Department of
Education

GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Trusted Adult Guide

Your guide for supporting young people to navigate personal safety and wellbeing



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The Trusted Adult Guide: Your guide to supporting young people to navigate personal safety and wellbeing.

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Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which our students live and are educated throughout Western Australia.

We recognise the enduring strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the vital role of family, Elders and community in keeping young people safe, connected and supported. For countless generations, Aboriginal peoples have protected and nurtured their young people through strong cultural knowledge, kinship networks and collective care.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and honour their ongoing leadership in strengthening the wellbeing of future generations.



Artwork: Medicine Trees
Artist: Michelle Butler - B. 1992
Artist statement: '*These are medicine trees that my grandfathers and grandmothers told me about. They are not one type of tree.My trees are all different ones that can fix people.*'

Artist information: Michelle Butler Nakamarra is an emerging artist from Central Australia. Born in in 1992, Michelle grew up primarily between the remote communities of Tjukurla in Western Australia and Mimili in the Anangu Pitjanjtatara Yankunyjtatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia. As a young girl, Michelle was constantly around her family members, watching them paint and listening to their stories. In her late teens, Michelle began painting her own designs. The stories Michelle paints have been passed to her from both her grandfather and grandmother's sides.

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Contributors

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Bridgewell X
Consulting

WA Child Safety Services
Creating Safer Communities

Illustrations by Cameron Kim Jones.

camkim

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Before you begin: A note on your wellbeing

This guide covers sensitive topics like harm, abuse and online risks. It is normal to have strong feelings while reading. Some topics may be difficult, especially for adults with lived experience of trauma or intergenerational trauma (the passing of stress and trauma through generations). Please take your time and seek support if you need it.

Please look after yourself

Go at your own pace	You don't need to read everything at once.
Take breaks	If you feel overwhelmed, step away. Come back when you're ready.
Check in with yourself	Before you start, ask: • *'Am I ready to read this right now?'* • *'What support do I need?'*

If you feel unsettled at any point:

- use a settling skill (for example, slow breathing or stepping outside)
- reach out to someone you trust.

If you have concerns for yourself or someone else, support is available through professional services. See Support services for adults.

You'll also find more information in Looking after yourself as a trusted adult.

You don't need to have all the answers. Being a calm, supportive person who listens is what matters most.

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Reuse and adaptation

Make this guide work for your community

Different families, cultures and communities understand safety in different ways. Trusted adults may need to adapt these ideas to fit a young person's cultural, linguistic or community context.

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Guidance if you adapt this guide

If you adapt this guide, we suggest you:

Stay true to the goal	Any changes should support child safety, wellbeing and protective behaviours education.
Keep it accurate	Safety messages should stay correct and follow relevant child-safety guidance.
Give credit	Acknowledge the WA Department of Education as the original source and indicate if changes were made.

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Glossary

This glossary explains key terms used in this guide. You don't need to be an expert in these words. Understanding them helps you stay a steady, safe support for a young person.

Term	What it means
Agency	A young person's power to make choices and have a say. It means involving them in decisions about their safety in ways that match their age, stage and communication needs.
Being safe / feeling safe	**Being safe:** What's happening around you (the place, the people and what they're doing). **Feeling safe:** How your body and emotions respond. Feeling safe matters even when a place looks safe.
Building blocks of safety	Three things that help young people feel safe: • **Choice** (having a say) • **Control** (being able to make decisions or leave) • **Time limit** (knowing what will happen and when it ends). A lack of any of these can signal a situation may be unsafe.
Coercive control	A pattern of behaviour used to scare, pressure or dominate someone. It can include monitoring phones, isolating them from others or using threats. It doesn't always involve physical violence. In WA, coercive control is recognised as a form of family violence.
Consent	Giving free, informed and ongoing permission. In WA, consent must be affirmative (a clear and voluntary 'yes' that can be withdrawn at any time). Silence or a lack of resistance is not consent.
Culturally safe support	A person or service a young person feels respected by, understood by and safe with. This may include Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers, Elders, community leaders or other adults the young person identifies as culturally safe. Cultural safety also means recognising that young people may seek support from different people depending on their family, culture or community context.
Disclosure	When a young person shares information about harm, abuse, neglect or a safety concern. Disclosure is often a process, not a single event. A young person might test the waters by sharing a small worry first to see if an adult is safe to talk to before sharing a larger concern.
Echo chamber	When a young person mostly sees or hears the same views online or in a group. This can make harmful ideas feel normal because they're not hearing different perspectives.
Emotional safety	Feeling respected, understood and free from shame or fear. Adults support emotional safety by listening without judgment and responding in a calm, predictable way.

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Term	What it means
Fight / flight / freeze / fawn / flop	Common body responses to stress or fear: • **Fight:** wanting to argue or push back • **Flight:** wanting to leave • **Freeze:** feeling stuck or unable to act • **Fawn:** trying to please or keep someone calm • **Flop:** feeling limp, shut down or disconnected. These are automatic survival responses, not choices. A young person may 'fawn' (comply) even if they are being harmed.
Grooming	When someone builds trust with a young person with the intent to sexually abuse them in the future. It can happen online or in person. People who groom may give gifts, create secrets ('Don't tell anyone'), isolate the young person or slowly cross boundaries. Grooming is never the young person's fault.
Grounding	Ways to help a young person (or adult) feel calmer. These help you stay in the here and now when you feel overwhelmed. Examples include slow breathing, feeling your feet on the floor or naming things you can see.
Image based abuse	Sharing, threatening to share or creating sexual images of a person without their consent. This includes deepfakes and images of people under 18. Reports can be made directly to eSafety Commissioner.
Mandatory reporting	A legal requirement in WA for certain professionals (such as teachers, doctors and nurses) to report child sexual abuse to the authorities.
Protective behaviours	Skills that help young people stay safe, recognise unsafe situations and ask for help. They include knowing warning signs, identifying trusted adults and using safety networks.
Protective interrupting	Gently pausing a conversation to move it to a private place. This protects the young person's privacy and dignity in public spaces. It's not used for one-on-one private talks.
Radicalisation	A process where a person's beliefs become more extreme over time. It may involve us vs. them thinking or justifying harm.
Safe risk	A challenge that feels a bit scary but is not unsafe. Safe risks help young people build confidence and independence.
Safety continuum	A way of understanding how situations move from: • Safe (feeling calm and secure) • Safe risk (feeling nervous but still in control) • Risking on purpose (choosing a challenge to learn or grow) • Unsafe (feeling scared, trapped or in danger). The continuum helps young people notice warning signs.
Safety network	A group of people, services and supports a young person can turn to for help. It may include family, Elders, teachers, coaches, friends, community supports and helplines. A safety network must include at least one trusted adult. Young people have the right to choose and change who is in their network.

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Term	What it means
Sextortion	A form of blackmail where someone pressures a young person to send sexual images or videos and then demands money, more images or favours. This is a crime.
Tech based abuse	Harmful behaviours that happen online or through devices. This includes grooming, harassment, and image-based abuse. A report can be made directly to eSafety Commissioner.
T.E.D tool	A simple way to ask open questions: • Tell me… • Explain to me… • Describe to me… TED questions help young people share in their own words.
Trusted adult	Someone a young person feels safe with and can rely on to help keep them safe. This is a relationship, not a job title. A young person chooses who feels safe, and trusted adults may come in and out of their network as relationships change.
Violent extremism	Using or supporting violence to promote a cause or belief. This can include hate based violence or terrorism.
Warning signs	Body or emotional signals that something feels off or unsafe. These may include a racing heart, shaky hands, or feeling frozen.

Definitions in this glossary draw on shared principles across child safety, wellbeing, online safety and protective behaviours frameworks. Key sources include the WA Department of Communities, protective behaviours education, the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), Blue Knot Foundation, the eSafety Commissioner, and the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE).

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1 How to use this guide

This guide provides practical support for any trusted adult having conversations with young people about their safety and wellbeing. Whether you're a parent, carer, coach, Elder, school staff member, support worker or community member, as a trusted adult your role is the same: to be a calm, steady connection for a young person when they need it most.

The guide is informed by:

- Protective behaviours education
- Respectful Relationships Education
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- WA child safety guidance, including the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)

This resource is designed for adults supporting young people in Years 7-12. It is especially valuable for those supporting older students (Years 11-12), as formal safety education often decreases during these years.

You can use this guide on its own or with the tip sheets. The tip sheets offer quick help on topics like consent, bullying and online safety.

You don't need to read the guide in order. Use the sections that best support the young person in front of you.

1.1 Icons and cues

Icon	Meaning
Note	Important reminders or context.
Tip	Practical strategies you can use in real time.

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1.2 Quick start: Where do I go?

If you need…	Go to…
An answer right now	The Quick response section in the matching tip sheet.
To prepare for a conversation	The matching tip sheet or ‘Starting a supportive conversation’ (Section 4.1).
Support when a young person shares a concern	‘What to do when a young person shares a concern’ (Chapter 5).
Support for yourself	‘Looking after yourself as a trusted adult’ (Chapter 7).

1.3 Where to use this guide

You can adapt these suggestions to fit your specific setting.

Setting	How you can use it
In schools	Staff can use this guide to support students in Years 7–12, including students using the *Young Person’s Guide to Personal Safety*. • **Year group:** Use the guide to develop activities for wellbeing days or R U OK Day discussions with year groups. • **In class:** Support small group talks on topics like consent or online safety. • **One-on-one:** If a student raises a concern, use the guide to talk through it privately.
At home	Parents, carers and family members are often the first people a young person turns to for support. • **Start the conversation:** Use the guide to bring up a topic you’re worried about. • **Explore together:** Talk about what they’ve read in the Young Person’s Guide to Personal Safety. • **Create a safe space:** Use the guide to help you stay calm and ready if they choose to talk later.
In the community	Coaches, youth workers, mentors and others can use the guide to build a culture of safety. • **Youth programs:** Use the guide during group activities or themed weeks. • **Quick support:** Use the tip sheets for fast guidance before or after a session.

Whether in a group or one-on-one, the principles remain the same: Stay calm, listen and prioritise the young person’s safety.

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When using this guide:

Keep it relevant	Focus on topics that matter to the young person right now.
Check their understanding	Ask what they think about a topic before sharing your view.
Be inclusive	Share this information with all young people, regardless of gender, background, identity or ability.

1.4What this guide is and is not

It's important to know the limits of this resource:

- It is a practical tool to help you pause, listen and connect a young person with help.
- It is not a mental health intervention or a formal teaching curriculum.
- It is not a substitute for professional medical, legal or workplace advice.

If you're a professional, always follow your organisation's child safety policies, such as the WA Department of Education Child Protection Policy, mandatory reporting laws and duty of care rules.

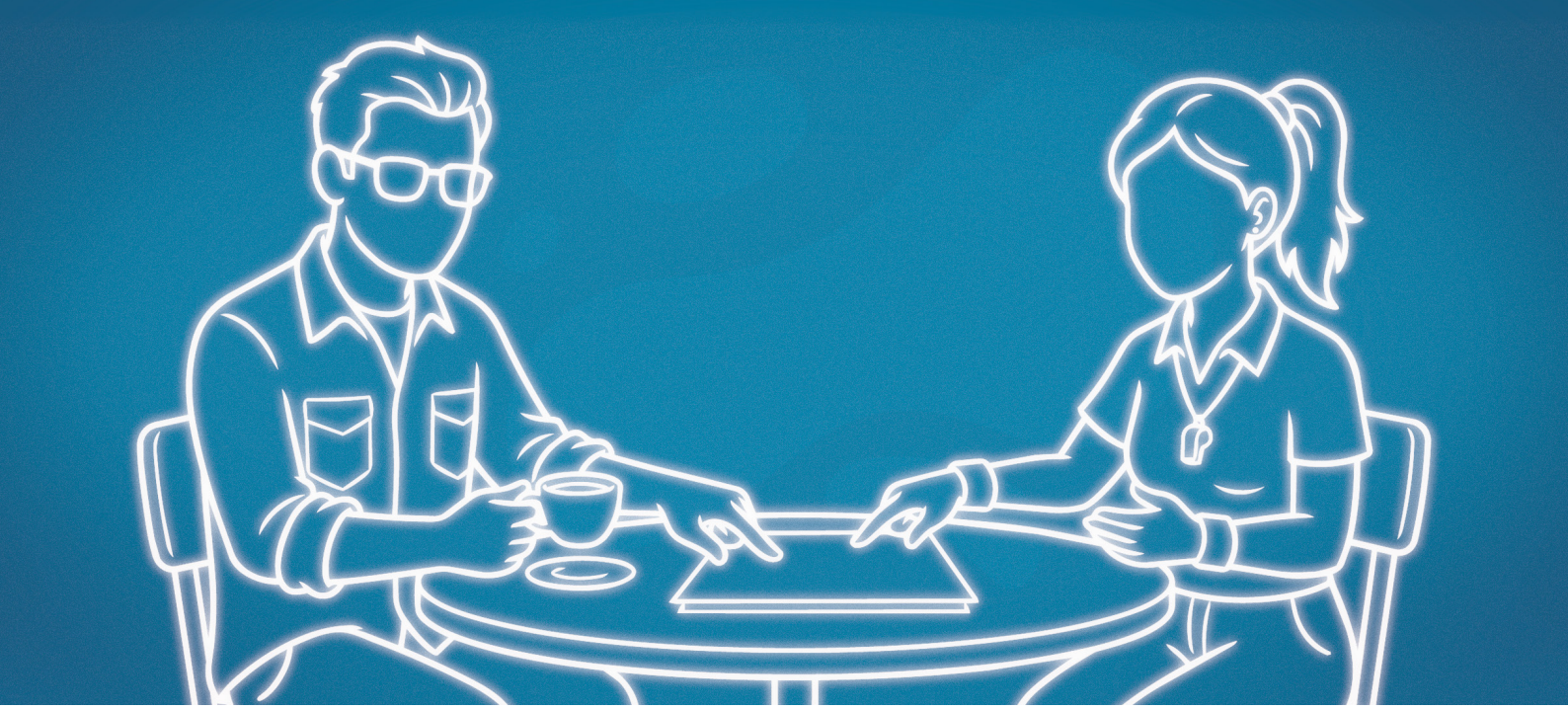
If you're unsure what to do, ask a colleague, supervisor, school leadership or another trusted adult to help.

