

Eleven Years Living in England but NO ENGLISH FRIENDS--Why?

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By Jade Joddle

Hey guys! Today I'm answering a question from one of you guys. Someone wrote to me and said, "I've been living now for eleven years in England, but I still don't have any English friends. Is it because English people don't want to be with Muslims? They don't like to be friends with Muslims? And also: Is there a way to be friends with English people, but without drinking alcohol and things like that?" And he also said he does have friends in England, but they are not English people. So he knows people after living there for some time, but he hasn't made friends with any English people.

And I wanted to get some more information about his background, his specific country and blah blah blah, but he never wrote back and told me more information. So I'm going to have to guess things, and there's going to be a lot of generalisations in this video.

The way I'm going to answer this question is to talk about class again. I already have a video on the British class system, which you could watch to get an idea of how it's like. This video is: How does the British class system work on a more international level?

OK. In England, the class system is obvious to you, if you're an English person and you grew up there. I know from my interactions with people in comments and also from my experiences... I've met many people from different countries in the world. Some people say, "There's no class system in our country; everybody's equal." And other people say, "Well, we've got the same kind of thing as in England, but it's much more hidden. And people don't admit that society is, like, structured like this; but we still have it, it's more secret."

So what I think—and these generalisations are coming from me in this video—is that, at the level of upper middle-class and above, these kinds of people, they're very international-outlook kind of people. They've usually studied in a different country at university, or worked internationally. These kinds of people often have more in common with each other, each other: You're Italian, you're English, you're American, you're African. But if you're at this level, these people are...have a lot in common with each other.

Not in, you know, not first language always; not same religion often; but yet they still have a lot of international values in common with each other. So, for example, if you're from Africa, but you're living in England, and you're a doctor, and your parents were doctors, you're going to have quite a lot in common with British upper-middle class kinds of people. Your outlook's going to be very international. And if you admit to... I've never been to Africa, I'm gonna talk about other countries. If you admit to yourself, even though you're from this country blah blah blah, you do not have so much in common with the average person

from your country. You...your...your family's wealth, the education you've had, the travel experiences you've had, make you quite different from the mass of people where you come from.

The same can be said about England. So you've got an upper middle-class person in England; they don't have much at all in common with working-class people from England, from the same country. OK, we speak the same language, the same television shows have been on, if people watch the TV. But often they haven't gone to the same kinds of schools; they don't shop in the same supermarkets; they eat different kinds of food; they go on holiday in different places. I can go on and I can go on and go on. So they live in the same country, but don't have a great deal in common.

So what about you? How can I answer if British people want to be friends with you, without knowing your background? So let me imagine. If you are an upper middle-class person from your country, wherever it is; I don't know—it could be an Arab country, could be a North African country; I have no idea. If you're an upper middle-class person from one of those places, I would say that it would be possible for you to make friends in England with similar kinds of people to you. So you would meet these people through your profession; I'm presuming you would have a profession now. I've already mentioned doctor, but you might be dentist, you might be engineer, you might be an academic. And you would meet your friends, who are of similar class and similar world-view as yourself, through your profession. And over time, even if it wasn't the easiest thing in the world to

do, to make friends in a new country that's very different to where you're from, over time, you would form relationships.

And I also want to add here that, at least in my experience of the world, people with those kind of international outlooks, when they...they can...they can move to a lot of places, and, you know, they're able to leave a lot of the culture that they came from: like mentally, they're able to leave a lot of the culture where they came from, because if they're very honest with themselves, they don't fit that well in the culture where they come from. Like, let's say it's not Europe, not a Western country; it's a developing country. Because these people are the wealthiest, most educated, most international, they don't have that much in common—if they're very honest with themselves—they might have the same religion; but even when they have the same religion, from what I've seen, there's a different way of practising that religion. OK? Think about that.

So since the person who wrote to me said, "I've been in England for eleven years now and still don't have English friends," I'm guessing that you didn't meet them through your profession. So which...I don't know... How else do you come into the country? You come in the country... If you're from a Muslim country, I'm guessing that you came into the country as someone seeking asylum, or an immigrant in some other way. I don't know the full story, because you didn't tell me.

So, if you come in the country in this route...I don't know if you had to learn English when you arrived. Um, using my imagination to pull out this situation: Let's say you moved to England; you didn't have any language skills; you had to learn it here. You had to depend on the government to give you support for a few years. And slowly, slowly, you started to get on your feet. Maybe you got a, got a job, and that kind of thing, right?

What kind of English people would you be around, if you meet them in your job that I imagine that you may have now? The kind of English people you're going to be meeting are working-class people. OK. Working-class people are not really interested in knowing people from any other countries if you can't...like... They're interested to know you and just say, "Oh, hi...good morning." You know, just simple small conversation. But not interested in becoming friends with you, unless you also have a similar world-view as them, OK? And if you're not from England, really don't think it's likely that you're gonna have a similar world-view to most, the majority of British working-class people.

For a start, you mentioned about your religion; it must be something important to you, because you mentioned it in the email. British working-class people...they don't really, like... Why would they want to go out of their way to know you, if what, where you come from, and what you think, is so different to them and how they think, and how they live and stuff? And you mentioned: Is there a way to be friends with English people without drinking alcohol? And a lot of the culture does have alcohol involved in it. So any parties, celebrations, um... Or the pub—that

place, where maybe you've never even been inside, because it's alcohol place. These things are part of British culture. So, I'm gonna say: a working-class person... Like, working-class person in general is not really that open to knowing a lot of new people coming from different places. It could even be a different town in England. They're just not...making big generalisations here...not the most...yeah, not really going out of their way to like, learn about the whole world. They're just living their lives, where they live, getting on with things.

