM

I actually agree that chronic physical exhaustion is a genuine threat that nobody should ever ignore. Critics are entirely right that burning out in your twenties can cause lasting damage to your body. Still, there is a fundamental difference between purposeful intensity and getting trapped in endless corporate exploitation. You can push your limits safely if you intentionally protect essential sleep and maintain firm daily boundaries. Ultimately, the real key is strategic dedication combined with deliberate physical recovery, not mindless overwork.

DAVID

Under what specific conditions does sacrificing personal balance actually pay off in the end?

TOM

This sacrifice only works when you are acquiring rare skills in an industry with clear upward mobility. Because your efforts directly build tangible expertise, you quickly gain pricing power and control over your schedule. For instance, working sixty hours a week at a high-growth startup teaches you more than years elsewhere. You see direct results from your labor rather than simply performing repetitive administrative tasks for someone else. In short, intense effort must always buy you future leverage, or else you are just being exploited.

A little English. A wider world.

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