

News release – 22nd August 2017

Managing exam results – tips for young people and parents

With A-Level results now out and GCSE results just around the corner, many parents will be wondering how best to support their child during what can be an incredibly stressful time. Some families will be celebrating together, but the reality is that not everyone will get the grades they dreamed of and there are likely to be some tears as well.

Recent figures released by Childline showed a 21% rise in counselling sessions over the last year for young people who were worried about their grades.* Relate is the UK's largest provider of children and young people's counselling in schools and their counsellors also witness first-hand how exam stress can be a key cause of anxiety for teenagers.

That's why Relate Cambridge is releasing tips to both young people and their parents for how best to handle the coming days and weeks.

Relationship Counsellor Elaine Taylor at Relate Cambridge, says that without realising they are doing any harm, parents can sometimes put unnecessary pressure on their children. She said: "Most parents want what's best for their child and that's why they can sometimes pile on the pressure when it comes to school work and exams. But pushing your child too hard or criticising them when they don't get the grades you'd hoped isn't good for their self-esteem or your relationship.

"When it comes to knowing what grades to expect and how to react, take your cue from your child. If they're happy with their grades then try to be happy for them too, even if the straight As you'd hoped for didn't materialise. If they're disappointed, support them and talk them through the options they have. It may be that lower than expected grades act as a catalyst for positive changes in their lives or to decide what it is they really want to do."

Relate's tips for young people

Be honest. You might feel like bottling up what you're worried about, but if you're honest with your friends and family, they might be able to help. It can also be hard for those around you to know how to react unless you tell them what you're hoping for.

Don't despair. If your results are not what you were hoping for, try not to fly off the handle. It's ok to feel disappointed, and you should give yourself time for that. But try to think about what steps you can take now to improve the situation.

Talk to someone. Knowledge is power and all that, so if your results aren't what you wanted, make an effort to talk to an expert about your options. It might be that you can retake, or there might be alternative routes that you can take from here. Find out as much information as you can before rushing a decision.

Go steady. Celebrating or commiserating, it's easy to get carried away on results day. Results day can be very emotional, and parties can sometimes get out of hand. Steer clear

of drinking too much, and try to think things through before you make rash decisions.

Relate's tips for parents

Talk to your teenager. Try and find out about their expectations so you know what they're hoping for. This can make them feel cared for, and it also helps you know how to react when they open their results.

Match your expectations with theirs. You might be harbouring hopes for a straight A student, but that might not be what your teenager is hoping for. If they're happy with their grades, be happy for them. Equally, if they're disappointed, try to see where they're coming from and offer support.

Don't underestimate the effect that exam results can have. Results day can be one of the most important days for young people and it's vital to recognise that. Don't make out like the results don't matter, or that the exams were not difficult and don't hold back on the celebrating if your child is happy!

Support them. If the grades are not what your teenager was hoping for, give them time to come to terms with it. They might want to talk through their options with you, or they might just want to be alone, but make sure they know that you're feeling for them, and you're there to help.

Relate's non-judgmental services support individuals, couples, families, children, young people and friends of all ages, backgrounds and sexual orientations. Relate Cambridge has recently launched a new service, Relate 4 Parents, which is open to any parent who just needs a bit of help, advice and support, regardless of whether they are living with their children, are a single parent, a step-parent, are separating, or are a separated parent. The sessions are focused on the child's needs, and offer support, advice and information. They are designed to enhance parenting skills, extend knowledge of a child's development and behaviour, as well as to gain insight into some of the issues parents may be struggling with.

To find out more or to book a face-to-face appointment, please contact us on 01223 357424 Mon-Thur 8am-10pm, Fri 8 am-6pm, Sat 9am-5pm (confidential answerphone at all other times) or visit www.relatecambridge.org.uk

-ENDS-

For all media enquiries contact Elaine Taylor on 01302 347712

For urgent out of hours enquiries call: 07971 869 735

* <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/21-rise-childline-counselling-sessions-about-exam-results/>

Notes to editors:

- Relationships are the beating heart of our lives – when they aren't healthy, we suffer.
- Relate champions the importance of strong and healthy relationships for all as the basis of a thriving society.
- Nearly 3 million people in the UK are in distressed relationships – that's 1.4 million families at breaking point.
- Relate's work helps prevent loneliness, depression, abuse, homelessness, debt and many other life-shattering events that can happen when relationships go wrong.
- Relate's non-judgmental services helped more than 1.5 million couples, families, children, young people and friends last year, of all backgrounds and sexual orientations.
- Relate will celebrate its 80th birthday in 2018.
- Visit relate.org.uk or call 0300 100 1234 to find out more.
- Relate is a registered charity number 207314.