

An intimidating meeting.

Last week, as some of you know, I met with the Superintendent of Wenatchee Schools. I was very nervous, for some reason. I had never met him before, though I had seen him a couple of times in School Board meetings. My intention was to encourage changes in the school district, changes that have been wanted and recommended for a long time but haven't taken place. But, as I stepped into the office, and sat down in the waiting area, I began to feel very small. For some reason, I started to doubt my right to be there. Was I informed enough to have a pertinent conversation with this very busy man, a man who obviously knows more about the school district than me? Would I forget what I had planned on saying half way through a sentence? Would I stutter, or burp, or trip and fall and smash something important, like his laptop? "Okay Anna, what's your problem? Are you losing your edge?" (1) I said to myself, "Whatever happened to the girl who did public speaking, or the rock climber, or the hitchhiker? Pull yourself together!" (2) I talked reasonably to myself in order to calm down my thumping heart, and my sweating armpits. I did some deep breathing exercises, and focused on the meeting being over, rather than the meeting itself. "Hello Anna," a voice interrupted my thoughts. I looked up, and standing there was a smiling man, reaching out his hand to shake mine. I quickly got up and shook his hand, "Hello Mr Flones, how are you?" The Superintendent had just got back from lunch, and had approached me while I was in the middle of my deep breathing exercises. He led me to his office, which was moderate, and practical, and not intimidating at all, plus there was nothing that I could easily break, so I started to relax. "I appreciate you meeting with me, Mr. Flones. I will be brief, I won't take up much of your time." "That's fine," he replied, looking at the clock, "I'm good." (3) I realized that I could stop being apologetic, and could just get on with what I wanted to say and ask. It turned out, actually, to be the opposite of what I had expected. He was not only very open, but he was very candid about the state of schools, and changes that needed to be made. What a relief! We agreed on many things, and towards the end, I said, "Really, I want to offer my hand of friendship, and to help in this transition to an upgraded school district." I said this because I have felt in the past that there were two separate and conflicting groups: parents and the school district. Of course, it doesn't have to be that way. If we work together, we can get twice as much done in half the time, as long as we really listen to each other. I left the meeting feeling very satisfied, and stood outside for while, taking in the early Spring sun. As I walked to my car, I pondered why I had been so nervous. Well, if you've recently raised four children, and not worked, then you've been out of the loop (4): no office meetings, no business lunches, no professional decisions etc. It can be intimidating to step back into that arena when my world has been diapers, a-b-c's, and the price of milk. But, the impression that I got from the Superintendent was that, as a teacher and a parent, I have very valuable things to say. It didn't take long to adjust back to the school-decision making world. So, I've planned for another meeting in a few weeks, to check on progress, but this time, I won't need the breathing exercises.

Related expressions: to lose your edge, pull yourself together, I'm good, to be out of the loop.

1. To lose your edge means to lose the quality of a skill through lack of use or fear.

Exs: I used to tell jokes at parties, but I haven't done that for years. I've lost my edge.

I couldn't possibly skydive anymore; I've lost my edge.

2. To pull yourself together means to become brave by effort. You can use this as a command, even for yourself.

Exs: Pull yourself together, man, you only need one filling. Your other teeth are fine.

I need to speak to him right now, but I really don't want to. "Pull yourself together Anna! Just do it!"

3. I'm good is used in the U.S. It's an expression that means "That's okay, I'm fine" or "I don't need

anymore". It is used when people are asked if they want some more to eat, or if they want to communicate that they have plenty of time.

Exs: Do you want some more cake?

No thanks, I'm good. Here it means that he is satisfied and has had enough.

I won't take up much of your time.

I'm good. I've got plenty of time. It can be used by itself without specifying 'I've got plenty of time' afterwards.

4. To be out of the loop means that you have been away from a certain arena, perhaps work, or a circle of friends, or an activity.

Exs: I haven't sung in the choir for a few months; I'm out of the loop.

I used to meet with the ladies from my dance class, but I haven't been to it for two years. I'm out of the loop.

Here, 'I'm out of the loop' is used because she hasn't been to class, and she hasn't had connection with her social group.