

Topics: Family by Adrian Tennant

LEVEL: Intermediate +
AGE: Teenagers / Adults
TIME NEEDED: 90 minutes + project
LANGUAGE FOCUS: Modal verbs,
 understanding vocabulary in context,
 topic words

LEAD-IN

Ask students to look at the wordsearch and try to find the ten words connected to family. It might be a good idea to encourage students to work in pairs. Make sure they know that the words can be in any direction including backwards and diagonally. Check the answers together. You could present the completed wordsearch on an overhead projector (OHP) to make it easier to check.

Key _____

G	L	M	U	N	P	Q	U	E	N	D	S
G	R	A	N	D	P	A	R	E	N	T	S
K	F	T	C	A	I	N	R	A	M	T	I
D	E	L	L	E	W	K	B	I	L	J	S
I	N	K	E	Y	C	S	S	N	I	W	T
V	I	N	X	R	U	A	A	J	I	L	E
S	N	E	P	H	E	W	B	F	U	H	R
O	L	I	X	B	A	M	E	Y	W	F	U
M	A	W	Q	E	E	U	Z	P	N	R	E
V	W	U	R	L	J	X	N	B	P	K	O
M	S	T	E	P	B	R	O	T	H	E	R

FIRST SENTENCES

Explain to the students that they are going to read four sentences that are the first lines of four different letters to an agony aunt (someone in a newspaper or magazine who tries to help people with their problems). First, check to see if your students know what an agony aunt is, then get them to read the sentences. They should then discuss in pairs what they think the problem is in each situation. Elicit ideas from students as a whole class discussion. Don't confirm whether their ideas are correct yet.

READING: LETTERS

Ask students to read through the letters and see if their ideas were correct. While they are doing this, they should also try to complete each letter with the correct first line (if you want, you can give a short time limit, i.e. two minutes). Tell them they don't need to understand every word of the letters. Get students to check their answers in pairs before checking as a class. Remember to discuss their predictions from the previous stage.

Key a _____

1. b; 2. d; 3. a; 4. c

Next, ask students to read the four comprehension questions and answer each one. Again, get pairs to check their answers together before checking as a class.

Key b _____

1. stepmum and stepdaughter; 2. that they can help her look after her two children; 3. not very long as they have only recently met each other; 4. 25

After this, ask the students to read through the two replies and match each one to the correct letter. Get them to check their answers in pairs, check as a class.

Key _____

A. 3; B. 1

WORKING WITH THE LANGUAGE

Focus 1: Understanding meaning

Ask students to answer the five questions in pairs. Monitor and help where necessary before checking as a class.

Key _____

1. living with her in-laws; 2. seeing her (identical) twin sister; 3. her daughter's pregnancy; 4. the opportunity; 5. having to share with a brother or sister

Focus 2: Language use

Ask students to look back at the letters and replies and circle the modal verbs (check they know what these are). Then get them to read the sentences with the modals in and work out the function of each one. Get students to check their answers in pairs before checking as a class.

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Key

1. *can / should*; 2. *have to*; 3. *can*; 4. *might*; 5. *can*;
6. *must (be) / (have)*

WORKING WITH VOCABULARY

Focus 1: Meaning

Ask students to look back at the letters and replies and find words that match the definitions. Encourage them to work in pairs and discuss their ideas as they look at the texts. Check the answers as a class.

Key

1. *brat*; 2. *get on*; 3. *strict*; 4. *bump into*; 5. *identical*;
6. *neglect*; 7. *come to terms with*; 8. *turned on its head*;
9. *get used to*

Focus 2: Topic-related words

Next, ask students to look back at the letters and responses and circle all the words connected to family members. Then, ask students to work in pairs and complete the table. Encourage students to add any other family words they know. Check the answers as a class.

