

TEXT 4 WHO KNOWS YOU BETTER? YOUR FAMILY, YOUR FRIENDS?

Taken from:

Vacek, J. Hendy, D. *Analýza odborného anglického textu*. Brno: MU, 2006. ISBN 80-210-3967-1

Pre-reading questions

1. *What types of relationships could you talk about?*
2. *What makes a happy relationship? What does the happiness depend on?*
3. *How would you define a friend?*

It would obviously seem a fairy-tale like story if we made out that all young people share a single ambition – to meet a loving partner, get married, have children, and live happily ever after.

The image of a traditional family, where the husband goes to work every morning while his wife stays home taking care of their children, is dead and gone for ever. Without the employment of the wife, the Czech family income would suffer in most cases. At the same time, this does not necessarily have to bring happiness to the family life automatically, though. With greater numbers of divorces, the number of children growing up in single-parent families has notably increased recently.

Apart from that, stepfamilies have also become quite common because of remarriages. The relationships there are mostly affected by the ability of the stepchildren and stepparents to get along and communicate successfully.

Nowadays, a growing number of young people decide to live together without getting married. They argue they do not need a formal wedding ceremony, nor a wedding certificate or wedding reception as a prerequisite for a happy relationship. Besides, there is very little disapproval of living together in Czech society today, contrasted with the past, and, what is more, the government provides single mothers with various social benefits and services. Such cohabitation of unmarried couples has also become very popular among middle-aged and even older people as well, something which would have been unbelievable, e.g. in Czech villages several decades ago.

Our recent study shows that today's young people in their relationships appreciate trust, mutual respect and understanding, tolerance, helpfulness, and the ability to put oneself out for the partner. They also indicate condemnation for rude behaviour between the partners, home violence, and, maybe a bit surprisingly, marital infidelity. It turns out they are more likely to be attracted by partners who are similar to them and their beliefs, rather than by somebody who is quite different from them. Among other findings, the research showed that young people greatly value growing up in a happy family.

It goes without saying that favourable relationships between children and their parents immensely affect their adult behaviour afterwards. Not less important are the children's relationships with their siblings, as well as with foster parents, stepparents, stepbrothers, stepsisters, etc. The place in the family is a strong factor in developing a child's personality, and can have a big influence on the rest of his/her life.

Children who receive little attention from their parents tend to be emotionally and socially impaired. Besides, they may be sullen and inarticulate, have few hobbies, interests or close friends. They spend hours in front of the television watching videos or playing computer games, and the rest of their free time simply hanging around in gangs on street corners, complaining that they have nothing to do and often making a nuisance of themselves. Drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and crime are major preoccupations, as well as fashion and sex are often their only topics of conversation.

Most parents discourage mindless watching of television and take a much greater interest in what their children are doing, actively encouraging and facilitating their hobbies and interests wherever possible thus making for a happy or healthy childhood. Parents take an active interest in their children's education and encourage them to do well at school. Also, they accept that their children's success or failure as learners is as much their responsibility as it is the school's.

For a child it is better to be born into a family where the relationships are good, to a family which values education and academic achievement, mutual respect, and a positive attitude towards life, where the atmosphere is cheerful and friendly, to a family which contributes to the healthy development of a wanted offspring.

Unfortunately, nobody can guarantee a child being born with a silver spoon in their mouth.

After-reading questions

Scan the text and answer the following questions:

1. Which traits in a partner do today's young people prefer in their relationships?
2. How could you characterize children who receive little attention from their parents?

Match the definitions with the following expressions:

encourage, offspring, cohabit, marriage certificate, a thing of the past, helpful

- the young of an animal, (humorous or formal) a person's children
- willing to help, or useful
- something which no longer happens
- to talk or behave in a way that gives someone confidence to do something
- if two people, especially a man and woman who are not married, cohabit, they live together and have a sexual relationship
- document that shows that two people are legally married