The What If Table: He Never Said No at Work — Until His Body Collapsed

Level: A2 to B1

Estimated time: 10 to 15 minutes

Welcome to this study sheet. You will relisten to key moments from Patrick and Julian's story, check your understanding of important details, learn useful work expressions, and practice speaking about your own boundaries in English.

Activity 1: Listening for Key Details

Goal: Relisten to specific moments in the conversation to verify facts, decisions, and consequences. Before playing each audio clip, read the question carefully. Try to remember what happened, and then listen to check.

1. Listen from [01:35]. What two things did Julian buy at the corner chemist (farmacia) to push through the night alone?

Write your answer below:

2. Listen from [02:05]. What accident happened at two o clock in the morning, and what did Julian secretly do with his own money?

Write your answer below:

3. Listen from [04:30]. When the angry client demanded an overnight shift on Tuesday, what alternative did Julian offer, and what did he refuse?

Write your answer below:

Activity 2: Listening for Exact Words

Goal: Listen for the exact words spoken in the episode. Read the sentence with the context first, then listen from the timestamp and write the exact word you hear.

4. Listen from [03:52]. Patrick explains the advice he gave Julian on Monday morning:

Patrick: Admitting our limits is honesty, not [...].

Write the missing word:

5. Listen from [06:10]. Patrick describes how Julian felt about leaving unfinished tasks at the end of the day:

Patrick: Leaving unfinished tasks for tomorrow was no failure to him, but an honest [...] for his own life.

Write the missing word:

Activity 3: Everyday Expressions in Context

Goal: Understand two useful expressions used in the episode to talk about work pressure and personal health. Listen to each clip and choose the best meaning.

6. Listen from [01:35]. Patrick says: The shop owner warned him that the turnaround (tempo de entrega) was unreasonable, but Julian laughed it off to protect his dependable image.

What does to laugh something off mean in this situation?

a) To tell a funny story to make the shop owner smile.

b) To dismiss a serious problem or warning as if it were not important.

c) To laugh loudly because someone told a joke.

Write your choice (a, b, or c):

7. Listen from [07:22]. Patrick says: True self-respect means honoring your limits instead of running yourself into the ground.

What does to run yourself into the ground mean?

a) To work so hard that you make yourself completely exhausted and sick.

b) To drop heavy workshop tools on the floor by accident.

c) To walk out into the evening quickly without looking back.

Write your choice (a, b, or c):

Activity 4: Speaking Practice with Transfer

Goal: Practice speaking with a clear, steady rhythm using a key sentence from the episode, and then express your own personal boundary in English.

8. Listen from [03:52].

Sentence: Admitting our limits is honesty, not failure.

Suggested practice grouping:

Admitting our limits / is honesty, / not failure.

Step A: Listen from [03:52] and repeat the sentence aloud after Patrick two times. Focus on keeping a calm and steady pace, pausing slightly before not failure.

Step B: Now talk about your own life, studies, or work. Complete the sentence starter below and speak your full sentence out loud.

Sentence starter:

For me, admitting that I cannot [action or task] is [positive word or idea], not failure.

Checklist for your spoken sentence:

- Did you name a specific task or situation where you need to say no or stop?
- Did you choose a positive word, such as honesty, wisdom, self-care, or healthy?
- Did you say your full sentence aloud in English with confidence?

Write your sentence here:

Answer key

1. Antacids and caffeine pills.

Explanation: Julian spent forty-five dollars at the corner chemist on antacids and caffeine pills to silence his stomach ache and force himself to work all night.

2. A metal guide slipped and ruined two hundred catalogs. Julian secretly spent four hundred and eighty dollars of his own savings to buy replacement paper before sunrise.

Acceptable alternative: He ruined 200 catalogs and used 480 dollars of his personal savings to order new paper secretly.

3. He offered two regular daytime shifts to finish the job, but he firmly refused to work another night.

Acceptable alternative: He offered daytime shifts and refused to work overnight.

4. failure

Explanation: Patrick told Julian that recognizing personal limits is an act of honesty, not a failure.

5. respect

Explanation: Julian understood that leaving work at five o clock showed an honest respect for his own life.

6. b

Explanation: To laugh something off means to treat a serious warning, risk, or difficulty lightly so other people do not worry.

7. a

Explanation: To run yourself into the ground means to push yourself to severe physical and mental exhaustion by working too hard.

8. Possible answer: For me, admitting that I cannot answer work messages on Sunday is healthy self-care, not failure.

Checklist review:

• Specific task named: answering work messages on Sunday.

• Positive framing used: healthy self-care, not failure.

• Speaking check: say your sentence out loud twice with a calm and firm voice.