

GENERATION RESPECT

A practical guide for talking
to other adults about raising
respectful young people.



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
**LET'S STOP IT
AT THE START**

GENERATION RESPECT

HOW WE CAN ALL WORK TOGETHER TO RAISE RESPECTFUL KIDS

We can all help our adult peers to be positive role models for young people by having open and ongoing conversations about respect with each other.

When adults – parents, family members, teachers, coaches, employers and other community role models – work together as a team to promote respect, we set a positive example for our kids.

This guide shares practical tips to help you build the confidence to start conversations with other adults about raising a respectful generation of young people. This includes talking to each other about respect – or disrespect – when we see it.

If we all come together as a community and find our collective voice, we can build a better future for our children, free from disrespect.

WE CREATE THE WORLD YOUNG PEOPLE GROW UP IN

Fourteen year old Elise cares about basketball above all else. She wants to feel valued for her basketball skills, and be treated with respect, regardless of her gender. Her main focus is that she'll score a three pointer in her game on Saturday, and that she isn't treated differently because she is a girl. Sometimes there's more focus on whether her shorts are too short, or how she plays '*for a girl*'.

The world Elise grows up in is created by the adults she looks up to. We have a lot to do with whether she feels like she is valued for the right reasons, and whether she is treated with respect as she grows up. This is because respect - and disrespect - are things that we learn, and things that we all have the power to teach. How we behave, how we treat others and what we accept from those around us all have a big impact on young people.

It may sound like a lot of responsibility to take on, but small actions really do make a big difference. We all have the power to create the world that Elise – and other children – want to live in.



HOW CAN I MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

As a community, we know that violence against women is wrong. We want to help break the cycle for the next generation. We have started to understand what we say and do as adults can contribute to this cycle – often without us realising it.

Our words and actions impact those around us. Sometimes we may hear another adult say something that doesn't sit right with us, or we may see children behave in a way that isn't okay. It can feel easier to just let it go, but staying silent sends a message that this behaviour is sometimes okay. But the good news is we can all come together and make a positive change for Elise.

Below are some ideas of small steps we can all take, that will move us closer to a culture free from disrespect:

- 1. Think carefully about the language we use around young people.** When we make excuses for disrespect, by saying things like 'he just did it because he likes her' and 'she's probably overreacting', we could be teaching young people that disrespect towards girls is a normal part of growing up.
- 2. Role model respectful behaviour.** Young people learn how to behave from us – the adults that influence them. By actively role modelling respect towards everyone, we're setting a positive example for the young people around us – and the broader community.
- 3. Start a proactive conversation about respect with the young people in your life.** By having open, honest conversations about respect, we're helping prepare our children for the future. Then, when they face a difficult situation, they'll know there are different ways they can react. Read [The Conversation Guide](#) for tips on where to start.
- 4. Address disrespectful behaviour when you see it.** If we call it out when we see it, instead of making excuses or staying silent, we're sending a clear message to those around us about what is and is not acceptable.
- 5. Chat with another adult you trust about raising respectful kids.** Raising children takes a village, and other adults around us can act as a much needed support net or source of advice. Keep reading for tips on how to start a conversation with other adults in your community.



WHERE YOU CAN START

Having a conversation with family members, friends and other adults about raising respectful children can seem daunting, but below are a few ideas to help you get started.



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



Share how you've broached the subject of 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.



HOW TO MAKE POSITIVE IMPACTS IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS

When we see disrespect in social situations, addressing it can feel awkward or scary, and we might think it's easier to just let it go. But it's a great opportunity to spark up a conversation about respect, and share our experiences with other adults.

It might seem overwhelming – we might think other parents will judge us, or that speaking out might start unwanted conflict – but we often focus on the potential worst case scenario, instead of the positive outcomes that speaking out can inspire.

We need to look at these situations differently, and remember that our friends, family and other parents may be just as unsure about the situation as us. By speaking up and starting a conversation about respect, we can set a positive example for those around us.

Below are some common situations where starting a conversation about respect may seem overwhelming, and some examples of how to look at the situations differently:



#1

You are at high school orientation, and one of the female students is wearing a short skirt.

One of the mums says, "That girl is asking for trouble – I would never let my daughter out of the house wearing that". A young boy nearby hears the comment, and looks over.

YOU MIGHT THINK:

"Hmm, I don't know if I should say something.
I don't want to create conflict."

