BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak
Try one's patience

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.

Phil
And I'm Phil.

Feifei
I saw you struggling with the printer earlier, are you OK?

Phil
I hate those machines!

Feifei
You seemed quite annoyed.

Phil
I can't stand it – paper jammed, open this bit, close this bit, put something in here, take something out of here. No ink. They really try my patience.

Feifei
I mean you should try patience. You need to calm down a bit.

Phil
No, I said 'try my patience'. In this expression 'try' has a similar meaning to 'test'. If something tries your patience, it means you get to see how patient (or impatient) you really are.

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Feifei
Don't worry, I was just joking with you. Yes, 'try one's patience' is a great expression to talk about things that annoy you. If something tries your patience, then it's something annoying. You get to see how much you can tolerate before you lose your patience – which didn't seem to be very long when you were using that printer.

Phil
Yes, you might be right there. It's an expression that can be used about anything that makes you annoyed, whether that's bad traffic, annoying colleagues or terrible customer service. All of these things can try your patience.

Feifei
Let's hear some more people using the expression 'try one's patience'.

Examples
Excuse me, can you sit down? Sit down! You're really trying my patience.

My computer just keeps crashing. It's really trying my patience now.

"Unknown item in bagging area." Aargh, these self-checkouts really try my patience.

Feifei
We've been learning the expression 'try one's patience' to talk about things being annoying.

Phil
This expression often gets used in the negative, almost as a warning. 'Don't try my patience – you are going to need my help'. We can also use 'Don't try your luck' or 'Don't push your luck' in a similar way.

Feifei
We're at the end of programme but do come back next time. We can help you improve your English without trying your patience.

Phil
See you next time!

Feifei
Bye!

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