



STOP IT AT THE START SPEAK UP BOOKLET

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
LET'S STOP IT
AT THE START



Australian Government

A joint Australian, state and
territory government initiative.



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Understanding our behaviour	5
The importance of reflecting on our behaviour	7
How to speak up	8
Having the courage to speak up	10
Speaking to young people about respect	12
Unmute yourself	13
How I role model respect to my children	14
Further resources and where to go for help	15



**As parents and influencers
of our young people, we
want the best for them, and
for our community.**

Introduction

We want our young people to be healthy and proud of who they are. We want them to understand right and wrong, and to respect others and respect themselves.

This booklet is about encouraging and supporting people to speak up about disrespectful attitudes by having conversations about respectful relationships with the young people in their community.

We will share how we can all role model positive attitudes and behaviours toward women, and the importance of reflecting on the ways we might be excusing disrespect, through our own behaviours without knowing it.

You'll hear real stories from people in the community sharing their own experiences with speaking up about disrespect and reflecting on their behaviours.

Even the smallest action can help stop the cycle of disrespect. As a community we want to help break the cycle of violence against women, which starts with disrespect towards girls.

By speaking up about respect, we can make our communities better, stronger places for our future generations.



Understanding our behaviour

Making excuses

It's important to understand how our behaviour can impact young people. Sometimes, we excuse disrespect without meaning to.

“Boys will be boys”

“He just likes you”

“He just misses me”

Excuses like these tell our young people that disrespect is OK. Young boys can carry these harmful attitudes into their adult lives, which can sometimes lead to violence against women, if not addressed. These excuses can also lead young girls to accept disrespectful, aggressive and sometimes violent behaviour in their adult lives.

Often, these types of excuses or disrespectful attitudes are things we have learnt from others when we were young, things we grew up hearing and have come to think of as normal and harmless. Eventually, we end up passing these same attitudes and excuses on to our children and young people, often without realising it.

This is how the cycle of violence against women starts, and continues, from each generation to the next.

Being a role model

Many of us have grown up being influenced by our Elders teaching us and showing us about the importance of respect for women.

Young people pick up their behaviours from us, their parents and Elders, Aunties and Uncles, and other adults in their lives like sporting coaches or role models.

There are many different role models in our community, and we all play a part. What we say and do can influence young people. They might be members of our family, students or on sporting teams that we coach.

It's equally important to think about the positive examples we are setting for young people too. Young people learn from the examples we provide them, they pay attention to and reflect our positive and helpful behaviours and attitudes just as much as those that may be negative or harmful.

By focusing on the positive behaviours towards respect, we can also encourage other people in the community to reflect on their own behaviors and actions. This can lead to a positive change for the whole community.

Reflecting on our behaviour

It's important that we think about our behaviour, and what our young people are learning from us.

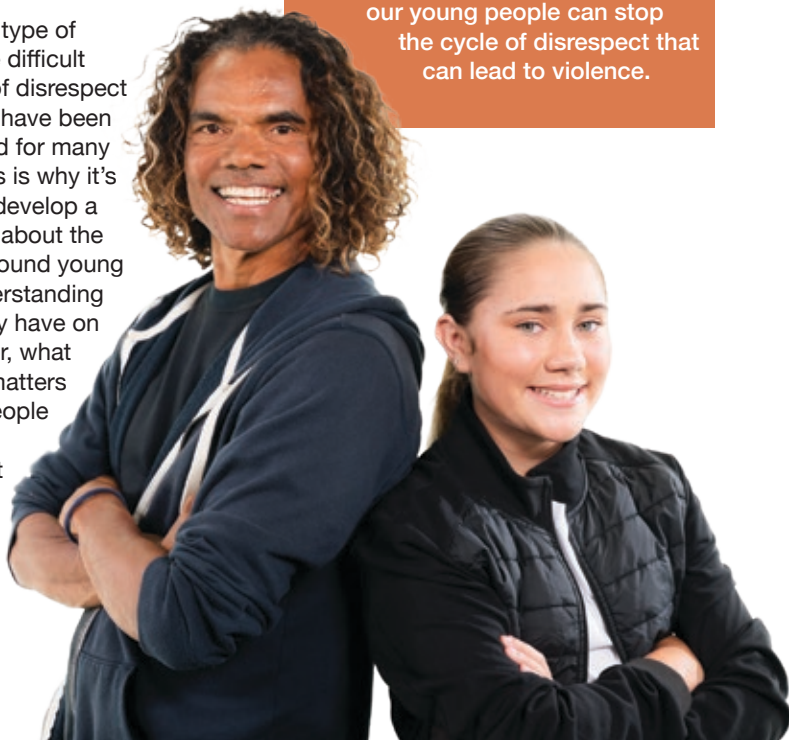
Thinking about our own experiences in life, particularly as young people, can help us to understand our own behaviours and the excuses we are making for disrespect as adults.