Key

male	female	either / both
<i>father / dad</i>	<i>mother / mum</i>	<i>parent(s)</i>
<i>stepdad</i>	<i>stepmum</i>	–
<i>son</i>	<i>daughter</i>	<i>child(ren) / kid / baby</i>
<i>stepson</i>	<i>stepdaughter</i>	<i>stepchild(ren)</i>
<i>brother</i>	<i>sister</i>	<i>sibling(s) / only child</i>
<i>twin brother</i>	<i>twin sister</i>	<i>twin(s)</i>
<i>stepbrother</i>	<i>stepsister</i>	–
<i>husband</i>	<i>wife</i>	<i>spouse</i>
<i>father-in-law</i>	<i>mother-in-law</i>	<i>in-laws</i>
<i>grandfather</i>	<i>grandmother</i>	<i>grandparent(s)</i>
<i>uncle</i>	<i>aunt</i>	–
<i>nephew</i>	<i>niece</i>	–
–	–	<i>cousin(s)</i>

LISTENING

Ask students to listen to a short extract from a radio show and decide which of the letters from the Reading: Letters exercise it is most closely related to.

Transcript:

Host: OK, so let's go to our next caller ...
Trudy: Hi, my name's Trudy and I'm 35 years old.
Host: And what's your story, Trudy?
Trudy: Well, recently I had the shock of my life. I've always thought I was an only child but it turns out I have a brother.
Host: Really? And how did you find this out?
Trudy: I was at home watching TV when the phone rang. It was a man and he said he was my brother. Of course, I didn't believe him but then he seemed to know a lot about my parents.
Host: So what did you do?
Trudy: Well, we arranged to meet and it turns out that he is my older brother. Apparently, he was adopted as my mother was only 15 when she had him.
Host: Wow!
Trudy: I know. His name's Kieran and he's lovely. We've met a few times and we really get on. But now I've got to tell my family.
Host: Your family?
Trudy: Yes, my husband and son - they don't know about him yet.
Host: Well, good luck and thank you for sharing your story with us.

Key

letter 3

Ask students to read letter 3 and circle any differences between that and the radio show. Put students in pairs and ask them to discuss their answers together. Play the recording again, if necessary. Check the answers as a class.

Key

brother / sister; he phoned her at home / she bumped into her; he is older than her / they are the same age (twins); he / she was adopted; his name is Kieran / her name is Karen; they get on very well / don't know if they will get on

SPEAKING

Put students in small groups and ask them to discuss the advice that they would give to the other two letters that Betty didn't reply to. Monitor and help where necessary. Afterwards, ask a few groups to report back on their suggestions.

PROJECT

Ask students to carry out the project for homework and follow it up in the next lesson.

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LEAD-IN

Can you find ten words connected to family in the wordsearch? Be careful! The words appear in all directions.

G	L	M	U	N	P	Q	U	E	N	D	S
G	R	A	N	D	P	A	R	E	N	T	S
K	F	T	C	A	I	N	R	A	M	T	I
D	E	L	L	E	W	K	B	I	L	J	S
I	N	K	E	Y	C	S	S	N	I	W	T
V	I	N	X	R	U	A	A	J	I	L	E
S	N	E	P	H	E	W	B	F	U	H	R
O	L	I	X	B	A	M	E	Y	W	F	U
M	A	W	Q	E	E	U	Z	P	N	R	E
V	W	U	R	L	J	X	N	B	P	K	O
M	S	T	E	P	B	R	O	T	H	E	R

FIRST SENTENCES

Read these sentences. What do you think the problem is in each situation?

a. Recently, I had the shock of my life!

b. Last year, my mother got married again.

c. I'm 41 years old and I'm going to be a grandmother!

d. I'm living with my in-laws and we don't always get on.

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READING: LETTERS

- a. Read the letters sent to an agony aunt and fill in the gaps with the correct first sentences (a-d) from the previous exercise.

1. Dear Betty,

My new dad is called Bryan. I know he's actually my stepdad but that's okay. He already had two kids – Carly and Tony – so now I have a stepsister and a stepbrother. The problem is that Tony is a brat – he keeps taking my things. He never asks me if he can borrow things and then he loses or breaks them. I've tried talking to my mum and Bryan but they tell me I have to learn to share. What can I do?

