

Grasp the nettle!

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“Nettle” (ortiga) you may know. If you touch, hold or grasp a nettle, you will get a “nettle rash” or a “sting” (picadura de ortiga). Not advised!

An important use of nettle is in an idiom: to “grasp the nettle”. It means to directly deal with a difficult problem, however tough it may be. Consider these:

- May, the British Prime Minister, should grasp the nettle (...debería agarrar el toro por los cuernos...) and renegotiate some of the Brexit terms. So to grasp the nettle means tackle (enfrentar) the issues or problems.
- Mr. Sanchez should grasp the nettle and call an election.

A person can also “be nettled” by something or somebody. This means that they are troubled or irritated. “Nettle” is also a verb, similar to “irritar”. Some examples as an adjective and verb:

- The Spanish people are somewhat nettled (molestada/irritada) by Mr. Sanchez’s failure to pass the 2019 budget.
- Mr. Morales nettled Mr. Podemos by calling him a communist.

So, in life, we often have to grasp the nettle and we are sometimes nettled by others, or we nettle others.