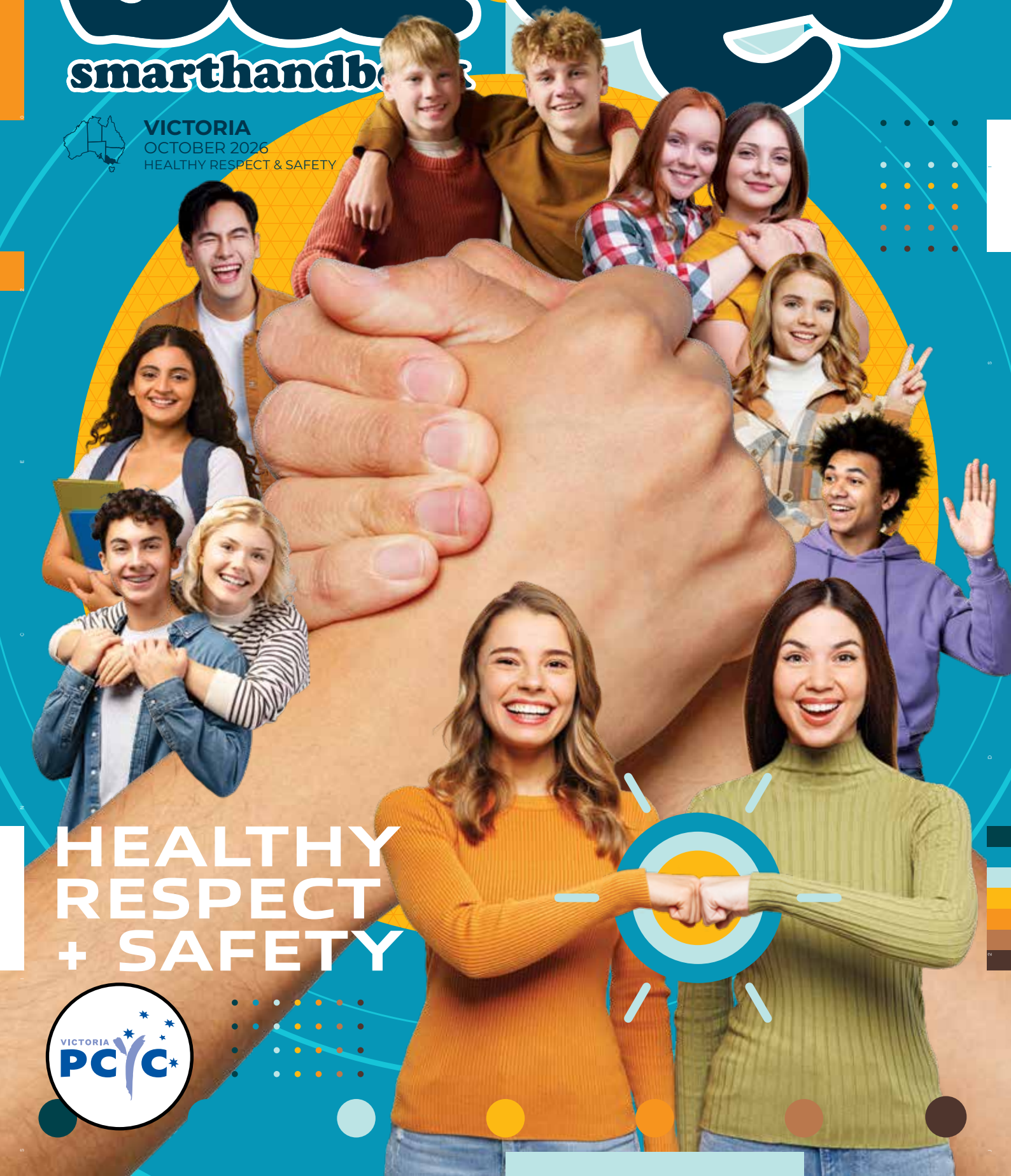
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VICTORIA
OCTOBER 2026
HEALTHY RESPECT & SAFETY



HEALTHY RESPECT + SAFETY

VICTORIA PCYC


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Working together

Victorian Police have been working alongside the community for many years and in various ways. PCYCs are excellent examples of how local police and community work together to provide access and opportunities for our youth.

