
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Alice in Wonderland

Part 5: Advice from a caterpillar



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Narrator

After Alice frightened everyone by growing as big as a house, she ate some little cakes and **shrank** again. She doesn't like being so tiny, so she's looking for something to make her grow to the right size. But this is Wonderland and what she finds, sitting on top of a mushroom, is very curious indeed...

Alice

Am I as small as a mushroom, or is the mushroom as tall as me? Ohh!!

Narrator

Sitting on top of the mushroom was a blue caterpillar smoking a **hookah pipe**.

Caterpillar

Who are you?

Alice

I... I'm not sure. I know who I was when I woke up this morning. But I've changed so many times since then!

Caterpillar

What do you mean by that? Explain yourself!

Alice

I can't explain myself because I'm not myself. It's very confusing... I think you should tell me who YOU are first.

Caterpillar

Why?

Alice

Ummm...

Narrator

Alice couldn't think of any good reason. She decided to leave.

Caterpillar

Come back! I have something important to say!

Alice

Yes?

Caterpillar

Don't be unhappy.

Alice

Is that all?

Caterpillar

No. So you think you've changed, do you?

Alice

I have, sir. I don't stay the same size for more than ten minutes!

Caterpillar

What size do you want to be?

Alice

Oh, I don't mind. A little bit bigger is all I would like. Seven centimetres is such a terrible height!

Caterpillar

It is a very good height! I myself am exactly seven centimetres in height!

Narrator

And with that, the caterpillar crawled off the mushroom and away.

Caterpillar

One side of the mushroom will make you grow taller. The other side will make you grow shorter. Seven centimetres indeed!

Alice

Hmmm... let me pull this side... and now this side... But which side is which?

Narrator

There was only one way to find out the answer to that question. Alice took a bite of one piece of the mushroom ...

Alice

Ouch!

Narrator

...and shrank so quickly that she hit her **chin** on her foot. Quickly, she ate some of the other piece of mushroom and ...

Alice

Where have my **shoulders** gone? And my hands – where are you, hands?

Narrator

Alice grew and grew until her **neck** was as long as a snake. Up and up she grew, through the branches and leaves, until her head was higher than the trees. Alice found she could move her neck just like a snake, bending this way and that. She was about to use her long neck to push her head down into the trees to look for her shoulders and hands, when suddenly a furious bird flew at her.

Bird

Snake! Snake! You want my eggs! I know!

Alice

I'm not a snake! I'm a... I'm a little girl!

Bird

Little girl or snake, it doesn't matter to me, you want my eggs just the same!

Alice

I don't want your eggs, really I don't!

Bird

Then be off with you! Go away!

Narrator

The bird settled angrily into its nest. Alice ate a little of one side of the mushroom, then a little of the other, then a little of the first again until she was a good size. She decided to find her way back the door to the beautiful garden that she saw when she first arrived in Wonderland. As she walked through the forest she found a little clearing, with a small house in it, not much more than a meter or so high.

Alice

I wonder who lives here? The house is so small – anyone who lives here will surely be afraid of me!

Narrator

Alice ate a little more of the mushroom and quickly brought herself down to the right size for this little house. Next time, Alice meets a walking fish, talks to a smiling cat and has to look after a baby. Goodbye.

Vocabulary**shrank**

past tense of shrink; grew smaller

hookah pipe

a water pipe for smoking tobacco. Hookah pipes are popular in Turkey and the Middle East

bad mood

an angry feeling

height

how tall or short something is

chin

the bottom part of your face under your mouth

shoulders (singular: shoulder)

the part of your body on each side of your neck, between the top of your arms and your neck

neck

the part of your body between your shoulders and your head