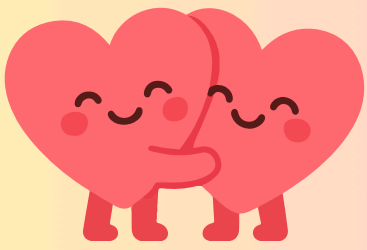
Parent LineNI™

0808 8020 400

# Making Connections





#ParentingWeek2026

#MakingConnections

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

Making Connections

# Introduction

Welcome to our Making Connections Resource Booklet.

This is an easy- to- read guide to making positive connections with our children and indeed with ourselves.

We have included a selection of our Parentline NI GoTos. They are handy to have together as a simple reminder of the importance of making connections with our children whatever their age or stage.



## 1. What is Connection?

Connections are the way we relate to other people or things. One of our basic human needs is love and belonging (Maslow). They reflect the human need for social connection, including friendship, family, and romantic relationships.

Attachment is the deep emotional bond a child forms with their parent or primary carer. 'To feel attached is to feel safe and secure' (John Bowlby). Attachment is strengthened through consistent and loving interaction from birth through childhood and beyond.

## 2. Why are connections important?

Making time for connection is the greatest investment parents can make for themselves and their children. There are many benefits to connecting with others, including improvements to our physical, mental and emotional well-being. Making connections with others allows us to feel safe, loved, secure and supported. Connection is essential for healthy brain development. Children's brains develop through relationships as well as experiences. Children learn from parents how to love themselves.
Parents can respond with P.A.C.E: Playfulness, Attunement, Curiosity, Empathy. (Dan Hughes)

### 3. How can we strengthen our connections?

Connections can be built through everyday moments- listening, asking questions, setting boundaries, showing interest and reminding children they are valued. Regularly spending time together and having regular conversations helps to strengthen our relationships. It is in the small things like a gentle touch, a warm smile, a comforting hug, sitting together at the dinner table or putting your phone down when your child is talking that connections with our children are strengthened.

### 4. Rupture & Repair of Connections

Rupture is part of what happens in family and relationships. We all have conflicts and make mistakes at times. Repairing the ruptures builds secure attachments and resilience for children. It is always the parent or carers job to repair the rupture, not the child's.
'The most important aspect of attachment is repairing a rupture' (Dan Siegel).

# References

Holmes, J. ( 1993) John Bowlby & Attachment Theory

Hughes, Daniel.org/ p.a.c.e. html

Maslow, A. H. (1943) A Theory of Human Motivation

Siegel, D.J. and Hartzell, M. ( 2003/2018)
Parenting from the Inside Out : How a deeper self - understanding can help you raise children to thrive .

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

Making Connections

# Index of Go-To's

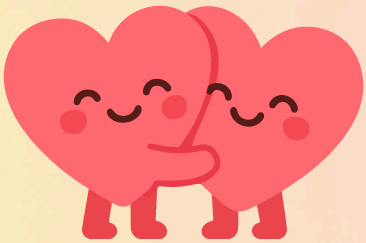

**Section 1**
Attachment – The Heart of Parenting 0-5 years / 5-10 years
Attachment – The Heart of Parenting 10-18 years

**Section 2**
Communication

**Section 3**
Regulation
Co-Regulation Guide

**Section 4**
Parenting Styles

**Section 5**
Play 0-5 years
Play 5-10 years
Never too old to Play ( teens )

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

Making Connections

# Section 1

- Attachment – The Heart of Parenting 0-5 years / 5-10 years
- Attachment – The Heart of Parenting 10-18 years



# Go-To for
Attachment- the Heart of Parenting (0-5 years)

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

## Attachment



The deep emotional bond a child forms with their parent.
Built through consistent and loving interaction from birth, through the early years and beyond.

## Why Attachment Matters

- Builds safety & security
- Supports brain growth & development
- Shapes future relationships- with friends, teachers, key figures in a child's life
- Provides resilience for dealing with emotional stress

## Small Moments Matter!

Every interaction is a chance to strengthen your child's sense of safety and trust.

It's nOT about perfect parenting. It's about being responsive, present and loving.

Bonding happens in everyday moments- your voice, your smile, your touch.
Play, laugh and enjoy. These little things are the big things!

## Infants 0-12 months

Peekaboo! Playing simple games & making babies giggle can strengthen bonds.
Sing silly songs- your voice is their favourite sound.
Dance together, hold your baby and sway to music.
Mirror faces- copy their expression and watch them copy you.
Bath time fun! Make care moments playful.



