

# Relate NI



**Relieve The Pressure  
On Your Children**

# About Relate NI

Relate NI is passionate about enabling good quality relationships and that's why our mission is to make expert information and support for healthy relationships available to everyone. Through our experience of working with parents and children throughout Northern Ireland, we've come to understand that relationships not only give our lives meaning, they are of vital importance to our happiness.

For the last 75 years, we have been supporting the health and wellbeing of children & young people, individuals, couples, and families through our therapeutic services because we know how important our relationships are to our health and wellbeing.

Visit our website for more guidance on how to 'Relieve the Pressure' on your relationships throughout Christmas and the Cost of Living Crisis.

[www.relateni.org/relieve-the-pressure](http://www.relateni.org/relieve-the-pressure)



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**we can Relate**

87% of people told us that relationship support helped to improve their well-being

**Relate NI**

# Introduction

Many people find that Christmas and the wider winter period puts their relationship under pressure, including our relationship with our children and their relationships with others.

Additional pressures including requirements to perform at school, breakdown in parent or family relationships, a change of routine or grief following the loss of a loved one may build up on children.

Eventually, the pressure may become too much and begin to affect them personally as well as creating unhelpful conflict in their relationships with others.

Children may still be experiencing the effects from the pandemic and the previous lockdown conditions, which may have compounded existing issues, and created further barriers in our relationships.

And now the Cost of Living Crisis is providing further uncertainty for children and families. Children are likely aware of the pressures which this brings, and may be worried about how it might affect their festive period, and what may have been a period they would have previously looked forward to may not be a reason for some angst and anxiety.

This is an uncertain time for both adults and children as we're all trying to navigate life as calmly and optimistically as possible.

As we prepare for a busy festive period, it's important to recognise the pressures this time can have on our children and their relationships.

This resource aims to provide ideas on how you can Relieve the Pressure on yourself and your children.



# Children & Young People

## Under Pressure

Children & young people have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. As we move beyond this, further events such as Climate Change, The Invasion of Ukraine and now the Rising Cost of Living are providing further uncertainty to all of us and our children are not insulated from the effects of these.

Children & young people already live in a world over which they have little control so when they lose the routine that they have come to rely upon (like friends, school, clubs) this can cause some long lasting distress.

Their holiday routine is no different. Children may currently be worrying about how the Cost of Living Crisis may impact on their festive period and whether it will look like it has previously, and include all the people it has in the past. Will we be able to drive around and visit our extended family? Will be able to have a big dinner with all our loved ones? Will we still take a trip to town with our parents and visit Santa? These are just some of the questions that Children may have about what their festive period will look like.

While some children may be excited to play and socialise with friends, cousins and neighbours over the Christmas break, others may be experiencing low confidence and anxiety around socialising if they think they may be the only ones who don't the latest toy or video game, or if they think others may be dressed in new gear while they are wearing the same things they have been all year.

They might not know it yet, but everything doesn't have to be a big event or expensive foray to make it a magical time - spending time together in playful ways is very important for children & young people's development and is what will bring them the most joy.

Children & young people rely on their families entirely, so it is very important for parents & carers to help them to **Relieve the Pressure** both in the run up to and over the festive period.

Exploring some of the anxieties that exist and providing reassurance to children that the main components of the winter break will still happen, even if the form they take has to change a little, can go a long way in helping them to build emotional resilience and Relieve the Pressure.



# Relieving the Pressure on Children & Teens

## *Communicating.*

Include children & young people in decisions as much as is possible. Communication isn't always through the spoken word – it's important to pay attention to what children & young people do & how they behave – this can be through their play, their drawings & so on.

Listen to children about their hopes & wishes. If something isn't possible, take the time to explain why. Create a feeling of comfort & security so that children & young people can more easily chat. You can do this by being interested in your children & showing your interest by getting involved in the things that they enjoy. Finances may be tight, so perhaps you could concentrate on playing games and creating fun experiences, rather than providing things. Balance your interest though - don't become an overbearing, competitive parent either!

Respect the privacy of young people – they might not want their news spread through the extended family WhatsApp group.

Listen, listen, listen & listen some more. It's very tempting for parents to want to share advice & guidance but there's never a good time to rush a response. Take your time, slow down & be curious about what your children think would help.

## *Be there & Be reliable.*

Children & young people need to know that their parents or carers are there for them. If you schedule time with them, make sure to be reliable and follow through with that. Try to be there when they want to talk.

Chances are that the your child will want to talk at the least opportune time for an adult.

Set aside what you're doing where possible & give them your full attention. The moment of connection can pass very quickly otherwise.

## *Feelings.*

Be respectful of the children & young peoples' thoughts & feelings. What might seem unimportant to an adult is vital at the time to the young ones. If they know that they can talk to you about the 'small' things then they know they can talk about the 'big' things too.

## *Open mind, open heart.*

A child & a young person is a separate person from you. They have their own thoughts, feelings, hopes & dreams. It is important for their feelings to be affirmed & validated, even if you feel somewhat differently.

## *Boundaries.*

Communication that is open & honest is also about setting boundaries. Whether it's a 5 year-old or a 15-year-old, healthy boundaries give a feeling of safety & security for young people. Encourage the young ones to be active participants in setting agreed boundaries as they will see that their opinions matter & they'll be more inclined to honour the guidelines set.

If you notice that the children or teenagers could maybe benefit from support, Relate NI is available. We offer specialist services for young people including our childrens counselling service for 4-11 year olds and Relate Teen for 11-17 year olds.

It's normal for parents to seek help to support their children. Accessing support shows you're a caring, supportive parent. It may also help you. After all, your mental health & well-being is very important, too.

# We can Relate

The tips and guidance contained in this book are aimed at helping you **Relieve the Pressure** you and your children may be facing. Relate NI's team of skilled and professional counsellors are also available to help people with their relationship issues, whether big or small. Your relationship doesn't need to be at a time of crisis to benefit from Relate NI services. In fact, 78% of people who used our services last year told us they wished they'd attended sooner.

Use the details below to contact us to find out how we can support you.

**If you would benefit from speaking to one of our trained counsellors, contact us at:**

**028 90323454**  
**[office@relateni.org](mailto:office@relateni.org)**

## **Relate NI Services:**

- **Adult Relationship Counselling for Individuals Or Couples**
- **Family Counselling**
- **Relate Kids**
- **Relate Teen**
- **Sex Therapy**
- **Relationship MOT**

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