Today, PCYCs remain a very worthwhile community-based proactive initiative. Local communities continue to be involved in the establishment of these viable and long-term community resources that provide recreation and entertainment for youth, specifically those at risk of anti-social behaviour and those who are disadvantaged.

The Victoria Police Youth Affairs Office supports and gives advice to the PCYCs, however, Victorian PCYCs are all run independently by Management Committees. These committees are made up of local police, community members and local youth.

The Mission of PCYCs is **'Developing our future through helping young people'**. With this in mind, PCYCs have the following aims:

- To have shared respect between police, community and young people
- To reduce the incidence of young people becoming offenders or victims of crime
- To develop young people's self-esteem, confidence, social and leadership skills
- To provide opportunities for challenge and excitement through law abiding behaviour
- To encourage the principles of good citizenship

To remain relevant in the community, PCYCs offer a substantially different form of activities and programs that fill a need within the fitness, recreational and social market. PCYCs aim to provide a wide range of sporting activities designed to promote good citizenship within local communities generally and for the disadvantaged and youth at risk. PCYCs provide a safe meeting place for local youth to participate in a number of activities such as craft, video nights, billiards, computer/homework sessions, boxing, basketball, day trips, gym work, self-defence etc. These clubs exist in suburbs of Melbourne and also in country areas.

PCYCs continue to be viable and relevant community resources and we trust that you will find this handbook to be a handy resource as well. Under the skill and guidance from our publishers, Countrywide Austral, and the generous assistance provided through businesses and supporters, we believe we have produced a vital resource that will assist youth in dealing with a wide range of life skills and issues.

Thank you for assisting Victorian PCYCs with this project and we urge you to support those who have got behind us to make this possible.

For locations of Victorian PCYCs visit our link site at: **www.police.vic.gov.au**

VICTORIA PCYC

A message from

AFP Deputy Commissioner Lesa Gale



As the Australian Federal Police Deputy Commissioner, it's my job to highlight to you the importance of protecting yourself and where to get help if something goes wrong both in the online and real world.

I recommend to you the Streetsmart Handbook which does just that. It contains answers to your many questions about being part of a safe, healthy and connected community. It will point you in the right direction of how to access government and other services that can provide advice and support and empower you through your teenage years into adulthood.

As you choose your own path – keep this book nearby so you are informed with all the important tools you will need at your fingertips. The decisions you make now will impact you for the rest of your life. We all make mistakes – it's how we recover from those mistakes that's important. The Streetsmart Handbook will help you make fewer mistakes and guide you through how you recover from the mistakes you do make.

Issues like cyberbullying, image-based abuse, or sextortion can happen to people of all age groups, and it can happen to you. The Streetsmart Handbook can help with what to do if this happens to you. We know technology and the internet are an important part of our everyday lives. Whether you are using technology as part of your studies or on a social basis, being digitally Streetsmart means you will know what to do to stay safe online.

This Streetsmart Handbook has been developed to guide you over the coming years and contains information to answer some of your questions and to point you toward sources of additional support as you seek to maintain a healthy mind, body and relationships.

Good luck! I wish you all the very best.

Lesa Gale
AFP Deputy Commissioner
International & Specialist Capabilities

Deputy Commissioner Lesa Gale APM

AFP Deputy Commissioner
International and Specialist Capabilities

The Streetsmart Handbook will help you make fewer mistakes and guide you through how you recover from the mistakes you do make.

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WorkApp is a free listing platform for jobs, workers, and small businesses to advertise without the fees.

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Shane, an inspirational speaker for youth, says,

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past, present and emerging.

Disclaimer
This publication contains images of Indigenous people that have been sourced/purchased from image galleries. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that these may include images of deceased persons.

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We offer parent education sessions and workshops on modern parenting, emotional wellbeing, neurodiversity, digital wellbeing, and practical strategies for supporting children and adolescents.

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We deliver professional development and CPD training for educators and health professionals, including Youth Mental Health First Aid, Neurodiversity in the Classroom, and tailored workshops designed to meet the needs of schools, organisations and workplaces.

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Our specialised therapy services include individual, couples, family and child therapy.

