

The baby's a bit clingy at the moment. • She's a typical stropky teenager. • He's had a few scrapes with the police. • He just sits in his room and reads angst-filled books. • Her dad's a bit over-protective. • You're grounded! • Don't be so earnest about everything. Lighten up a bit! • I just wanted to melt away into the background. • Don't you feel the teeny-weeniest bit guilty? • No wonder she hasn't got any friends! • I've got absolutely no desire to have kids. • There's no sign of him getting a job. • My granddad's a bit stuck in his ways. • My gran's getting a bit doddery now. • It's the fastest-growing demographic group. • They just threw him on the scrap-heap. • Honestly, I was livid.

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Youth and experience

Conversation

1 Role play

Imagine you have a colleague at work and you have heard she is pregnant. Think about how you would bring up the subject when you see her next. Think of five questions you might ask her. Write them down and try to remember them.

With a partner, role-play the conversation you think you would have.

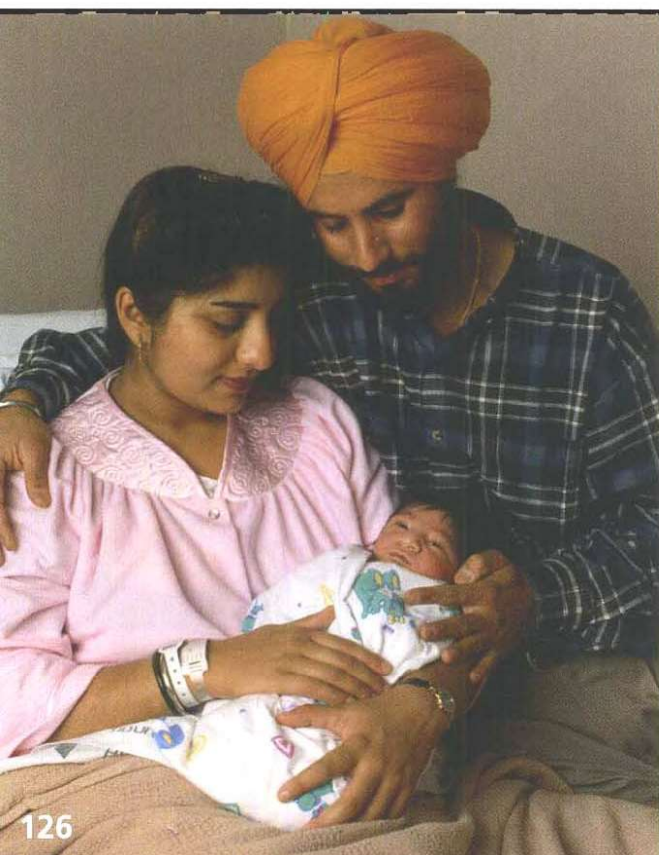
Now imagine you meet your colleague for the first time after she's given birth. She is with her baby. What would you say? Think of five questions you might ask.

With your partner, role-play the conversation you think you would have.

2 Listening (1)

Listen to a conversation between a woman – May – and a colleague of hers – Esther – who has just recently had a baby. As you listen, take notes about the birth and the baby.

Compare what you heard with a partner.



3 Describing people at different ages

Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

| | | | |
|---------------|--------|-------------|----------|
| angst | chubby | gives in | shot up |
| authoritarian | clingy | handful | smothers |
| brat | got in | patronising | stropky |

- She's a real She's got bags of energy and she can really wear you out – especially when she throws one of her tantrums.
- She's a right spoilt She gets everything she wants and she gets away with murder sometimes.
- He's very at the moment. I can hardly put him down without him crying. It's really wearing.
- She just won't let go. She doesn't give him any space to breathe. She just him.
- Oh, he's so cute. Look at those lovely little cheeks.
- She can be really sometimes. She gets in a mood and then locks herself in her bedroom for hours on end.
- It's incredible! He's just over the last year. He's gone all thin and gangly, and his voice seems to have broken overnight.
- He's so soft. He just to her as soon as she makes a fuss.
- He's pretty wild, really. He's with the wrong crowd and he's had a few scrapes with the police.
- She's just really She talks to them like they were still two years old.
- He's going through a bit of a phase. You know, he's the typical -ridden teenager. It's all 'What's the point? We're all going to die anyway' at the moment.
- He's quite They've got a lot of really strict rules they have to stick to.

Which of the sentences above describe the following?

- a baby / toddler
- a teenager
- a parent

Look at the words in the box. Which of them might you use to talk about each of the three kinds of people above?

| | | | |
|---------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| cheeky | encouraging | puerile | sweet |
| crawl | out of control | rebellious | supportive |
| earnest | over-protective | snigger | teething |

Use some of the words above to tell a partner about any toddlers, teenagers and parents you know.

4 Listening (2)

You are going to listen to two conversations. While you listen, think about the following questions.