## Toddlers 12-24 months

Play chase and catch! Safe games build connection.
Pretend play, be the dinosaur or tea party guest.
Read with sound effects! Funny voices make stories magical.
Play hide and seek, even with toys under blankets. It builds permanence and trust.
Being a helper! let them stir, sprinkle & enjoy tasks together.

## Preschoolers 3-5

Engage in imaginative play led by your child- easy games and jigsaws, taking turns & naming feelings, builds emotional language.
Reassurance rituals; a goodbye wave, a secret handshake.



self- care is really important. A calm parent supports a calm child.



## useful websites

READ MORE

NSPCC - How to bond with Yourbaby
PHA- Infant Mental Health Framework
Lifestart Foundation
Parent Infant Foundation

### Recommended books

The Attachment Parenting Book - William & Martha Sears
Attachment Focused Parenting - Daniel Hughes
Hold on to your kids - Gordon Neufeld & Gabor Mate
Why love Matters- Sue Gerhardt



We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm

# Go-To for Attachment-the Heart of Parenting (5-10yrs)

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

At this age, children are becoming more independent, but they still need love, support, and regular attention from trusted adults to feel safe, confident, and to learn how to handle their feelings

'To feel attached is to feel safe and secure'
Jeremy Holmes (John Bowlby - Attachment Theory)



As new relationships form with friends, teachers, and other adults, you are still your child's main source of comfort and safety

## Secure attachment at this age can look like ..

Tells you about their day or problems at school

May push for independence but still looks for reassurance

Comes to you when upset

Tests limits, but responds to clear consistent boundaries

Shows affection and enjoys timewith you

## Ways to strengthen attachment

Make time each day to connect with your child. Ask about their day and really listen.

Use hugs, kind words or time together to show love during tough moments

Encourage independence while being your child's 'safe base'

"You can try it on your own, I'll be right here if you need help"

Being predictable helps your child to feel safe

Consistency builds trust and helps your child to feel secure

## Have Fun Together

Playing cards and board games

Problem solving games e.g. jigsaws or treasure hunts

Talk together

Visit the library together

Listen to music together

We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm

# Go-To for Attachment-the Heart of Parenting (10-18 yrs)

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

Importance of healthy attachment for tweens & teens !

Attachment is crucial for healthy social and emotional development in the tween & teen years. Whilst friends & new relationships become increasingly important, parental bonds still play a huge role in providing support & guidance during this period.



Securely attached tweens & teens tend to have:

Better mental health

Stronger social skills and positive relationships

Less engagement in risky behaviours

A better ability to cope with challenges

Nurturing, positive attachment developed in infancy, through childhood and stabilising in teen years, provides the template of how to relate to others. It informs how to learn to love as a teenager and safely separate from parents/family at points of transition- School, Uni, work.

Trusting and relying on the people we love.....

It isn't about knowing you're okay all of the time, or never struggling- in fact, it's the opposite! When you do struggle, healthy attachment means you know where to turn and how to ask for the support you need to feel okay.

Secure child/parent attachment supports and informs every new relationship. Whether it's friendships, romantic love, or even a love for hobbies, teenagers' understanding begins at home. Healthy attachment helps teens to judge who and what makes them feel comfortable in the new relationships they develop. They will learn to build emotional resilience and life-skills. They will be more confident developing and maintaining their own identity within relationships.



If you are concerned about your teenager consider seeking reaching out for support.

We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm

# Go-To for

Attachment- the Heart of Parenting (10-18)

HOW TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN STRONG BONDS With Your Teen

Secure, Consistent & available- the key to attachment in the tween & teen years

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400



- Spend time connecting with your teen
- Provide safe and supportive space for them to explore experiences & emotions
- Look for opportunities to encourage open and honest conversation- in the car, a walk together
- Try to be playful and curious
- Acknowledge & show empathy for the big (and small) emotions experienced during these years of rapid change
- Keep talking and Listening attentively
- Offer praise and encouragement for their efforts & accomplishments.
- Establish clear boundaries and expectations, while allowing for age-appropriate experience & autonomy



READ MORE

Useful reading

"Never too old to play"- Parentline NI https://www.ci-ni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/18-D-Ready-to-go.- Play-teens.pdf

'Creating Loving Attachments" Golding & Hughes, 2012. ' Gold

"Teenagers & Attachments: Helping Adolescents Engage with Life and Learning." D Hughes & K Brisch, 2009

https://www.blossomingkindness.com/blogposts/bonding-with-your-teenage-child-is-a-beautiful-undertaking

We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm - call us on 0808 4020 400

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

Making Connections

# Section 2

- **Communication**



# Go-To for

# Communication

Parent LineNI™

0808 8020 400

## Understanding Communication

less than 10% of any communication is the words we use. Over 90% is our tone, volume, body language etc.

