

The Conversation Guide

Short guide: Starting the conversation

Not all disrespect towards women results in violence. But all violence against women starts with disrespectful behaviour.

It can be hard to start a conversation that could affect our relationship with our children, cause shame, or make parents seem hypocritical. We might be concerned about raising issues that will worry or scare them, or express opinions that could lead to conflict with others.

Getting started

Having the confidence to get started can sometimes be the hardest part. These suggested topic areas and conversation starters will help you take that first important step.

You don't need to have all the answers, but gathering information about the topics you think are important and practising your answers can help when talking about complicated and difficult issues.

Suggested topic areas

Consider your young person's own experiences, existing knowledge, and needs. Consider having conversations in stages and building on topic areas throughout their years based on their age, maturity and abilities.

Consider your young person's own sense of identity including gender, sexuality and culture and speak with them in a way that will best resonate with them.

Explaining respect

- what respect means and why it's important
- treating people how you would like to be treated
- what respectful behaviours look like and how to be a role model
- respect in the family, between friends and peers at school
- self-respect
- respect in sports teams and in the workplace
- respectful relationships between people of all genders
- respectful behaviour online.

Gender norms

- how people of all genders are good at lots of different things
- what gender stereotypes are and what expectations we have on ourselves to conform to these
- what does it mean to be a boy or man, girl or woman, gender diverse or fluid—what kind of person do we want to be
- what is gender identity and what does this mean for you
- what does gender equality mean to you, and why is it important
- how different genders are portrayed for example, in the media, movies, shows and online
- what is an equal and healthy relationship.

Recognising disrespect and aggression

- bullying, teasing, name-calling and laughing at others
- fighting in the playground or unreasonable and degrading behaviour on the sports field
- violence and harassment online and through social media content, comments and posts
- intimidation and public harassment, cat-calling or whistling at girls in public
- physical violence
- persistently pursuing or annoying someone if they are not interested
- controlling or jealous behaviour, emotional manipulation.



Personal privacy

- the right to your own privacy
- taking photos, being photographed, and sharing photos
- sharing photos of yourself with someone who doesn't want them
- sharing private conversations and online chats with others
- giving out personal information online, knowing what information is private
- sexting, phone and cyber etiquette and setting boundaries online
- harassment through repeated text messages or calls
- what to do if you feel unsafe online.

Respectful relationships

- respectful romantic and intimate relationships
- freedom of choice, independence
- doing things you both want to do and are comfortable with
- acknowledging and apologising when you have crossed a line
- communicating and listening
- being clear about what behaviours you won't tolerate
- how to tell if a relationship is not healthy or equal.

What we can do when we experience or recognise disrespect

- how you could call out disrespect
- ignoring peer pressure and recognising when you're being 'duped' by online influencers to say and do disrespectful things
- how to take action as a bystander when someone else is being targeted
- talking to your friends about respect
- being a role model
- talking to a trusted adult or friend
- speaking up and getting help, even if it means ending a relationship
- seeking further information through apps like iMatter
- accessing services like [Kids Helpline](#) and [1800RESPECT](#)
- referring to websites and social media pages like [The Line](#).

Suggested starters and opening lines

Remember, you don't have to have all the answers. Be ready to explore topics together. Be clear that you're there to help them. Consider who might overhear and the environment you and your young person are in. You may not get a response the first time, and that's OK. You could try a different opening line when you feel the timing is right. Try using open ended questions i.e. questions that don't lead to a 'yes' or 'no' response.

You could say:

- **I'm glad you came to me about this.** You're not going to get in trouble, I want to hear more about your opinion and how I might be able to help you.
- **You might not want to tell me everything, and that's OK.** I promise to listen and not judge. I might not have all the answers, but together we can work this out.
- **You mentioned before that you were OK and nothing is wrong.** You seemed a little concerned or upset. How can I help? What would you like to talk about?
- **You might think I don't understand, and maybe you're right.** But I would really like to try. Why don't you fill me in on what's going on?



Find out more

[The Conversation Guide](#) has more information on how to talk to young people about respect.