Sometimes, this type of reflection can be difficult because forms of disrespect towards women have been socially accepted for many generations. This is why it's so important to develop a habit of thinking about the things we say around young people and understanding the impact it may have on them. Remember, what we say and do matters to how young people are forming their own views about respect and what is right and wrong.



Key points:

- As parents and influencers of our young people, we want the best for them. We know violence against women is not our way.
- Disrespect impacts everyone. It starts with what we see and hear people say when we are young.
- Sometimes our words and attitudes can send the wrong message to our young people. Over time, our young people start to believe that disrespect is normal.
- Being aware of how we influence our young people can stop the cycle of disrespect that can lead to violence.



CASE STUDY

The importance of reflecting on our behaviour



My name is Sean Choolburra. I am a proud Girramay, Kalkadoon, Pitta and Gugu Yalanji man, and the father of four wonderful children.

I was raised by a strong single mother who taught me about respect.

I've always been very comfortable in who I am as a person. My daughters would constantly paint my nails – I spent an entire year once doing dance performances with red and green toenails. I set an example for my daughters to always be comfortable and confident in who they are.

I think all of us, regardless of our personal environments, get exposed to harmful attitudes towards women in some way or another. This is why I think it's important to always reflect on the examples we are setting for our children and the things we say.

Something that has stayed with me very strongly was a moment when a woman



Watch Sean's
video story



was telling me a story about a friend who had experienced disrespect from her partner. I responded by saying, 'oh, what did she do?'.

The woman I was speaking with immediately pulled me up on that comment. She didn't get angry, she just spoke to me very directly and said, "why would you say that?" I was shocked myself that I had said it, *me*, of all people, a father of two daughters, and the son of a single mother, I felt pretty shame about it.

It caused me to reflect on why I made that particular comment and things we pick up from years and years of disrespectful attitudes towards women being normalised and accepted within our society. I'm glad she pulled me up. If I had of said it with a group of guys I don't think anyone would have pulled me up, and that's what we need to change.

I've never said it again, and if I heard anyone else say it I wouldn't tolerate it. I would speak up about it, just like the woman who I had that conversation with did with me.

Unfortunately, when it comes to disrespect for women we are so conditioned, we have to change it, and this is where it starts.

How to speak up

When we speak up about disrespect, we take action to end the cycle of violence against women and girls. Speaking up can be done in different ways.

It could be speaking to someone about a disrespectful comment they've made, and letting them know how the comment could be harmful for the community and our future generations. Or it could be making sure to yarn with young people about the importance of respect.

Speaking up about disrespect can be a hard thing to do. We might feel too shame to speak up, or that it's not our place. We might fear what will happen if we do speak up, or what other people in the community will think of us.

Even though it might be hard, speaking up is one of the most important things we can do to help our communities and future generations.

If we can teach our young people about respect, we're setting them up for a happy, healthy life.

Encouraging respectful behaviours

In order to make our communities safer for women and girls, we need to start speaking up more when we see disrespect happening. Here are a few examples to show how unmuting ourselves and speaking up when we see disrespect can lead to positive outcomes for the whole community.

"She's just asking for trouble"

You are at a community gathering for NAIDOC Week, there are women at the gathering who you know well, and they have brought their children along. One of the girls is wearing a short skirt. One of your friends says to you, "that girl is asking for trouble – I would never let my daughter out of the house wearing that".

You might think: "I don't know if I should say something. I don't want to get caught in a conflict."

Instead, consider having a conversation about the issue with your friend, to help understand each other better. Talk about the importance of boys respecting girls, regardless of what they are wearing. Each small step adds up to a better world in which we all feel respected.

Tip: Stay calm and non-judgmental. Remember, it's not about causing conflict, it's about setting the standard for how people should be treated.

“Toughen up princess!”

It's athletics day, and everyone is really excited as the 100m freestyle is about to begin. Your nephew gets a shock at the start gun and misses the start – his tears start to flow. His older brother calls out, “Toughen up, princess!” and all the adults pause, but no one says anything.

You might think: “I feel too shame to tell his parents that comment is not okay. What if they think I’m overreacting, or that I should mind my own business?”

Instead, consider talking to his parents about the ways we want women and girls to be treated and how comments like these reinforce harmful ideas that women are weaker than men. Talking about it might help to empower them to have a yarn with their son about respect. We all want what’s best for our kids and our young people, and we all want them to be respected and respectful.