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Our growing range of on-demand resources and parent education courses covers learning support, supporting young people who self-harm, emotional regulation, and other practical tools for parents and carers.

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From the editor

Welcome to the Healthy Respect and Safety edition of *Streetsmart*.

There's a lot of advice in the world about being a teenager. This edition, we wanted to make a little more room for what young people have to say too.

Streetsmart Studio is starting to take shape as a creative space for exactly that. This time we have an opinion piece from a Year 12 student, a film review from Year 11 and three terrific haiku from Year 10 students in WA.

Let's keep building it.

We'd love to see more writing, artwork, photography, reviews, opinions, poetry and other creative work from students around Australia. Teachers, if there's something being created in your classroom that deserves a wider audience, please encourage your students to send it in.

This edition also features sisters Kristy and Amanda Lee, founders of Encompassed. Amanda has worked in social welfare for more than 20 years and Kristy has spent more than two decades teaching. We asked what all those years working with children and families had taught them about something most of us find difficult at one time or another: talking to the people closest to us.

Their answers are practical, reassuring and useful for young people and adults alike.

There's another thread running through this edition too. As you get older, you're making more of your own decisions about friendships, relationships, what happens online and what feels right for you. Knowing where you stand, understanding your boundaries and recognising when something doesn't feel right all matter. So does knowing when to speak up for yourself or someone else.

That's where *Streetsmart* can play a part: good information about the things that matter to you, alongside more of your experiences, ideas, creativity and voices.

Enjoy the edition, and please keep those submissions coming.

Kristi

Streetsmart Editor
editor@smarthandbooks.com.au



Dear Teachers

Somewhere in your classroom is a future writer, artist, or storyteller.

If they'd like to share their work, we'd love to see it.

Thank you for helping young people feel confident, creative, and proud of what they create.

Email your submission to editor@smarthandbooks.com.au to be considered for publication in the next edition.





Respectful relationships



Respect is at the heart of every healthy relationship – with friends, family and the people you date. It's about listening, communicating honestly, respecting boundaries and treating each other as equals. This chapter looks at what respect means in everyday life, from talking with parents to handling disagreements and becoming a better communicator. These skills can help you build stronger connections where everyone feels heard, valued and safe.

PSR.

PERTH SHOWER REGROUTING

GIVE YOUR SHOWER A

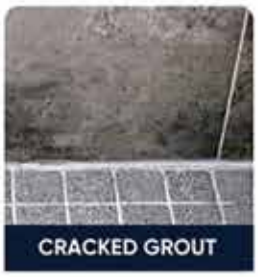
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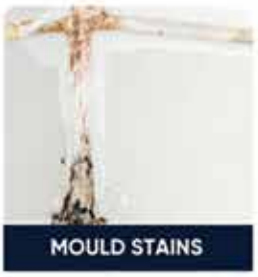
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Why is respect important?

Respect means treating someone as an equal, and expecting the same in return.

You can disagree, get annoyed or want different things and still respect each other. In a healthy relationship, you should be able to have your own opinions, spend time with other people, say no or set a boundary without being pressured, embarrassed or made to feel guilty.

Respect isn't something we automatically get right all the time. It's something we learn and practise in our friendships, families and relationships.

How you know if there's respect

Here's how you'll know if there's mutual respect in any relationship you have:

- Both people listen to each other's thoughts and feelings without interrupting or dismissing them.
- Conversations are honest and open, with each person feeling comfortable sharing their views.
- Personal space and individual boundaries are acknowledged and honoured by both parties.
- Each person supports the other's goals, dreams, and personal growth.
- Disagreements are handled calmly and constructively, with an emphasis on finding solutions rather than blaming.
- Decisions and responsibilities are shared fairly, with neither person dominating or controlling the other.
- Both individuals trust each other and maintain honesty, avoiding deceit or manipulation.



Remember

You can have other friends. Nobody makes you feel guilty for spending time with other people.

You have a right to privacy. You don't have to hand over passwords, messages or your location to prove you care.

You can say no. You don't feel scared about how the other person will react if you disagree or don't want to do something.

You both get a say. One person isn't always deciding where you go, who you see or what you do.

