

# Episode 6: Alexia's Story Transcript



**Bree:** Glamorous industry parties, getting paid to attend A-list social events - this was the life that our guest, Alexia, used to have working in South Africa's television industry. From the outside, her life looked successful and enviable but the truth was that Alexia daydreamed of adventure beyond her concrete office walls.

In today's story, Alexia tells us about the time she grabbed her backpack and moved across the world to Thailand, a country she had never been to and a culture she knew nothing about to begin teaching English, a job that she had never done before! You'll hear Alexia talk about how this experience helped her to heal from her past unhappiness and taught her to approach life with self-compassion and courage. We're calling this story 'Far away and Fearless'.

Before we begin listening, let's talk about some of the vocabulary and expressions you'll hear Alexia say:

1. to seep into - Alexia uses this phrasal verb as a metaphor to describe how her unhappiness at work started to affect her personal life. To seep into literally means a slow flow of water leaking out of something like a cracked pipe. To seep into.
2. despondent - this adjective refers to feeling sad or without hope. For example, you could say, after many months of searching, I started to feel despondent about finding a new job.
3. a breaking point - a breaking point is an expression that we use to talk about a peak moment of stress or tension. For example, Alexia speaks about her breaking point as being the moment she decided to quit her job and move to Thailand.
4. point-blank - this expression is used as an adjective to describe the way that someone speaks to you as being very direct and without explanation. For example, you could say that 'the reporter asked the politician a question 'point-blank' without explanation.
5. comfort zone - this expression describes a situation where you feel safe or relaxed. On the other hand to step outside of your comfort zone means to take a risk and try something new. For example you could say, 'this job is challenging, it pushes me outside of my comfort zone each day!' If you need more help with understanding Alexia's story, remember for each episode, you can get a full vocabulary list and listening comprehension activities on our website [acingles.com](http://acingles.com), that's la letra a, letra c, ingles punto com. OK let's get into the story...

**Alexia:** The year was 2016, I think I was working in the entertainment industry for a television station in South Africa and I worked in the publicity department for a few years and then I worked in the marketing department for a few years and my job basically entailed trying to get publicity and word-of-mouth for the various TV shows that were on this platform. And from the outside looking in, it seemed really glamorous. I was constantly going to all these different industries and constantly socialising and seemed happy. It seemed like a good job. But the reality is that I was dealing with really big egos.

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I was dealing with insane deadlines. I was dealing with a lot of pressure to perform without the real recognition and it was just really, it was really impacting me. I was reaching the point where being unhappy at work was seeping into every aspect of my life.

A few people had mentioned to me that teaching English overseas was a good option for someone who was looking to travel and earn money at the same time which is kind of what I was looking to do. I hadn't traveled much before and I was really curious about the world and the possibilities of exploring. I ended up looking at Thailand. So looking and speaking to people who had been there before. Everyone had said to me that Thailand was a beautiful country, a peaceful country with good people. And the more I heard about this country the more I realised that it sounded like the place where I could heal from a lot of the things that had happened in my life that had reached a breaking point. So I remember sitting in my apartment the one day and looking at budgets and looking at this pamphlet to go and teach in Asia, in this country I had never been to and knew nothing about really. Some people just thought that I was point-blank crazy. Like how can you just leave everything and move to a place you've never been to before. the more people said that to me the more excited I got! And I just made the decision there and then and I said, 'I'm going to do this!'

I remember getting to the airport and getting my luggage and just thinking, 'this is crazy' and I remember leaving the airport and the very first thing that hit me was the humidity. I'm talking intense, insane humidity when the doors open at the airport and I walked out of there and I was like, 'dear Lord!'. I had no idea how humid and hot this country is.

I hadn't been exposed to Thai culture and Buddhism really. So coming to Thailand, it was just absolutely everything that you can imagine, I had to rewire in my brain. So the greetings for instance and learning how to 'wai' which is the Thai greeting which is like palms together and you bend a bit forward. Knowing to do that and knowing who to do that to and who not to do that to. So you greet people who are older than you that way but not people that are younger than you. You're not supposed to show anyone the bottom of your feet in any situation because in Buddhist culture it is seen as disrespectful because your feet are considered dirty. Avoiding touching the tops of people's heads because that is seen as disrespectful because they believe that enlightenment comes through your head basically and if you touch anyone's head you're interrupting the flow of energy. Not really being so bold in your opinions and statements in a public setting. It's very much a collective, a collective ideology, thinking about the collective before thinking about the individual. And coming from a country, where that isn't really something that's ingrained in the culture. It was really hard to be a little bit less selfish and think about other people more than myself I think.

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The thing that keeps on coming back to mind is just the acts of kindness that I experienced in Thailand. From complete strangers on a continuous basis. It would be anything from being on a really long bus ride and, all of a sudden, the old lady sitting next to you will give you something to eat and something to drink just because she thinks you look hungry. There was no expectation of what am I getting from this or, 'hey you owe me' it was just kindness as part of culture which I think was the biggest cultural shock for me.

It wasn't always like rainbows and butterflies. There were definitely moments of like, 'what am I doing? This is hard but I think it's important for us just to find opportunity wherever it is. And I think there is always opportunity, if you look hard enough. There's always opportunity to learn and grow but you've got to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

I remember when I moved to my placement town. It was the town of Tak, which was basically 80 km from the border of Myanmar, up in the north of Thailand, up in the mountains. It was a really small town and when I first moved there I was a little bit depressed because I had to leave my previous placement and I had to leave my friends so I was a little bit sad and working through this process. I remember moving to my apartment and I had the river the Ping River right across the road for me and I would go and sit there at sunset whenever I could with a book or a notepad and a pen and really just try and really heal. And just try and kind of be grateful for what my life had become.

Once I had kind of settled in I found this really beautiful National Park that wasn't too far away and I would jump on my bike on the weekends, whenever I had a free moment, and would ride to this national park and would do a short little hike up to the top of this waterfall and I had this spot which was always quiet by this really really beautiful little waterfall, little cascade, and I would just sit there in nature and just be so happy, so happy and so content with what I had in my life and I did not have much. I mean I went from this really flashy seeming job earning much more money back in South Africa than I was in Thailand. Materially speaking I had a lot more in South Africa but in Thailand kind of letting go of all of those materialistic things and really living such a basic life. I was so so happy and often sitting there at the waterfall I would often think to myself, 'wow this is what life is supposed to be.'

I'm currently living in Barcelona and very happy with the life that I've established for myself here. I'm currently teaching English. But if I'm honest with myself there are things that I've wanted to pursue for so many years that maybe I thought, you know, that I'm not talented enough or not good enough to do. So I'm trying to find the time and the patience with myself to maybe develop some story ideas to do some writing. I'm focusing more on poetry which is a big love of mine and maybe just trying to push myself into... I don't know exploring these aspects of myself and doing things like this podcast which is very much out of my comfort zone!

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But just this continuous thing of like, 'Hey! This fearless girl that lived in Thailand and did all these crazy things and travelled around Southeast Asia on her own with a backpack'.... Everyday we should be trying to do something that helps us grow. So I think that's where I'm at at the moment, just taking a little look at my life, at the moment and seeing if it's time to push some boundaries again.

**Bree:** That's all for today! Si te ha gustado la historia de Alexia y quieres seguir escuchando más episodios de nuestro podcast, puedes visitar nuestra pagina web, [acingles.com](http://acingles.com) donde tendrás todos los episodios de Into the Story. También encontrarás algunas actividades y materiales de cada episodio para ayudarte mejorar tu inglés. Thank you for listening, until next time we hope you have a good time, or at least, a good story to tell.