BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak
In the same breath

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Feifei
Hello and welcome to The English We Speak, where we explain phrases and expressions used by fluent English speakers so that you can use them too. I'm Feifei.

Becca
And I'm Becca.

Feifei
Becca, last time we caught up, we were talking about your plans for the end of the month. Something about a hike?

Becca
Ah, I remember that conversation. I'm thinking about going away soon, and I was considering a hiking holiday because I haven't done that before, but in the same breath, I feel like I need to just relax.

Feifei
That I understand. You just used 'in the same breath'. What does it mean?

Becca
Well, 'in the same breath' is used to compare different ideas. It introduces a contradiction. Though different, both ideas could be true, but the latter idea, which comes after 'in the same breath', usually carries more weight.

Feifei
I see. So, as much as you'd like to try something new and go on a hiking holiday, you mostly just want to relax. And you used the coordinating conjunction 'but' before the expression.

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Becca
Yes. Conjunctions that show contrast, such as 'but', 'however' and 'though,' can be used before 'in the same breath' to introduce the differences between the ideas.

Feifei
Right. Let's hear some more examples.

Examples
My friend says she hates her job, but then in the same breath, she's just volunteered for more overtime.

You said you wanted to help me, but then in the same breath, you say you've got no time, you can't do it. I mean, which is it?

My friend says she's run out of money, but in the same breath, she just told me that she's booked a really expensive holiday. What's going on?

Feifei
Are there any other phrases or expressions that mean the same thing or could be used like 'in the same breath'?

Becca
Well, you might have heard 'on the other hand', 'at the same time' or 'in the same instance'. These phrases are fairly common and express a difference.

Feifei
OK, that's it for this programme, but join us next time to learn more English phrases and expressions. But for now, it's goodbye!

Becca
Bye!

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