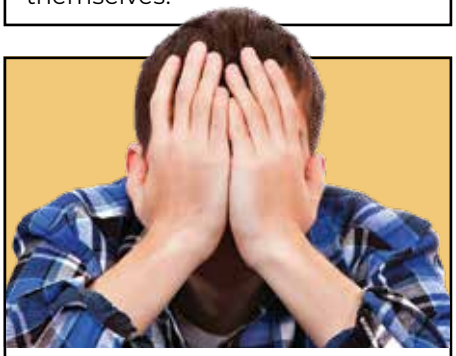


Respect yourself

Respect starts with how you treat yourself.

That means knowing your feelings and boundaries matter too. You can say no. You can change your mind. You can have your own friends, interests and opinions. You can ask for space, speak up when something doesn't feel right and ask for help when you need it.

Being respectful doesn't mean always keeping everyone else happy. A healthy relationship has room for both people to be themselves.



Had a falling-out?

Arguments happen, even in good relationships. If you've hurt someone, own it and apologise. If something has upset you, explain what happened and how it made you feel. Listen to their side too and give each other time if you need it.

Sometimes a friendship or relationship can come back stronger after you've worked through a disagreement.



Getting your point across at home

Sometimes talking to parents or carers might feel like you're trying to crack a secret code.

If you're feeling stuck, put some of these tips into action. They might help you get your point across without anyone losing their cool.

1 Choose the right time

Picking the right moment can make a big difference. Wait for a time when your parents or carers are relaxed and not busy. Avoid bringing up important stuff during a TV show or when they're in a rush.



2 Stay respectful

You're more likely to be heard if you explain your point calmly, even when you strongly disagree.

3 Explain your thoughts

Start by explaining your thoughts clearly and calmly. Share your perspective and how you feel. Use “I” statements to express your feelings without sounding like you’re blaming them.

4 Listen to their side

Communication is a two-way street. After you’ve shared your thoughts, listen to what they have to say. It shows that you value their opinion too.



5 Be patient

Sometimes parents or carers need a little time to understand where you’re coming from. Don’t get frustrated if they don’t agree right away. Keep the conversation going and be patient.

6 Use examples

Giving examples can make your point clearer. If you’re talking about a rule you’d like to change, explain why with real-life examples.



7 Look for common ground

You might not get exactly what you want, and neither will they. Sometimes there's a solution everyone can live with.

But compromise doesn't mean agreeing to something that makes you feel unsafe or crosses an important personal boundary.



How to be a great communicator

Good communication isn't about always knowing what to say. It's about listening, being clear about what you mean and giving the other person a chance to be heard too.

Active listening

Give them your attention

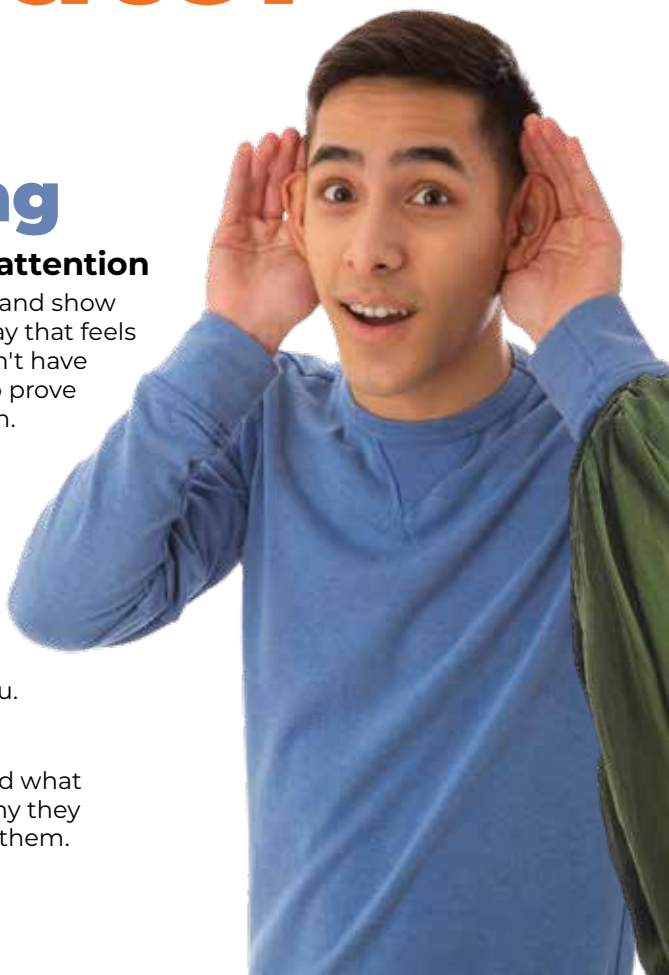
Put distractions aside and show you're listening in a way that feels natural to you. You don't have to stare at someone to prove you're paying attention.