- Which language from Activity 3 would you use to describe the parents and toddler discussed in Conversation 1 and the father and son speaking in Conversation 2?
- Can you think of any other words to describe the people you heard about?

Discuss your answers with a partner.

5 Vocabulary focus

Match the verbs with the words they were used with in the conversations.

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. run | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. blue murder |
| 2. throw | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. him be |
| 3. scream | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. into the background |
| 4. melt away | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. circles round my brother |
| 5. leave | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. your mind to mush |
| 6. turn | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. himself on the floor |

Now match these verbs with the words they were used with in the conversations.

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7. answer back | <input type="checkbox"/> | g. people at face value |
| 8. show | <input type="checkbox"/> | h. authority |
| 9. take | <input type="checkbox"/> | i. a little more respect |
| 10. question | <input type="checkbox"/> | j. your anger |
| 11. challenge | <input type="checkbox"/> | k. the way that you did |
| 12. express | <input type="checkbox"/> | l. assumptions |

Listen again to check your answers.

6 Speaking

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

- How do you relate to people a lot younger or older than you?
- Have you ever been in a similar situation to the one described in the first conversation? What happened?
- What do you think is the best way to discipline children?
- Do you think it's good to bring children up to question authority?

7 No wonder

We often make comments starting with *No wonder* to mean 'In that case, it's not surprising that ...'. For example:

A: My brother always gives in to my nephew's every demand.

B: No wonder the kid's such a brat!

Write what you think was said to elicit each of these comments.

- No wonder their children are so fat!
- No wonder he hates his dad!
- No wonder she hasn't got any friends!
- No wonder he's so popular!
- No wonder she left him!
- No wonder it's taken you so long!
- No wonder I couldn't find them!
- No wonder it's not working!

Work in pairs. Student A – read out the things you wrote. Student B – respond with one of the *No wonder* comments.

8 Using grammar: Expressions with *no*

Complete the sentences with a noun from the box and the verb in brackets in the correct form. You also need to add a preposition in sentences 5–10.

| | | | | |
|--------|--------|-----------|-------|--------------|
| chance | desire | good | need | recollection |
| choice | excuse | intention | point | sign |

- Personally, I have no burning (get married)
- There's no to persuade him. He's not going to change his mind. (try)
- There's no me. I was just doing my job. (thank)
- It's no him. It just goes in one ear and out the other. (nag)
- There's no like that, however upset he was. (swear)
- I'm sorry, but I have absolutely no for what I said, because it's true. If they don't like it, that's their problem. (apologise)
- I have absolutely no that film, but Barry insists I saw it with him, so I must've done, I suppose. (see)
- There's no them ever a baby. (have)
- We did try IVF, but it didn't work out, so we had no but (adopt).
- The economy's been in a mess for a while now, and there's no things just yet. (pick up)

Now complete these sentences in ways that are true for you.

I've absolutely no desire ...

There's no point ...

There's no excuse ...

I've absolutely no doubt ...

Reading

1 Talking about elderly people

Make sure you understand the words and expressions in red. Tick the sentences that describe elderly people you know.

1. He's quite hard of hearing now.
2. She has to wear a hearing aid now.
3. She's getting on a bit now.
4. He's a bit stuck in his ways.
5. He's a bit of a bigot.
6. She can't really get around without her Zimmer frame.
7. Her memory's not what it used to be. She's going a bit senile.
8. He's getting a bit doddering now.
9. He's still very sprightly.
10. She had a stroke a few years ago and now she's paralysed down one side of her face.
11. She's doing really well, all things considered.
12. He's still got all his faculties. He's as sharp as he ever was.
13. His eyes aren't what they used to be.

Tell a partner which sentences you have ticked and who they describe.

2 Listening

You are going to listen to two friends – Mary and Roy – talking about their grandparents. As you listen, try to answer these questions.

1. What problems do Roy's grandparents have?
2. How does he get on with them? Why?
3. What are Mary's grandparents like?
4. How does she get on with them?

Discuss your answers with a partner. What do you think about their attitudes towards their grandparents and towards growing old?

Real English: the good old days

People talk about the good old days and say *Those were the days* about times in the past that they remember with affection. The implication is that things have gone downhill since! The expressions are also used sarcastically.

I remember the good old days when petrol was only 60p a gallon!

A: We used to be able to smoke wherever we wanted in here.

B: Those were the days, eh! How we miss you inflicting your stinking cigarette smoke on us all.

3 Before you read

You are going to read an article about elderly people in Britain. Complete the introduction with the words in the box.

