

LISTENING ONE

Matt : Hello and welcome to the programme. This morning we're going to discuss 'kidults'; adults that stay at home with their parents until they're in their mid-twenties or even their mid-thirties. And here to tell us about the results of a recent survey on this subject is Sadie Andrew.

Sadie : Thanks Matt. Yes. Well the results show that the number of 18-24 year olds in Europe still living at home has reached 67 %, although that figure is much lower for countries in northern Europe. Sweden has overtaken the UK and France as the country with the fewest 'kidults' with only 46% of this age-group still living at home. As you might expect, that figure rises to over 90% for countries in Southern Europe such as Spain and Italy, where young people have traditionally lived with their parents for longer. Despite lower unemployment and relatively low rents, there's little change here because family relationships remain very strong.

Matt : That's very interesting. And what about outside Europe?

Sadie : Yes, The survey also covered the United States where the trend is also for people to live at home longer, but here, the reason given wasn't to do with people having to pay back huge student loans. 'Kidults' here said there was no reason for them to leave home because they got on so well with their parents. Many people reported continuing to live at home even after they got married. So there's obviously less of a generation gap than there used to be.

Matt : I can see there are advantages. Having your mum to do your washing and ironing, for example.

Sadie : People interviewed for the survey didn't admit to that-even if it were true-though I know my mum wouldn't be prepared to do my washing and ironing. In fact the impression I get is that the kidults are pretty responsible people. What they seem to appreciate most is having the opportunity to save the money that they would otherwise spend on rent so they can eventually buy their own home, which seems like a good idea. But of course, there are some disadvantages. Interviewees report that having to tell their parents what time they'll be home or not being able to spend time at home with friends without first asking permission is a frustrating experience and they complain that a lot of parents still think of 'kidults' as just kids.

Matt : Yes. That must be difficult. What about the parents? What do they think?

Sadie : On the whole most don't seem to mind and are willing to help their adult children out wherever possible. However, in some cases parents find that just when they've reached the point in their lives when they have the time and the money to do whatever they want, they are held back because of their children's needs. On the other hand, there is evidence to show that having the kidults at home does prevent some marriages from breaking down. This often happens apparently; when a couple do get to spend time alone after raising a family, they find they have nothing in common anymore.

Matt : That's sad. So before we hear from the listeners, what advice would you give for families in this situation?

Sadie : Well, obviously things are going to be better if everyone involved does their fair share, so it's a good idea to work out a fair contribution for bills and jobs such as shopping and washing-up. However, feedback from the results from the survey suggests that deciding in advance how often they are going to eat together, if at all, and at what time, will avoid resentment building up on both sides. This causes more arguments than any other issue.

Matt : Thanks Sadie. Right, if you've got any comments to make, please call...

LISTENING TWO

Int : Today in our studio we have the author, Carlos Lopez, who will talk about his experiences as an author.

Carlos Lopez : Well, thank you very much. It is nice to be here. I have to say first of all that the most important decision you make is why you are writing at all. And I have to be honest about this-that I write because it is a way of making money. Also I enjoy it and I would like to think that occasionally I am good at it. But there are people who believe that you write in order to make the world a better place. That could be but for me it is really a matter of supplementing my income. Usually, the first question people ask you is “How did you come to start writing books?” Did you go to a publisher with an idea? Or did a publisher come to you?” Well I am very lucky that, with almost no exceptions, publishers have always approached me to write something for them. That means I haven’t had to go out and try to persuade somebody to listen to my idea or buy my manuscript. I know that a lot of people when they want to be writers will begin with the logical point by writing a complete book and then hoping that a publisher will accept it. I’ve never had to do that and I don’t recommend it as a way of going about things if you can avoid it. Another question that often comes up is “is it a lonely business writing on your own?” Well, I think writing is a lonely business. I have on a few occasions written with a co-author and that is a very interesting experience. It certainly takes away that feeling that everything is down to you. It takes away the feeling that you are responsible for absolutely everything. It provides you with an opportunity to bounce ideas off your co-author and to that extent it is a very rewarding way of writing. And it might be something that an inexperienced writer could consider, that is, working as a co-author with a more experienced writer. Now, the disadvantage of having a co-author is very simple, that is you share the rewards. Normally when you write a book your payment is in the form of what are called royalties, that is a percentage of money received from sales of the book. Obviously, if you have to share your royalties you’re only going to get 50 % but then you only put in 50% of the effort. It all balances out. The process of writing a book is quite a long and elaborate one. Clearly at the beginning is the idea for

the book and that idea has to be cast simply in the form: “Who wants this book? Who is it for? You don’t write books for yourself or for nobody in particular. That would be crazy. No, you write them for a particular audience. So you have to be very clear who your book is aimed at. Then, having established who the book is for, you will need to consider very carefully what will be the contents of that book. Now when you start to think about the contents of the book you are effectively engaging in a sort of research. People might think this means going into libraries and studying all sorts of volumes of books and looking at other people’s work and so on; Well, there is some of that, but the most important research is the research which goes on in your own head, when you look at your own experience, because it is there that you will find the greatest originality from what you yourself have experienced and done over the years of your professional life. Then comes, when you have done that research, the awful business of writing. This is, I can assure your listeners, one of the hardest jobs that I know. You are faced with a blank piece of paper or you are faced with a blank screen and you are terrified. In fact you are so frightened of putting down anything on that blank piece of paper that you do all sorts of things to avoid starting. You sharpen your pencils, you take the dog for a walk, you make yourself yet another cup of coffee. You then sit down and say “Good, now I’m going to begin!” And then you think “Ah, but before I do that I’ll just write a letter to my old friend George!” Or whatever. You do all sorts of things to avoid that awful moment when you have to commit yourself, your pen to paper. Why is this? I think the most important reason is you want to create a masterpiece – in other words, you want your book to be the best thing you’ve ever done and without any mistakes in it. And because this is so difficult, the alternative is, you might feel, to produce nothing at all. And I have a strategy for overcoming this-now this is going to sound crazy but it’s absolutely true. After avoiding work for two or three days – or in the worst case two or three weeks, I will get up one morning, look in the mirror and say ‘All right, man, what you are going to do today is to write a bad book. Crazy as that sounds, it works because once I decide that it doesn’t matter if the book’s a bad book, what’s important is to write a book, any book, as long as I write a book. I can actually then start to

write. You can be absolutely sure that later on you will have to go back to those first chapters, and rewrite them because, they really won't be as good as they should be.

Int. : Well it certainly sounds as though you have some interesting strategies. I'm sure our listeners will have learnt a lot from your advice today. Carlos Lopez will be here with us in the studio after the commercials. If you have questions to ask, call 1676982 or tweet us.