A softer tone, lowered shoulders, using fewer words and truly listening can transform a conversation.

## Preparation to Talk

If posssible, carefully consider the time and place. Absence of other pressures can make all the difference.

Talk with, not to.
Listen to hear, not respond.

Eye contact can be difficult for many so consider a walkn'talk instead.

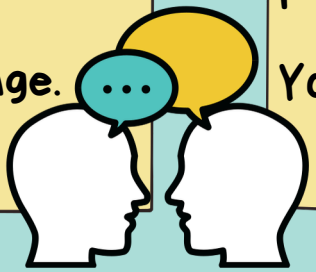
Conflict is unavoidable...it's how wedealwithitthat'simportant

Tactical withdrawal from conflict is NOT submission.

Try to visualise rows or arguments as fires. Are you going to be a petrol can or sprinkler system?

For difficult conversations try to:-

- Begin with something you agree on.
- Reallylisten.
- Be genuinely curious for the other view.
- leavespaceforothertosaveface and become less defensive.
- Maintain neutral body language.
- Avoid'you'and'always'.
- Be kind.



Feelings are highly contagious, both good and the not so good.

Aim to prioritise care for yourself and protect your capacity to cope.
You will find it easier to communicate effectively.

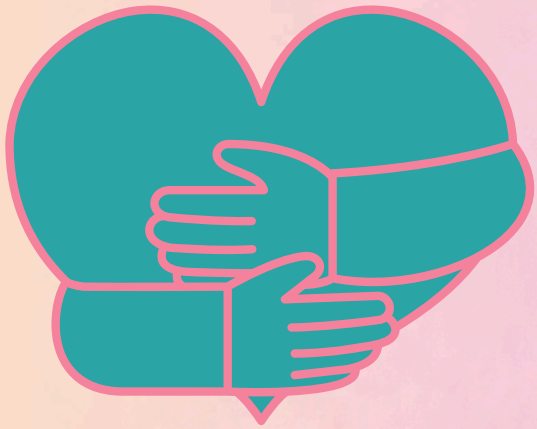
We are in your corner here at Parentline, to listen, support or advise.
Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm or Saturdays 9am to 1pm

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

Making Connections

# Section 3

- Regulation
- Co-Regulation Guide



# Regulation

(When saying 'CalmDown' doesn't work)

The first thing to do to help your child calmdownandregulate their emotions is the most difficult part... regulating your own. A 20 second pause canbethedifference between responding and reacting, but it is not a strategy which comes naturally whenwearebusyand trying to get through the days routines.

Try your best to model self-regulation and becalmandresponsive when your child is struggling to manage their emotions.

~~A.C.T.~~

Acknowledge your child's feelings. This helps your childfeelunderstood.

- "You look sad becauseitshomework time"
- "I think you are disappointed thathewould not play with you"
- "You're frustrated as you really wantyourtablet for more screen time "
- "You're angry because you wish youcouldhave sweets before dinner."

Communicate the limit.

- "It's ok to be disappointed but it is time to do homework now " • "Its ok to be frustrated/mad/angry but it is not OK to hit " • "It's ok to be annoyed but tablet time has finished now "
- "I know you are sad the day is over, but it is time for bed now"

Target an alternative or Teach.