Aaron

2. Dear Betty,

I know living with my husband's family might sound strange but in my culture it's quite normal. Sometimes it's great because I have two children and his parents can help me look after them. The problem is that my mother-in-law doesn't agree with the way I'm bringing my children up. She says I'm not strict enough, so sometimes we argue. What can I do?

Safia

Dear Betty



3. Dear Betty,

I never knew my real parents. I was adopted and grew up in a really loving home but knew nothing about my original family. So, imagine my surprise when I bumped into someone who looked exactly like me! It was like looking in a mirror. It turned out I had an identical twin sister, Karen. But now I'm not sure what to do. Should we try to get to know each other more? What if we don't get on? What do you think I should do?

Trudy

4. Dear Betty,

I know it sounds shocking – I couldn't believe it when I heard the news, especially as my daughter is only 16. When I tell people, they look at me as though I'm to blame – that maybe I neglected my daughter which is why she became pregnant – but the truth is we're a loving family and I just don't understand what went wrong. I've come to terms with it now but how do I make other people realize that I'm not a bad mother?

Barbara

- a. Read the letters again and answer these questions.

1. What is the relationship between Aaron's mum and Carly?
2. What is one thing that Safia likes about living with her in-laws?
3. How long has Trudy known her sister?
4. How old was Barbara when she had her daughter?

- a. Here are two replies from Betty that offer advice. Match the replies to the correct letters.

A. I can't imagine how you must have felt and I really do understand that it must be very difficult for you – your life has been turned on its head. But this is an opportunity you can't afford to miss. If you don't take it, you might regret it for the rest of your life. Take things slowly at first. After all, you've got a lot to find out about each other.

B. I know it must be difficult for you but I wonder if the other children are also finding it hard? How old are they? Are you the oldest? It seems as if you get on quite well with your stepdad, so at least that's not a problem. And your mum might be right – if you've never had a brother or sister before then it's something you might just have to learn to get used to.

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WORKING WITH THE LANGUAGE

Focus 1: Understanding meaning

Answer these questions.

1. In letter 2, what does the word *it's* refer to in the phrase *it's quite normal*?
2. In letter 3, what does the word *it* refer to in the phrase *It was like looking in a mirror*?
3. In letter 4, what does the word *it* refer to in the phrase *I've come to terms with it now ...*?
4. In reply A, what does the word *it* refer to in the phrase *If you don't take it ...*?
5. In reply B, what does the word *it's* refer to in the phrase *... then it's something you might just have to learn to get used to*?

Focus 2: Language use

Look back at the letters and circle all the modal verbs you can find. Which modals are used for ...

1. ... asking for and giving advice?
2. ... talking about necessity?
3. ... asking for permission?
4. ... talking about possibilities?
5. ... talking about ability?
6. ... talking about something that is true or likely?

WORKING WITH VOCABULARY

Focus 1: Meaning

Find words and phrases in the letters and replies that match the definitions below.

1. an annoying child who behaves badly
2. to be friends with someone (two words)
3. having rules that must be obeyed / followed
4. to meet someone unexpectedly (two words)
5. exactly the same
6. to fail to look after someone when you are responsible for them
7. to accept something that was difficult to understand or accept (four words)
8. completely changed suddenly (four words)
9. become familiar with something new (three words)

Focus 2: Topic-related words

Look back at the letters and replies and find other family words to complete the table.

male	female	either / both
dad	mum	parents

Can you think of more family words? Write them into the table.

LISTENING

Listen to the radio show and answer the questions.

- Which letter is it most closely related to?
- What are the differences between the letter to the agony aunt and the radio show?

SPEAKING

Look back at the two letters that Betty didn't respond to. In groups, discuss the advice you would give to the two people. Do you agree with each other?

PROJECT

Find an agony aunt column in a newspaper, magazine or online. What kinds of problems do people have? Are there any letters about family problems? Bring some to the next class to discuss with the other students.