***CONVERSATION CLUB***

**LESSON 7**

**Topic: “Discussing Sensitive Topics”**

**Objective:** Students will be exposed to some expressions that will help them talk about sensitive topics without being too rude or too direct or even hurt someone´s feelings, by practicing these expressions in made-up situations.

**Expressions used before breaking the bad news:**

**Bringing up a sensitive topic**

Can I talk to you for a minute?

Can I ask you something?

Do you mind if I ask you something?

I need to talk to you for a minute.

I have to tell you something.

There's something I need to tell you.

There's something I think you should know.

We need to talk.

**Prefacing a negative subject**

I don't mean to be rude, but . . .

I hate to tell you this, but . . .

I don't know how to tell you this, but . . .

You might not like what I have to say, but . . .

I wish I didn't have to tell you this, but . . .

This may be unpleasant, but . . .

This may seem blunt, but . . .

**Example Conversations:**

*Person 1:* I've been rather sick lately.  
*Person 2:* **I hope you** feel better soon.

*Person 1:* Tim has been having a lot of troubles lately. I think he might be getting a divorce.  
*Person 2:* **I'm sorry to hear about** Tim's problems. **I hope things get better** for him soon.

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| **Practice 1:**  **-From the options A, B, and C, choose the form that best fits the function state, to complete the dialogue below.**  **Conversation 1:** | |
|  |  |
| **Harry** | I know I had it when I left the canteen but it's gone now. It contained all my house keys. I'm really upset. |
| **Chong** | \_\_\_\_\_\_**1**\_\_\_\_\_\_ **( to express sympathy )**. I lost my pencil case last year too. |
| **Harry** | Did you find it ? |
| **Chong** | Unfortunately, no. I didn't even know where I had misplaced it but at least you lost yours in school. \_\_\_\_\_\_**2**\_\_\_\_\_\_ **( to console )** |
| **Harry** | That's what I'm hoping for.  \_\_\_\_\_\_**3**\_\_\_\_\_\_ **( to express regret )**. But I guess it's too late now. |
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| 1. |  | | **To express sympathy** | |  |
|  |  | | A | That was a silly thing to do. |  |
|  |  | | B | You have no keys now. |  |
|  |  | | C | I can understand how you feel. |  |
|  |  | | D | You shouldn't have put all your keys in it. |  |
|  |  | |  |  |  |
| 2. |  | | **To console** | |  |
|  |  | | A | That was smart of you. |  |
|  |  | | B | I hope you have learnt your lesson. |  |
|  |  | | C | What is there to worry about ? |  |
|  |  | | D | I'm sure you'll get it back. |  |
|  |  | |  |  |  |
| 3. |  | | **To express regret** | |  |
|  |  | | A | I shouldn't have put all my keys in the case. |  |
|  |  | | B | Maybe someone will find it. |  |
|  |  | | C | I'm a very careless person. |  |
|  |  | | D | Thanks for your advice. |  |
|  |  | |  |  |  |
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**Practice 2: -In pairs, practice how to break the bad news**

1. A patient of yours has got a serious illness.
2. You saw your colleague’s wife with another man on your way to work.
3. You and your fiends were at a party where you drank a lot. Your friend got wasted and drove home. On the way, he has a car accident. You have to call his/her spouse.
4. You and your colleague invested on a business. You realize that you have lost all your investment and now you have to let your partner know about this event.
5. Your own idea.

**Source:** <http://www.eslgold.com/speaking/sensitive_topics.html> <http://esl.about.com/od/smalltalk/a/Expressing-Sympathy.htm> <http://www.englishdaily626.com/dialogue.php?106>