Reading: CAE Part 2

Gapped text

1 When you are upset or have a problem, who do you turn to first for help and advice? Why?

Has this always been the case?

2 You are going to read a magazine article about the relationship between mothers and their sons. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs **A–G** the one which fits each gap (**1–6**). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

Don't forget!

- Read the whole of the base text and all the paragraphs before you start to make any choices.
- Underline words or phrases which show links between base text and missing paragraphs. Some parts of this base text have already been underlined to help you.
- Check your answers by reading the whole article through again to ensure that it makes sense. Check that the extra paragraph does not fit into any of the gaps.

MOTHERHOOD'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

One night, not so long ago, just as I was drifting off to sleep, the phone rang. It was my 19-year-old son, who is at university in Edinburgh, calling to say that he had broken up with his girlfriend at midnight and he had been wandering around the city ever since, not knowing what to do. I told him to catch the first train home. He arrived looking a wreck, but after a good sleep and some home cooking, he began to feel his old self again.

1 _____

Girls I knew then were fairly open with their mothers, but none of my male contemporaries would ever have admitted asking their mothers for advice. Despite all our talk about how important it was for men to let down their defences and learn how to express their feelings, most of us still secretly felt that any man who depended on his mother too much was a bit of a mummy's boy.

2 _____

But things don't work that way any more. In a world of short-term contracts, downsizing and redundancy, even the most promising and ambitious of our children will go through many career highs and lows during their twenties; and whenever they hit those depths, many of them will return to the nest. A typical son will continue to be at least partly dependent on his mother well past the age of 18.

3 _____

They're also better able to see through the mask of apparent self-confidence. When my boy was growing up, he always maintained a fairly invincible front. His early imaginary play involved sieges, ambushes and surprise attacks. His starting point, though, was always a danger against which he needed to defend himself. He used the games to convince himself that he could prevail.

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In his teens, he used many of these same tricks to keep me at bay. If I drove him anywhere to meet his friends, he insisted I drop him off out of sight of where they were waiting. There were girlfriends I never met, and phone conversations which were all in code. But occasionally, a confidential mood would come over him and he would tell me whatever happened to be on his mind.

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'And there's another important change,' she adds. 'Most of us took pains to reassure our sons that it was okay for them to show physical affection or cry when they were upset. If our boys are not so anxious now about showing their emotions, our efforts in this area have not been in vain.' This seems to be backed up by research, which shows that boys call their mothers on their mobile phones more than anyone else.

6 _____

What I didn't anticipate was for the same thing to happen with my son. I assumed I would lose him, just like all the experts said. It may be that they were wrong all along – that sons have always confided in their mothers – and just made sure that no one else knew. Have I stumbled on motherhood's best-kept secret? Even if I have, it doesn't diminish my sense of wonder. It's still like getting a present you never expected.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

A These days, however, mothers can expect to be relied on almost indefinitely for the type of advice that calls on our experience of the outside world. A generation ago, it was accepted that sons would eventually leave their mothers to join the world of men and work. Mothers put their 18 years in and then opened the door to allow their sons to move into jobs for life.

B Friends told me that they, too, were getting the same volume of confidences. Celia Pyper says this is normal behaviour for today's boys: 'Our sons will tell us more than their fathers told their mothers, because we have brought them up to do so. Our norm has been to empathize with our children when they tell us about their actions or feelings, whereas the previous generation tended to be shocked.'

C Many of my friends are surprised at this reluctance of their 20-something sons to break away. But according to psychotherapist Celia Pyper, the mother–son intimacy is nothing new. 'Mums have always been easier to talk to,' she observes. 'They're more cuddly than their fathers, and sons realize early on that their mothers are more accepting of human frailty.'

D They are not in any doubt about how to respond to the situation. As one friend said of her rather reticent son: 'My job is to give my son courage.' And whilst we might welcome the chance to see more of our children, one does have the feeling that there is something anti-natural in all this.

E 'But don't assume that girls are any tougher than boys,' says Celia Pyper. 'Daughters need their mothers too.' Certainly, I know how much my own daughters need me. But this continuing mother–daughter bond is something I expected.

F The next afternoon he told me what had happened. Then he told me more. And more. And even more. A moment arrived when I couldn't help asking myself, should I be hearing all of this? It wasn't that I was shocked. He reminded me of myself in my own student years, but with one important difference – I would never ever have confided in my parents this way.

G As he got older and had to ride to school on a bus with other children, all too often there were situations in which he didn't. I had to teach him how to put up new defences so that his rougher classmates would not see his weaknesses.

Reacting to the text

To what extent have parent–children relationships changed in recent decades in your own country? Is the relationship very different for sons and daughters?

Vocabulary 1: Verb + Noun collocations

1 Find and circle the following nouns in the base text of the article on page 62. Write them in your vocabulary notebook, together with the verb which is used with each one. Record any adjectives which are used as well.

Example: *maintain a fairly invincible front*

front	feelings	pains
affection	emotions	

2 Find and circle the following phrasal verbs in the base text and with your partner, discuss their meaning in context.

drift off to	break up with	let down
go through	see through	

Record the verbs in your notebook, together with the noun which follows each one.

LIVEWORKSHEETS