



Words and Their Stories: Get Off My Back!

Now, the VOA Special English program WORDS AND THEIR STORIES.

There are many American expressions that use parts of the body. These include the eyes, ears, nose, mouth and even the heart. Today we will tell you some expressions that use other body parts – the back, shoulders and chest.

When I am facing a lot of pressure at work, my back and neck will start to hurt. Sometimes, this tension is the result of too much work. I have too many things to do because my supervisor is **on my back** all the time. In other words, my employer is always telling me to do things.

Sometimes, I want my employer to **get off my back!** I want her to stop criticizing me and making too many demands on my time. I can not say this, however. I would never **turn my back on her** and refuse to help when there is a need. If I did refuse to help, my supervisor might say bad things about me **behind my back**. She might criticize me when I am not present. This would surely be a **stab in the back**. It is never kind to unfairly harm or say bad things about other people.

Sometimes, when I am very productive in my job, my employer gives me a **pat on the back**. She praises my work. She might even say "**I will scratch your back if you will scratch mine.**" This means she will do something for me, if I do something helpful for her in exchange. Such an offer usually comes **straight from the shoulder**. My supervisor has a very direct, open and honest way of speaking.

I know that my employer carries a lot **on her shoulders**. She is responsible for many things at the office. And because she is so important, she sometimes gets to **rub shoulders** with the top officials. She gets to spend time with some very important people.

I believe the top official values my superior. He never gives her the **cold shoulder**. He is never unfriendly to her. He always treats her like she is an important part of the organization.

I also value my supervisor. In fact, I think she is very effective in her job. Of course, I could yell my opinion **at the top of my lungs**, or as loudly as I

possibly could. It might even feel good to get my emotions **off my chest**. It is always helpful to tell people how you feel so that your emotions do not trouble you.

But it is not necessary for me to praise my superior. Most of my co-workers feel the exact same way about her. So, I think I will just **save my breath**. I will keep silent because talking or repeating myself will not do any good.

(MUSIC)

WORDS AND THEIR STORIES, in VOA Special English, was written by Jill Moss. I'm Faith Lapidus.