And now we must also mention that, if you are doing some job that a working-class person, English person generally does, you're essentially competition to those people. You're competing for the same kinds of jobs. If you're living in a council house, you're...you've competed with them, some of them, and some other immigrants to that council house where you live. If you have children, and your children are at school, they are making that school where the English people go... In London, there's fewer English... There are fewer children actually born to English parents in a lot of places, than there are immigrant children.

So there is that sense of competition that is felt in these kinds of working-class neighbourhoods, which, you know, when... Someone my Mum's age; she is...in her fifties now; London was a different, different place when she was young. The neighbourhood where my Mum grew up was a working-class British neighbourhood. But now it's a...it's a very, very... It's like sixty percent of people

were not...sixty to sixty-five percent of the residents there were not, were not born in England.

So there's my putting-it-straight view, full of generalisations, about why it might be hard for you to make friends with English people, because at the start, it's like: What English people are you talking about? Upper middle-class people as well, they probably don't have... Why would they want to be friends with you, either? It's too much... It's just way too different. It's way too different. Different in terms of...background, wealth, class. But also upper middle-class English people: not so often that friendly and have a lot of British people of the working-class [as friends] as well.

Let's talk about exceptions now. So, some people move to England, and I call these people "full assimilation people." They move there and usually this kind of person's always had a heart's desire... And I've spoken to many, many people like this, because when I used to be doing my English lessons on Skype, so many of my Skype clients said, "I've always wanted to go to England and live there, and just always... I think I had a past life in England! Always just had the passion for going there and living there."

Other people, for whatever circumstances in their life, move to England, but without following a heart's desire. Can be for money... yeah, it's usually an economic motive. Why else would you move there? Economic motive / danger to your life somewhere else. So, you move to England. But not all these people

have a heart's desire to go there. And some of them may be resistant, and against, the culture that they're moving in to. Don't like it that much, but yet living there, and sort of trying to keep the same as where they came from before.

So now I'm talking more about just the idea...the idea of multiculturalism, does it work? And I say... What multiculturalism means is that you're there with your culture, we're there with our culture, we're here with our culture, and sort of all together we live happily. But people... it's not, it's not, it's generally not living happily all together; it's generally just living separate.

But the exceptions are the "full assimilation" people, who always had the heart's desire to go to the other place. And I know quite a lot of these people in England, or London... I know people like this in London. And they have lots of English friends. They do all the things English people do. If they're invited to somewhere by an English person, they go. They wouldn't even be thinking about it: "Is this person English or not?" They've been there long enough, plus they're open enough to the culture, that the full assimilation happened to them.

Other people: they are more like... I think I would call these people "resistors" of the culture. They just don't like enough about the culture, they feel a sense of un-belonging, but the main thing is that there's a lot they don't like in the culture. If you're a resistor, it's not that easy to make friends where you're going, because...you will not be that compatible in your views, in the way you live your life on so many levels. OK?

What am I? I've lived in lots of different places. Um... What I am changes depending on the place. There are very, very huge differences between the country I come from and Turkey, where I'm living now, OK? Huge differences in terms of culture, in terms of development... I've travelled to a lot of places, OK? And a lot of places are easier for me to be than being here. The level of culture...that I experience as being really quite different.

Now if I was a full assimilation type of person, I would love that. I would just be loving that; I would just want to know more and more about the Turkish way of life, and celebrate everything. But I'm not like that, because I'm a resistor to it. There is...it's just... There's a lot that's very different, and there's just a lot I don't get and I don't think I want to get. Some things are OK, but I'm a resistor, who is living here. So... Do I... Do I have loads of Turkish friends? No, I don't. Would I have more Turkish friends, if I wasn't a resistor? Yes, definitely; because I would be more open to doing different things than I am now, being a resistor. I would be more open and less critical. But hey, I'm a resistor.

So your situation: swapping around... I don't know what country you're from, which Muslim country; but maybe you're in that kind of situation as well. You've lived in the country for a long time, but you're still a resistor to it. There's some things that you don't like so much; and you're living there, but your heart isn't really there.

I still think it's possible to make friends if you're a resistor, but you have to have an open mind, and also you have to seek out other people who also have an open mind as well, so you can be friends with them on that level, not necessarily... Like, in your situation, not necessarily be looking for English people who are going to accept everything about you that you brought from your home country, and for them to think it's great. I would say, realistically, if you make English friends in England, if you're still clinging on to a lot of the culture where you came from, the more you can drop that kind of thing, the more likely you will be to make friends with English people, because they'll meet...they'll meet you in the middle in some sort of open-minded place, rather than you come with a really different culture. Then, also, another...

If any of this stuff I've said doesn't apply to you, another reason why you might not have any English friends is because you've been... I'm gonna presume here you've been living in London. So many people from so many different places. That life in London is going to most likely bring you into the most contact with people who are also from other countries and in a similar situation to yourself. If you choose to, you can have that kind of existence and live in England or / live in London more, that way. And that's just a different way to do it. I've met many people who've lived in London for a couple of years and haven't made any English friends; they keep to the international kinds of crowds.

So um, as a recap. The point was... the points were that: Whether or not you're having friends depends on your social class. It is easier and more likely to make

friends with English people if you are from a much higher social class in the country that you came from. Because you will have an international mindset, which isn't that different to upper middle-class English people. If you come from a lower-class background from your country, if you're a full-assimilation person, you will make English friends, but if you are a resistor kind of person, the path to friendship with English people is probably just going to be more on the polite knowing people, rather than close friends.

So let me know in the comments...people who've had the experience of living in London, how was it for you to make friends there with English people?

Thank you for watching, and see you later. Bye-bye!

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