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The English We Speak

Teething problems

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

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Feifei

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak, where we explain expressions used by fluent English speakers so that you can use them too. I'm Feifei.

Phil

And I'm Phil. Have you had lunch yet, Feifei?

Feifei?

No, not yet. Why?

Phil

They've got a new system in the canteen, and I think they're having some teething problems. Nothing was cooked properly.

Feifei

Oh no, I hope it wasn't too bad. Let's look at that expression you just used, 'teething problems'. You didn't hurt your teeth, did you?

Phil

No, 'teething problems' usually means something different. Literally, teething is when babies are getting their first teeth. It can be a difficult time for them and their parents, but we often use the expression to talk about the temporary problems that you have with something new.

Feifei

If you change the way you do something at work, for example, you can have teething problems at first. New technology often has 'teething problems' when it's introduced. The good thing is that they are usually only temporary – as you get used to things, the teething problems go away.

Phil

Let's listen to some other people talking about teething problems.

Examples

I've just got a new phone and I really like it, but there are a few teething problems. I don't really understand all of the settings.

The managers have got me to work with some new people at the office and we haven't really got used to each other yet. There's been a few teething problems.

I know you're having some problems with your new software but I believe they're just teething problems.

Feifei

We've been learning the expression 'teething problems' to talk about temporary problems related to the introduction of something new.

Phil

Because teething problems are often seen as just temporary, and almost inevitable, you'll often hear adverbs like 'just' and 'only' used with the expression.

Feifei

So, you could say that those problems with the canteen are just 'teething problems' or say, 'Don't worry, they're only teething problems'. The idea is that any issues are to be expected and shouldn't last too long.

Phil

This programme shouldn't last too long either, so let's finish here.

Feifei

See you next time! Bye.

Phil

Bye.