1.5 The language in this guide

The phrases used here are examples, not scripts. Use your own voice. Adapt the words to suit you and your relationship with the young person.

Go for connection over perfection. A young person will remember that you listened and stayed calm much longer than they will remember the exact words you used.

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2 Your role as a trusted adult

A trusted adult is more than a helper. They play an important part in a young person's safety and wellbeing. Having even one safe, supportive adult can make it easier for a young person to share worries and ask for help.

You don't need special training to make a difference. What matters most is being calm, reliable and willing to listen. Your role is to support the young person, not to be an expert on every topic.

2.1 Why trusted adults matter

Safe relationships act as a protective shield. When a young person has a trusted adult, they're more likely to:

- ask for help when something feels off or wrong
- share worries or concerns before they become overwhelming
- feel a sense of belonging and value
- build resilience and confidence needed to navigate challenges.

Sometimes, you may be the only safe person a young person feels they can talk with. Your calm, predictable presence helps them feel understood and ready to take the next step.

2.2 Who is a trusted adult?

A trusted adult is someone a young person chooses to feel safe with. Only the young person can decide who earns this label; an adult cannot choose it for themselves.

This is not a static role. As young people grow, they may add, change or drop people from their list of trusted adults. This is a normal and healthy part of gaining independence.



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Trusted adults can include:

- parents, carers and family members
- teachers, education assistants and school staff
- school counsellors, chaplains and mentors
- Elders and community leaders
- volunteers and people who support young people
- coaches, employers or supervisors.

In this guide, a trusted adult is someone who:

- can take action to protect a young person
- can help them get support
- can follow up and connect them to professional services.

Trusted adults strengthen safety by:

- supporting each other (you don't have to carry the load alone)
- sharing information appropriately and within legal limits
- stepping up when concerns arise to ensure the young person is protected.

2.3 Building a safety network

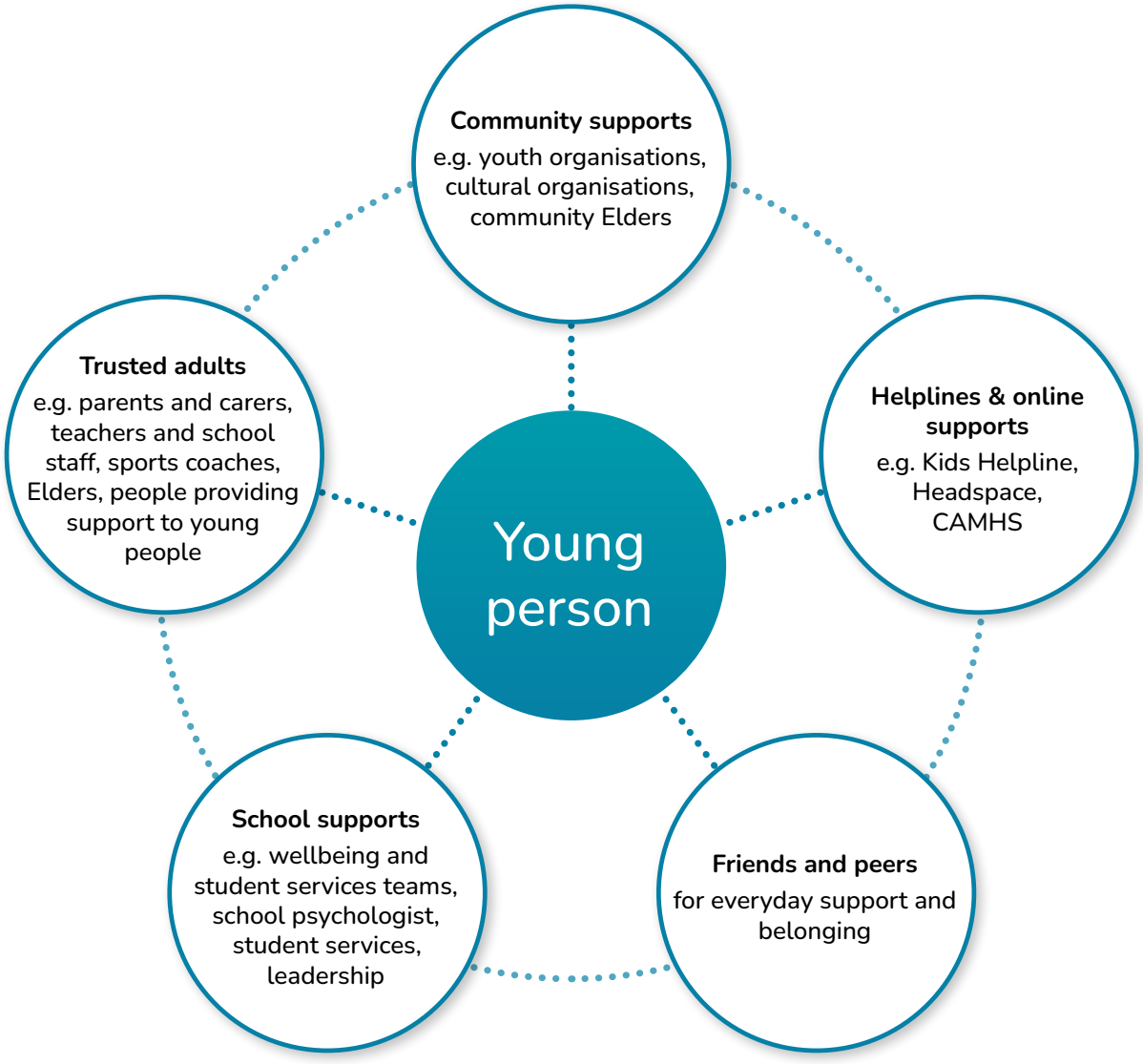


Diagram 1: An example of a young person's safety network

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For many Aboriginal young people, wellbeing is holistic. It's shaped by connections to family, kin, community, culture, and Country. A safety network should reflect these deep connections.

A trusted adult is one part of a young person's wider safety network. Every young person should have a network that is reviewed regularly.

A safety network includes:

- multiple trusted adults (at least one is required)
- friends and peers (the people they often talk with first)
- school and community supports (teachers, coaches, people supporting young people)
- helplines and services.

To help a young person explore their network, you can ask:

- 'Who has helped you in the past when you were worried?'
- 'Who listens without making you feel judged?'
- 'Who helps you feel calm or understood?'
- 'Who helps you feel strong in who you are?'

2.3.1 Is the network working?

A safety network is only helpful if the young person feels safe using it. Ask yourself:

1. **Are they available?** Check if the people in the network are reachable when needed.
2. **Is it the young person's choice?** A support is only a 'support' if the young person defines it that way.
3. **Is there immediate danger?** Always prioritise physical and emotional safety right now.

How to confirm safety with the young person:

- *'We've talked about a few people who can help. How are you feeling about reaching out to them?'*
- *'Is there anything making it hard for you to feel safe with [person/service]?'*
- *'What is one thing we can do right now to help you feel safer tonight?'*

Safety is an ongoing conversation, not a one-time event. Young people have the right to be heard, to have a say in their safety and to change their mind about who feels safe to talk with.

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2.4 How to be a trusted adult

To be an effective support, focus on these 4 key practices:

Practice	What it means
Stay calm	If you stay steady, the young person will feel safer to keep talking. Calm responses help them manage their own feelings.
Be honest	Explain what you can keep private and when you must get help. Example: *'If you tell me something that means you're not safe, I'll need to get help. I'll tell you before I do.'*
Give them a voice	Young people have the right to be heard and be part of decisions that affect them. This builds confidence and trust.
Respect identity and culture	*Respect their identity. Listen first to avoid making assumptions about their culture or background.*

You are not expected to:

- investigate or 'solve' the problem alone
- have all the answers or be available 24/7
- keep serious safety concerns a secret.

2.5 What helps young people feel safe

Young people feel safest when adults:

- listen deeply without rushing to a solution
- value and celebrate their strengths, identity and culture
- avoid placing extra pressure or shame on them
- repair relationships (if you react poorly or make a mistake, apologise and try again).

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3 The world young people navigate

Young people live in a fast-moving world where their online and offline lives are deeply connected. Many safety issues overlap and change quickly.

Young people often don't use clinical words like abuse or coercion. Instead, they might talk about:

- 'drama' or 'conflict'
- 'rumours' or 'people talking'
- 'feeling overwhelmed' or 'stressed out'
- 'being weird' or 'acting sus'.

As young people grow, their risks shift. While younger children may face harm within familiar relationships, older young people face complex pressures around identity, consent, online spaces and the risks that come with increased independence.

3.1 Common challenges

Today's challenges rarely happen in isolation. A young person facing pressure online may also be dealing with stress at home, school or in their friendships.

Category	Common challenges
Social and online risks	• **Bullying:** Being left out, targeted or humiliated on purpose (in person or online). • **Coercive control:** Someone checking their phone, tracking them, or telling them who they can see. • **Online pressure:** Being asked for nudes, receiving unwanted contact from strangers or being pressured to share personal information. • **Harmful content:** Seeing illegal or distressing videos or images that make them feel unsafe.

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Category	Common challenges
Senior school experiences	• **Driving safety:** Speeding, distractions or fatigue. • **Alcohol and other drugs:** Staying safe at parties and avoiding unsafe situations, including getting into a car with someone who has been drinking. • **School ball and leavers:** Managing expectations, peer pressure and staying together as a group. • **Workplace settings:** Starting casual work, apprenticeships, TAFE or VET programs. Young people may see employers, supervisors or trainers as trusted adults. This may also create power dynamics.
Relationship tension	Ongoing disagreements about chores, house rules or life choices can create noise. This noise can make a young person feel they can't reach out when something truly serious happens.

Australian law now includes age-based restrictions for social media use (under 16). Even with these rules, young people still need guidance to navigate online spaces safely.

3.2 How you can support them

When a young person's behaviour changes, it's often a way of communicating stress. Understanding their world helps you respond with curiosity instead of judgment.

To support safety, focus on:

Focus	What it means
The experience, not the label	Listen to how they feel rather than forcing them to use words like abuse or grooming before they're ready.
Meeting them where they are	Recognise that what happens on a screen feels just as real to them as what happens in person.
Separating conflict from safety	Make sure they know your support in a crisis is unconditional. It isn't tied to their grades, chores or how well they followed house rules.
Focusing on their wellbeing	In a safety conversation, set aside daily house rule arguments to focus completely on their immediate wellbeing.

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Safety is not always what it seems. Sometimes people who intend to cause harm can work hard to appear safe. They may use tricks (like over-the-top flattery, unexpected gifts or creating special secrets) to build a connection and slowly cross boundaries. Because these behaviours can look like friendship at first, it is important to help young people recognise when their boundaries are being tested. This is always an abuse of trust by the adult, never the fault of the young person.

For more information, visit:

- Online safety | eSafety Commissioner
- Social media age restrictions | eSafety Commissioner
- Coercive Control WA
- Risk and protective factors for child abuse and neglect | Australian Institute of Family Studies
- Student health and wellbeing - Department of Education

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4 Signs a young person may need help

Young people often show distress through their behaviour before they have the words to describe what's happening. These signs don't always mean there's a specific problem, but they show a young person might need support or a chance to talk.

4.1 Understanding behaviour as communication

A difficult, moody or shut down response is often a way of coping when a young person feels overwhelmed, unsafe or unsure how to ask for help.

When noticing changes, keep in mind:

- **The baseline:** Look for changes from their normal. A quiet teen becoming loud is just as significant as a social teen becoming withdrawn.
- **Non-verbal cues:** For those with different sensory needs or limited literacy, a change in routine or a physical cringe may be the only way they can show they feel unsafe.
- **Online influence:** Experiences in online spaces can strongly impact a young person's offline wellbeing and behaviour.
- **Curiosity over assumptions:** Instead of 'Why are you acting like this?', think 'I wonder what this behaviour is trying to tell me?'

