BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak
Sell yourself short

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
How are you, Becca?

Becca
I'm alright, thanks, Feifei. I'm a bit nervous for this evening though. I'm going to propose a new idea at the meeting later.

Feifei
Fantastic! It's natural to feel nervous about sharing something new for the first time.

Becca
Yeah, well… I just don't know if my idea is creative enough. It feels pretty plain.

Feifei
Aw Becca, don't sell yourself short. You are creative, and I'm sure your idea isn't plain.

Becca
That's very kind of you to say, Feifei, and a good use of the expression, 'sell yourself short'. When we sell ourselves short, we say negative things about ourselves. We undervalue or underestimate ourselves.

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Feifei
Like when you called your own idea 'pretty plain', you underestimated your sense of style. OK, now let's hear some more examples of this phrase 'sell yourself short'.

Examples
My sister keeps talking badly about herself. I told her to stop selling herself short.

If you've got a job interview coming up soon, the most important thing is don't sell yourself short.

Don't sell yourself short. You can definitely get a place on that course.

Feifei
So, Becca, what would be the opposite of 'selling yourself short'? Is it 'selling yourself long', or maybe 'selling yourself tall'?

Becca
It’s not that simple, Feifei. We can't make the opposite of this phrase by using antonyms of 'short', like 'long' or 'tall'. We could say that we value ourselves. We could also say that we know or recognise our value or worth.

Feifei
I see. Thank you, Becca. Now, remember to know your worth and good luck with the meeting later!

Becca
Thank you Feifei. That's it for this programme but join us next time to learn more English phrases and expressions. But for now, it's goodbye.

Feifei
Goodbye.

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