BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak
Keep yourself to yourself

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, our new office neighbour seems nice, but I hardly ever see him talking to anyone.

Becca
Yes, he really seems to keep himself to himself.

Feifei
Hmm, what does that mean?

Becca
If someone keeps themself to themselves, they don't spend much time socialising with other people. They prefer to be on their own and usually don't share much about their personal life. Someone who is introverted could prefer to keep themself to themselves.

Feifei
So, does it mean they're unfriendly?

Becca
Not at all. Someone who keeps themself to themselves can be perfectly friendly. It just means they're private or quiet. It’s usually a neutral description, although sometimes people use it to suggest someone is a bit mysterious.

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Feifei
Ah, I see. Now, let's hear some examples.

Examples

I'm just going to keep myself to myself today. I'm so tired.

I've been trying to get to know my new neighbour recently, but I think she likes to keep herself to herself.

When I go travelling on my own, I usually want to meet up with people, but there are others who just want to keep themselves to themselves.

Feifei
Good examples there. Becca, can I say, keep ourselves to ourselves?

Becca
Yes, you certainly can! You can change the pronoun depending on who we're talking about. She could keep herself to herself, or maybe there's a lot going on and I want to keep myself to myself. And with a very different meaning, if we say that we keep something to ourselves, it means we're keeping a secret or just aren't sharing it. I guess it has a similar mysterious feeling as someone who keeps yourself to yourself.

Feifei
Well, I'm glad you didn't keep this expression to yourself and instead decided to share it with us. That's it for this programme. Join us next time for more useful English expressions. Goodbye!

Becca
Bye!

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