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4.2 Indicators to notice

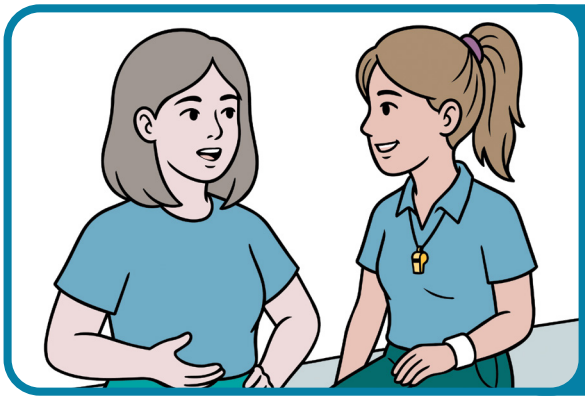
The following changes, especially when they happen suddenly or persist over time, may suggest a need for a supportive conversation.

Emotional	Behavioural	Social	Physical
Increased anxiety	Taking more risks than usual	Sudden friendship changes	Difficulty sleeping
Irritability or mood swings	Being very secretive	Avoiding certain places or people	Changes in appetite
Withdrawing from others	School refusal	Increased conflict	Frequent headaches or stomach aches
Feeling flat or numb	Showing aggression	Isolation from the group	Unexplained injuries

Trusted adults don't need to diagnose or interpret behaviour.

4.3 Starting a supportive conversation

4.3.1 Finding the right time and place



You do not need to be certain about the cause of a behaviour to reach out. Your role is to offer a calm, supportive space and seek extra help if safety risks emerge. A gentle check-in can help a young person feel acknowledged, even if they're not ready to share much.

A supportive conversation works best when the environment feels calm and predictable.

You can help by:

- choosing a quiet, private space where you won't be interrupted
- letting them choose where to sit
- avoiding public or rushed settings
- giving them time to settle before talking
- checking if now is a good time: 'Would you like to talk now, or later today?'
- respecting cultural or family preferences about privacy and who should be present
- choosing a space where they can leave if they need to
- putting phones away to show you're fully present
- talking side-by-side (walking, driving, washing dishes) if direct eye contact feels intense.

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4.3.2 Starting the conversation

You don’t need perfect words. What matters most is staying calm and keeping a steady tone. Use these prompts as a guide to invite a talk without adding pressure.

Approach	Example
Notice changes	*‘I’ve noticed you’ve been a bit quiet lately. I’m here if you want to talk.’*
Check in	*‘How have things been feeling for you this week? You’ve seemed a bit stressed.’*
Safety check	*‘I’ve noticed you’ve been avoiding [place/person]. I’m here if that’s worrying you.’*
Remove blame	*‘You’re not in trouble. You can tell me as much or as little as you want.’*
Offer support	*‘You don’t have to carry hard things alone. If anything has been feeling unsafe or uncomfortable, you can talk with me.’*

4.3.3 Keeping the conversation supportive

Use your own words. These examples show different ways to notice changes, reduce pressure and offer support. For more support with communication, the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program offers free guidance for WA parents and carers.

Use these habits to keep the conversation safe and productive.

Go at their pace	Allow for silences. Don’t rush them to fix the problem.
Validate feelings	Focus on their feelings, not just the facts of what happened. Avoid minimising (‘It’s not that bad’) or over-reassuring (‘You’ll be fine’).
Use open prompts	Use the **TED tool**: 'Tell me...', 'Explain...', or 'Describe...'
Avoid ‘Why’ questions	‘Why’ can feel like blame. Try ‘How’ or ‘What’ instead.
Keep the door open	Let them know they can come back to the conversation at any time.
Set boundaries	Be clear about what happens next and what you can/cannot keep private.

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4.4 Tool: Supporting a ‘pause and check-in’

Sometimes a young person needs a moment to slow down. A pause helps them tune in to their body and feelings.

4.4.1 How to support a check-in

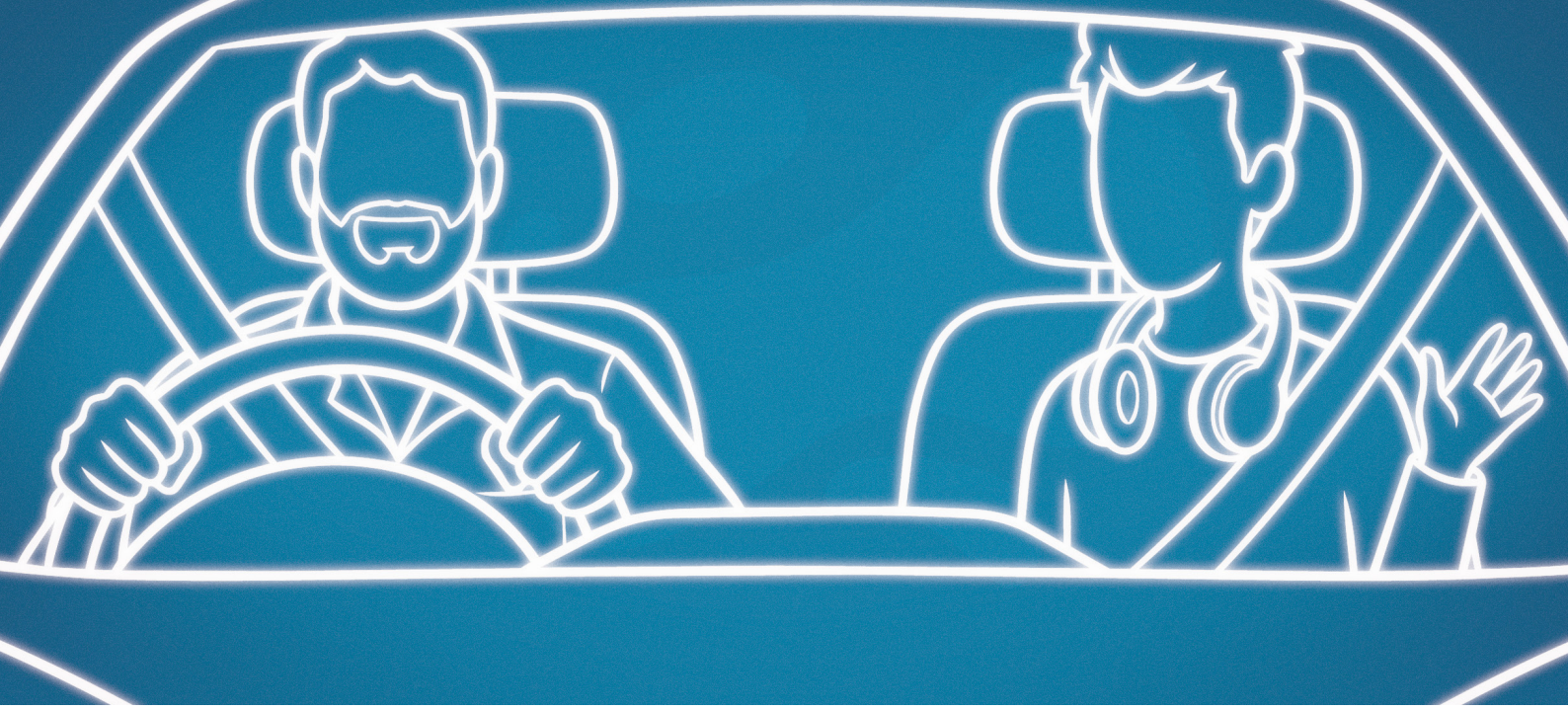
Allow privacy	They can think or write down how they feel. Sharing is optional.
Use gentle prompts	‘Would you like me to sit with you for a moment while you process that?’
Normalise all responses	‘Some young people feel a lot right now; others feel numb. Both are OK.’
Listen without fixing	Your goal is to be present, not to solve everything immediately.
Follow their cues	Let the young person set the pace. If they seem overwhelmed or upset: • pause the conversation • offer a way to settle (like slow breaths or fresh air) • offer water or a moment to stretch • wait and check in gently when they seem ready.

4.5 If more support is needed

If the young person asks for help or if your concerns persist, follow these pathways:

What to do	How to do it
Identify safe people	Help them think of who in their school, home or community feels safe to involve.
Use familiar pathways	Connect with the school’s wellbeing team or known community supports and services.
Offer youth-friendly services	Headspace (mental health and wellbeing) Kids Helpline (24/7 phone and online chat) Reach Out (online tools and peer support) eSafety Commissioner (online safety) 13YARN (for Aboriginal young people) Lifeline (for crisis support)
Stay connected	Check in again in the days ahead. Support doesn’t end once a referral is made.

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5 What to do when a young person shares a concern

How you respond in the first moments can shape what a young person shares next. You don't need perfect words. You just need to stay calm, listen and take them seriously.

5.1 Noticing the signals

Young people often share in small pieces, testing the waters before they share a larger worry. You may notice:

- **Subtle shifts:** They become quieter, withdrawn or unsettled.
- **Testing the waters:** They share a small worry to see if you'll listen and believe them.
- **A disclosure (big or small):** They share a serious concern. Your role is to listen, validate and follow safety steps.

Some young people may jump between different times or mention many people. Gentle questions like 'When did that part happen?' or 'Who was there then?' can help you understand the order of events without interrupting their flow.

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5.2 How to respond: The 6-step-framework

If the young person begins to open up, use these steps to stay steady. If you feel activated or shocked, take a slow breath and seek support afterwards. Your calm presence is the most important tool.

Step	What to do	Why it matters	Example language
1. Stay calm	Take a breath. Notice your own reaction first.	If you stay steady, they can settle.	*'I'm right here with you. We can take this slow.'*
2. Listen	Let them set the pace. Allow pauses. Don't rush the story.	Pressure can make a young person shut down.	*'I'm listening. You can pause whenever you need.'*
3. Affirm	Acknowledge their courage and feelings without judgement.	Reduces shame and builds trust.	*'Thanks for telling me. I know it's not easy to talk about.'*
4. Use open prompts	Use the TED tool and gentle open questions. Avoid asking leading questions and avoid investigating.	Helps them share in their own words without suggestions.	*'Tell me more about what happened.'*
5. Check safety	Assess immediate risks. You don't need details, just enough to understand safety.	Ensures urgent risks are addressed quickly.	*'Are you feeling safe right now?'*
6. Explain and act	Be honest about what may need to happen. If you must tell someone else to keep them safe, say so.	Knowing what will happen next helps a young person feel safer and more in control.	'My job is to keep you safe. I'll talk with you about what happens next.'

If you're unsure, seek guidance from a supervisor, school staff member, GP, the Department of Communities, a helpline or a trusted service.

5.3 Using the TED tool and open questions

TED prompts invite more information without leading the young person or 'putting words in their mouth'.

T Tell

E Explain

D Describe

Examples:

*'**Tell** me what's been worrying you.'*

*'**Explain** what made you feel unsafe.'*

*'**Describe** what you're most concerned about right now.'*

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TED prompts help trusted adults:

- understand what the young person is worried about
- clarify immediate safety
- decide what support or protective action may be needed.

5.3.1 Safe clarifying questions

If you're not sure what they mean or you need to clarify safety, you can ask:

- *'When did this happen?'* (to know if the risk is current)
- *'Who was there at the time?'* (to understand who else is involved)
- *'Where did this happen?'* (to understand the environment)
- *'What would you like me to understand about this?'*

For young people who are learning English or feeling overwhelmed, abstract questions like *'Are you feeling safe?'* can be hard to process. Try concrete, sensory questions:

- *'Where are you right now?'*
- *'Is that person near you at the moment?'*
- *'What can you see around you?'*

Clarifying questions help you understand whether the young person is safe right now. They are not about investigating. Investigating details or seeking evidence is the role of trained professionals.

5.4 Helpful language and what to avoid

Some responses can accidentally shut a conversation down. Using supportive language helps a young person feel safe enough to keep sharing.

Helpful things to say:

- *'I hear you. That sounds like a lot to carry.'*
- *'This isn't your fault. You've done the right thing by speaking up.'*
- *'You're not in trouble.'*
- *'I will only tell the people who need to know to keep you safe.'*

What to avoid:

- 'Why' questions. These can feel like blame (e.g. *'Why did you go there?'*).
- Showing shock. Gasping, anger, or panic can make them feel they've done something wrong.
- Making secret promises. Never say *'I won't tell anyone.'*
- Investigating. Don't ask for proof or deep details. Leave that to the professionals.

If a conversation feels like it didn't go well, you can always go back and repair it. Say: 'I'm sorry if that felt uncomfortable. I care about you and want to make sure you have the right support'. Then check in with a colleague, supervisor or your network for your own support.

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5.5 Cultural context and barriers

A young person's background can shape how they ask for help. They may:

- use different words to describe safety or harm
- fear bringing 'shame' to their family or community
- be wary of adults in 'official' or authority roles
- worry about being misunderstood or not believed.

5.5.1 How you can help

- **Listen more, speak less:** Value their identity and connection to community.
- **Address barriers:** Recognise that language differences or a fear of authority can make it hard to speak up.
- **Involve safe supports:** With the young person's consent, involve a culturally safe support person, such as an Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer (AIEO), an Elder or a community leader.

In small or regional communities, trusted adults, families and service providers often know each other well. This overlap can make a young person feel hesitant to seek help if they think everyone will find out. Reassure them by clearly explaining who will (and won't) be told.

5.6 Pausing with care (protective interrupting)

If a young person starts sharing a sensitive concern in a public place (like a classroom, bus or park), use protective interrupting. This involves gently pausing the conversation to protect their privacy and dignity, then moving to a private space to continue.