- Once you Acknowledge and Communicate you can target an alternative by using controlled choices or first and then or when appropriate teach by discussing what your child should do in each situation next time.

| Phrases for co-regulation: | Action for co-regulations (Be a calm influence during an emotional storm): | Model regulation: |
|---|---|---|
| - Its ok to be disappointed. I have enough calm to share with you.<br>- You're upset, I understand.<br>- I'm here for you.<br>- Let me know when you're ready.<br>- This is hard for you, I want to help you.<br>- When I feel angry it helps if I take some deep breaths like this...<br>- I love you, you are safe. | - Hold them whilethey cry.<br>- Belly breathing.<br>- Candle/bubble blowing.<br>- Invite them to rock or snuggle with you.<br>- Change of scenery.<br>- Angry/shake it off dance.<br>- Count backwards.<br>- Dinosaur roar.<br>- Play I spy. | - I'm feeling frustrated that the dishwasher isn't working. I'm squeezing my fist and taking deep breaths to help my body'.<br>- I'm feeling sad that we haven't seen grandma in a while. I'm going to write in my diary'.<br>- I'm feeling overwhelmed. I'm going to pause and take space for a few minutes to calm my body'.<br>- Sometimes when I feel upset it helps if I go for a walk. Do you want to come for a walk with me?<br>- Sometimes I just need to have a good cry. Do you just need to cry right now? |

**We are here:**
**Monday - Thursday 9am-9pm**
**Friday 9am-5pm**
**Saturday 9am-1pm**
**Webchat; ci-ni.org.uk**

# HOW TO CO-REGULATE WITH A CHILD

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

When feelings rise, your calm presence helps create safety.

## First, become the anchor

### 1 REGULATE YOURSELF FIRST

Children borrow the adult's calm. Slow your breathing, lower your voice, and settle your body before you try to help.

**Ask yourself: How am I feeling right now?**

If adults feel anxious or upset, children can feel more dysregulated.

### 2 REDUCE DEMANDS

When a child is overwhelmed, their thinking brain is not fully working. Take away instructions, questions & pressure until they settle.

### 3 SHOW SAFETY WITH YOUR BODY

Use a soft posture, relaxed shoulders, slow movements, and gentle movements. Position yourself to the side and crouch to the child's level rather than towering above them.

### 4 USE A CALM, STEADY VOICE

Speak slowly, softly, and at a predictable pace. Short sentences work best. Pauses, quiet, and stillness can help.



### 5 STAY CLOSE, BUT NOT TOO CLOSE

Some children want you close. Others need space but want you to stay nearby. Follow their cues.

### 6 HELP THEIR BREATHING MATCH YOURS

Model slow, steady breaths and invite the child to join in if they are ready. You could make it a game with bubbles.

### 7 OFFER COMFORT THEY CAN ACCEPT

A blanket, quiet space, favourite object, or hug can help, if they choose it. Comfort should be tailored to the individual child.

You are the anchor.
Co-regulation comes first.

Parentline NI 0808 8020 400
Mon-Thur 9am-9pm Fri 9am-5pm Sat 9am-1pm

# WHEN CALM RETURNS

**Support understanding and build coping skills over time.**

## After the storm




1

**NAME THE FEELING NOT THE BEHAVIOUR**

Say things like: "You are feeling overwhelmed" or "This feels too much for your body." Naming emotions helps children feel understood rather than judged.

"I can see you're happy."

You look sad.

"I can see you're angry."

2

**WAIT BEFORE TALKING**

Do not teach or correct the child while they are upset. Once settled, talk through what happened in simple steps.

3

**ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR EMOTIONS**

Notice and gently reflect what you see. Over time, this supports children to develop words for their emotions.

4

**PERSONALISE THE SUPPORT**

Every child has unique triggers and responses to stress. Tailor co- regulation to the individual child, you know them best.

5

**CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

Provide a quiet area with calming resources when needed. Choose resources that suit the individual child.

6

**BUILD COPING SKILLS WHEN CALM**

Teach simple breathing, taking breaks, moving their body, and asking help. Create a regulation ground through repeated, supportive experiences.

7

**REMEMBER**

Each co-regulatory experience supports the child in the moment and strengthens their ability to regulate stress over time.

8

**FEELING SAFE**

Co-regulation supports the child to feel safe and secure in the knowledge that the adult will support them through challenging situations.

