

The Best Gift I Ever Survived

TEDTalks

A video talk by Stacey Kramer

You are going to watch a 3-minute video of a woman named Stacey Kramer, who talks about a gift she received some time ago. As you watch the video the first time, your objective should be to understand the general message of the video; don't worry too much about details during this first viewing.



Video link:

http://www.ted.com/talks/stacey_kramer_the_best_gift_i_ever_survived.html

After watching the video once, you should complete the following series of tasks, which will help you to understand the video in greater detail and to improve your English communication skills.

1. Listening Comprehension: Understanding the TEDTalk

In this talk, Stacey Kramer describes the effects that a special '*gift*' had on her. Watch the video again and answer the following questions using your own words.

1. What is the '*gift*' that Stacey Kramer received?

2. When she first received it, was she happy about it?

3. Why does she see this experience as a gift now?

4. What is the message that she wants to transmit to the audience?

2. Express Yourself

Stacey Kramer's talk is surprising when she reveals what the *'gift'* consisted on. What kind of gift had you imagined? What was your reaction when you saw what it really was? What is your opinion about the positive concept she has about this experience? Would you consider it a *'gift'* personally?

3. Language Practice

In her talk, Stacey Kramer uses several adjectives that are constructed from verbs and the suffix *'-ed'*, such as *'motivated'*. Similarly, you can construct adjectives by adding the suffix *'-ing'* to a verb (*'motivating'*). *'-ed'* adjectives are generally used to describe states or feelings, whereas *'-ing'* adjectives are used to describe characteristics of a person or an object. Take a look at the verbs in the box and fill in the blanks with the appropriate *'-ed'* / *'-ing'* form of these verbs.

interest	inspire	annoy	bore	confuse
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1. We attended a very _____ conference that gave us lots of ideas for our business.
2. If you are _____, why don't you go for a walk?
3. The information was so _____ that I couldn't understand anything.
4. I'll send you the link to an _____ article about the use of smartphones.
5. The photographer was _____ by the beauty of those landscapes.
6. The old lady was _____ by the children's screaming.
7. This is the most _____ seminar I've ever attended. I'm going to fall asleep!
8. Sorry, I'm not _____ in your product.
9. My husband has the _____ habit of smoking inside the house.
10. No, I'm not Alison Perkins. You must have _____ me with someone else.

4. Writing

Stacey Kramer points out all the positive things she learned from her experience. Write about a personal experience which was negative at first but which turned out to be positive for you.

Answer Key

1. Listening Comprehension

1. She had a brain tumor.
2. No, she wasn't. She perceived it as a threat to her life.
3. Because, thanks to this experience, she learned to see life in a different way.
4. She wants to transmit to the audience that we can learn something valuable from any life experience, even if it seems terrible at first.

2. Express Yourself

Sample answer:

I thought that the gift would consist on some sort of life experience, such as travelling to India or becoming a volunteer for an NGO. I didn't expect it to be an illness, so I was shocked when Stacey Kramer announced that she had had a brain tumor. I can't share her positive vision about the 'gift'. It is true that you can learn valuable lessons from any experience but I would be too terrified to consider it a gift. I think that my reaction would be feeling grateful for surviving the illness, more than appreciating the lessons I've learned from this experience.

3. Language Practice

1. We attended a very **inspiring** conference that gave us lots of ideas for our business.
2. If you are **bored**, why don't you go for a walk?
3. The information was so **confusing** that I couldn't understand anything.
4. I'll send you the link to an **interesting** article about the use of smartphones.
5. The photographer was **inspired** by the beauty of those landscapes.
6. The old lady was **annoyed** by the children's screaming.
7. This is the most **boring** seminar I've ever attended. I'm going to fall asleep!
8. Sorry, I'm not **interested** in your product.
9. My husband has the **annoying** habit of smoking inside the house.
10. No, I'm not Alison Perkins. You must have **confused** me with someone else.

4. Writing

Sample answer:

Two years ago, I was fired from my job. First, I was angry and frustrated. However, I realized that it was a great opportunity to do something that I had always wanted to do, so I decided I would take singing and acting lessons. I had a great time with those lessons, I did several auditions and I even got a minor role in a TV series. Later, I got a job in a dubbing studio and now I make a living as a voice artist. Therefore, losing my job was one of the best things that has ever happened to me, as it encouraged me to do what I really wanted to do in life.