

FAMILY

Warm-up

- 1) What is the best environment to raise a family in (e.g. apartment, village, etc)?
- 2) What was the worst thing you did as a child? Did you get caught?
- 3) Is there anything funny or different about your family?
- 4) Does someone in your family maintain a family tree? How far back can you trace your family history?

Key Vocabulary in Context

The *nuclear family* is the traditional family structure in the West. This term, originating in the 1950s, describes families consisting of a father, a mother, and their **offspring**. Under this **conventional** structure, the family is seen as the basic unit in society; the father functions as the **breadwinner** and the mother as the **homemaker**. Nowadays, alternative family types are becoming more common, such as single-parent families, families headed by same-sex parents, and extended families where families live with their **kin**, which may include several generations. Extended families are less common in North America, where it is not uncommon to place grandparents in retirement homes.

A Social Trends survey in 2009 reported radical changes in child **rearing** and marriage practices in the United Kingdom. Figures showed that while 30 percent of women under thirty had given birth by the age of 25, only 24 percent had married. This marked the first time childbirth had become the first major **milestone** in adult life, ahead of marriage. In 1971 in the U.K, 3/4 of women were married by the age of 25 and half were mothers.

Judging by the high rates of divorce and the increasing number of children born out of **wedlock**, it would appear that the family as an **institution** is **in decline**. American sociologist Stephanie Coontz believes so too, but for different reasons. Coontz points out that marriages are no longer arranged for political or economic reasons, and children are no longer required to contribute to the family income. Marriages nowadays are founded on love. She believes this shift towards love, emotional fulfillment, and free choice has actually weakened the family by making it optional and **fragile**.

Follow-up Questions

- 1) What is a nuclear family?
- 2) **True or False:** extended families are replacing nuclear families in North America.
- 3) How has marriage and raising children changed in the U.K. since 1971?
- 4) Why does Stephanie Coontz believe the institution of the family has weakened?
- 5) Do you agree or disagree with the ideas in the article?

Match the words with their meaning as used in the article.

1. offspring	a. a very important stage in the development of sth
2. conventional	b. traditional
3. breadwinner	c. bring up and care for a child until it is fully grown
4. homemaker	d. the income-earner of a family
5. kin	e. breakable; delicate; weak
6. rear (verb)	f. failing; dying
7. milestone	g. the state of being married
8. wedlock	h. children
9. institution	i. a person who takes care of the house and family
10. in decline	j. your family or your relatives
11. fragile	k. a custom or system that has existed for a long time

Master the language: Connect the below ideas to make a sentence. (note: good as homework)

government / crush / uprising	e.g. The government plans to crush the uprising.
care / offspring	
conventionally / breadwinner	
homemaker / rear	
kin / gifts	
milestone / life	
born / wedlock	

institution / in decline	
relationship / fragile	

Define: What is the appropriate English term for ...

your sister's daughter? _____

your sister's son? _____

your grandmother's mother? _____

your brothers and sisters? _____

your wife's brother? _____

the son of your mother's new husband? _____

What do you do?

What should you do when...

- your six year-old child asks where babies come from.
- your child fails his English test.
- your 13-year old gets a tattoo on his back of a tarantula.
- your child won't eat his/her vegetables at dinner.
- your 12-year old daughter says she's dating a high school student.
- your child won't stop screaming because you won't buy him candy in the grocery store.
- your child tells you that he or she is gay.
- your marriage becomes stale.
- your child graduates university.

Discussion Questions

- 1) **Violence:** Is it ever okay to hit a child? What is the custom or law in your country?
- 2) Due to population growth and environmental problems, should families have fewer kids?
- 3) What is the ideal number of children to have?
- 4) Is it better for a child to have one parent or two homosexual parents?
- 5) Is it tradition in your culture for women to adopt their husband's last name? Is this fair?

- 6) In your country, are mothers allowed maternity leave (from work)? What about paternity leave for fathers?
- 7) What is a *mid-life crisis*? How can one be avoided?
- 8) When are children old enough to move out of the house?