Connect → Calm → Reflect → Practise

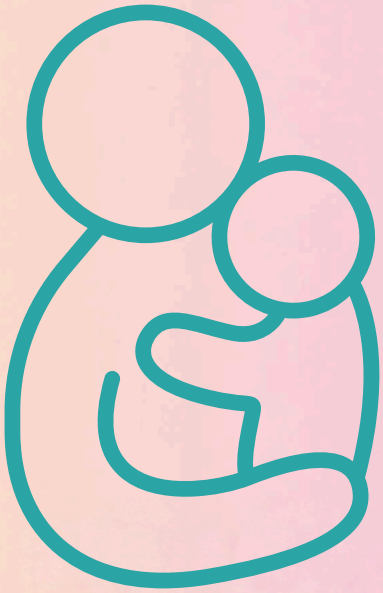
Parentline NI 0808 8020 400
Mon -Thur 9am-9pm Fri 9am-5pm Sat 9am-1pm

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

Making Connections

# Section 4

- **Parenting Styles**



# Go-To for Parenting Styles

Parent LineNI™
FREE LOCAL HELPLINE
0808 8020 400

Becoming a parent can often trigger our own deep childhood memories. Try to seek support if you find these difficult.

How we emotionally interact with our children; how we support them to cope with their feelings and how we encourage them to develop skills, is known as our Parenting Style.

Our experience of childhood will also influence our own parenting style; the patterns we repeat, and the things we do very differently.

??????????????.....**********.....??????????????

### Permissive Style

This style involves few boundaries or natural consequences. It can either include high levels of parental love and involvement or, alternatively, children endure low levels of affection and feel their parents are disengaged.

### Authoritative Style

This involves high levelsoflove and affection but alsoinvolves parents implementingreasonable boundaries, and having fair expectations.Childrenhave emotionally safe opportunities to developconfidence, self-control, independence and attachments.



### Authoritarian Style

This often involves a child feeling the absence of affection. Parents use consequences and punishments to control children's behaviours. Children can become obedient but resentful and may fail to grasp important life-skills. Children often feel shame and misunderstood.

## Gentle Parenting (ref Dan Hughes)

***Children feel respected and loved.Theylearn fromparents howto love themselves.
Parents respond with PLACE: Playfulness,Love, Attunement, Curiosity and Empathy
***Parents calmly hold the safe-place,routines and boundaries for children to learn.
***Children feel empowered to makechoices and learn natural consequences.
***Children's delicate strengthisnurtured to overcome difficulties.
***Children are supportedtobecome their best selves***





We are here at Parentline to listen, support or advise. Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm or Saturdays 9am to 1pm

# Go-To for Parenting Styles

Parent LineNI™
FREE LOCAL HELPLINE
0808 8020 400

*All behaviour is communication..

*Try not to take any negative behaviour personally. Your child is communicating a feeling, not how they feel about you.

*Separate your child's behaviour from their need. This will reduce your feelings of hurt or rejection. You will feel more confident and able to respond with calm understanding.



Angeris always a secondary feeling.



Less than 10%ofall communication consists of the wordsweuse. Over 90% isourtone, body languageetc



When the going gets tough .....become more gentle

****

Take a slow deep breath
Drop your shoulders
Feel grounded

***



Visualise yourself as the parent you need.
Visualise the need in your child

***

Listen
Validate your child's feelings
Empathy not solutions
Speak softly
Use fewer words
Apologise if necessary



Children and teenagers need our support with the big feelings they can't handle. Our response teaches them how to cope and will always be much more important than any of their behaviour.



Thoughts
↓
feelings
↓
behaviours

Feelings must always be acknowledged but we can support our children to develop their thinking and manage their behaviours. This is co-regulation.

'Nothing could be more comforting and powerfully healing than feeling accepted by our loved ones when we are at our worst'.
Janet Lansbury





***Most rows or 'meltdowns' are repeats.
***.Taking time to care for your own needs will help you and your family to break this cycle..
***Children need us most when their behaviour is at its worst.



To read more, go to....
The A-Z of Therapeutic Parenting * Sarah Naish
The Whole Brain Child * Dr Dan Siegel
safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk* Dr Karen Treisman



Toddlers and Teens ex perience huge periods of brain development but with very different levels of autonomy. Try to be prepared for your toddler-teen. Their need of your love and support is just as real.



We are here at Parentline to listen, support or advise. Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm or Saturdays 9am to 1pm

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

Making Connections

# Section 5

- Play 0-5 years
- Play 5-10 years
- Never too old to Play ( teens )



# Go-To for Play (ages 0-5 years)

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

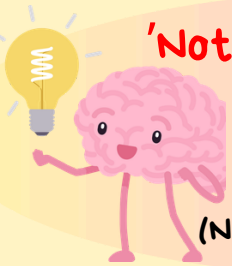







Playing with your child helps them develop the skills they need to socialise and play with other children. It is an important part of learning about relationships and emotions.

