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# A family is for life, not just for Christmas

This Christmas Day, 1.5 million adults\* will be seeing their immediate families for the first time this year, after last seeing each other at Christmas in 2016.

New research by Center Parcs has revealed one in three (36%) of us only see our parents once a year and half (52%) of people see their siblings less than six times a year.

Furthermore, more than a quarter (27%) of people only make the effort to see their immediate families at special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas and weddings.

Despite nine in ten (90%) people saying they like spending time with their families, 38 per cent say it's too difficult to regularly meet up. The main reasons for this were; distance from each other, juggling busy diaries and lack of space.

However, Christmas is the time of year when people do make the extra effort to arrange the logistics, with the average person starting to discuss plans on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August and locking them in a whole two months before. In fact, one in fifteen (7%) find it so difficult, they start planning where they will be for Christmas a year in advance.

The average household will this year have six family members sitting round the dinner table and one in seven (13%) even have a family member stay in a nearby hotel overnight to make sure they get to see each other.

Even though people go above and beyond because it's Christmas, we're actually still trying to get out of having to host the day, with 41% having refused to host Christmas at their house – blaming the size of their house (16%) and the amount of work that goes in to hosting (10%) as the main reasons we're not keen.

However, Psychologist Emma Kenny says that quality time together as a family unit throughout the year - and not just at Christmas - is essential to mental wellbeing, with nine meetings a year the magic number for happiness.

Kenny said:

“Spending time together as a family is key to feeling good and happy. From the family counselling I do, it's become clear that families who see each other little and often are more likely to have a better sense of well-being and less tension among each other, opposed to those who save up their meetings for one or two key moments a year.

“Approximately nine meetings a year is – in my mind - the perfect amount for family togetherness. By meeting more than every two months we reduce the pressure that's put on each gathering which means we look forward to it more, rather than feeling the pressure of the whole affair. And if a few people can't make it that time, it doesn't matter as another gathering is just around the corner.”

Colin Whaley, Marketing Director from Center Parcs said:

“We understand the challenges families face when trying to organise a get together and how it can become overwhelming when added to every day pressures. That being said we all know the effort is absolutely worth it! For

many years we have had families come to Center Parcs for breaks with aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins and they all arrive and stay in neighbouring lodges, spending time doing activities, having family meals and just enjoying each other's company. It's wonderful to see families meeting up and spending good time together, throughout the year and not just at Christmas."

Psychologist Kenny has revealed her top tips for stress-free family gatherings:

1. **Meet semi-regularly** – not too often that little things become annoying, but regularly enough that you don't put too much pressure on the occasion
2. **Delegate** - If you are getting together make sure everyone chips in by bringing food and drink along. This way no one needs to stress and everyone gets involved
3. **Have fun** - Make meeting up fun by planning activities that you can all enjoy together. Whether it involves going to the park, or taking part in a new activity. Trying something a little different means everyone will take something positive from the experience
4. **Get organised** - If you want your get together to work out well, then make sure that everyone knows exactly what they are doing, where they are meant to be and what time they need to arrive. This means that no one becomes stressed or anxious and helps to create a harmonious event
5. **Take turns hosting** - Make sure that your meet ups are shared and don't end up becoming one person's responsibility. The whole aim of connecting regularly with your family is to increase bonding and make you all feel connected, and that can't happen if one person has to be the host on each occasion. At the end of each meet agree who will go next so that everyone is treated equally

Find out how to get together again at: <http://blog.centerparcs.co.uk/give-the-gift-of-family-time/>

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### Notes to Editors

- A representative sample of 2000 UK adults were surveyed in November 2017 by Mortar.
- \*Based on 3% of the adult UK population of 51,767,543

### About Center Parcs

Center Parcs has five villages across the UK; Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, Elveden Forest in Suffolk, Longleat Forest in Wiltshire,

Whinfell Forest in Cumbria, Woburn Forest in Bedfordshire and a sixth, Longford Forest opening in 2019. Offering family weekend (Friday to Monday) or midweek (Monday to Friday) breaks in the forest, the villages welcome more than 2.2 million guests each year, with 96% of guests saying they plan to return.

Each village is nestled within 400 acres of forest and has a variety of accommodation, cafes, restaurants, shops, adventure play areas and more than 100 activities. Whilst the Center Parcs concept started in Holland in the 1960s and the first two villages built in the UK in the 1980s were modelled on villages in Holland, Center Parcs UK and its soon-to-be-six villages are now an entirely separate company to Center Parcs Europe.

### **About Emma Kenny**

Emma is a registered psychological therapist, broadcaster, columnist and a regular on TV screens. Emma has a wide-ranging focus, however she is particularly passionate about helping people create long-term coping strategies for personal wellbeing. She is also the CEO of Make Your Switch, an online health and wellbeing service that encourages people to be the best they can be.

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