5.6.1 When to use it

Use protective interrupting when a young person:

- starts to open up about a concern in front of peers or other people
- mentions another young person's private details or identity publicly
- says things like 'Can I tell you a secret?' in a group space.

Protective interrupting doesn't remove your responsibility to act. If you believe a child may be unsafe, follow your legal and workplace requirements.

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5.6.2 How to do it

Step	Example language
Interrupt gently	*'It sounds like you want to tell me something important.'*
Protect privacy	*'Let's find a quiet place where we can talk privately.'*
Move and reassure	*'I really want to hear this. Let's talk in a few minutes when we are somewhere private.'*
Follow up as soon as possible	*As soon as you are in private, say: 'Thank you for waiting. You can tell me in your own time now.'*

Don't use this if you are already in a private, one-on-one space. The goal is not to stop them from sharing, but to ensure they can tell their story safely and privately.

5.7 After the young person has shared

Once the talk is over, keep things slow to help the young person settle.

- **Check in:** Ask how they are feeling now. Give them a moment to breathe or sit quietly.
- **Don't dismiss retractions:** If they later say, 'I made it up', stay curious. Retractions are common and often come from fear, not dishonesty.
- **Make a note:** Write down what you observed and what was said. Use the young person's actual words where possible.
- **Stay connected:** Professional support is a referral, not a handover. Keep checking in with them in the days ahead.

5.8 Supporting young people to seek help

If the young person is ready to reach out to a service, you can offer practical support.

- **Normalise it:** 'Lots of people use these services. They're here for exactly this.'
- **Be a sidekick:** Offer to sit nearby while they call or chat. Help them write down what they want to say or practice the first sentence together.
- **Offer options:** If a phone call feels too intense, suggest webchat or text-based support.
- **Create a safety net:** If services have waitlists, help them identify interim supports (e.g. ReachOut or Youth Mental Fitness Hub).

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5.9 If you're worried about a young person (WA)

Keeping children safe is a shared responsibility. In Western Australia, any adult can report concerns about a child or young person's safety or wellbeing. If you believe they are being harmed or are at risk of harm, you should report it. This includes physical, emotional or sexual abuse, as well as neglect.

When reporting, stick to the facts, use the young person's own words where possible, and don't investigate or try to find proof yourself.

How to report:

- **Immediate danger:** Call **000**.
- **If you believe a crime has happened:** Contact WA Police on **131 444**.
- **Concerns about wellbeing or abuse:** Contact the Department of Communities (Child Protection) on **1800 273 889**.
- **If you're a professional:** You can submit a Professional Referral online to the Department of Communities.
- **If you're a** mandatory reporter (e.g. teacher, doctor, police officer, psychologist), you must report child sexual abuse by law. Mandatory reporting applies even if the young person asks you not to. You should still report all other types of harm (such as neglect or physical abuse) to the Department of Communities.

If you're unsure what to do, you can seek advice from the Department of Communities or WA Police.

For more information, visit:

- Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse in WA | Western Australian Government
- Concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person

5.10 Talking with other adults or services

When you pass on a concern, you're acting as a link to safety.

- **Be factual:** Stick to what you saw and heard. Example: 'I'm calling because [Young Person] shared a concern about their safety. They said [factual detail]. I'm looking for advice on how to best support them now.'
- **Ask for guidance:** 'What does the process look like from here? How can I help them feel safe while this is being handled?'
- **Close the loop:** Let the young person know what you shared and why. This maintains trust and helps them feel part of the process.

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6 Supporting diverse young people

Every young person is an individual. Their culture, identity, communication style and life experiences shape how they see safety and how they ask for help. Inclusion is not a checkbox. It's about creating a space where every young person feels acknowledged, respected and strong in who they are. A sense of belonging is protective.

6.1 How different parts of identity shape risk

A young person's identities (such as their race, gender, disability, culture or sexuality) don't exist in isolation. These layers overlap and shape how they experience the world.

Some young people face many challenges at once. For example, a young person might be Aboriginal, female and living with a disability. These different parts of their identity can combine to increase their risk. This can make it harder for them to get help or feel safe. Noticing these combined challenges helps you respond with more awareness and care.

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6.2 Habits of inclusive support

To support any young person effectively, move beyond noticing a difference to actively understanding their community and communication needs.

Habit	What to do
Listen without assuming	Let them share in their own way and at their own pace. Avoid filling in the blanks.
Ask what safety looks like for them	Every young person defines safety differently. Ask: 'What makes you feel safe here?' or 'Who are the people you trust most?'
Honour culture and identity	Feeling strong in one's culture or identity is protective. Support their connection to community.
Respect names and pronouns	Using the right name and pronouns helps a young person feel acknowledged and valued.
Give them a say	Offer choices instead of pressure. Involve them in decisions that affect them.
Be predictable	Explain what is happening next. Predictability reduces panic for young people with trauma or neurodivergence.
Value communication style	Humour, silence, indirect storytelling, gestures or devices are all valid ways of communicating.
Check understanding	Don't just ask 'Do you understand?' Instead, ask them to describe the next steps in their own words or use visual aids to confirm you're both on the same page.

You don't need to be an expert in every identity. Curiosity, respect and listening help create safe support.

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6.3 How safety can look different

Safety doesn’t look the same for everyone. Depending on a young person’s lived experience, it may look like:

Community and kinship	For many young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, safety is found in family, kinship networks, community and Elders. Decisions may be made collectively rather than individually.
Identity affirmation	For LGBTQIA+ young people, safety includes knowing their identity will be respected and that they won't be outed without their consent.
Cultural diversity	For some young people, safety may be shaped by culture, migration experiences or family expectations. Checking understanding, avoiding assumptions and using interpreters when needed can help them feel safe and respected.
Sensory and physical needs	For neurodivergent young people or those with disability, safety may mean a quiet space, clear structure, visual supports and extra time to process information.
Trust and authority	Young people who have experienced trauma, discrimination or instability may feel cautious of adults in official roles. Building trust takes time and consistent, calm honesty.

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6.4 Practical strategies for inclusive support

Regardless of a young person's background, you can strengthen safety by using these practical strategies:

Cultural safety	Cultural safety means a young person feels respected in their identity. It's defined by the young person and their family, not the system. You can: • Be aware of your own shortcuts or assumptions about certain cultures or backgrounds. • Support connection by helping them stay linked to Elders, family and community. • Use professional interpreters where possible if there is a language barrier, rather than relying on friends or siblings.
Supporting disability and communication needs	Move beyond simply recognising disability to respecting and celebrating strengths. Trusted adults support safety by removing barriers. You can: • Use clear, literal language. Avoid metaphors or vague questions like 'Are you feeling safe?' Instead ask: 'Is there something making you feel worried right now?' • Reduce overload. When discussing sensitive topics, choose a quiet space with low sensory input (dim lights, minimal noise). • Allow processing time. Give extra time for responses. Silence is OK. It often means they're working hard to find the right words or gestures. • Use visual supports. Drawing, writing or pictures can help explain what will happen next. • Celebrate strengths. Notice what they do well and build from there.
Communication beyond words	Some young people communicate through behaviour, gestures, devices, routines or sensory cues. Slow down, observe and use the communication method that works best for them. For young people who communicate non-verbally or have limited literacy, changes in behaviour or routines may be the clearest way they show something feels unsafe.
Context matters	In small or regional communities, relationships and visibility can affect how safe a young person feels seeking help. Be mindful of privacy, confidentiality and community dynamics.

When a young person shares something sensitive, avoid making assumptions based on culture, gender, age or background. Stay curious, listen first and let the young person guide what they want you to know.

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6.5 Check in: Is the support working?

Inclusive support only works if the young person feels safe, understood and respected. Before finishing a conversation, pause and reflect:

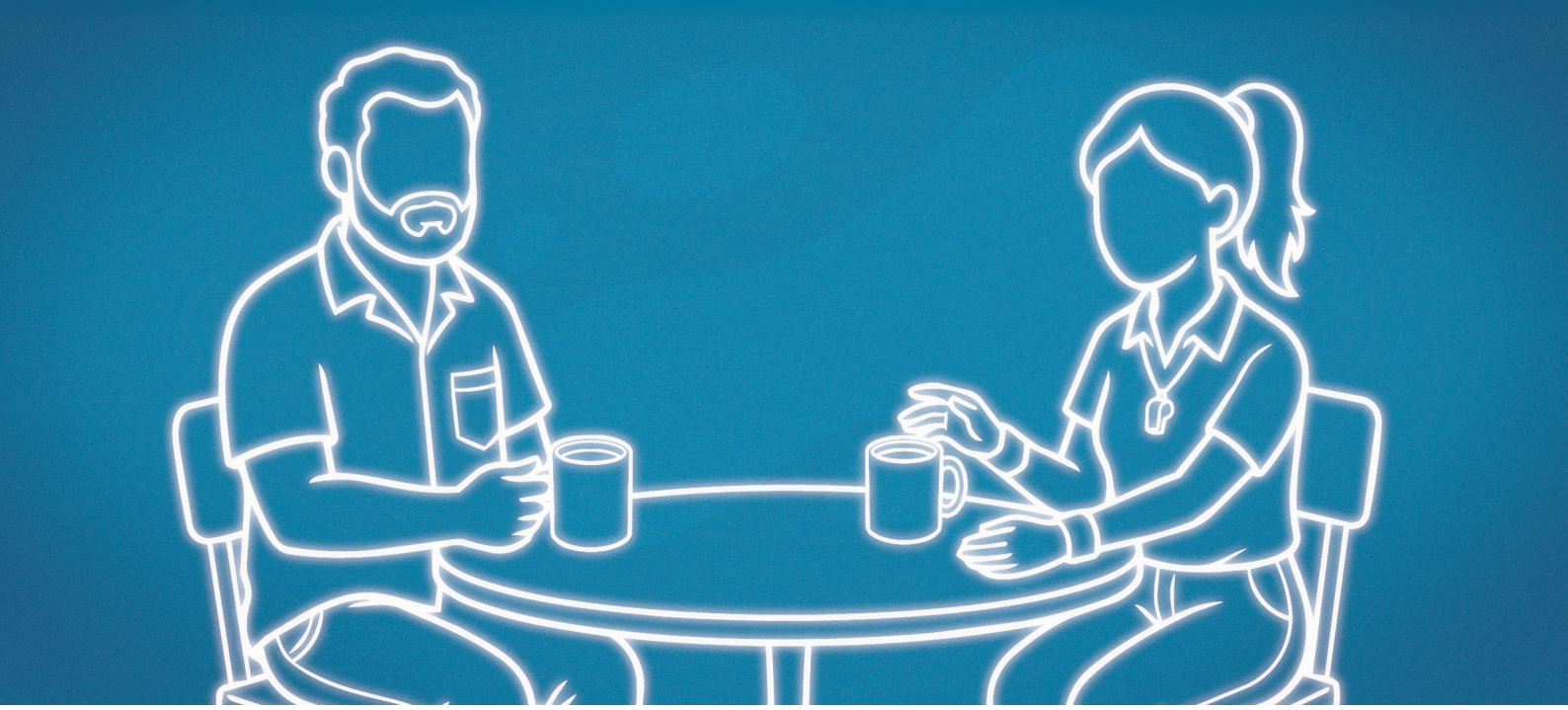
1. **Am I avoiding assumptions?** Have I let the young person define what safety means to them today?
2. **Does the environment support them?** Have I reduced the noise and given them enough time?
3. **What strengths are they showing?** What is already working well for them that we can build on?

6.5.1 How to check in with the young person

Safety is an ongoing conversation. Keep checking in to make sure your approach is working for them.

- ‘How are you feeling after our chat?’
- ‘Is there anything we could change to make this feel more safe for you?’
- ‘What is one thing I can do right now to help you feel safer?’

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7 Looking after yourself as a trusted adult

Supporting young people is meaningful work, but it can also be emotionally heavy. You will think more clearly and respond more calmly when you look after yourself too.

Conversations about safety, harm, consent or online risks can bring up strong emotions. This is especially true if you have your own experience of harm. Feeling overwhelmed is not a sign you're doing something wrong. It's a sign you're human.

7.1 Understanding the impact

When you support someone who has been hurt, it can affect you in two main ways:

Secondary trauma	The immediate emotional stress you may feel when hearing about a young person's trauma. It can feel as though the stress is happening to you.
Vicarious trauma	This develops over time. As you witness the struggles of others, your view of the world may shift. You might feel more worried, cynical, or on alert than usual.

Being honest with a young person is helpful but avoid sharing the details of your own past trauma. This can overwhelm them and shift the focus away from their needs. Seek your own professional support to stay steady.

7.2 Self-care in practice

Self-care is more than just a break. It's an act of breaking cycles. For many people, stress responses are shaped by the experiences of those who came before them (intergenerational trauma). By staying regulated, you provide a safe model for the young person to follow.

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7.2.1 The ‘regulation partner’ concept

You don’t have to carry the emotional load alone. A regulation partner is a peer, colleague or friend who understands your role. They are the person you call after a hard conversation to:

- decompress and shake off the stress
- check that you are thinking clearly
- remind you of your boundaries.

7.2.2 The quick self-check

Use this check-in to stay grounded before, during or after a tough conversation.

