EPISODE 263

The Hikikomori Phenomenon

Full transcript · point of view · vocabulary review

Hi, everyone! Thanks for joining me for another episode. I'm Georgiana, your English teacher and founder of SpeakEnglishPodcast.com

You can subscribe to my newsletter on my website and get the 5 secrets to learn to speak English for free.

Have you ever spent a whole weekend just relaxing and doing nothing? Just playing games or binging shows? It's a nice break, right? But what if you did that for months or even years? Today, I've got a story that might shock you.

Think about someone who stays in their room all day and night, not seeing friends or family, not working or studying. Odd, right?

Well, there's a Japanese word for this -"**Hikikomori**," which means "being confined." It's about people who choose to stay away from society completely. This is common in Japan, but other cultures have similar ideas. People call them loners or "modern-day hermits." Around half a million young people in Japan, and about the same number of middle-aged people, live like this.

It's not just in Japan. Often, young people, especially guys, are really into the online world of games and **social** media. However, they are not afraid of going outside like people with agoraphobia. They simply prefer not to be involved in the world.

You might wonder why. I did too. Some people believe that pressure from society to do well can lead to this. Others have experienced difficult situations, such as bullying or family problems. Also, technology allows them to easily stay alone, as everything is accessible online.

Let's continue!

Now, think about their health. Being inside constantly isn't healthy. They might get weak or face sleep problems. Emotionally, they might feel down, unsure, or guilty.

In any case, many don't see this as a big problem, since these people don't often seek help. They're content in their **isolation**. But there are ways to help.

In Japan, there are online communities for them. When they're ready for help, they get therapy, medication, and **social** activities.

Even taking a short step outside can significantly impact you if you feel confined. The sun and fresh air can be invigorating.

Great! That's all for now! I hope you found this topic helpful.

Now, let's practice.

Point of View

Grammar in Context

Read the same story from different points of view and notice how the grammar changes naturally.

First version

Past Tense - Third Person

I will tell you the same story twice. So make sure to focus on the changes.

Jimmy was a **hikikomori**. He spent his days locked in his room, immersed in video games. His favorite was "Kingdoms Connected." There he had a battle buddy, Lila. Together, they conquered kingdoms, fought monsters, and solved riddles. Although they talked daily, they only knew each other by their voices.

Jimmy didn't know that Lila, the brave virtual warrior, lived in the house next door to his. Like him, Lila was a **hikikomori**, and her window was in front of him, although they always kept it closed.

One day, the electricity went out. Unable to use his computer, Jimmy looked out his window. At the same time, Lila did the same. They looked at each other with confusion and curiosity, and when they started talking, they recognized each other's voices! After the surprise, they decided to meet in the garden that divided their houses.

They realized they had a great deal in common. Gradually, they began to spend more time together off-screen, exploring the real world.

Years passed, and their relationship blossomed. They fell in love, got married, and had seven wonderful children. In honor of their story, they named each one after a video game character: Mario, Zelda, Lara, Sonic, Luigi, Donkey, and Pacman.

And so, from a virtual **coincidence**, a real love story was born.

Second version

Present Tense - First Person

Jimmy is a hikikomori. He spends his days locked in his room, immersed in video games. His favorite is "Kingdoms Connected." There he has a battle partner, Lila. Together, they conquer kingdoms, fight monsters, and solve riddles. Although they talk to each other every day, they only know each other by their voices.

Jimmy doesn't know that Lila, the brave virtual warrior, lives in the house next door to his. Like him, Lila is a hikikomori, and her window is opposite his, although both always keep it closed.

One day, the electricity goes out. Unable to use his computer, Jimmy decides to look out his window. At the same time, Lila does the same. They look at each other with confusion and curiosity, and when they start talking, they recognize each other's voices! After the surprise, they meet in the garden that divides their homes.

They realize they have many things in common. Gradually, they spend more time together off-screen, exploring the real world.

Years pass, and their relationship blossoms. They fall in love, get married, and have seven wonderful children. In honor of their story, they decide to name each one after a video game character.

And so, from a virtual coincidence, a real love story is born.

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.

Review

Vocabulary from This Episode

Review the most useful words and expressions before listening again.

01 social isolation a state of having little or no contact with other people.	**05 loneliness** sadness caused by a lack of companionship.
02 hikikomori a person who withdraws from society for a long period.	**06 virtual connection** a relationship or interaction maintained online.
03 withdraw remove yourself from social activity.	**07 coincidence** an unexpected occurrence of related events.
04 reclusive avoiding contact with other people.	**08 reach out** contact someone to offer or request support.

Continue your speaking practice

Build fluency with **guided audio lessons** and mini-stories.

Explore my Premium Courses >

Georgiana
Founder of Speak English Now Podcast
SpeakEnglishPodcast.com