Games and play will help with speech development; helping children to learn to talk and to understand what is being said to them.



'Nothing lights up a child's brain like play'

Dr StuartBrown
(National Institute for Play)



From birth, children need experiences and relationships that show them they're valued, capable human beings who make other people happy.



Aim to be playful and curious yourself. Your baby will be learning every day through exploring so allow them to make mess.



Playing with your baby, talking or even singing with them, can build their brain, right from birth.
It's also a great way to make your bond even stronger.



Following your child's interests and introducing new types of play that fit with their developmental stage will help them learn & grow.

## What Play can look like




We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm

# Go-To for Play (ages 0-5 years)

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

## Types of play

-Physical play - e.g., dancing or ball games. help your child build their muscles, bones and physical skills. Children under 5 should have at least 3 hours of physical activity a day.

-Social play - playing with others, children learn how to take turns, cooperate and share. E.g., playgrounds or parent and toddler groups

-Creative play - playing with drawing, music and building things. E.g., arts, crafts and building blocks -Fantasy play - Using their imagination child's during play is good for your communication skills. It is good for them to create their own games. E.g., dress up

-Games with rules - Games with rules can teach children about fairness e.g., 'Simon says' or 'Duck Duck Goose'

Your children will do the rest!

Being present is key. Give your child lots of opportunities and then let nature do the rest. If your child likes airplanes, spend time with them making, folding and decorating it. Doing things together will build your relationship and creates a strong bond.

Mix gross motor and fine motor activities. Playing in the park or playground with other children, kicking the ball, chasing each other, will allow the child to test and develop their gross motor skills. Sitting down at the table to trace, colour and try out the new jigsaw puzzle will develop their creativity, hand skills and problem solving abilities while giving an opportunity to develop as well.

READ MORE

www2.hse.ie/babies-children/play/1-2-years/
www2.hse.ie/babies-children/play/3-5-years/
www.birthto5matters.org.uk/play/
www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/leaflets/look-say-sing-play-early-years-resources-parents

### Remember you are only human!

We all have days whenthings feelexhausting. Give yourself permission to have 'relaxing' days. There is always another day and a chance to try a new way of being together tomorrow. Snuggle up in bed or on the sofa with a movie, make buns, or get creative with story telling!

After a tough day, it's important to repair and reconnect with our children. Taking care of ourselves is a necessary part of the important responsibility we have in raising remarkable kids.

We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm

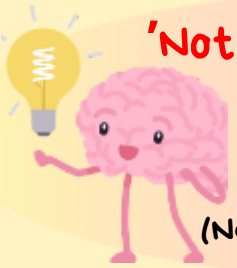
# Go-To for Play (ages 5-10)

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400



Play is so much more than activity for children. Play creates the essential opportunities needed for brains and bodies to develop. Structured & unstructured play support different skills, both are vital.

Play is so important that it has been enshrined by the United Nations under Article 31: The Child's Right to Play!



'Nothing lights up a child's brain like play'

Dr StuartBrown
(National Institute for Play)

## What 'play with me' can mean...

'I feel a bit insecure'
'I need to be with you'
'I am lonely'
'Am I important to you?'

Try being first to play.





Aim to be playful and curious yourself, as often as possible. Children instinctively respond to these positive feelings, and connections blossom.



A few minutes of your complete interest and undivided attention will usually help most children to settle into playing independently. Check in, without being asked, to admire effort and progress.



Global research has proved that screen time is not a positive alternative to real life play. Children's brains need to be processing 3D experiences for physical, cognitive, social, emotional & sensory growth to take place.



## What Play can look like



We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm

# Go-To for Play (ages 5-10)



Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

## PLAY STORE CUPBOARD

### Inspiration Ingredients

Recyclable goodies such as egg-boxes, packaging, loo rolls, fruit nets and bubble wrap.

Coloured pipe cleaners, straws, lolly pop sticks, paper plates, cup cake papers, tinfoil and ribbons.

Tracing paper, sticky tape, glue, coloured pens & pencils, chalk & paint.

Occasional extras...ice, water, rice, lentils, shells & pebbles.

Your children will do the rest!

### Timers

**Use these yourself to build fun into games, household duties or turn-taking.

**Put children in charge to encourage a sense of responsibility & patience, and the opportunity to tell you when it's time to do something different!