Self-check	Why it matters
Have I settled?	Taking a moment to breathe or step outside helps you respond with calm. Try slow breaths, splashing your face with cold water or grounding through movement.
Do I need to talk?	You don’t need to carry the emotional load alone. Isolation makes trauma heavier. Use peer support or supervision to process your feelings (while keeping the young person’s identity private).
Am I within my role?	Know your limits and when to get help. Whether you’re a parent, carer or professional, you don’t have to manage everything alone. It’s OK to say, ‘I want to help, and I’m going to bring in someone who can support us both.’
Who can I lean on?	Your own support network protects your wellbeing. Use it often. Access professional support when needed (e.g. through a GP or Medicare Mental Health).

Practical steps you can take:

- **Notice your reactions:** Be aware of when you feel activated, tense or upset. This is your signal to take a break or seek support.
- **Keep boundaries:** Be clear about what you can do and when you need to hand over to a professional. You are a bridge, not the entire destination.
- **Stay private:** When seeking support for yourself, never share the young person’s name or identifying details. Share only what is needed to get the help you need.
- **Grounding through movement:** If you feel stuck after a disclosure, move your body. Walk, stretch or change environments to help your brain process the stress.

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8 Support services for adults

You deserve support too. These services offer guidance and wellbeing support for adults.

Immediate or crisis support

- Lifeline (13 11 14): 24/7 crisis support for adults in distress.
- 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732): 24/7 support for sexual, family and domestic violence.
- Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC): WA (08 6458 1828 or 1800 199 888): 24-hour crisis support, medical care and counselling for sexual assault.

Parenting and caregiver support

- Ngala Parenting Line (1800 111 546): Phone support for parents and carers in WA.
- Triple P-Positive Parenting Program: Strategies to support communication, behaviour and family wellbeing.
- Raising Children Network: Evidence-based information on development, mental health and communication.
- ReachOut - Parents & Carers: Online tools and peer support for parents of young people facing mental health struggles.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support

- 13YARN (13 92 76): 24/7 crisis support led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Yorgum Healing Services (1800 469 371): Counselling and trauma support for families.
- Aboriginal Family Legal Services (AFLS) - WA (1800 469 246): Legal and advocacy support for adults and children experiencing family violence.
- Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service: Culturally secure health care and wellbeing support.
- Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia (ALSWA) (1800 019 900): Culturally appropriate legal advice and support.

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Specialist and community support

- Medicare Mental Health (1800 595 212): Free help to find and connect with mental health services.
- Victim Support Service (1800 818 988): Free counselling and support for people affected by crime.
- Australian Childhood Foundation (1300 381 581): Specialised trauma and abuse support for children and families.
- QLife (1800 184 527): Anonymous phone and webchat support for LGBTQIA+ people.
- MensLine Australia (1300 78 99 78): Support for men managing family or emotional challenges.
- SECCA (08 9420 7226): Resources for young people with disability, including consent and protective behaviours education.

Closing

Supporting young people is ongoing work built through small, everyday interactions. You don't need to be a hero. You just need to be a safe, reliable adult. Having even one person like you can make a lasting difference in a young person's safety and wellbeing.

Keeping children and young people safe is a shared responsibility. Families, schools, services and communities all play a role in supporting safety, wellbeing and online resilience.

Thank you for being a trusted adult and for helping to create a culture of safety and respect in your community.

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Where to find more help and practical tools

These links offer more depth for adults who want to explore specific topics. They are grouped by theme to help you find what you need quickly. Each link includes a short description, so you know what it offers.

Safety, wellbeing and protective behaviours

Australian Human Rights Commission: National principles for child safe organisations
Guidance for creating safe, child-centred environments across organisations and communities.
https://humanrights.gov.au/resource-hub/resources-for-organisations-businesses/child-safe-organisations

Department of Communities: Harmful sexual behaviours framework
A WA framework for understanding and responding to harmful sexual behaviours in children and young people.
https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2022-07/Framework-Understanding-Guiding-Harmful-Sexual-Behaviours.pdf

Department of Communities: Identifying child abuse and neglect
Information on recognising different types of abuse and what to do if you're concerned.
https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/identifying-child-abuse-and-neglect

Department of Communities: Mandatory reporting guide (WA)
A practical guide for mandatory reporters in WA.
https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2025-04/mandatory_reporting_guide_western-australia.pdf

Department of Education WA: Child Protection in Department of Education Sites Policy
Policy outlining child protection responsibilities and procedures in WA public schools.
https://www.education.wa.edu.au/web/policies/-/child-protection-in-department-of-education-sites-policy

Department of Education WA: Protective behaviours education
Information and resources for protective behaviours education in WA public schools.
https://www.education.wa.edu.au/student-health-and-wellbeing

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eSafety Commissioner: Coercive control
Information on recognising and responding to coercive control in relationships.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/domestic-family-violence/coercive-control

eSafety Commissioner: Coercive control: information sheet
A short, accessible overview for educators and trusted adults.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/training-for-educators/professional-learning-for-teachers/coercive-control-information-sheet

eSafety Commissioner: Recognising online coercive control
A webinar for parents and carers on spotting online coercive control.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/webinars/recognising-online-coercive-control-in-young-peoples-lives

National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse: Harmful Sexual Behaviours
Guidance on understanding sexual behaviours in children and young people.
https://nationalcentre.org.au/resource/sexual-behaviours-displayed-by-children-and-young-people-that-can-be-harmful/

Online safety and digital wellbeing

Act Now. Stay Secure: First Nations resources
Cyber safety resources designed with and for First Nations communities.
https://www.actnowstaysecure.gov.au/first-nations

Act Now. Stay Secure: Accessible information
Easy-read and accessible online safety information.
https://www.actnowstaysecure.gov.au/accessible

Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE): Sextortion
Information and support for young people and adults experiencing sextortion.
https://www.accce.gov.au/sextortionhelp

ACCCE: For parents & carers
Practical advice on online child sexual exploitation and how to support young people.
https://www.accce.gov.au/resources/for-parents-and-carers

eSafety Commissioner: Dealing with sexual extortion
Steps to take if someone is being threatened with image-based abuse.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/image-based-abuse/how-to-help-someone-deal-with-image-based-abuse

eSafety Commissioner: eSafety education
Resources for educators supporting safe online behaviours.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators

eSafety Commissioner: First Nations online safety
Culturally relevant online safety resources.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/first-nations

eSafety Commissioner: Parents
Guides, tips and conversation starters for parents and carers.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents

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eSafety Commissioner: Image based abuse
Information on what image-based abuse is and how to get help.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/image-based-abuse

eSafety Commissioner: Managing the impacts of image based abuse
Support for people affected by image-based abuse.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/image-based-abuse/managing-the-impacts-of-image-based-abuse

eSafety Commissioner: Online boundaries and consent
Classroom resources on consent and respectful online behaviour.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/classroom-resources/online-boundaries-and-consent

eSafety Commissioner: Respond Toolkit
Tools for schools responding to online safety incidents.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/toolkit-schools/respond

eSafety Commissioner: Technology-facilitated abuse
Information on tech-based abuse and how to support someone experiencing it.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/tech-based-abuse

eSafety Commissioner: Toolkit for schools
Whole-school online safety resources.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/toolkit-schools

eSafety Commissioner: Young people
Youth-friendly online safety information.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people

ThinkUKnow: Parents and carers
Australian Federal Police-led online safety resources for families.
https://www.thinkuknow.org.au/resources-tab/parents-and-carers

Relationships and consent

Australian Curriculum: Respectful relationships (Curriculum connection)
Explains how respectful relationships education is embedded across the Australian Curriculum, including safety, consent, communication and social-emotional learning.
https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/curriculum-information/understand-this-curriculum-connection/respectful-relationships

Australian Government: Consent Can't Wait
Clear, accessible information about affirmative consent, communication, boundaries and respectful relationships.
https://www.consent.gov.au/

Department of Health: Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships (GDHR)
A free education resource to support schools and educators to deliver relationships and sexuality education, including protective behaviours.
https://gdhr.wa.gov.au/

Legal Aid Western Australia: Sex and consent
Clear information about sex and consent laws in WA.
https://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au/find-legal-answers/young-people/sex-and-law/sex-and-consent

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School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA): Health and Physical Education (WA Curriculum)
WA curriculum content covering respectful relationships, consent, safety, protective behaviours and social-emotional learning across Years K–10.
https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/teaching/curriculum-browser/health-and-physical-education

Youth Law Australia: Consent (WA)
Youth-friendly legal information about consent, age of consent and rights in WA.
https://yla.org.au/wa/topics/health-love-and-sex/consent/

Bullying, help-seeking and mental health

Bullying. No Way!: Understand
Information on bullying, cyberbullying and how to get help.
https://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/understand/

Department of Education: Student wellbeing hub
Resources for educators and families on wellbeing and safety.
https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/

Headspace: Bullying isn't banter
Youth-friendly information on bullying and mental health.
https://headspace.org.au/bullying/

Headspace: Learn skills for tough times
Tools for managing stress, emotions and difficult situations.
https://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/for-young-people/learn-skills-for-tough-times/

Kids Helpline: Self-care
Practical self-care ideas for young people.
https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/self-care

Legal rights and youth-friendly information

Australian Human Rights Commission: Know your rights
Information on rights and protections in Australia.
https://humanrights.gov.au/know-your-rights

Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA)
An independent advocate for all WA children. Provides resources on rights, safety, and how to involve young people in decisions that affect them.
https://ccyp.wa.gov.au/

Legal Aid Western Australia: Find legal answers
Free legal information for young people and families.
https://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au/find-legal-answers

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Violent extremism and harmful influences

eSafety Commissioner: Illegal and restricted online content
Information on harmful online content and how to report or block it.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/Illegal-restricted-content

eSafety Commissioner: Inappropriate content: factsheet
Guidance for educators and trusted adults on supporting young people exposed to harmful content.
https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/training-for-professionals/professional-learning-program-teachers/inappropriate-content-factsheet

Government of Western Australia: Understanding violent extremism
WA-specific information, advice and support for recognising harmful influence and knowing when to seek help.
https://www.wa.gov.au/government/understanding-violent-extremism-information-advice-and-support

Step Together: Understanding violent extremism
Practical, family-friendly information about early signs of harmful influence, online radicalisation and how to support a young person.
https://steptogether.gov.au/violent-extremism/understanding-violent-extremism.html

Specialist research and support

Australian Centre for Child Protection
Research, training and resources on child protection and trauma.
https://accp.adelaide.edu.au/

Australian Childhood Foundation
Resources on trauma-aware care, emotional safety and supporting children.
https://www.childhood.org.au/

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)
Evidence-based research on child wellbeing, trauma and family support.
https://aifs.gov.au/

Bravehearts
Support, education and advocacy around child sexual abuse prevention.
https://bravehearts.org.au/

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)
Specialist support, information and counselling for anyone affected by sexual assault.
https://www.kemh.health.wa.gov.au/Other-Services/SARC

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GOVERNMENT OF
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Trusted Adult Tip Sheets

Helping you support the young people in your life



How to use the tip sheets

Think of these as a toolkit. You don’t need to read them in order. Just grab the one you need when a specific situation arises. They are designed to help you stay calm, feel prepared and know what to say.

The tip sheets can also be used alongside the Young Person’s Guide to Personal Safety and the Trusted Adult Guide.

You are not alone

These tip sheets are a starting point, but they don’t cover everything. If something feels too big or you’re unsure what to do:

- check the Where to find more help and practical tools chapter in the guide
- look at the Support services for adults list for expert help
- seek support from other trusted adults in your own or young person’s network
- use the Glossary for an explanation of key terms.



Some parents and carers may find it helpful to go through these tip sheets with a trusted professional or school staff member. Looking after young people works best when adults support each other. You’re not expected to do this alone.

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Snapshots: What the topics cover

These snapshots give you an overview of the ideas young people explore in the Young Person's Guide to Personal Safety. They help you understand the language they use and the conversations that might come up. They are not a school curriculum.

You don't need to be an expert. Your focus is on staying calm, staying curious and supporting the young person's safety and confidence.

Some topics may be sensitive. Please take your time and seek support if needed.

Tip sheet topic	What young people are learning
1. Safety (Corresponds with Topic 2: Being safe and feeling safe in the Young Person's Guide to Personal Safety)	Young people learn that safety has two parts: • **Being safe:** what is happening (facts and behaviour) • **Feeling safe:** how the body and emotions respond. They use the Building blocks of safety to judge safety: • **Choice:** Do I have a say? • **Control:** Can I make decisions or leave? • **Time limit:** Do I know when it ends?
2. Networks (Corresponds with Topic 3: Networks: who's got your back?)	A safety network can include: • trusted adults and friends • school staff and community support • professional services. Young people learn that: • different people play different roles • friends are important, but some problems need an adult • if one adult doesn't help, they should keep asking until someone does.
3. Abuse and neglect (Corresponds with Topic 4: Let's talk about abuse and neglect)	Young people learn: • what abuse and neglect are, and the different forms they can take • abuse is never their fault • the person who harms is always 100% responsible for their own choices • grooming and coercive control can be hard to spot • the difference between healthy and harmful behaviour • how to seek help safely • support is available through networks and helplines.

