

BBC Learning English
6 Minute English
Warm hands, cold heart?



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Yvonne: Hello, I'm Yvonne Archer, this is '6 Minute English' - and thanks to William for joining me today.

William: You're welcome, Yvonne!

Yvonne: Now, are your hands usually warm or cold?

William: Err – you tell me...

Yvonne: Ooh, you've got warm hands! And that just might explain the type of person you are. Hmmm...

William: Right, in what way?

Yvonne: I'm not telling you! In today's report, we hear the results of some research into whether there's any real link between warm hands and a warm heart. But first – today's big question! William, what's the world's record for the longest time spent by someone in full body contact in ice? Is it

- a) one hour and fifteen minutes
- b) one hour and thirty minutes or
- c) one hour and fifty minutes

William: Umm – I don't know. I'm going to go for a) – one hour and fifteen minutes.

Yvonne: And how long do you think you'd be able to stay in ice?

William: Umm - what, alive?!



Yvonne: Yeah!

William: I – probably about, I don't know, twenty minutes; I'm a bit of a softy.

Yvonne: Yeah – I don't think I could do five minutes actually. But we'll find out whether your answer is right or wrong at the end of the programme. Now, we need your help with some of the language, William, that we'll come across in today's report. First, we'll hear how some people are 'generous in their judgements'. What does that mean?

William: Well if you're 'generous in your judgement' of somebody, for example – then your opinion of them is quite nice and quite kind. You're generous in your judgement of them.

Yvonne: So when I say that you're great company here in the "6 Minute English" studio, William, am I being generous in my judgement of you?

William: Well – you're being honest! No - you're being very generous in your judgement. Yes.

Yvonne: Okay. Now what are 'volunteers'?

William: People who aren't paid, but offer their time and their help to do something, usually for a charity. These are 'volunteers'. For example, I used to be a volunteer

Yvonne: Did you?

William: Yeah.

Yvonne: Doing what?



William: I worked for the Red Cross as a volunteer for a little while.

Yvonne: Fabulous, so helping people who were ill or injured and so on?

William: Yeah – people who were in need. Yeah.

Yvonne: Excellent. Now in today's report from the BBC's John McGrath, we'll hear how volunteers were asked to judge people's personalities. But what were the volunteers asked to hold before they made their judgements?

JOHN MCGRATH

They found that those who had held warm cups of coffee were more likely to be generous in their judgements than those who had held cups of ice. In a second study, the scientists found that the volunteers were more likely to give a gift to another person if they had warmed their hands first.

Yvonne: William, what were the volunteers asked to hold before they judged people's personalities?

William: Well some were given warm cups of coffee to hold so their hands were warm, while others were given cups of ice to hold.

Yvonne: Hmmm - and those people with warm hands said nicer things about the personality of each person they judged. And in the second study – or experiment – did you happen to catch what the volunteers with warm hands were more likely to do?

William: Yes, they wanted to give gifts to other people, while those with cold hands didn't.



Yvonne: Aha! So next time you shake hands with someone, you might want to check whether their hands are warm or cold. If they're warm – there could be a gift on its way to you!

Now as we know, the words 'warm' and 'cold' are sometimes used to describe people - even in children's stories. But what do we mean when we use those terms, William?

William: Well, someone who is a 'warm' person is usually someone who's good, kind, giving and friendly. But someone who is a 'cold' person is the opposite and might even be thought of as a bit cruel.

Yvonne: Ooh - but where did that idea come from?

JOHN MCGRATH

The research team say that describing people as either warm or cold, taps into emotions and experiences that date back to childhood.

Yvonne: William, John used the expression– 'taps into emotions' - so, 'to tap into'. What did he mean by that?

William: John means that describing people as 'warm' or 'cold' reminds us of feelings and experiences from our childhood. So for example, most people think of a mother as a warm person who's kind and good. And that makes us see others who are physically warm as being kind and good too.

Yvonne: Yes, but psychologists and scientists on the research team have warned us that this isn't always the case. We can't always know who is good and who is bad by checking whether their hands are warm or cold. But what we do know is that our own behaviour and feelings can change depending on whether our own hands are warm or cold.



William: Well that's it! If a salesman gives me a warm cup of coffee when I go to buy something, I won't take it.

Yvonne: Why not?

William: Because if my hands are nice and warm, I just might buy something that I don't really need or want.

Yvonne: That's good thinking! Okay, it's time now to find out the answer to today's big question, William. What's the world's record for the longest time spent by someone in full body contact with ice?

William: I said a) - an hour and quarter.

Yvonne: And again...

William: Again? Am I right?

Yvonne: No – no, you were wrong. Sorry. It's actually an hour and a half. It was a man in China. And yes, he was still alive when they took him out! But that's all we've got time for on today's "6 Minute English" –

W/Y: Goodbye!