### Outdoors & Nature

Volunteering e.g. beach cleaning

walkni.com

nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/northern-ireland

dayoutwiththekids.co.uk/ni

discovernorthernireland.com

1000s of ideas...

Playboard.org/resources/

education-ni.gov.uk/articles/play-matters

thedadlab.com

sitters.co.uk/blog/the-15-best-activities-for-children-to-help-them-learn-through-play.aspx

goodhousekeeping.com/home/craft-ideas/g1389/diy-kids-activities/

## Keeping it real.

For days when engaging in playisemotionally or practically difficult, take time to support your own needs.

Have some pre-prepared activities up your sleeve!

A treasure hunt of items to hide around the house or garden.

Sticky tape to create large scale floor games, tracks or limbo challenges!

A store of rarely used or forgotten games & toys.

Home movie event with closed curtains and treats.

We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm

# Go-To for

## Never too old to play!

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400



**Supporting teens to navigate their social world, manage stress and build essential skills for adulthood through play.**

## Parent-Teen Relationships

Build strong connections with older children by being playful.

Playful and relaxing times together will foster connection and improve communication. Wecan communicateinterestand respectfor teens and their world through playfulness.

When teens are struggling through difficult times and don't want to talk, try to make yourself available for relaxation and connection. **Sometimes being with your young person, even if only for 5 mins, can help them feel less isolated **

## Peer Relationships

Play facilitates friendships and develops social networks. Connection between teens is central to learning negotiation, co-operation, conflict resolution which will help with adapting to future challenges.

## Digital well-being

Video games & socialmediacan offer opportunities for play & connection but **excessive screen time** can lead to a lack of real connection, loneliness,addictionand poorself-esteem.

We are in your corner here at Parentline, to listen, support or advise. Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm or Saturdays 9am to 1pm

# Go-To for

## Never too old to play!

Parent LineNI™

0808 8020 400

## Making Time

Set aside time for your teen. This is just as important when they are feeling overwhelmed. Try to be inventive and find activities which they will enjoy and will help you both connect, allowing space from worries.

## Play & Curiosity

By being playful and curious, parents can show understanding toward their teen. 'Wondering' out loud can help the young person feel you are curious about their life and taking their issues seriously without enforcing your solutions. For example, "I wonder what would have happened if...? " I wonder if you are okay with the way it turned out?" "I wonder if you would do something different if it happened again ?".

## Eye contact & direct conversation can be difficult for teens!

Getting alongside yourteen for example, in the car, walking the dog, ballgames, watching TV, gaming together, shopping, preparing/eating meals, can all be opportunities for listening and giving attention in a non-judgmental, non-threatening atmosphere.

**Humour can help to lighten the mood ** But remember, avoid sarcasm as young people often feel this belittles their problem**

## Play & Acceptance

Playallows for downtime and a non-judgmental space between you and your teen. It sends an important message of acceptance. Unconditional acceptance of a young person's thoughts, feelings and struggles will build their self-esteem.

We are in your corner here at Parentline, to listen, support or advise. Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm or Saturdays 9am to 1pm

# Go to

Never too old to play!

Parent LineNI™

0808 8020 400

## Trust and Empathy

Being playful builds trust and empathy and is good for bonding.

Playful, curious conversation with your teen can encourage empathy towards themselves and others. (For example. "I'm guessing that must have been hard for you?" .... "How do you think Joe felt?" .... I can see that would hurt your feelings" ...)



## Strike a Balance

To support your teens wellbeing, try to encourage them to strike a balance between face to face & screen time. Encourage equal measures of organized sports/activities/study time with spontaneous play and connection with peers

Useful reading

'Creating Loving Attachments' ...Golding & Hughes, 2012.

"Teenagers & Attachments: Helping Adolescents Engage with Life and Learning." D Hughes & K Brisch, 2009

## Down time

Finally, we all need 'down time' to recharge our batteries so we can face all the daily challenges of life. In this respect, children and young people

are no different to adults.

We are in your corner here at Parentline, to listen, support or advise. Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm or Saturdays 9am to 1pm

Parent LineNI™
0808 8020 400

Making Connections

We hope you have found this guide helpful.

We are always here to support, advise or simply listen.

Please get in touch for a caring, confidential conversation.

**Parentline NI 0808 8020 400**
Monday-Thursday 9am-9pm
Friday 9am-5pm
Staurday 9am -1pm

**www.ci-ni.org.uk/parentline-resources**
**parentline@ci-ni.org.uk**