

Handling Sensitive Topics and Issues

Talking about child sexual exploitation is a sensitive, and sometimes challenging topic for adults as well as kids. Child sexual abuse and online grooming as well as growing curiosities about sex and their bodies, may evoke strong emotions or raise challenging questions about values and beliefs that have no easy answers.



It is important to handle these issues without reinforcing stereotypes, increasing confusion or shaming students. A fear-based approach is NOT recommended. This education package is designed to provide an empowering alternative.

When talking about child sexual exploitation or sexual behaviours between children, it is important to create a safe and positive classroom environment which encourages participation and cooperation. By helping to create an environment where students are encouraged to act with empathy and assertiveness, students can actively take part in increasing respect and personal boundaries in the classroom and beyond.

When using teaching and learning activities from this resource, be mindful of the different learning abilities, maturity levels and personal backgrounds of your students. In particular, efforts should be made to ensure that students feel that they are in a safe learning environment.

One of the primary ways of doing this is by setting group rules by establishing a mutually agreed list of sharing guidelines, displaying them in a highly visible place, and encouraging the class to kindly remind each other of the guidelines. These guidelines could include:

- Own your ideas by using “I think” rather than “you should”.
- Respect each other by remembering that each person has their own beliefs and values and their own world views, experiences and opinions.
- Each person has a right to contribute their ideas so listen politely.
- Avoid sharing personal stories in class, instead, go to a trusted adult.
- Be brave in sharing your ideas, experiences and opinions during activities.
- Consider the privacy of your classmates and appreciate that everyone has the right to uphold their privacy; this might mean they don't want to share their ideas on an issue and what happens in the room, does not get talked about outside of it, except with parents/caregivers or trusted adults.
- Share feedback in a way that is considerate and positive: remember to be kind, helpful and specific when providing feedback.

By helping to create an environment where opinions and perspectives are respected, students are encouraged to actively take part in advancing respect for the rights of others, within the classroom and beyond. In cases where students require counselling or support, refer them to assistance from the school counsellor or from one of the organisations listed on the next page. You may wish to display this in your classroom.

If you have experienced bullying, unwanted contact, icky conversations, icky requests or abuse, sometimes it can take time to wrap your head around what's happened.

If it doesn't feel right, talk it through with an adult you trust, such as a teacher, parent/caregiver or school counsellor.

Our school's best wellbeing/counselling contact is: _____

Or, you could contact one of the following:

eSafety Kids (eSafety Commissioner)

This website contains some advice for tricky situations. It will refer you to Kids Helpline for support, but you can report cyberbullying on this page.

Website: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/kids>

Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline is a counselling service for Australian children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years.

Website: <http://www.kidshelp.com.au/>

Phone: 1800 551 800

Headspace

The National Youth Mental Health Foundation provides information and advice for young people going through difficulties through their Headspace centres, online, and telephone support services.

Website: <https://www.eheadspace.org.au/>

Phone: 1800 650 890

1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT is a national counselling helpline that offers support and information around domestic violence and sexual assault, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Website: <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

Phone: 1800 737 732