Tip: Be calm and confident – reassure yourself that we all have a role to speak up and that it will make a positive difference for others.

Choose the right time and place to have a chat with someone.

Tips to remember

- Choosing the right time and place can be important to having a productive conversation with someone.
- If you are speaking up about the behaviour of someone’s child, speak to the parent privately, rather than in front of other people. People will be more likely to listen and think about your concerns if you chat with them respectfully.
- Never speak up in an aggressive or judgmental tone or manner. Speak up in a caring, friendly, and respectful way.
- Not everyone feels comfortable or confident about speaking up. If you find you can’t speak up yourself, you can talk to someone else in your community, like a family member or Elder, about what has happened. Usually, there will be people in your community who can address the situation in a helpful and respectful way.
- What matters is not staying silent, because staying silent allows disrespectful behaviours to continue and tells young people these behaviours are OK.



CASE STUDY

Having the courage to speak up



My name is Renee Thomson, I am a proud Wiradjuri woman and Auntie & Mentor from Western Sydney.

There's been many times in my life where I've spoken up about a disrespectful comment or behaviour towards women, and also times when I didn't speak up, but later wished that I had.

An example of that is hearing off-the-cuff jokes and comments being made by older men like, "women belong in the kitchen", and not saying anything because I thought, "well, that's just their mentality, there's nothing I can really say that will change the way they think".

Regretfully, I've seen the impacts these comments have had on young people in the community and the way they behave towards each other.

Now, I always make sure to speak up about disrespect.

There have been times when I have been out with friends and noticed the disrespectful way some of my male friends talk to girls passing



Watch Renee's
video story



by. It's like they become different people depending on the environment and who is around them.

Whenever I've seen this, I've spoken up about it, pointing out how inappropriate, disrespectful and intimidating this kind of behaviour is. In most cases, the guys I've said this to have taken on board what I've said. Not everyone will, but I think most people will listen to you and it can lead to a positive change in the way they behave in the future.

It's so important to break down disrespectful behaviours that we've learnt from a young age. Explaining the harm that these words can have can help people understand they can have a lasting impact.

What I would say to any person about speaking up is: you have a voice. Remember to always use it, even if you feel tears coming on, or you feel embarrassed. Just remember that even if one person hears you, that's better than no one hearing you.



Yarning about respect

Another important form of speaking up is having conversations about respect within the community. Conversations about respect are important, especially with young people. It might be our children, nieces and nephews, or young people in our community.

Talking about respect helps our young people to know what is right and wrong and shapes their future behaviours.

You can yarn about respect with young people, asking them questions to find out what they already know and think about it. By doing this, you can become more aware of their thoughts and perceptions about respect for women and girls as well as their current influences.

It's good to talk to young people and other influencers and adults in your family or community, about the common excuses we so often make for disrespect so we can all begin to become more aware of these excuses and begin to make changes to our behaviours that will have lasting positive impacts for our community.

This means not just talking about disrespect when you see it happening, but also making a point to talk about the importance of respect for women and girls and being aware of the common excuses for disrespect that are being made.

Here are some ideas to help you get a conversation about respect with other adults in the community started:

- Ask a parent you admire about how they are teaching their children about respectful relationships.

- Share how you've started a conversation about respect with your children, and how they responded.
- Share a time you witnessed disrespectful behaviour from a young person, how you responded, and how you felt about it.
- Discuss phrases like 'it takes two to tango' or 'don't cry like a girl' that you heard from your own parents, that you won't repeat to your own children.
- Share a time you accidentally excused disrespectful behaviour by saying phrases like 'boys will be boys' or 'he did it because he likes you', before realising the impact this really had on your children.



Key points:

- It might seem intimidating to get involved and stop the cycle of disrespect.
- Disrespect impacts everyone, regardless of culture or background.
- We might feel shame or be embarrassed about speaking up. We might fear what others might say or think if we get involved.
- We might feel it's not our role and the problems are too great.
- Make sure you are speaking up within a safe environment
- Speaking up tells our young people disrespect is not OK.
- Together, we can help our young people by calling out disrespect when we see it.

CASE STUDY

Speaking to young people about respect



My name is Kristy Masella, I am a proud Darumbal woman and the mother of two teenage daughters.

When it comes to talking to my daughters about respect, I often draw on personal examples of things I've experienced or reflected on myself. I talk about the disrespectful behaviors that I accepted at times in my life or thought were normal.

