

Respectful relationships education



Student Wellbeing Hub

A guide for parents and families

As a parent you want your child to have positive experiences at school and throughout their lives. You want them to develop healthy relationships, to feel supported and to have access to all opportunities to learn and develop. You want them to respect themselves, to have respect for others, and to be respected.

Parents, in partnership with schools, play a key role in teaching children and young people about respect and respectful relationships. Respectful relationships education supports families to help their children interact positively with others and to develop respectful relationships as they grow up and become adults.

What is respectful relationships education?

Respectful relationships education is a school-based program that supports students to develop the skills to build and maintain respectful relationships in our communities.

Schools that teach respectful relationships education believe that everyone in their school community has the right to be respected, valued and treated equally.

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Respectful relationships education is included in the Australian Curriculum at all year levels. It may be taught in a variety of ways, including:

- in your child's primary school classroom
- in Health and Physical Education in both primary and secondary school
- through pastoral care classes in secondary school
- through special days and student-led activities.

What do students learn in respectful relationships education?

Respectful relationships education develops the skills and understanding students need to interact positively and respectfully with people across a wide range of social situations.

COMMON TOPICS

Respectful relationships education may be taught differently in each state and territory, but common topics include:

- personal safety
- coping skills
- making friends and solving conflicts
- managing your emotions
- developing communication skills.

Understandings and skills

As part of respectful relationships education, students learn about the importance of basing all of their relationships on mutual respect and equality, how to manage their feelings, and ways of asking for help and support when they feel upset.

Respectful relationships education also explores the causes of bullying and violence for both boys and girls. It helps students to be aware of the effects that negative gender stereotypes and gender inequality can have on the way we see and treat each other.

How can parents and families support respectful relationships education?

Schools can't do this work alone. Parents play the first and most influential role in teaching children and young people about respect and respectful relationships. You can reinforce your child's school learnings by modelling positive behaviours for them at home.

Respectful relationships education and gender

It's important to recognise that both boys and girls can be at risk of abuse, bullying and other forms of violence. Respectful relationships education is about making sure that all of our relationships are more positive. However, respectful relationships education is also about tackling the issue of gender inequality and the effect that it has on attitudes towards violence.

From a young age, boys and girls can start to believe that there are situations where disrespectful behaviour towards girls and women is acceptable. Children hear how some adults talk about boys and girls differently, and can learn from these conversations that it is OK for boys and men to treat women disrespectfully. Without realising it, we can sometimes say and do things that may make our children think disrespectful behaviours are excusable or even normal.

If we teach boys that rough or aggressive behaviour is 'just what boys do' they will act in this way towards other boys and towards girls. Girls may be told that boys behave aggressively as a form of showing interest or affection – 'because he likes you'. Gradually, boys and girls can start to believe that disrespect is just a normal part of relationships.

EXCUSING DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR

We might be surprised by some of the ways we excuse disrespectful behaviour. These include:

- playing down the effects of disrespectful behaviour
- accepting that aggression is just part of being male
- blaming females for causing or contributing to any abuse that they experience.

We know that changes in attitudes and behaviours can be achieved when positive attitudes, behaviours and gender equality are reinforced and modelled in our community.

If you want to look more closely at language that may be excusing disrespect, read [The excuse interpreter](#) from Our Watch.

How do parents and families have conversations about respect?

As a parent you never know when a situation might arise for a conversation with your child about how to behave in a respectful way. It could be that you've seen an incident that needs to be followed up or you have watched a news story or movie that depicts violence. It is not always easy, but it's a conversation worth having. Every time you speak out against disrespectful behaviour, we're one small step closer to creating a more respectful society.

Respect.gov.au has published a [Conversation guide](#) that can help you start the conversation about respectful relationships with your child.

Children and young people need guidance from the people they look up to – role models like you, their friends, their teachers and their heroes. All have a role to play in helping children to build the skills to have healthy, happy and respectful relationships, and to call out attitudes and behaviours that hurt, intimidate or diminish others.

Where can parents and families find out more about what the school is doing?

Schools are at different stages of introducing respectful relationships education. Contact your school for details about how they are approaching respectful relationships education.

KEY SCHOOL CONTACT: Respectful relationships education

CONTACT (PHONE):

CONTACT (EMAIL):