

Parent & Carer Toolkit

*Navigating Conversations on Consent,
Respectful Relationships and
Gender-Based Violence*



Introduction

As it stands, there is widespread discussions on gender-based violence (GBV) in Australia. As a parent or carer, **understanding the complexities of GBV is paramount to equip young people with the necessary knowledge and skills to cultivate healthy and respectful relationships.** By fostering open and informed conversations at home, parents and carers wield significant influence in shaping young people's attitudes towards respect, consent, and healthy relationships.

Despite the widespread acknowledgment "we all have a role to play in combatting GBV", actionable advice for parents and carers remains scarce. Working with more than 100,000 young people across Australia each year, we recognise the importance of these conversations in the home environment. Developed by Elephant Ed, **this resource is designed to empower parents and carers with guidance and tools to engage effectively in these crucial discussions.**

Thank you for taking the time to engage in these important conversations. **As a parent or carer, your primary goal should be to create an environment where your young person feels safe.**

From everyone at Elephant Ed, thank you for playing your part.

Agenda

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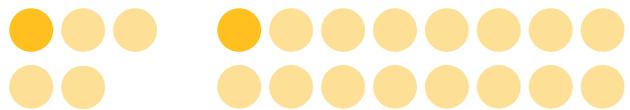
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Background and Statistics

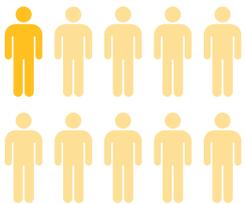
Analysing current trends and statistics allow us to better understand the GBV issue in Australia. While these statistics are confronting, it is important young people are aware and informed to help enact positive change.



*Young men aged 15-19 have the highest offender rates of sexual violence.*¹



*1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.*²



*1 in 10 boys have been physically or sexually abused before the age of 15.*³



*On average, one woman is killed every four days by a current or former partner.*³



*The average age of first time exposure to pornography is 13 years old.*⁴

Australian Culture & Drivers

Mainstream pornography

The widespread availability of sexually explicit content, facilitated by the internet and various media platforms, exposes adolescents to degrading portrayals of women.⁵ A concerning 75% of 16–18-year-olds have encountered pornography, with almost one-third exposed before the age of 13.⁶ Research shows 88% of pornographic scenes contain physical aggression, of which 94% is directed towards women.⁷ This exposure can significantly shape the developing attitudes and behaviours surrounding sexual behaviour and relationships in children and young adults.⁸



Everyday media

Objectifying representations of women pervade various forms of media from advertising to film and television.⁹ Counteracting the negative influence of figures like Andrew Tate on social media necessitates fostering environments where young boys can cultivate healthy, social and emotional growth, while engaging in positive conversations about masculinity.¹⁰

Gender and power imbalances

Violence against women and girls stems from entrenched inequalities and discrimination based on gender, race, and other power differentials.¹¹ These inequities trace back to historical power dynamics, long-positioning women and girls as subordinate to men and boys.¹²



Practical Tips

Research shows early and preventative education can make a tangible impact on young people as they learn to navigate appropriate and respectful behaviour.¹³

Framing Discussion

Consider the following tips when navigating these discussions with your children:

- Tailor your conversations to suit your child's age and developmental stage.
- Meet your child at their level of understanding and readiness.
- Create an inclusive and accessible dialogue space where questions are welcomed, and judgment is suspended.
- Initiate conversations early, emphasising fundamental values such as ethics, rights, and bodily autonomy. As your child grows, gradually incorporate topics like consent and discussions on GBV, adapting them to their maturity level and expand into conversations about sexual relationships.¹⁴



Conversation Starters

While these conversations may evoke feelings of awkwardness or discomfort, they remain crucial and are most effective by fostering open dialogue. *The home serves as a pivotal setting, which should be perceived by your child as an approachable and open space to ask questions.*

Below are some conversations starters which can be used to guide your conversations regarding consent, respectful relationships and GBV.