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|--------------|----------|
| canvas | demographic | ratio | sharp |
| comprehensive | massively | respectively | suggests |
| contrasts | parallel | | |

Pensioners: the new generation

New research (1) that Britain's population may well be ageing even faster than had previously been believed. Life expectancy for both men and women has continued to rise. Average life expectancy at birth now stands at 81 for females and 76 for males. This (2) dramatically with 49 and 45 (3) at the turn of the last century. Indeed, the number of centenarians is expected to rise (4) over the next few decades due to a combination of medical advances, improved standards of living, better diet and more (5) care for the elderly.

Running (6) to these trends is a (7) fall in the birth rate, as women are tending to wait longer and longer before having children. One result of all this is that the (8) of people working to people who have retired is shrinking year on year, a fact that has serious implications for the social security system.

We were curious to see what today's pensioners make of being part of Britain's fastest-growing (9) group and thus set out to (10) opinion. Here's what six over-70s told us:

How similar does this situation sound to the one in your country?

4 While you read

Now read what the six people had to say. As you read, decide which – if any – of the people in the article you think each of these sentences describes.

1. sounds particularly livid.
2. seems to have almost given up on life.
3. comes across as being very considerate – perhaps a bit too considerate for his / her own good, in fact!
4. sounds like he's / she's looking at things through rose-tinted glasses a bit.
5. It sounds like is getting to reap the rewards of all his / her hard work earlier on in life.
6. seems to really be living it up.
7. seems to be more or less living on the breadline.
8. sounds all bitter and twisted to me.
9. comes across as being remarkably well-balanced.

Discuss what you have written with a partner. Explain why you agree or disagree with your partner's choices.

Edna

I'm 73 and I only stopped working last year. I've found retirement quite hard to cope with. It's only over the last year that I've come to see what a massive investment I'd made in my career – emotionally and psychologically. I spent nearly 50 years teaching and loved every minute of it and now I've stopped, I feel like I'm just biding my time till I go. I've tried applying for work as a supply teacher, but no-one will touch me because of my age. I don't like to make a big song and dance about the ageism thing, but it does get to me. There seems to be a total lack of appreciation of all the experience I've accrued. We're just thrown onto the scrap-heap and left to rot!

Harold

I'm sure you've heard about the power of the grey pound, haven't you? Well, I'm one of the beneficiaries of all that! I was always quite careful when I was working. I put a little by every week and built up quite a nice little nest egg for when I retired, and now I'm having the time of my life. We went cruising down the Nile last year and we're now thinking of having a Jacuzzi put into the bathroom. Well, you can't take it with you when you go, can you?

Rosie

I wouldn't want to be young today, I really wouldn't. Society's gone to the dogs, if you ask me. I'm glad I won't be around that much longer to have to witness it all. Now, back when I was young, in the good old days, we had respect for older people and we all had proper manners too. Nowadays, though, all that's gone out the window. It's all dog-eat-dog and Me Me Me today.

Dorothy

I've never felt as happy as I do now, it might surprise you to hear. My daughters and granddaughters all work, and it makes me ever so proud to see how well they're doing. They've been able to take advantage of all the opportunities my generation were denied. Because we're a close-knit bunch, and we all live within spitting distance of each other, I help out with my great-grandchildren. It's nice to feel needed – and it keeps me young at heart, being around the kids.

Callum

I'm doing as well as can be expected, I suppose. I moved into an old people's home a few years back – well, sheltered accommodation is what they call it, but it boils down to much the same thing – and I can't complain. I do have children of my own, but I wouldn't want to be a burden to them or impose myself on them, so I guess this will have to do. I do get slightly lonely sometimes though, especially now that my darling wife has gone.

Kelvin

I worked for forty years as an engineer, helping build this country's infrastructure, only to end up being sold down the river by the powers that be! I only get a pittance of a pension because the firm's pension fund collapsed the year I retired. They'd invested in some high-risk, high-return markets and lost pretty much everything. The government refused to bail them out, meaning I'm now left having to live on a shoestring budget. It really makes my blood boil when I think about how much I gave and what scant reward I get in return!

5 Vocabulary check: idioms

Complete the sentences with words from the article.

1. I don't want to make a big song and about it.
2. I was just thrown onto the and left to rot!
3. I managed to build up quite a nice little egg.
4. I'm having the time of my
5. Society has gone to the
6. That's all gone out the
7. We all live within distance of each other.
8. It helps keep me young at
9. I don't want to be a to my children.
10. They sold me down the
11. I'm having to live on a budget.
12. It really makes my blood

Which of these sentences do you think you're most likely to use? Which might the elderly people you know use? Why?

6 Speaking

Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. Do you agree with Rosie that society's going to the dogs? Why / why not?
2. Do you think ageism is much of a problem in your country? How do you feel about it?
3. Would you feel OK about putting your parents into an old people's home? And if you had kids yourself, would you be OK about moving in with them when you get older?
4. Do you think people should be able to rely on getting a state pension or should they expect to have to top it up with a private pension scheme?
5. Have you heard of the grey pound before? What about the green pound or the pink pound? Are any of them strong in your country?

