



American Expression E2019 Break one's back

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The phrase "break one's back" is an idiomatic expression used to describe an extreme level of physical or mental effort and exertion. It conveys the idea of working tirelessly and relentlessly to achieve a goal, often to the point of exhaustion. This idiom is not to be taken literally, as it does not refer to an actual physical injury but rather emphasizes the magnitude of the effort involved.

When someone is said to be "breaking their back" to accomplish a task, it means that they are putting in an immense amount of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. It implies that the individual is going above and beyond what is expected or required to achieve a particular objective. This expression is commonly used in both professional and personal contexts.

In a professional setting, "breaking one's back" can be associated with someone who is committed to their job and is willing to go to great lengths to excel. Such individuals may take on extra responsibilities, work long hours, and make significant sacrifices to meet deadlines or deliver outstanding results. They are driven by a strong work ethic and a desire to surpass expectations.

In the context of entrepreneurship and business, breaking one's back often characterizes the journey of starting and growing a company. Entrepreneurs frequently face daunting challenges, financial pressures, and relentless competition. To succeed, they must be willing to break their backs by investing immense time, energy, and resources into their ventures. This commitment is often a defining factor in the success of startups and small businesses.

Outside the workplace, the phrase can also apply to personal endeavors. For example, someone pursuing a challenging educational degree, like a Ph.D., may be said to be "breaking their back" to achieve academic excellence. Similarly, individuals who are dedicated to their hobbies or sports may push themselves to their limits, training rigorously and relentlessly to achieve their goals.

The idiom is not limited to physical exertion; it can also describe mental strain and emotional effort. People may be said to be "breaking their back" to overcome personal obstacles, such as overcoming addiction, dealing with grief, or pursuing therapy for mental health issues. In these cases, the emphasis is on the mental and emotional resilience required to make progress and recover.

In conclusion, "breaking one's back" is a figurative expression that conveys the idea of putting in extraordinary effort, whether in a professional, personal, or emotional context. It underscores the determination, dedication, and perseverance required to achieve ambitious goals and overcome significant challenges. While it does not imply actual physical injury, it emphasizes the magnitude of the effort and sacrifice involved in striving for success and personal growth.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you share a personal or professional experience where you felt like you were "breaking your back" to achieve a goal? What motivated you to put in such a significant effort?
 2. In what ways does societal pressure or cultural expectations influence individuals to "break their back" in their pursuit of success or recognition? Are there any negative consequences associated with this pressure?
 3. How do you differentiate between healthy, determined effort and pushing oneself to the point of burnout when striving to "break one's back" to achieve a goal? What strategies can be employed to maintain a balance between effort and well-being?
 4. Can you think of historical or contemporary figures who have been known for "breaking their back" in their respective fields? What lessons or inspiration can we draw from their experiences?
 5. In personal relationships and family dynamics, do you believe there are instances where individuals feel the need to "break their back" to fulfill certain roles or expectations? How can open communication and support help in such situations?
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