When I was younger I think I excused aggression in boys, I think I just accepted this belief that aggression for boys and men was in some ways just a normal and natural part of 'boys being boys'. I also didn't fully realise or reflect on the harm that can be caused by that culture around women being the possessions of men, of 'belonging' to a man.

I've been very quick to have conversations with my girls to say 'I've just realised I've been tolerating this', or, 'this has been part of my life and I've just become aware of it now, so make sure you look out for it and that you are aware of it.'



Watch Kristy's video story



By doing this, my daughters will be able to identify disrespect a lot quicker and easier. Most women would have examples under their belt to talk about, including positive examples of respectful behaviours and attitudes towards women as well.

I once witnessed a young woman speak up to two men who were whistling at women on the street as they passed by. The woman asked the men if they realised how intimidated and objectified this makes women feel. You could see the men were a bit taken aback by it, but it seemed as though they were taking on board what was being said, I doubt they would have done it again. I felt so empowered by seeing this young woman speak up in that way and it's given me the courage to do the same if I were to find myself in a similar situation in the future. The more we speak up, the more others see us speak up, and then they begin to speak up too.

If we don't have open conversations about disrespect, it becomes normalised and accepted.

Having conversations with one another about respectful relationships is so important because if we don't, we're going to have generations of women to come experiencing and being affected by disrespect and the issues disrespect leads to, such as domestic violence and other forms of abuse. We need to speak up now so we can break the cycle of violence and disrespect.

Unmute yourself

Every one of us has a part to play in ending the cycle of violence against women and girls. It's important to not stay silent, and we can do this by 'unmuting' ourselves.

We can do this by:

- Reflecting on and understanding the impact of our own behaviours.
- Role modelling positive attitudes and behaviours towards women to our young people.
- Speaking up about disrespect when we see it in a safe and productive way.
- Having preventative yarns about disrespect with young people.

The more we encourage respect, the more it becomes our 'normal' behaviour. It can make each generation more respectful to women and girls and make our communities safer, stronger places to be.



Key points:

- Even the smallest action can help stop the cycle of disrespect.
- It can be as simple as talking to our kids and young people about respectful relationships.
- When we speak up about bad behaviour, we let our young people know what is right and wrong.
- Don't stay silent. Unmute yourself and speak up when something isn't right.
- For tools and resources visit respect.gov.au



CASE STUDY

How I role model respect to my children



My name is Andy Saunders, I am a proud Biripi man from the New South Wales Mid North Coast, and the father of four wonderful kids.

I think one of the strongest ways we can teach our young people about respectful behaviour and attitudes towards women is through the examples we give to them. I do this in the way I hold myself around other people, especially my wife, mother, sisters – all the women in my life – I respect them like I want to be respected, so my kids see that and they automatically take on those values as well. I think with kids it's also about 'doing', not just 'saying'.

This is how I learnt about respect myself, and about being a strong, caring husband and father. Now, I carry on those lessons to my own children.

My mother was a strong woman who overcame many hardships in her life, she taught me about strength and respect. My grandfather brought up



Watch Andy's
video story



10 kids at a time when things were very hard, especially if you were Aboriginal. In spite of all the hardships he faced in his life, he never held hate or aggression in his heart. He was the most loving, beautiful man and teacher. He taught me everything I needed to know about being a good father and husband.

I think it's unfortunate that we grow up in a world where men are socially conditioned to be the 'toughest', to be the ones who don't cry, the ones who don't give their dads a kiss or a cuddle because that's a sign of weakness. I'm raising my boys to have a real connection with human emotion and to not be scared of that. And that's exactly what they see in me. I think that's what a 'real man' is, someone who is able to display how they feel in a respectful way.

If you have kids, nieces, nephews, young people that look up to you, that's exactly where you can make the change, because young people talk, they're sponges, they absorb the things they see and hear, then they tell their friends, and their friends tell their friends, and all of a sudden you will have a generation that will not put up with it, you will have a generation that will not tolerate disrespect.

Further resources and where to go for help

There are lots of resources available to download at respect.gov.au

You can also watch stories from community members too.

QR Code : Access the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stop it at the Start resources



If you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger, call **000**

1800RESPECT 1800 737 732

(24 hours, 7 days a week)

The National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

www.1800respect.org.au

Lifeline 13 11 14

(24 hours, 7 days a week)

A national number which can help put you in contact with a crisis service in your state.

www.lifeline.org.au

IF YOU SEE DISRESPECT **UNMUTE YOURSELF, SPEAK UP.**

We all have the power to end violence against women.

For tools and resources visit

respect.gov.au



Australian Government

A joint Australian, state and territory government initiative.