

Kaizen Main Text

Hi, this is AJ with your next lesson. The rest of the lessons are going to be a little bit different than what you've had up 'til now. In the rest of these lessons, I'm going to talk about some book or article or idea, I'll probably read a little bit of it just so you can get the general idea of the topic, and then I'll talk about that topic. And, of course, we'll have our same mini-stories, we're going to have our vocabulary lessons, and we're going to add one more kind of lesson, the point of view lesson. The point of view lesson is really great for learning grammar in an intuitive way. Alright, so let's get started.

This lesson is called "The Kaizen Way." So we're going to talk about a book. The book is called The Kaizen Way by Robert Maurer. Now, kaizen is a Japanese word although we use it in English now a little bit. Especially in Business you find it a lot, kaizen. Kaizen, as our Japanese students already know, means small improvements over time. It really means constant and neverending improvement. But it has this idea of making little tiny improvements again and again and again and again, for one week, for one month, for one year, forever. So kaizen is kind of the opposite of innovation.

Innovation means a sudden, big change, a sudden, big improvement. And that's a great way to learn and improve. For example, you could study English very intensely for one month or two months and you would make a big, sudden improvement. That's the innovation idea, but there's another way you can improve and that is the kaizen way. And the kaizen way means maybe you just listen to English or read English or study English, maybe you just do it 20 minutes every day. And every day you improve just a little bit. But the key, the secret is you do it every single day. Every day you make one little improvement. Well after one week, one month, one year, two years, five years, you will make a huge change just by making little tiny improvements over time. That's the idea of kaizen.

So I'm going to read a little bit from The Kaizen Way, just a couple paragraphs, and then I'll talk about it more. Okay, so here's a section, it's called Kaizen Tip and this is from Robert Maurer, M-a-u-r-e-r, that's his last name. Okay, Kaizen Tip:

"You want to do something creative. Write a story or a song. Paint a picture. Dream up your perfect career. Learn something or come up with a zinger of a solution to an office problem. But you have no idea where to start. Your mind keeps coming up empty. During times like these, kaizen can help you summon your powers of inspiration. Although you can't force your brain to cough up creative ideas on demand, you can program to launch the imaginative process simply by asking yourself a small question.

Here are some of the most popular small questions my clients use for creativity. Feel free to come up with your own. Whatever question you use, your challenge is to ask it with a gentle and patient spirit. When you use harsh or urgent tones with yourself, fear will clog the creative process.

So here are some questions you can ask yourself. Number 1, what's one thing I wish to contribute to the world with my project or idea? Number 2, whom could I ask for help or inspiration? Number 3, what is special about my creative process, about my talents, about my team? Number 4, what type of work would excite and fulfill me? Number 5, what small tiny change could I make now, today, to improve?

Remember, if you repeat the question for several days or weeks, or however long it takes, the hippocampus, which is the part of the brain that stores information, will have no choice but to address it. And in its own way, on its own timetable, the brain will begin giving you answers."

Okay, that's the section from The Kaizen Way, so this is very interesting from Robert Maurer here. This technique of asking small questions to yourself is very powerful. You can use it for anything. You can use it for learning English, of course. You could ask yourself small questions every day. For example, how could I improve today just a little bit? Or how could I improve my pronunciation 2% this week? The important part of asking these questions is that they must be small questions. So don't say how could I be totally perfect with English in one month? That's a huge question and often you'll feel stress or worry or fear if you ask this gigantic, huge question. You'll think, oh my god, I don't know, can I do it?

But if you ask a very small question, it seems so small, so easy, your brain will say "Oh, I can do that, that's easy." And then you will start to take action. And, of course, action is the most important part. Action is what we need. So if you try to ask big questions, you're trying to improve very fast and you're feeling stress, maybe you can change your strategy. Try the Kaizen way. Instead, ask yourself little small questions. How could I improve just a little bit? How could I learn just one new word each day? How could I improve my pronunciation just a tiny bit each week? Ask yourself these little questions.

And another point from this article, you need to repeat the questions again and again and again. You have to ask this same question or questions every day for one week or two weeks or maybe even a couple months. By asking yourself these questions again, again, every day you're asking the same question, your brain must come up with an answer. Your brain must find an answer. It will find answers. Keep asking questions, your brain will give you answers. It will give you better and better answers the more you ask these small questions. So anytime you have some big goal, some big project that seems so difficult, try the kaizen way. Try to approach this problem with little small tiny

improvements. Ask yourself little small easy questions every day, again and again and again. Your brain will get more energy. It will find the answers. You'll get momentum. You'll start to take action. And then after one month you'll take bigger actions. After two to three months, bigger actions, bigger actions. Actually these improvements start to grow. The improvements get bigger and faster and faster. That's the magic of the kaizen way. It seems so small and tiny. It seems so easy but over time it builds. It grows stronger and stronger.

So try this. Try this method. Try the kaizen way. And again, the book title is The Kaizen Way, that's K-a-i-z-e-n, kaizen, The Kaizen Way by Robert Maurer.

Alright, and remember, of course, keep your psychology strong. Keep your physiology strong. I hope you're smiling right now. I hope those shoulders are back. Chin up. Lots of energy. Don't forget that every single lesson. You must be smiling. You must be moving. You must have energy in your body. That's how you're going to learn English much, much faster. Okay, I will see you next time.