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**Callum:** Hello, I'm Callum Robertson. Today I want to talk about how to get back on topic in conversations

Have you ever found yourself talking to someone and for some reason you find yourself talking about the wrong thing. Maybe you've been interrupted or maybe you've just gone off the subject yourself and what you want to do is get back to the right topic.

I do it a lot myself, particularly in our webcast programmes. I get chatting away about something I think is interesting but it's not really the topic of the programme and I have to get back to the subject.

Here's an example from a programme about history. For some reason I was talking about banks making mistakes with our computer records but I really needed to get back to the topic. Have a listen to this piece of a conversation between myself, my colleague Jackie and our studio guest Maddy. Listen out for when the topic changes, can you pick out the word that I use to make that change.

### **Webcast clip**

It is quite scary that, you know, wrong, little wrong pieces of information which somebody maybe by accident puts into a computer ...

An extra zero or something or a minus instead of a plus

Yes, can effect your life, anyway, that's nothing to do with our topic, moving on from that, eh Maddy, I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about your personal history ....

**Callum:** So I'm finally back on topic, but did you catch the word? Here it is again

### **Webcast clip**

..anyway, that's nothing to do with our topic ....

**Callum:** Yes, it's 'anyway'.

### **Webcast clip**

..anyway

**Callum:** One word, a – n – y – w – a – y. Anyway. This word has a number of uses and it is one way we change the subject to get back on topic. As it happens I've just had lunch with a few colleagues and while chatting away I counted at least 4 'anyways' as our conversation progressed. Unfortunately I didn't have a microphone at the time to record us. But we were in the canteen and it was very noisy so it wouldn't have been a good recording, anyway, here's a different conversation I had with Jackie in which I forced her to go off topic by interrupting her. She's trying to tell me about something that happened to her on the underground. How many times did she have to get back on topic.

### **Jackie & Callum**

Well I was on the tube the other day, going home after work ...

When was this? What day was this?

Er, Monday.

Right,

Anyway, so I was going home from work so this guy tries to get off and it was very crowded and he pushed past someone else ...

What time was this?

About 6.15

Yes, it's very busy that time, isn't it?

Yes, so as I was saying, he was trying to get off and he pushed someone as he moved across to get off the tube and this person sort of shouted at him and said, you know, can you be a bit more polite please. Er, and he turned round and shoved him really hard so he hit me, and I ...

Oh no!

Yes, it was horrible, erm

What did he look like?

Erm, he looked, he was wearing a suit and he had, erm dark hair.

Sounds like a business man,

Yes, he was a business man, he looked very smart and quite young, so I was quite surprised, erm, where was I? Yes, anyway, so he had pushed this other man back into me and everyone else on the tube started shouting at him and tried to hold him back because it looked like there was going to be a really big fight.

Right.

**Callum:** There were three times she was interrupted and had to get back on topic. And although she did use the word ‘anyway’, that wasn’t the only language she used to move the conversation back to what she was describing. Listen again to the three sections where Jackie has to get back on topic, what does she say?

### **Jackie**

It was Monday.

Right,

Anyway, so I was going home

Yes, it’s very busy that time isn’t it?

Yes, so as I was saying ...

Yes, he was a business man, he looked very smart and quite young, so I was quite surprised, erm, where was I? Yes, anyway, so ...

**Callum:** The first time she says, ‘anyway’ followed by ‘so’

### **Jackie**

Anyway, so I was going home from work

**Callum:** After the next interruption she says something different, another useful expression to know, ‘so, as I was saying’

**Jackie**

So, as I was saying ...

**Callum:** And finally she uses another expression along with anyway: Where was I? Yes, anyway, so

**Jackie**

Where was I, yes, anyway so ...

**Callum:** Well that's about all from this edition of 'How to'. Today we've looked at how to get back on topic in conversations. We've heard the following bits of language that naturally guide a conversation back on to the right subject:

Anyway ...

So, as I was saying ...

Where was I? Oh yes ...

So why not try those out yourself the next time you're having a conversation and you find yourself, like me, going way off topic.

That's all from me.