Check you've understood

If you're not sure what someone means, ask. You can also tell them what you think you've heard and give them a chance to correct you.

Don't assume

If you don't understand what someone means or why they feel a certain way, ask them.



Be an assertive communicator

We can communicate in different ways depending on the situation. Being assertive usually gives you the best chance of saying what you need while still respecting the other person.



1 Assertive

I say what I think or need clearly while respecting you.



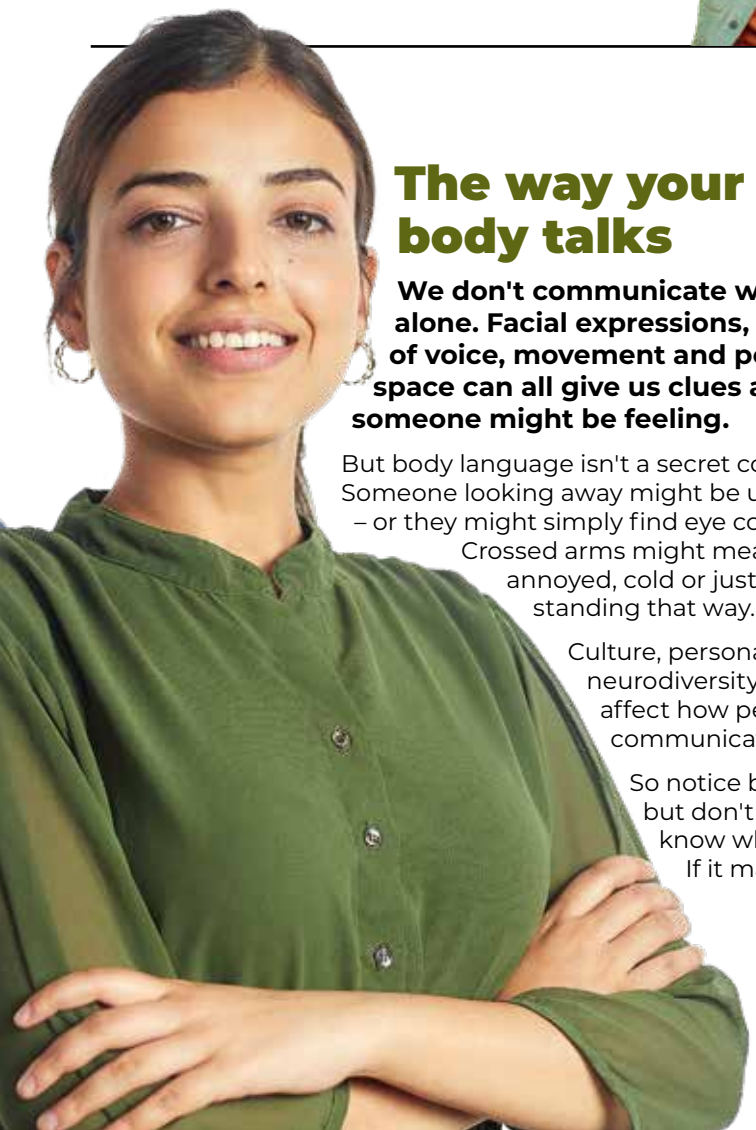
2 Passive

I don't say what I really think or need because I'm worried about the reaction.



3 Aggressive

I try to get my way by putting you down, intimidating you or ignoring what you need.



The way your body talks

We don't communicate with words alone. Facial expressions, tone of voice, movement and personal space can all give us clues about how someone might be feeling.