CONVERSATION STARTER:

I don't think any girl is ever 'asking for it'. Girls and women deserve respect no matter what they're wearing.

INSTEAD, CONSIDER:

Having a conversation about this issue can help us understand each other better. This mum may not understand that her words may teach young boys that there are circumstances where disrespecting girls is okay. By unmuting yourself, you can help her understand that we should be raising boys to treat girls respectfully, no matter what they're wearing.

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.



#2

You are invited over to a gathering with a few other families. A few of the boys are playing video games and one of the girls wants to join in.

The boys say “Girls can’t be gamers”, but the other parents seem to be ignoring their argument.

YOU MIGHT THINK:

“If I say something, I might just make their argument worse. If I cause a scene, the other parents might not invite me next time.”

CONVERSATION STARTER:

I think we should step in and let them know that’s really sexist – girls can do anything boys can.

INSTEAD, CONSIDER:

If you *don't* say something, the kids might think this sexist behaviour is okay. The other parents might not have heard, or might feel unsure how to address the situation themselves.

TIP:

Other adults may also feel unsure or scared to speak up when they see disrespectful behaviour. If you speak up, you can set a positive example for everyone.



#3

You become aware that one of your son’s friends has started a social media chat and invited people they met online into the chat.

You see inappropriate comments about girls. You raise it with the friend’s parents and they respond, “That’s just boys being boys...”

YOU MIGHT THINK:

“They’re going to think I’m judging them as a parent. I’m not perfect myself, and they might use it as a reason to judge my parenting.”

CONVERSATION STARTER:

No, that’s not on – we need to let them know treating girls like that is not okay. Let’s have a chat with them together.

INSTEAD, CONSIDER:

These parents might not have reflected on what their son is learning when they uses phrases like ‘boys will be boys’. You could share your own experience and learnings around starting a conversation about respect towards girls with your child.

TIP:

Acknowledge parenting is hard, but we will all benefit from creating a culture where disrespectful behaviour isn’t tolerated. By working together, and calling out disrespect, we can create a better future for our children.



#4

You are at a poolside get-together with your extended family.

One of the boys has been continually pestering a girl and flicking the strap on her swimming top. She is upset, and asks the boy to leave her alone.

YOU MIGHT THINK:

"If I call this out as disrespectful behaviour, my family might think I'm a hypocrite – they know I did silly things like this when I was young."

CONVERSATION STARTER:

We all did silly things as kids, but he's gone too far and she's clearly upset. I'll pull him aside for a quick chat.

INSTEAD, CONSIDER:

We all make mistakes, and nobody is perfect. You learnt that this behaviour isn't acceptable, but if you stay silent, this boy may continue to think this kind of behaviour's okay. By addressing this now, you're helping him grow up to be a kind and respectful adult.

TIP:

The best time to address disrespectful behaviour is when it happens. Calmly responding or casually asking the person if you can have a quick chat is a good way to start.

TOP TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT RESPECT

Below are some useful tips to keep in mind, when talking about respect with other adults in your life.

1. BE OPEN MINDED

Remember that we all have different experiences, and different language that we use to address disrespectful behaviour.

2. BE EMPATHETIC

Don't be judgemental. It's important to listen to and value others' opinions, regardless of your own ideas and opinions. Addressing disrespect can be tough, but we need to remember that we're all in this together.

3. BE HONEST

Share your own experiences and point of view even in situations where things may not have gone as planned. We don't always get it right, but we can learn from each other's experiences.

4. KEEP IT CASUAL

This will help make everyone feel comfortable to talk about respect. Encourage others to share their views and experiences - you could share your own personal story or ask questions to help guide the conversation.

5. KEEP THE DIALOGUE OPEN

Talking about respect and disrespect doesn't need to be a 'big deal' – it can happen as part of our everyday conversations with those around us. The more we talk about respect, the easier it will get.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

As mums and dads, family members, teachers, coaches, employers and role models, we all have a role to play in breaking the cycle of disrespect, and ultimately violence against women.

As individuals, and as a community, we have the opportunity to create a better future for our children. We all have the power to create the world that Elise wants to live in.

For more information visit www.respect.gov.au.

THE EXCUSE INTERPRETER

For more information on how young people can misinterpret our words or actions, read [The Excuse Interpreter](#).

THE CONVERSATION GUIDE

For tips on how to start a conversation about respect, read [The Conversation Guide](#).



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Australian Government

A joint Australian, state and territory government initiative.