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The English We Speak

Have lots of plates spinning



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

Hello, and welcome to The English We Speak with me, Feifei...

Roy

And me, Roy. Rob sounds very stressed today. I think he's worried about his magic trick!

Feifei

What magic trick? I know he has a lot of work on this week.

Roy

When I spoke to him on the phone, he said that he had a lot of plates spinning.

Feifei

No, Roy. If someone says they 'have a lot of plates spinning', it means that they 'have a number of different tasks to do at the same time and can't just focus on one'.

Roy

Ahh, so he was talking about work? Now I understand why he put the phone down when I started telling him about how many times I'd tried to find rabbits in my hats.

Feifei

Right. Let's listen to these examples.

Examples

As a single parent, I always have a lot of things to do at the same time. I always have so many plates spinning.

He is always busy. He's got so many hobbies and activities, and that's not including work. He has a lot of plates spinning.

She decided to quit her job due to the heavy workload. She always complained that she had a lot of plates spinning.

Feifei

You're listening to The English We Speak from BBC Learning English, and we're talking about the expression 'have a lot of plates spinning'. This expression refers to having a lot of things to do at the same time.

Roy

Yes, I've also heard the expression used as 'a lot of balls in the air'. You look quite busy today!

Feifei

I'm always busy Roy! I have so much work and I have a lot of balls in the air at the moment.

Roy

Maybe I can help you?

Feifei

Brilliant idea! In fact, I've already created you a list of things to do so I can focus on one task – the most important one!

Roy

Wow! There are so many things on this list! Now I have a lot of plates spinning. What task are you focussing on that's so important?!

Feifei

My birthday party! Someone needs to arrange that!

Roy

You can't be serious!

Feifei

Of course I am – I wouldn't ask you to do that as well. Bye.

Roy

Bye.