

# Relate NI



**Relieve The Pressure:  
Christmas, Cost of Living  
& Relationships**

# 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**

# Relationships: The Golden Threads Which Hold Our Wellbeing Together

Having quality relationships in our lives can help us through the good and bad times, and in the current economic climate, we depend more on these to guide us, support and encourage us. The cost-of-living crisis doesn't just impact our personal finances but causes a ripple effect across our families and relationships – and this has the potential to exacerbate during the festive season.

Relationships can form a crucial protective factor for our health and well-being, so it is not surprising that we often go to those we trust and are closest to when we want to vent and share our thoughts and concerns, they are our safety net.

While it is great to be able to utilise our relationships to protect us at difficult times such as this festive season, it is important to think about the impact this may have on our relationships, after all, they may be experiencing similar issues, so in reaching out for support, consider how you can do so in a way that is mutually supportive.

The cost-of-living crisis can create tensions that can often intensify when we feel pressure, and we can be left feeling alone, vulnerable, and with a weight of responsibility.

We try to implement new money-saving techniques while stress and confusion seep in.

When considering the impact, the cost of living crisis has on you, your relationships, and how it impacts your daily life, we should not forget the impact on your mental well-being, and physical well-being also.

Our mental well-being is innately interwoven with our relationships, each important and each affecting the other. Similarly, our mental well-being affects our physical well-being.

When we stress or worry our body carries that tension and we may also carry this stress into our relationships with others and this can be unhelpful.

Children sense when parents are worried and with Christmas looming and adding an element of concern, children may be worrying about whether Christmas will bring all of the comforts and traditions they may be used to.

This book aims to provide ideas on how you can Relieve the Pressure on which the Cost of Living Crisis may be adding to your relationships this festive season.



# Relationship with Self: The Most Important One We Have

There are a number of measures you can take to Relieve the Pressure on your Relationship with Yourself.

## **Pay Attention To Your Emotions**

Emotional awareness is paying attention to how you are feeling, what emotions you are experiencing at a given time, and how that is impacting your behaviour and bodily reactions.

Being emotionally aware comes from practice, just by simply taking a step back and asking yourself the question, “How am I feeling and why?” is a great start.

Emotions can be complicated and mixed e.g. you can feel excited and nervous, or angry and sad. For example, if there was a new baby in the family, you may feel joy for the new addition, and extending the family, but also be frightened due to the reality of the responsibility given to you.

As you become more in tune with your emotions you can get to the real reason why you are feeling a certain way and manage it appropriately. This can also help you from lashing out or carrying frustrations over into your relationships with others.

## **Consider Your Reactions**

Understanding that some situations are outside of your control, situations change, your spouse may get held up at work which means you cannot get the car in time for the grocery shop run.

How you react when this happens is important as it will impact your mental well-being. Take a deep breath and think of a potential solution rather than dwelling over what you cannot change as this can lead to stress, headaches, frustrations etc which are impacting you negatively, therefore the only person who is hurting is you!

We also need to consider how this impacts our relationships, how this may make others feel, and if we are emotionally affecting them with our anger. Remember, this was not your spouse's choice, and they probably feel really bad if they know you had plans to use the car.

## **Utilise your relationships to feel better**

Our relationships with others are integral to our relationship with ourselves. If money worries are at the heart of your Christmas this year, it can be easy to want to distance yourself from family members so that they don't see the extent of the problem.

However, our relationships are the Golden Threads to our wellbeing.

Simple things like getting the kids to help cook dinner/bake with you can let you both experience mutual wellbeing benefits. This also gives them the space and opportunity to talk through how why are feeling about this festive season.

Children are aware of the cost of living crisis, and it may actually provide some relief to children to know that there will still be some degree of festivities even if they are not at the same level as previous years.



# Cost-Effective Ways To Support Your Family Relationships

Having a **date night at home** may give you the privacy to be more intimate, which we know is essential to success in relationships but can sometimes get lost in the busy festive period. A mince Pie and a massage could be your new Couple Christmas Tradition.

Consider how **spending quality time with family and friends may actually reduce your bills!** If you can take turns hosting each other over the festive period, you can save on costs by being out of the house multiple times. Could each person bring one thing? Have a game night at home and consider games that may help you learn about each other and improve your relationships. What about playing 20 questions with your partner? Or charades or another team game that can help children learn to work together?

**Homemade cinema.** Buying corn kernels can be cheaper than popcorn and is great fun to make. Some diluting juice, close the curtains, turn the lights off and create that cinema feel at home This can create an exciting, fun time for your family and some much-needed time off thinking about finances and time with the family without the cost.

Ask your kids to **get creative and make something out of cereal boxes, toilet tubes, Sellotape, etc.** During these darker days, craft ideas are great for keeping the family occupied. Why not ask your kids to create a Christmas present for a loved one with the craft materials? Having handmade gifts can be a great way to cut costs and are more personal for the person receiving it. This shows a loving, caring side to your kids and helps promote a positive relationship with loved ones.

Local libraries often have events/clubs e.g., **reading corners or Lego clubs**. This can be a great idea (and often free) to encourage your children to develop friendships with others. When in these social settings they interact with children they may have never normally interacted with before. This goes to strengthening their ability to gain and grow relationships in the future.

**Treasure hunting or geocaches** (App for treasure hunting!) are great ways to explore and have fun! These can be done locally or further afield depending on what is more convenient for you and your family. They are free, can be done with family, friends, colleagues etc and get you out exploring outdoors. Having these adventures together are memorable and an excellent way to encourage conversations while getting fresh air!

**Have fun in your own garden** – DIY bird feeders, hedgehog homes or growing your own veg! Again, this can be done with kids or adults, these are easily made with lots tutorials online for doing this. You can have fun, be productive, help the local wildlife and it gives the opportunity to converse with friends/family without distractions! If growing your own veg it can help to save a few pounds on your weekly shop.



# We can Relate

The tips and guidance contained in this book are aimed at helping you **Relieve the Pressure** you and your relationships may be facing in the face of a Christmas Cost of Living Crisis. 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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