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Tip sheet topic	What young people are learning
4. Warning signs (Corresponds with Topic 5: Things to look out for: warning signs)	Young people learn to listen to their body and trust their warning signs. They explore: • how the body reacts to danger (Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fawn, Flop) • how calming skills can help their 'thinking brain' take over • how to notice their own warning signs (e.g. racing heart, tight chest, cold hands) • how to build a personal safety plan.
5. Risk-taking (Corresponds with Topic 6: Where's the line? (risk-taking & safety))	Young people learn to tell the difference between: • safe • safe risk (fun to feel scared) • risking on purpose • unsafe. They learn that: • taking risks is a normal part of growing up • safety can change from moment to moment • choice, control and time limit help them make good decisions • peer pressure can affect safety.
6. Consent and rights (Corresponds with Topic 7: Your body, your choice: consent & your rights)	Consent is part of everyday respect, not just intimate situations. Young people learn: • they own their body and their 'digital body' (images, messages and online identity) • consent must be freely given, clear, informed, ongoing, and only possible when both people have the capacity to choose • a 'no' always matters • consent applies online and offline • they can change their mind at any time.
7. Staying safer online (Corresponds with Topic 8: Staying safer online)	Young people learn: • online spaces can be positive and risky • they have the right to safety, privacy and respect online • boundaries and consent apply online and offline • pressure and threats are never OK • eSafety Commissioner and ACCCE can help if things go wrong.
8. Bullying (Corresponds with Topic 9: Your voice matters: speaking up about bullying)	Young people learn that: • bullying is a misuse of power, not banter • they have the right to feel safe and respected • bullying is never their fault • speaking up is a way to stay safe • adult support can stop harm and restore safety • 'bystanders' can choose to be 'upstanders'.

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Tip sheet topic	What young people are learning
9. Safe2Say (Corresponds with Topic 10: Safe2Say: one way to speak up)	Young people learn that: • there are safe, private ways to report sexual abuse in WA • they can choose if, when and how much they share • Safe2Say offers a way to report without giving a name • trusted adults can help them through next steps without pressure.
10. Violent extremism (Corresponds with Topic 11: Expressing your beliefs: understanding violent extremism)	Young people learn that: • it's healthy to care about issues but harmful, hateful or violent actions are never OK • beliefs can be expressed safely and respectfully • people can leave extremist groups and change • help is always available.

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Tip sheet 1:
Talking about safety



1.1 Why this matters

- Young people need help to understand what feels safe and what doesn't.
- Naming feelings helps them notice their warning signs.
- Most young people need support to think things through. They don't need adults to decide everything for them.
- Choice, control and time limit is a simple way to talk about safety.
- Calm, supportive adults help young people speak up.
- Feeling safe is as important as being safe. Both matter.

1.2 What you might notice

Young people may show warning signs through their behaviour. You might notice them:

- acting jumpy or on edge
- avoiding school, friends or new places
- trying very hard to please others
- crashing or acting out after a long day.

These are protective responses. They are not misbehaviour.

1.3 What helps

Being a 'safety co-pilot'	A calm adult helps a young person make sense of what's happening. You might say: *'On a scale of 1-10, how safe does this feel for you right now?'* Then explore gently: • *'What is happening that made you able to say that number?'* • *'What would move it up one number?'* • *'What is your body noticing?'*
Normalising without dismissing	*'It's normal to feel nervous when something is new. Let's look at the facts together.'*
Using side-by-side conversations	Talking while walking, driving or doing an activity often feels safer than face-to-face.

These approaches help build confidence and shared understanding.

1.4 What to avoid

Brushing off feelings	Avoid: '*You're fine, don't worry.*' This can make a young person doubt their warning signs.
Rushing to fix the problem	Jumping to solutions too quickly can shut down sharing. Listen first. Move at their pace.
Reacting with panic	Strong reactions can make a young person shut down.
Sharing adult problems	Sharing your own hard experiences can feel too heavy and shift the focus away from them.
Promising to keep secrets	If a young person is at risk, you must act. Be honest from the start. You can say: *'I want to support you, but I have to make sure you are safe.'*

1.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

If the young person…	You can say or do…
Downplays a risk	*'Let's check what's going on together.'*
Feels unsafe in a safe situation	*'New things can feel weird. We can go slowly.'*
Feels safe in a possibly unsafe situation	'Let's look at who has the choice and the control in this situation. Could you leave if you wanted to?'
Freezes or shuts down	*'I'm here. You don't have to talk until you're ready.'*
Says "I'm fine" but looks stressed	*'I hear you saying you're fine. I also noticed you seem a bit tense. I'm just checking in.'*
Asks for a secret	*'I will always listen and support you. But if I'm worried about your safety, I'll need to bring in someone else to help us. I can't keep you safe and keep a secret at the same time.'*

Choice, control, and time limit are explained in the Young Person's Guide to Personal Safety. Adapt the words to suit the young person's age, culture, identity and communication style.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA) advocates for the rights and wellbeing of all young people in Western Australia. They provide resources to help adults understand what young people are thinking and what their rights are under the law.

If the young person shares something that feels unsafe, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. If you're unsure what to do, check in with another trusted adult or a professional. You don't have to do this alone.

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Tip sheet 2:
Talking about networks



2.1 Why this matters

- Young people often delay asking for help, especially if the harm involves someone they know.
- Some are unsure who they can talk with or worry they won't be believed.
- A strong safety network helps young people feel less alone and get support early.
- Networks help keep young people safe both online and offline.
- One trusted adult can make a big difference.

2.2 What you might notice

Young people building or testing their networks may:

- hesitate or test your reaction with a small comment
- use a friend's story to see how you respond (they are often checking if you will judge the situation)
- worry about bothering someone
- rely mostly on friends their own age
- show stress through tired eyes, stomach aches or restlessness.

These responses are common. They often show caution, not avoidance.

2.3 What helps

Normalising help-seeking	Let them know everyone needs support sometimes.
Building layers of support	Help them identify at least 3 - 5 people across different areas (home, school, clubs or online) so they always have a backup.
Naming trusted adults	Ask who feels safe, who listens well and who they would go to first.
Practicing conversation starters	Help them prepare for a hard conversation or asking for help.
Being consistent	Predictable responses build trust over time.
Checking in over time	Networks change as relationships shift.

For more information, see **Support services for adults** from the Trusted Adult Guide.

2.4 What to avoid

Assuming you understand	Avoid: ‘I know exactly what you mean.’ Ask them to explain it in their own words.
Giving advice too soon	Avoid: ‘Here’s what you should do.’ Listen first, then offer options.
Overloading with information	Too many options can overwhelm. Keep it simple.
Brushing off their feelings	Avoid saying things that make their feelings seem small. Acknowledge what they’re feeling and listen.
Sharing adult problems	Sharing your own hard experiences can feel too heavy. Keep the focus on the young person.
Promising to keep secrets	Be honest that you can’t keep a secret if someone might be unsafe. Networks are about sharing the load.
Assuming silence means ‘OK’	They may be scared, unsure or testing your response.

2.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

If the young person…	You can say or do…
Is unsure who to talk with	*‘Let’s think about who feels safe for you.’*
Relies only on peers	*‘Friends are great for support, but for big safety things, you need an adult’s power to help fix it. Who is an adult you trust?’*
Wants help starting a conversation	*‘We can practice what you want to say.’*
Feels nervous asking for help	*‘It’s normal to feel that way. You’re not alone.’*
Says they don’t want to bother anyone	*‘There are people who care about you and want to help.’*
Is unsure	*‘You don’t have to carry this alone. Let’s think about who else in your network needs to know so we can keep you safe.’*

If the young person shares something that feels unsafe, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. If you’re unsure what to do, check in with another trusted adult or a professional. You don’t have to do this alone.

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Tip sheet 3:
Talking about abuse and neglect



3.1 Why this matters

- Naming abuse helps young people spot unsafe behaviour early.
- Knowing the signs can reduce confusion, shame and self-blame.
- Grooming and coercive control can happen online or in person. They are often slow and subtle.
- Young people may not realise something is wrong until they feel confused or pressured.
- Technology can be used to monitor, pressure or control young people.
- Young people are still learning how to talk about abuse. They may not have the words yet, and that's OK.
- Shared language (e.g. warning signs, boundaries, choice, control) helps young people talk about safety.
- Calm, supportive adult responses make it easier for young people to ask for help.

3.2 What you might notice

Signs that a young person may be facing grooming, abuse or neglect may include:

- secrecy about a specific relationship or a special friend
- receiving gifts, favours or extra attention
- feeling pressure to keep secrets
- changing routines (extra training or staying back late)
- testing boundaries (like sharing inappropriate jokes or adult information)
- being confused about what's normal in a relationship
- trying to protect the person causing harm
- unexplained injuries, frequent pain or discomfort
- struggle to name what feels wrong.

These signs show something may need attention. Every young person reacts to harm differently. While this list covers some signs of grooming and abuse, neglect often shows up as a pattern of unmet needs or a sudden change in behaviour.

3.3 What helps

Acknowledging their feelings	Let them know it makes sense to feel unsure or confused.
Keeping things calm and supportive	Your tone and pace help them feel safe.
Using simple language	You can say: *'Safe adults don't need secrets. You deserve to feel safe.'*
Asking gentle clarifying questions	Gentle questions can help you understand what they mean without pressure. You can say: • *'Tell me more about that.'* • *'What happened next?'* • *'How did that make you feel?'*
Asking just enough questions (the 'Goldilocks principle')	Ask enough to understand immediate safety, but not so many that they feel pressured or overwhelmed.
Giving the 'no trouble' message	Let them know they're not in trouble for speaking up.
Offering choice and control	Let them set the pace. Remind them they can pause the talk anytime.

For more information, see the **Starting a supportive conversation** and **What to do when a young person shares a concern** sections of the Trusted Adult Guide.

3.4 What to avoid

Speaking badly about the person	Focus on the behaviour, not the person. Criticising the person can make the young person shut down.
Taking over	Doing everything for them can make them feel they have no control.
Closed or shaming questions	Avoid questions like: • *'Why didn't you tell someone earlier?'* • *'Are you sure that's what happened?'*
Promising to keep secrets	If a young person is at risk, taking action is the best way to keep them safe. Be honest and clear. You can say: '*I need to make sure you're safe. I may need to tell another adult who can help us.*'
Assuming you have the whole story	Young people often share in small test pieces. Be patient
Downplaying what they share	Don't say things that make their feelings seem small. Acknowledge what they feel and listen.

3.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

If the young person…	You can say or do…
Says something feels 'off'	*'That feeling matters. Let's look at it together.'*
Describes behaviour that sounds unsafe	*'Safe relationships don't use secrets or pressure.'*
Says an adult is pressuring them to keep a secret	'Safe adults don't need to keep secrets with young people. I'm glad you told me.'
Mentions someone is controlling them	*'You have a right to feel safe and respected. No one should pressure you to do something that feels wrong.'*
Blames themselves for what happened	*'You're not responsible for someone else's choices. This is not your fault.'*
Is worried about what happens next	*'I'll explain what happens next. We can go step by step.'*

If the young person shares something that feels unsafe, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. If you're unsure what to do, check in with another trusted adult or a professional. You don't have to do this alone. Working together helps keep young people safe.

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Tip sheet 4:
Talking about warning signs



4.1 Why this matters

- Many young people are taught to be polite instead of listening to their gut.
- Warning signs are real information that helps young people stay safe.
- The body often notices stress or danger before the brain catches up.
- Young people often feel something before they can explain it.
- When the body is in a survival state (like fight or flight), the thinking part of the brain is less active. They need help to feel calm before they can talk.
- In grooming or abuse situations, many young people freeze, fawn or flop. Knowing these responses stops adults from asking 'Why didn't you just say no?'
- Many young people feel stressed or overwhelmed at times. Noticing body cues can help them get support before things build up.

4.2 What you might notice

Young people react to stress in different ways. These are the five most common responses:

Response	What it might look like
Fight	anger, raised voice, physical tension
Flight	pacing, leaving, fidgeting
Freeze	going quiet, staying very still, blank expression
Flop	low energy, slumped posture, appearing 'shut down'
Fawn	over-agreeing, people-pleasing

You may also notice:

- a young person saying they feel off
- sudden overwhelm or confusion
- stomach aches, headaches or tiredness
- avoiding eye contact
- becoming overly helpful or apologetic.

These responses are often protective, especially when a young person feels overwhelmed, unsafe or doesn't know how to ask for help. They are signs to be curious, not a diagnosis. Look for patterns and changes in behaviour over time.

4.3 What helps

Staying calm together	Sit nearby, walk together or do a simple task side-by-side. Slow your voice down. Check your own body first. Take a slow breath so your calm energy helps them settle.
Naming what's happening	Use messages like: *'Your body's trying to protect you.'*
Helping the body settle	Try slow breathing, gentle movement, grounding tools 5-4-3-2-1 or Box Breathing.
Offering small choices	Choices help young people feel more in control. • *'Do you want to sit or walk?'* • *'Talk now or take a minute first?'*
Asking gentle questions	If they can talk, try: • *'What's your body telling you?'* • *'When did you start feeling this way?'* • *'What might help right now?'*
Trusting their 'gut feeling'	Let them know it's OK to listen to their body's warning signs.