But body language isn't a secret code. Someone looking away might be uncomfortable – or they might simply find eye contact difficult. Crossed arms might mean someone is annoyed, cold or just comfortable standing that way.

Culture, personality and neurodiversity can also affect how people communicate.

So notice body language, but don't assume you know what it means. If it matters, ask.



Respect or control?

Sometimes controlling behaviour can look like someone caring about you. Think about these:

- "Send me your location so I know where you are."
- "Why do you need to hang out with them when you've got me?"
- "If you trust me, give me your password."
- "Take that photo down. I don't want people looking at you."
- "I was only joking. You're too sensitive."

One comment doesn't tell you everything about a relationship. But if someone regularly tries to control who you see, where you go, what you wear, what you post or who you talk to – or makes you feel guilty or scared for saying no – pay attention to it.

Caring about someone doesn't mean controlling them.





Sex, sexuality & gender



Growing up can bring plenty of questions about relationships, sex, sexuality and gender. Knowing the facts can help you understand yourself, make informed choices and respect other people. This chapter explores consent and intimate relationships, sexuality and gender in straightforward language, including some common terms you might hear and where to turn if you need support.

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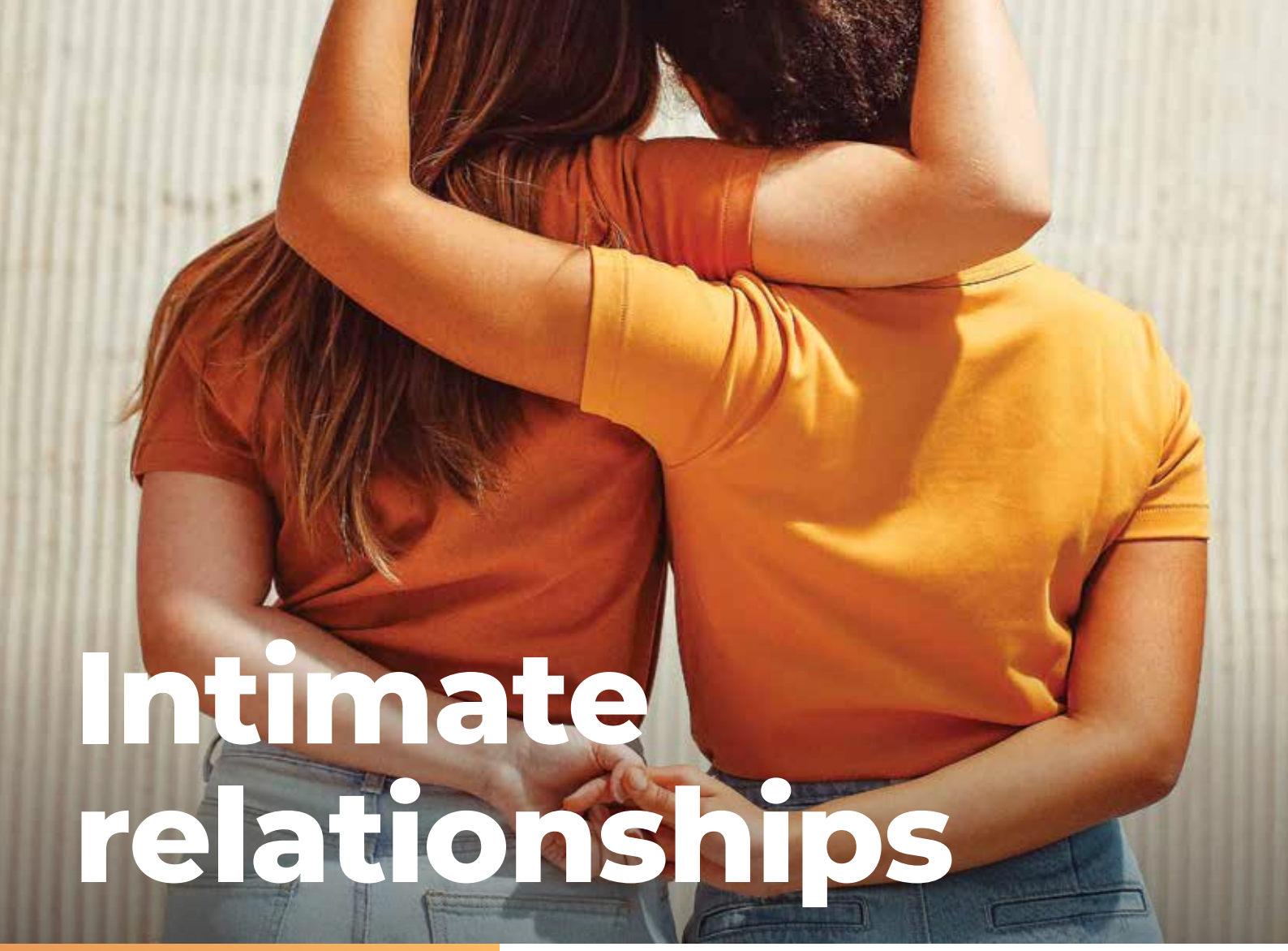
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Intimate relationships

