

THE BEST OF FRIENDS

The evidence for harmony in the family may not be obvious in some households. But it seems that four out of five young people now get on with their parents, which is the opposite of the popularly-held image of sullen teenagers locked in their room after endless family rows. An important new study into teenage attitudes surprisingly reveals that their family life is more harmonious than it has ever been in the past: more than half of 13 to 18-year-olds get on with their brothers. Eighty-five per cent of 13 to 18-year-olds agree with the statement "I'm happy with my family life," while a majority said their lives were 'happy', 'fun' and 'carefree'. Only one in ten said that they definitely did not get on with their parents.

"We were surprised by just how positive today's young people seem to be about their families," said one member of the research team. "There're expected to be rebellious and selfish but actually they have other things on their minds; they want a car and material goods, and they worry about whether school is serving them well. There's more negotiation and discussion between parents and children, and children expect to participate in the family decision-making process. They don't want to rock the boat."

So it seems that this generation of parents is much more likely than parents of 30 years ago to treat their children as friends rather than subordinates. There are actual statements to back this up. "My parents are happy to discuss things with me and make compromises," says 17-year-old Daniel Lazall. T always tell them when I'm going out climbing, or which girl I'm going out with. As long as they know what I'm doing, they are fine with it."

Susan Crome, who is now 21, agrees. "Looking back on the last ten years, there was a lot of what you could call negotiation... or you might have called it bribery. But as long as I'd done all my housework, I could go out on a Saturday night. But I think my grandparents were a lot stricter with their children." But maybe this positive view of family life should not be unexpected. It is possible that ideas of adolescence being a difficult time are not rooted in real facts. A psychologist comments, "Our surprise that teenagers say they get along well with their parents comes because of a brief period in our social history when teenagers were identified as different beings. But the idea of rebelling and breaking away from their parents really only happened during that one time in the 1960s when everyone rebelled. The normal situation throughout history has been a smooth transition from helping out with the family business to taking it over."

"The present generation has grown up in a period of economic growth, and as a result teenagers appear to believe much more in individualism and self-reliance than in the past. That has contributed to their confidence in the fairness of life, and thus to a general peace within the family unit."

But is life really fair? Nine out of ten young people think 'if you work hard enough, you will get just rewards.' However, some recognized that this was not actually inevitable - and not always fair. "If you have fewer opportunities and live in an inner city," one 15-year-old boy told researchers, "you've got to work 110 per cent. Otherwise you can work 50 per cent and get away with it."

But greater family stability has to be a good place for young people to start out in life, and the findings of the study supports this. In spite of some gloomy forecasts about the decline of the family, the future looks good!

1) What is important about the study into teenage attitude?

- 2) **It confirms previous findings.**
- 3) **It gives actual figures for its results.**
- 4) **It shows that most teenagers do not get on with their parents.**
- 5) **It identifies unexpected facts about family relationships.**

2) What is surprising about young people today, according to the research team?

- 1) They worry about being rebellious.
- 2) They think that education is important.
- 3) They negotiate with their parents.
- 4) They discuss things with their families.

3) According to the results of the survey, parents today differ from their own parents because they

- 1) listen to what their children say.
- 2) talk to their children more than before.
- 3) respect their children more as equals.
- 4) always compromise with their children.

4) The writer says that 'the positive view of family life should not be unexpected' because

- 1) a happy family is the normal situation.
- 2) this view comes from a specific time in the past.
- 3) parents allow children a lot of freedom nowadays.
- 4) children can be bribed to behave well.

5) What does underlined 'that' refer to?

- 1) a period of economic growth
- 2) a belief in individualism and self-reliance
- 3) an attitude held only in the past
- 4) a confidence in the fairness of life

6) What do some young people believe about life today?

- 1) It always gives everyone a fair chance.
- 2) Making money is the most important goal.
- 3) Some people have to work longer than others.
- 4) Not everyone have equal opportunities.

7) The purpose of the article is to

- 1) help people improve family relationships.
- 2) show young people how to choose a career.
- 3) demonstrate that popular ideas about relationships may be false.
- 4) suggest ways of educating children in developing relationship