The Paradox Mind: Why We Do Things That Contradict What We Want

Warm-Up

1. Why do people sometimes act *against* their own goals?
2. Can you think of something you know is good for you but don't do consistently? Why?
3. Do you think humans are rational or emotional first?

The Paradox Mind: A Short Reflection

Humans are fascinating creatures. **Even though** we are capable of remarkable logical reasoning, we often make decisions that defy that logic. Consider the classic example of procrastination: people delay important tasks, **despite** knowing that starting earlier would reduce stress. The same paradox appears in health. **Much as** we want to eat more mindfully, we end up reaching for comfort food the moment life becomes overwhelming.

Contradictions also shape our relationships. We crave meaningful connection, **yet** we spend hours scrolling alone on our phones. We desire stability, **while** simultaneously chasing novelty and excitement. These opposing drives coexist, **strange though it may seem**, without cancelling each other out.

Psychologists argue that these paradoxes arise from the tension between long-term values and short-term impulses. **For all** our advanced cognitive abilities, we remain deeply emotional beings. And perhaps that's the real paradox: understanding our contradictions doesn't make them disappear — it only makes them more interesting.

1. What is the central paradox described in the text?

   _____

2. How does procrastination illustrate contradictory behaviour?

   _____

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3. What two opposing desires appear in relationships?

_____

4. According to psychologists, what creates internal contradictions?

_____

5. What is the final paradox mentioned in the text?

_____

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Vocabulary

- **opposing drives**
- **inner conflict**
- **go against your own interest**
- **long-term vs. short-term mindset**
- **self-defeating habits**
- **contradictory impulses**
- **emotional override**
- **paradoxical behaviour**

Vocabulary Exercise (Match)

Match the term to the definition:

1. **paradoxical behaviour**
2. **inner conflict**
3. **self-defeating habit**
4. **emotional override**
5. **contradictory impulses**

a. emotions that overrule logical thinking

b. actions that harm your own goals

c. urges that push you in opposite directions

d. behaviour that seems illogical but still happens

e. psychological tension between two desires

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Grammar Focus — Advanced Concessive Clauses

A. Contrast clauses

- **even though / although / though** → full clause
  Even though he knew the risks, he invested.

B. Concessive linking with emphasis

- **much as + clause**
  Much as I respect him, I can't agree.

C. Preposition-based forms

- **despite / in spite of + noun / -ing**
  Despite being exhausted, she kept working.

D. Formal/advanced

- **for all + noun**
  For all his experience, he still panics before exams.

E. Adjective + though + clause

- *Strange though it may seem, people prefer familiar stress to unfamiliar calm.*
- *Unlikely though it sounds, he passed without studying.*

F. Whereas / while (contrast two facts)

- *Whereas I need silence to focus, he works better with noise.*

Emphasise: concessive clauses express **surprise**, **contradiction**, or **unexpected contrast**.

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Grammar Practice

Fill in the gaps using:
even though, much as, despite, in spite of, whereas, while, for all, adj + though, although

1. _____ he trained for months, he froze during the interview.
2. _____ his confidence, he still hesitates in key moments.
3. _____ I admire her creativity, I wouldn't hire her for this project.
4. _____ being exhausted, she stayed to help.
5. _____ I love staying informed, the news overwhelms me.
6. Determined _____ he was, he couldn't finish on time.
7. He prefers working at night, _____ I'm useless after 10 pm.
8. _____ it sounds, he quit just when success was guaranteed.
9. She kept quiet _____ she disagreed.
10. _____ his mistakes, he was promoted.

Grammar Practice 2 – Transformations

Rewrite using the prompt in brackets, keeping the same meaning.

1. He kept working, even though he was in pain. (**despite**)

   → _____

2. I respect him, but I don't trust him fully. (**much as**)

   → _____

3. She tries her best, but she still doubts herself. (**for all**)

   → _____

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4. It's surprising, but he enjoys stressful environments. (**adj + though**)

   → _____

5. I need structure, but he thrives on chaos. (**whereas**)

   → _____

6. Even though they had little data, they made strong claims. (**in spite of**)

   → _____

7. He's very talented, but he rarely takes risks. (**although**)

   → _____

8. Even though the solution was obvious, nobody acted. (**though**)

   → _____

9. They continued the project, even though the budget was cut. (**despite**)

   → _____

10. I appreciate your effort, but I can't approve this. (**much as**)

    → _____

Speaking Task

Prompt:

"The Paradox Interview"

You must respond to 3 paradoxical scenarios **using at least one concessive clause each**.

1. You want to save money, but you keep buying small treats every day.
2. You care deeply about your health, but you constantly stay up late.
3. You dislike social media, but you spend hours on it when stressed.

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You can use:

Much as…, For all…, Strange though…, Whereas…, Despite…

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