'Consent Can't Wait' ¹⁵

The Australian Federal Government recently released a campaign, 'Consent Can't Wait', which aims to support parents and carers in their communication and navigation of conversations on sexual consent.

Below are some conversations starters highlighted in the campaign.



Why is consent important?

Who is responsible for sexual consent?

Is consent needed every time with the same partner?

Do you need to be in a relationship with someone for consent to be necessary?

Is consent more important in a new relationship or a committed, long-term relationship? Why?

At what point during a sexual encounter are you meant to ask for consent?

*How are you communicating consent?
Are there certain situations it is implied?*

Why might someone find it hard to communicate 'no'?

Some people say asking for consent 'spoils the mood', what are some ways to ask for consent which will keep everyone feeling comfortable?



*'Bring Up Respect'*¹⁶

The Australian Federal Government's '*Bring Up Respect*' campaign also provides tangible conversation starters for parents and carers around respect, highlighted below.



Do you notice any differences between how boys and girls are treated at school?

Do you notice any differences between how boys and girls behave at school?

Have you heard a boy say something to a girl you didn't agree with?

Have you ever found it difficult to talk to boys/girls? What are the main reasons?

What do you think of the way the woman/man was treated in that movie/TV show/game?

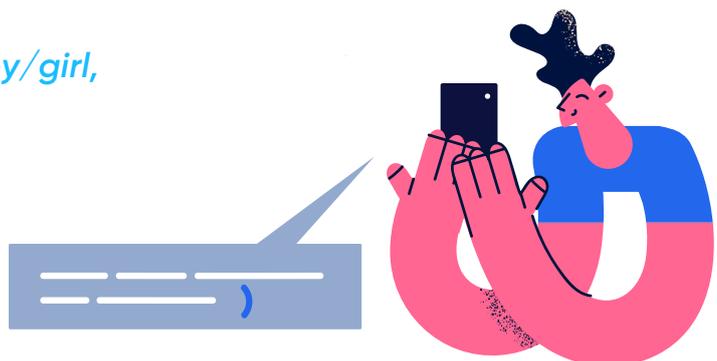
Can you think of a time you may have treated someone with disrespect?

If one of your friends was being disrespectful to you, how would you feel? What would you do?

If one of your friends was being disrespectful to someone else, how would you feel? What would you do?

If one of your friends was being treated with disrespect, how would you feel? What would you do?

If you ever felt unsafe around a boy/girl, where would you go for help?



FAQs

Below are some frequently asked questions from parents, along with suggested responses.

What do you do if your child won't engage?

How do I get my kids to talk to me?

It can be difficult for a young person to open up to a parent or carer when they feel awkward or embarrassed – and they likely do. While your child may not embrace the conversations immediately, it is important to create a space they know they can use to talk to you if and when they need.

- Engage in conversations regularly (lots of little chats, rather than a one-off)
- Validate the awkwardness of the topic and acknowledge it is normal
- Be honest. Share your understanding of the topic (or ask your own questions)
- Let them know regularly they can talk to you about anything
- Validate their experience and questions so they feel heard ¹⁷

Should parents talk to children only of the same gender?

It is important to engage with your children, no matter their gender. While sharing your own experiences is a powerful tool, so is the perspective of another gender and parent. While you may not have all the answers, the process of learning together can have a great impact. While a child may be more comfortable with one parent, ensure they know other trusted adults are there as support if they need.¹⁸

How do I involve my child so it is more of a conversation than a lecture?

- Ensure you allow plenty of opportunities for your child to ask questions and share their thoughts on the topic
- Bring your own set of questions and conversation starters
- Explore topics and answers together
- Use teachable moments and resources to generate spontaneous discussion ¹⁹

What are the legalities I should know about?

Laws relating to consent and sexual activity vary from state to state. Youth Law Australia is a legal service dedicated to helping young people understand their rights and responsibilities. Click [here](#) for your detailed state overview on these topics.

When is the right time to start conversations around pornography?