4.4 What to avoid

Asking ‘why?’	When the body is on high alert, it can be hard for young people to explain why. ‘Why’ can feel like blame.
Matching their energy	If they are loud or angry, aim to be the calm in the storm. If you get loud too, their body will feel even less safe.
Minimising feelings	Avoid: ‘You’re overreacting.’ To their body, the feeling is real.
Pushing for details	You don’t need to work out everything right away. Focus on safety first.
Pushing them to talk before they’re ready	Silence can be part of feeling overwhelmed. Give them time and let them know you’re there.
Keeping secrets	Safe relationships don’t need unsafe secrets. A warning sign may be their body’s way of saying a secret feels wrong.

4.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

If the young person…	You can say or do…
Notices a physical warning sign	*‘Your body is telling you something. What’s it feeling like right now?’*
Feels overwhelmed	*‘Let’s pause for a moment. Try one slow breath with me.’*
Is in a fight response	Stay calm. *‘I’m here. Let’s take a minute so your body can settle.’*
Is in freeze or flop	Reduce pressure. *‘It’s OK to have your own opinion. You don’t have to agree just to make me happy.’*
Is in fawn	*‘You don’t have to say yes to keep things calm. What do you think?’*
Reads a safe situation as danger	*‘It’s OK that you feel nervous. Let’s take a minute to look at what’s happening together.’*

If a young person’s warning signs worry you or they share something that feels unsafe, stay calm, follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**, and reach out to another trusted adult, a professional or a service for guidance. For more information, see the **Starting a supportive conversation** and **What to do when a young person shares a concern** sections of the Trusted Adult Guide.

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Tip sheet 5:
Talking about risk-taking



5.1 Why this matters

- Risk-taking is a normal part of growing up.
- Young people feel safer when adults help them understand risks instead of just saying 'no.' This keeps the path open for harder conversations later.
- Without guidance, young people often rely on what their friends think is normal.
- Learning the difference between safe, safe risk, risking on purpose and unsafe helps build judgement.
- Curiosity and calm responses help young people think things through.
- Online spaces can increase peer pressure to take risks, making adult support even more important.

5.2 What you might notice

Young people exploring risk may:

- test boundaries or rules
- talk about pressure from friends
- minimise danger ('It's fine' or 'Everyone does it')
- move quickly between feeling confident and feeling doubt
- withdraw or go quiet after taking an unsafe risk
- avoid all 'safe risks'.

These behaviours often show a young person is learning and testing limits.

5.3 What helps

Using the Safety continuum	Help them place a situation into a category: • safe • safe risk (fun to feel scared) • risking on purpose • unsafe. This keeps the focus on judgement, not good or bad. It helps them think, not feel judged.
Focusing on their thinking, not just the outcome	Ask what they noticed, what felt safe or unsafe, and what they might do next time.
Checking the Building blocks of safety	Ask: • *'Are you choosing freely?'* • *'Do you have control?'* • *'Is there a time limit?'*
Planning ahead together	Ask: • *'Have you thought about what you'd do if it stopped feeling safe?'* • *'If you needed to leave, what could help you do that?'* • *'If you felt uncomfortable, who could you reach out to?'*
Normalising mixed feelings	Remind them it is common to feel nervous and excited at the same time.
Keeping connection central	Curiosity and calm responses keep communication open.
Celebrating safe risks	Acknowledge their effort and courage when they try something new.

Respecting pace and context	Risk feels different for everyone. Culture, disability or past trauma can change how safety feels. Follow the young person's lead. A safe risk for one person might feel unsafe for another. Don't compare them to others. Focus on what feels manageable for them right now.

The **Safety continuum** and the **Building blocks of safety** come from protective behaviours education. Young people explore these in the **Young Person's Guide to Personal Safety**.

5.4 What to avoid

The 'I told you so'	Shame can stop a young person from learning. Connection supports growth.
Taking the wheel	Unless there is immediate danger, don't just ban the activity. Help them build safety skills instead.
Strict rules	Using words like never or always can stop a young person from telling you when a risk goes wrong. Focus on mostly and usually to allow for honest mistakes.
Assuming risk means 'acting out'	Risk-taking is a natural part of human development.

5.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

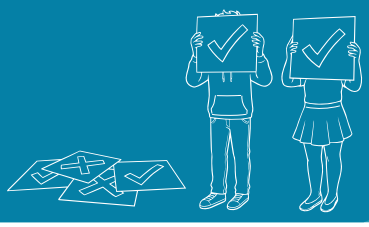
If the young person…	You can say or do…
Wants to try something new	*'That could be a safe risk. What's your plan to stay in control?'*
Feels pressured by friends	*'It sounds like others are making the choice for you. How can we help you get your 'voice' back?'*
Talks about an unsafe risk	Stay calm. *'Even if you took an unsafe risk, you don't have to keep it a secret. I'm glad you told me so we can sort it out.'*
Is unsure how to say no	Practise exits. *'I'm not up for that.'* or *'I've got to head off.'*
Is nervous but curious	*'It's OK to feel both. What would help this feel safe to you?'*
Is worried you'll be angry about a mistake	*'I might not like the choice, but I'm always glad you told me. Your safety matters more than the rules.'*

If the young person shares something that feels unsafe, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. If you're unsure what to do, check in with another trusted adult or a professional. You don't have to make decisions alone.

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Tip sheet 6:
Talking about consent and rights



6.1 Why this matters

- Understanding consent helps young people stay safe and build respectful relationships.
- Mixed messages from friends and online spaces can cause confusion.
- Many young people feel pressured to do sexual things. Spotting this pressure helps them stay in control.
- Practicing consent skills early builds confidence and supports respectful relationships.

6.2 What you might notice

Young people may be testing boundaries or practicing consent when they:

- ask 'what's normal' or look for reassurance about personal boundaries
- use unsure phrases ('I guess…' or 'If you want…')
- seem scared or hesitant to say 'no'
- talk about drama or pressure in online chats.

6.3 What helps

Reinforcing body ownership	Use the message: *'You get to decide what happens with your body.'*
Talking about consent	Remind them of five parts of consent: • **free and voluntary** (no pressure) • **specific and informed** (they know what they're saying yes to) • **clear and communicated** (an active yes, not a guess or silence) • **ongoing and mutual** (both people can change their minds) • **reflects capacity** (they're old enough, awake and sober enough to make a choice).
Naming pressure clearly	Help them notice if someone is using guilt, power or wearing them down.
Teaching them to speak up	Respecting their own needs is important. Practice phrases like: '*I'm not comfortable,'* or *'Stop that.'*
Including online consent	Consent also applies to photos, videos and messages. Remind them: • Consent to take a photo is not consent to share it. • Consent can be taken back. Even if they sent a photo before, they can say *'stop'* at any time. • Silence or freezing online is a no.
Explaining the law	It's illegal to take, request or share sexual images of anyone under 18. If someone is using an image to threaten or blackmail them, this is a crime.

For more information, see **Support services for adults** from the Trusted Adult Guide.

6.4 What to avoid

Dismissing or rushing	Avoid: ‘You’re fine, don’t worry.’ This can teach young people to ignore their own warning signs. Go at their pace.
Reacting with shock or blame	Strong reactions or asking ‘Why didn’t you tell me?’ can shift responsibility to the young person and shut a conversation down.
Shaming	Avoid focusing on what they were wearing, who they were with, or why they were online late. Consent is about the behaviour of the person who didn’t listen to ‘no’, not the choices of the young person.
Promising to keep secrets	Pressure and threats often rely on secrecy. If a young person is at risk, taking action is the best way to keep them safe. Let them know that sharing the information with a professional is how you protect them.

6.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

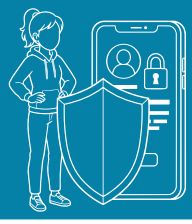
If the young person…	You can say or do…
‘I’m not sure if that was consent.’	*‘Consent should feel clear and freely given.’*
‘I said yes, but I didn’t want to.’	*‘Pressure can change choices. That’s not your fault.’*
‘They kept asking me.’	*‘Being worn down is not consent. Your no matters.’*
‘I froze.’	*‘Freezing is a normal safety response. If you didn’t say an active “yes”, it wasn’t consent. I am glad you told me.’*
‘I changed my mind.’	*‘You can change your mind at any time.’*
‘They threatened to share my nudes.’	*‘That is a serious crime called image-based abuse. You’re not in trouble. We can get eSafety to help take it down and stop the person.’* For more information, see **Support services for adults** from the guide.

If the young person shares something that feels unsafe, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. If you’re unsure what to do, check in with another trusted adult or a professional. You don’t have to make decisions alone.

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Tip sheet 7:
Talking about staying safer online



7.1 Why this matters

- Young people spend a large part of their lives online for friends, learning and fun.
- Almost 3 in 4 children have seen or heard harmful content online.
- Common risks include unwanted contact, sexual content and being targeted.
- Negative impacts like grooming, image-based abuse and child sexual exploitation are increasing online.
- New risks like doxxing (sharing private information to harm someone) and swatting (making false police reports) are becoming more common.
- Sextortion is a serious crime where someone blackmails a young person using sexual images. It affects 1 in 10 young people. Boys are targeted most often.
- Online harm can move fast and create deep shame, fear or confusion.
- Supportive, calm, adult responses make it easier for a young person to seek help.

7.2 What you might notice

Young people facing online pressure may:

- hide or delete accounts and messages quickly
- switch screen tabs when an adult walks into the room
- appear anxious or jumpy when they get notifications
- withdraw from friends or stop playing their favourite games
- show sudden changes in their digital mood (anger or anxiety during/after gaming or social media)
- use vague terms like online drama, weird messages or creepy direct messages (DM).

7.3 What helps

Normalising online challenges	You can say: *'Most people deal with tricky online situations.'* Use real examples young people recognise (e.g. gaming chats, group chats, DMs, friend requests, trends).
Reinforcing boundaries	Remind them: *'You never owe anyone photos or replies.'*
Building digital skills	• Review privacy settings together. • Practise blocking, muting and reporting. • Talk about 'safe people' and 'safe spaces' online. • Discuss signs of online grooming. • Explain the law (in WA, it is illegal to send or possess intimate images of anyone under 18). See Supporting digital literacy for under-16s on the eSafety Commissioner website.
Encouraging critical thinking	Ask: *'Does this feel respectful and safe?'*
Modelling healthy behaviour	Show them how you take breaks and set your own online boundaries.

For more information, see **Support services for adults** from the Trusted Adult Guide.

7.4 What to avoid

Confiscating devices (unless needed for immediate safety)	Fear of losing their phone can stop young people from speaking up.
Reacting with shock	Panic can shut down the conversation. Stay calm and supportive.
Blaming and shaming	Avoid saying: *'You should have known better.'* Technology changes fast, and even tech-savvy young people can be targeted.
Minimising	Avoid *'It's just online.'* Online harm is real harm.
Lecturing	Focus on safety and support. Avoid judging their choices.
Promising to keep secrets	If a young person is at risk, taking action is the best way to keep them safe. Let them know you need to involve a professional to stop the harm.

7.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

If the young person says…	You can say or do…
'I think I messed up.'	*'Everyone makes mistakes online. What matters now is your safety.'*
'They told me not to tell.'	*'Keeping secrets is a red flag. Safe adults don't ask you to keep secrets. I'm glad you told me.'*
'Someone asked me for photos.'	*'You never have to send images. Your body and your choices matter.'*
'Someone messaged me and it felt weird.'	*'Your gut feeling is usually right. Let's look at it together. We can decide if we should block them.'*
'I saw something online that upset me.'	*'It's OK to feel that way. A lot of things online aren't real life. We can talk about it.'*
'I'm being sextorted.'	*'Stop all contact and don't pay. We can report this to eSafety and the ACCCE together when you're ready.'*

If the young person shares something that feels unsafe, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. If you're unsure what to do, check in with another trusted adult or a professional. You don't have to make decisions alone.

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Tip sheet 8:
Talking about bullying



8.1 Why this matters

- Bullying can hurt a young person's mental health, safety and sense of belonging.
- Bullying can happen in person or online (cyberbullying). Both can have a big impact.
- In the 2025 Mission Australia Youth Survey, 30% of young people said they were bullied or treated unfairly.
- About 1 in 4 students in Years 4–9 say they are bullied every few weeks or more.
- Bullying someone because of their race, religion, gender or disability is discrimination. It often needs adult support to make it stop.
- Many young people wait to tell an adult because they're afraid it will get worse or they'll be told to 'ignore it.'
- Schools, clubs and community groups have a duty to keep their spaces safe and free from bullying.

8.2 What you might notice

Young people experiencing bullying or cyberbullying may:

- withdraw from friends, activities or online spaces
- avoid school or change their online habits suddenly
- have headaches, stomach aches or trouble sleeping
- act irritable, ashamed, withdrawn or emotionally flat
- hide their screen or get upset after being online.

These behaviours can be signs that a young person needs support.

