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Earlier this year I went to Corfu and wrote an article entitled: "Putting Yourself In The Way of Beauty". I was talking about the beautiful island and its people, who have so little in this difficult economic climate, yet remain so happy and positive.

Somebody wrote and asked the question, did I think that this was due to their Christian faith?

It's interesting isn't it, that we have so much more, on the surface, than the people in Corfu; our economy is better, we too have beautiful landscapes and beaches.

In comparison we are affluent, however, we don't seem to have the same sense of spirit or happiness?

It is an interesting point whether the Christian faith makes a difference.

In my work as a psychotherapist, I have worked with clients for whom their faith or religion has been an endless source of reassurance and comfort to them. However, I have also worked with just as many clients for whom faith and religion have been the very source of their discomfort or issue.

For me, the key word would be 'community'. It does seem to be something that we are losing sense of here. In Corfu there is a huge sense of community. Families live together and pull together; the elderly are taken care of by the younger members of the family and the tradition is that you leave a house unfinished so that you can add another floor for the next generation.

As a small island, they all know each other and support each other.

In the winter in most resorts, a couple of bars are opened for the local community to catch up with each other after a busy summer season.

The families all look out for each other and the children. One teenager grumpily told me that 'if I sneeze in Sidari, Mum knows about it before I get home to Ipsos!'



# Long live a wonderful sense of community

West Norfolk based psychotherapist and counsellor **Amanda Jayne** investigates why it is all smiles in Corfu.

The children here are relatively safe as a result of this community spirit.

There have been many reports to prove that socialisation and family are key to longevity and good mental health. Sardinia, for example, boasts an extraordinarily long living population.

In a report by CNN ([edition.cnn.com](http://edition.cnn.com)) it was reported that in the early 2000s, demographer and physician Dr Giovanni Pes found remarkably low mortality rates and high life expectancies among several villages in central Sardinia. He marked each settlement on to a map, eventually creating a cluster of blue marks.

He labelled the region a blue zone, a term now used to refer to any area with extraordinarily long-living populations.

Five have been identified, including Nicoya, Costa Rica, and Ikaria, Greece.

The elder population did not take vast amounts of medication either, and they remained lucid and in good mental health. The findings of his study proved that being among family, good social interaction and a feeling of still being an core part of a household and community lead to a long and healthy life.

I suppose a sense of belonging, whether it be to your God or your family and community is the important factor in sustaining a long, healthy life!

There is a lot we can learn from the people in Sardinia and Corfu. We are still only a small island - there is something to be said for getting on with your neighbours.