Each young person matures at their own pace. Consider framing conversations within a broader discussion about consent, respectful relationships, body safety and related topics. Once you gauge their maturity and knowledge levels, you can then delve deeper.²⁰

Find some further tips in [this](#) resource from eSafety spanning conversations about online bullying, sending and receiving intimate images and online pornography.

Is the desire to seek out pornography a natural curiosity?

Young people mostly view pornography online. With young people spending a significant amount of time on devices, viewing pornography does not always stem from actively seeking it out.²¹ Despite this, young people are naturally curious and want to understand how things work.²²

How do you have conversations around consent without blaming or demonising males, especially if you have sons?

The language used around consent can have a major impact on harmful expectations and misrepresentations. Be clear with what you are saying, stick to the facts and don't make broad statements about groups of people e.g. 'all men' or 'all women'. Try and challenge unhelpful stereotypes.²³ Make the conversation relevant and personal to your child. It is important for young men know they are part of the solution and don't have to be part of the problem.²⁴

Resources

Please note, these resources are only recommendations. Before using, please ensure they are suitable for your child and align with your family values.

- **Federal Government Consent hub for parents and carers**
<https://www.consent.gov.au/>
- **Federal Government Consent Policy Framework**
<https://www.dss.gov.au/sexual-consent>
- **eSafety parents and carers**
www.esafety.gov.au/parents
- **ReachOut Parents**
<https://parents.au.reachout.com>
Includes one-on-one, free personalised professional coaching for parents and carers
- **Youth Law Australia**
<https://yla.org.au/>
- **The Line**
<https://www.theline.org.au/parents-and-carers/>
- **ReachOut Sexual Assault Support**
<https://au.reachout.com/articles/sexual-assault-support>
- **Kids Helpline – What is Consent?**
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/what-consent>
- **Australian Government – respect.gov.au**
<https://www.respect.gov.au/resources/talking-about-respect/>
- **Australian Government – Australian Institute of Family Studies**
[The effects of pornography on children and young people](#)
- **eSafety Commissioner**
[Talking about sex and pornography](#)

References

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- 2 <https://www.consent.gov.au/conversation-guides>
- 3 Australian Institute of Criminology. 2024. Homicide in Australia 2021–22 and Homicide in Australia 2022–23. _____
- 4 <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/Accidental-unsolicited-and-in-your-face.pdf>
- 5 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-25/degrading-behaviour-women-pornography-risks-australian-teenagers/103827668>
- 6 https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/Roadmap-for-age-verification_2.pdf?v=1714975217398
- 7 Brem MJ, Garner AR, Grigorian H, Florimbio AR, Wolford-Clevenger C, Shorey RC, Stuart GL. Problematic Pornography Use and Physical and Sexual Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration Among Men in Batterer Intervention Programs. J Interpers Violence. 2021 Jun
- 8 <https://theconversation.com/by-the-time-they-are-20-more-than-4-in-5-men-and-2-in-3-women-have-been-exposed-to-pornography-new-research-225573>
- 9 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-25/degrading-behaviour-women-pornography-risks-australian-teenagers/103827668>
- 10 <https://www.vox.com/even-better/24097641/andrew-tate-masculinity-teens-boys-men-talk-conversations>
- 11 <https://theconversation.com/australias-new-consent-campaign-gets-a-lot-right-but-consent-education-wont-be-enough-to-stop-sexual-violence-230956>
- 12 <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/national-strategy-achieve-gender-equality-discussion-paper/current-state/gendered-violence>
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- 14 <https://theconversation.com/wondering-how-to-teach-your-kids-about-consent-heres-an-age-based-guide-to-get-you-started-230976>
- 15 <https://www.consent.gov.au/conversation-guides>
- 16 <https://www.respect.gov.au>
- 17 <https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/development/sexual-development/sex-education-children>
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- 19 <https://theconversation.com/wondering-how-to-teach-your-kids-about-consent-heres-an-age-based-guide-to-get-you-started-230976>
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