BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak
Share your life story

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 and I'm joined by Becca. How are you, Becca?

Becca
I'm well, thanks! I had such a great weekend! I caught up with my friend, well she lives outside of London with her husband now, but we've been friends since we were 11 and we basically grew up together in London. And we went to a market that we used to go to often because we studied textiles together and used to go to this market all the time for fabric. Anyway, she now works in marketing and is doing really well for herself and…

Feifei
Whoa, Becca. I asked how you are, I didn't ask for you to share your life story.

Becca
Haha OK Feifei. I'm doing fine thanks. You used an interesting expression there – share your life story.

Feifei
Yes, a life story is a narrative about a person's life experiences. It's often very long and it goes into incredible detail of the events, relationships, and milestones that helped shape that person's identity.

Becca
Yes, so if we share our life story, it could feel like we're over-sharing, that we're saying far too much than necessary. And you said you didn't ask for my life story because I was rambling on and going into detail about my friend.

©British Broadcasting Corporation 2026

Feifei
Yes, you were going into very specific details. And though it's sometimes nice to share about yourself, you should remember, when a British person asks you, 'how are you?' or 'are you alright?' it's usually a very basic greeting that requires a simple response. Let's hear some examples.

Examples

I remember my grandpa always sharing his life story with me. Usually, the same stories but I didn't mind.

I love when I meet new people when I'm travelling and they share their life story with me. It's so interesting to learn about different cultures and upbringings.

Sorry I'm late! I was talking to the receptionist, and he was sharing his life story.

Becca
We often use the expression 'share your life story' in a slightly negative way, usually in response to someone talking at length. So, it's important to be mindful of how you say this expression. If you raise your tone towards the end, it could express surprise and feels more positive. But if you drop your tone, it could express disappointment or even sarcasm. Hear the difference – I didn't ask for you to share your life story, and, I didn't ask for you to share your life story

Feifei
You're right, the latter sounded a bit rude. That's it for this programme. Join us next time for more useful English expressions. Goodbye!

Becca
Bye!

©British Broadcasting Corporation 2026