8.3 What helps

Believing and supporting	You can say: *'What you're feeling makes sense'* or *'You don't deserve this.'*
'Banter' check	Ask: *'Is everyone laughing? Does it stop if someone is upset?'* If it's one-sided, it is bullying, not banter.
Naming it clearly (without shaming)	Use the word 'bullying' when the behaviour is repeated and on purpose. Naming it helps young people feel believed.
Talking about online bullying	Talk about how bullying can happen in group chats, direct messages (DM) and gaming. You can use eSafety tools to help. For more information, see **Support services for adults** from the Trusted Adult Guide.
Build a 'safe' list	Identify the specific teachers or staff at school or other adults who the young person feels OK talking to. Don't assume every adult feels safe to them.
Supporting upstanders	Talk about low-risk ways peers can help, like checking in privately or offering to sit with someone.
Taking back control	Write down what happened and save screenshots of online harm. It helps you have the proof you need. Report serious cyberbullying to the eSafety Commissioner.
Following up	Bullying rarely stops right away. Check in often. Don't assume silence means it's over.

8.4 What to avoid

Minimising	Avoid saying *'It's just drama'* or *'Ignore it.'* This can stop a young person from seeking help.
Blaming	Avoid: *'Why didn't you tell me sooner?'* This puts the blame on the young person.
Lecturing	Focus on safety and support. Don't judge their social choices.
Promising to keep secrets	If a young person is at risk, taking action is the best way to keep them safe. Let them know that telling a professional is how you protect their right to be safe.
The phone ban	If a young person is afraid of losing their phone, they may stop telling you about what's happening. Removing their phone also cuts off their access to help. Instead of taking the phone, use these tools to support safety: • **eSafety Commissioner**: Advice, reporting pathways and help removing harmful online content. Report cyberbullying via eSafety. • **Kids Helpline**: A free, private and safe place for young people to talk or web-chat 24/7. • **eSafety Guide**: Step-by-step instructions on how to block, mute and report people on specific games and apps.

8.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

If the young person says…	You can say or do…
'It's just banter… I think.'	*'If it doesn't feel safe or respectful, it isn't banter. Your feelings matter.'*
'I'm being bullied in the group chat.'	*'That's cyberbullying. It's not OK. Let's look at how to block and report it.'*
'I tried to tell them to stop and it got worse.'	*'That's not your fault. Some patterns need adult support to change.'*
'I don't want to be a snitch.'	*Reporting is about protection. Ther's a big difference between 'tattling' to get someone in trouble and 'reporting' to get someone safe.'*
'I tried ignoring it, but it didn't work.'	*'That wasn't a mistake. It just means we need more support. Let's look at new steps together.'*
'It's because of who I am.'	*'Identity-based bullying is never OK. You deserve respect for being you.'*

If the young person shares something that feels unsafe, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. If you're unsure what to do, check in with another trusted adult or a professional. You don't have to make decisions alone.

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Tip sheet 9:
Talking about Safe2Say
(anonymous reporting)



9.1 Why this matters

- It can take a long time for a young person to tell someone about abuse.
- Fear and shame can stop young people from speaking up.
- Safe2Say is an online way to report sexual abuse in WA without giving a name.
- Having a choice in how they report can help a young person feel in control.
- Reporting without giving a name can take the pressure off and make it easier for a young person to start getting help.
- Safe2Say is a tool, not a person. It gives a young person a way to speak up, but they still need you to help them feel safe and plan the next steps.

9.2 What you might notice

A young person thinking about reporting may:

- ask what if questions about reporting
- tell you small parts of a story to see how you react
- try to make the abuse sound not that bad or minimise what happened
- change their mind often about wanting to speak up
- worry about getting someone else in trouble
- seem very quiet, jumpy or angry for no clear reason.

9.3 What helps

Believing and supporting	You can say: *'I believe you. This is not your fault.'* Believing them reduces shame and makes it easier for them to ask for help.
Giving them choice	You can say: *'You don't have to decide today. We can go step by step.'*
Explaining Safe2Say clearly	It's an online platform. It's not a 'live' chat. Reports are usually checked during office hours (Monday to Friday). If they need help right this second, they should call **000**.
Show them the Safe2Say site	Sometimes just looking at the homepage together on a phone can make it feel less scary.
Being honest about your role	If your job requires you to report child abuse by law or policy, tell them early. Don't let this be a surprise later.

For more information, see **Support services for adults** from the Trusted Adult Guide.

If the young person shares something that feels unsafe, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. If you're unsure what to do, check in with another trusted adult or a professional. You don't have to make decisions alone.

9.4 What to avoid

Treating Safe2Say as a handover	The website is a tool, but you are their support. Stay by their side.
Pressuring them	Don't force an immediate report. This can break trust.
Asking detective questions	Pushing for lots of detail can feel overwhelming for a young person. It can also affect what police or professionals need to do later. Ask only the questions you need to understand the concern and make sure the young person is safe right now.
Minimising	Don't say *'It's not that serious.'* This can stop them from telling again in the future.
Promising to keep secrets	If a young person is at risk, taking action is the best way to keep them safe. Let them know that you need to tell a professional to make sure the harm stops.
Overloading them	Too much detail or legal talk can cause fear. Keep it simple.

9.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

If the young person says…	You can say or do…
'I want to report, but not in person.'	*'Safe2Say is an online way to report without going to a station. We can look at it together if you want.'*
'I don't want anyone to know it's me.'	*'Safe2Say lets you report without giving your name. You choose what you share.'*
'I'm scared it will make things worse.'	*'That fear makes sense. We'll go at your pace and work out a safety plan.'*
'I don't know if it counts as abuse.'	*'You're the expert on your own feelings. If something felt wrong or unwanted, it's worth talking about.'*
'I don't want to get them in trouble.'	*'I hear that you're worried about them. Right now, my main job is to make sure you are OK. We can take this slowly.'*
'It happened a long time ago.'	*'There's no time limit on speaking up. You still deserve support and safety.'*

- Safe2say is an information-sharing tool. It doesn't always stop harm right away. You must still help the young person with a safety plan.
- You still need to make your own report. If your job says you must report abuse, a young person using Safe2Say doesn't count as your legal report. You must still follow your own workplace steps.
- In WA, police officers are mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse.

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Tip sheet 10:
Talking about violent extremism



10.1 Why this matters

- Young people are still figuring out who they are and where they belong. This can make them more likely to be influenced by external factors, including people and content online.
- Radicalisation is not a sudden event. It's a slow process where a young person is led toward extreme views over time.
- Having deep passions is a normal part of growing up. Most young people who care about a cause aren't being radicalised. It only becomes a risk when it turns toward hate or violence.
- App settings (algorithms) are designed to keep people watching. They can quickly push a young person from a simple video to extreme or hateful content.
- Extreme content often targets young people by:
  - telling them that other groups are the cause of all their problems
  - promoting alpha/beta labels (the Manosphere) and saying dominance or violence equals power
  - taking a young person's need for purpose and turning it into resentment toward others
  - making harassment or graphic violence seem cool, funny or normal.
- Support from a trusted adult can reduce isolation and prevent things from getting worse.
- People do leave extremist groups. Feeling cared for by a supportive adult outside the group makes it easier to walk away.

10.2 What you might notice

You may notice a young person:

- withdrawing from friends, family or activities
- using us vs them or other black-and-white language
- becoming secretive about online activity or spending time in online echo chambers (spaces where they only hear one side of a story, making extreme ideas seem normal)
- suddenly changing how they talk about women or gender, such as using alpha/beta labels or saying equality is a threat
- using slurs or aggressive political labels
- talking about violence as a solution or idolising violent groups
- sharing or creating concerning, violent or illegal content.

These signs don't always mean a young person is becoming an extremist. Often, they're looking for belonging, certainty or a sense of power.

10.3 What helps

Focusing on connection	Your relationship is the strongest protective factor. You can say: 'You don't have to work this out alone. I'm here to understand, not judge.'
Listening to understand	Use TED prompts like: *'Tell me more…', 'Explain that to me…',* and *'Describe how it affects you…'*
Validating feelings, not violence	You can say: 'It makes sense you want to feel heard. But hurting others is never OK.'
Encouraging critical thinking	You can ask questions like: *'Who is trying to make you angry, and why? What do they gain from you feeling this way?'*
Finding positive outlets	Help them find safe ways to act on their passions (e.g. volunteering or youth groups).
Reporting illegal content	If a young person sees or shares restricted or graphic content, you can report it to eSafety.

For more information, see **Support services for adults** from the Trusted Adult Guide.

10.4 What to avoid

Labelling or profiling	It can increase secrecy and make the young person more defensive.
'The debate'	If you try to prove their ideas are wrong, they may stop talking to you and turn back to the group that gets them. Focus on the relationship, not the argument.
Shaming	Humiliation can make young people withdraw and trust the extremist group more.
Treating curiosity as a crime	Most exploration is a part of growing up, not a criminal act.
Isolating them further	Cutting young people off from support can increase risk.
Spying	Checking their phone in secret can destroy trust. If you're worried, tell them why. Be the safe person they can come to when they feel confused.

10.5 Quick responses

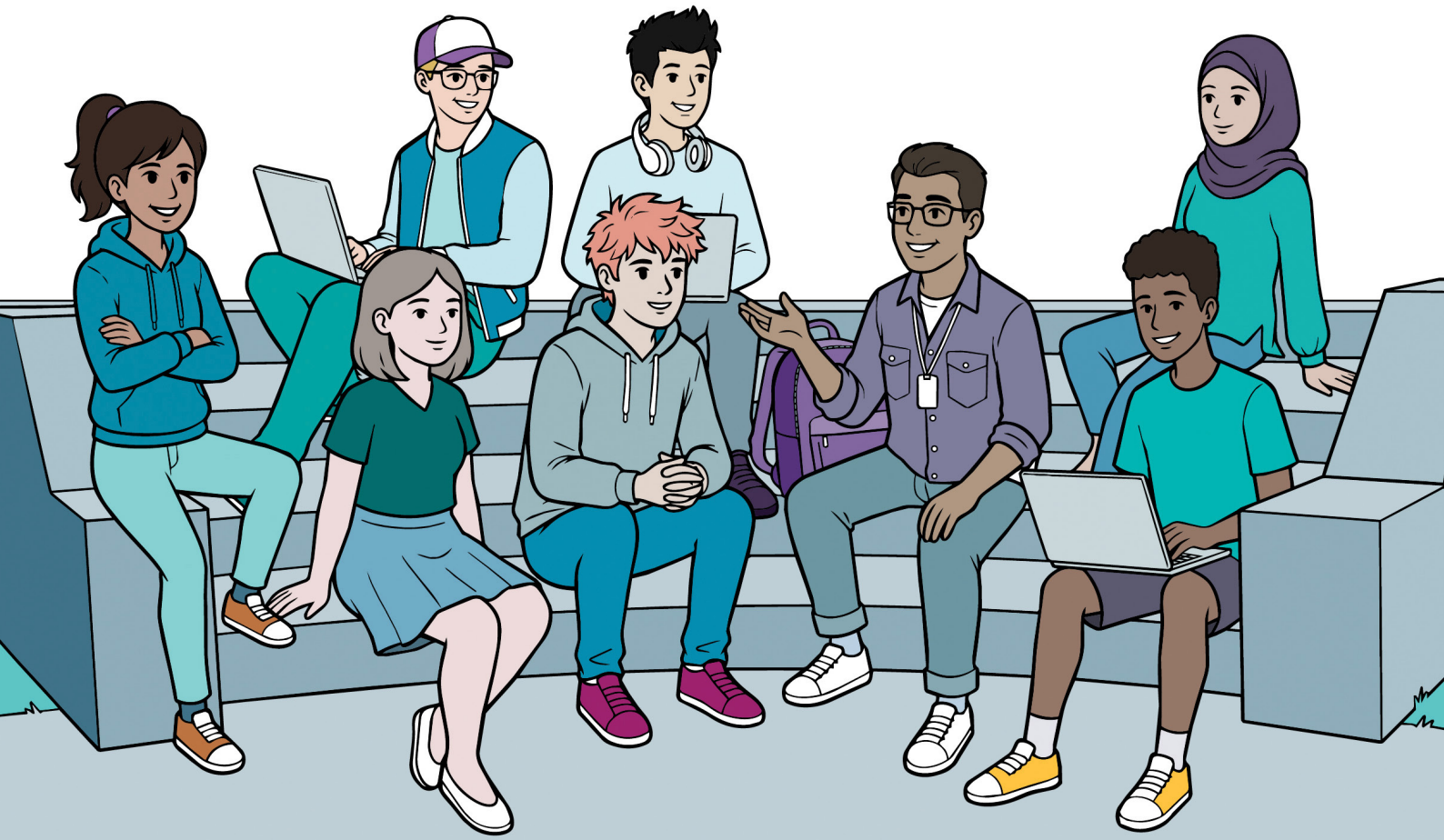
These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

If the young person says…	You can say or do…
'Violence is the only way to be heard.'	*'I hear your anger, but violence harms people. Let's explore safer ways to make a change.'*
'They're the only ones who get me.'	*'Feeling understood matters. I'm here for you, too. Let's talk more.'*
'People like us are under attack.'	'It sounds like you feel you need to protect yourself. Let's look at who's telling you that you're under attack.'
'I'm just sharing memes.'	*'Memes can hide a lot of hate behind a joke. Can you explain why you find this one funny? I want to understand what it means to you.'*
'I'm angry all the time.'	*'Anger is a signal that something needs attention. I'm here to help you figure it out.'*

If you are worried about a young person's safety or extreme views, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. Don't do this alone. Reach out to a professional or Step Together. **If there is an immediate threat of violence, call the Police on 000 or 131 444.**

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