Getting close to someone

An intimate relationship can mean feeling emotionally close to someone, being physically affectionate or having a sexual relationship. Different relationships develop in different ways, and there's no age or stage when you have to be ready for any of it.

What matters is that both people feel comfortable, respected and able to make their own choices without pressure.

Consent

Consent: make sure it's a yes

Consent means everyone involved genuinely agrees to what's happening.

A person needs to be able to make that choice freely – without pressure, manipulation, fear or feeling like they owe someone something.

Consent is ongoing. Saying yes to one thing doesn't mean saying yes to everything. Saying yes yesterday doesn't mean yes today. And anyone can change their mind at any time.

If you're not sure, ask. If the answer isn't clear, stop and check.

Why is this so important?

Well, giving, asking for, and receiving consent is all about treating each other with kindness and respect. It shows that you care about how the other person feels and that you're making sure both of you are comfortable. Imagine how you'd feel if someone did something that made you uncomfortable without asking – that wouldn't feel good, right? Consent makes sure that everyone feels safe and happy in their interactions and sets boundaries.





A few things that aren't consent

- "They didn't say no."
- "We've done it before."
- "They were flirting with me."
- "They sent me a nude."
- "We're going out."
- "They said yes at first."

None of these automatically means someone has agreed to what happens next.

When you're not sure, ask.

But what does consent actually MEAN?

Here's what consent looks like in practice:

- **Asking before doing:** Before you engage in any private or intimate activities, always ask for permission. If you want to hug, kiss, hold hands, or do anything else that involves someone's body, make sure to ask them if it's okay. And remember, it's okay if they say no – everyone has the right to decide what they're comfortable with.
- **Listening and respecting:** If someone says they're not comfortable with something or changes their mind, it's important to respect their decision without any pressure or judgment. Consent can be given or withdrawn at any time. Being respectful of each other's choices shows that you care about their feelings.
- **Clear communication:** Openly talk about your boundaries and feelings with your partner or the person you're interacting with. Let them know what you're comfortable with and what you're not. Encourage them to do the same. This helps both of you understand each other better and build trust.
- **Body language matters:** Sometimes, body language can also show whether someone is comfortable or not. Pay attention to their cues. If they seem hesitant, tense, or uncomfortable, it's a sign to slow down or check in with them.
- **No pressure, no guilt:** Never pressure or guilt anyone into doing something they're not comfortable with. It's important to prioritise everyone's well-being and feelings. A healthy relationship is built on mutual understanding, trust, and shared decisions.
- **Educate yourself:** As you grow and learn, take the time to educate yourself about healthy relationships, consent, and the importance of communication. Understanding these concepts will help you navigate relationships in a respectful and positive way.

Remember, practicing sexual consent is all about treating each other with kindness, empathy, and respect. It's a key part of building healthy relationships that make everyone involved feel valued and safe.



What does the law say?

Australian laws about sex and consent aren't exactly the same in every state and territory. Your age, the other person's age and the relationship between you can all matter.

If you need to know what the law says where you live, use a trusted legal information service rather than relying on friends, social media or something you've heard at school.

Youth Law Australia - Lawstuff



Pressure

Pressure isn't consent

Asking again and again, making someone feel guilty, threatening to break up with them, getting angry when they say no or saying things like “if you loved me, you would” isn't a respectful way to get agreement.

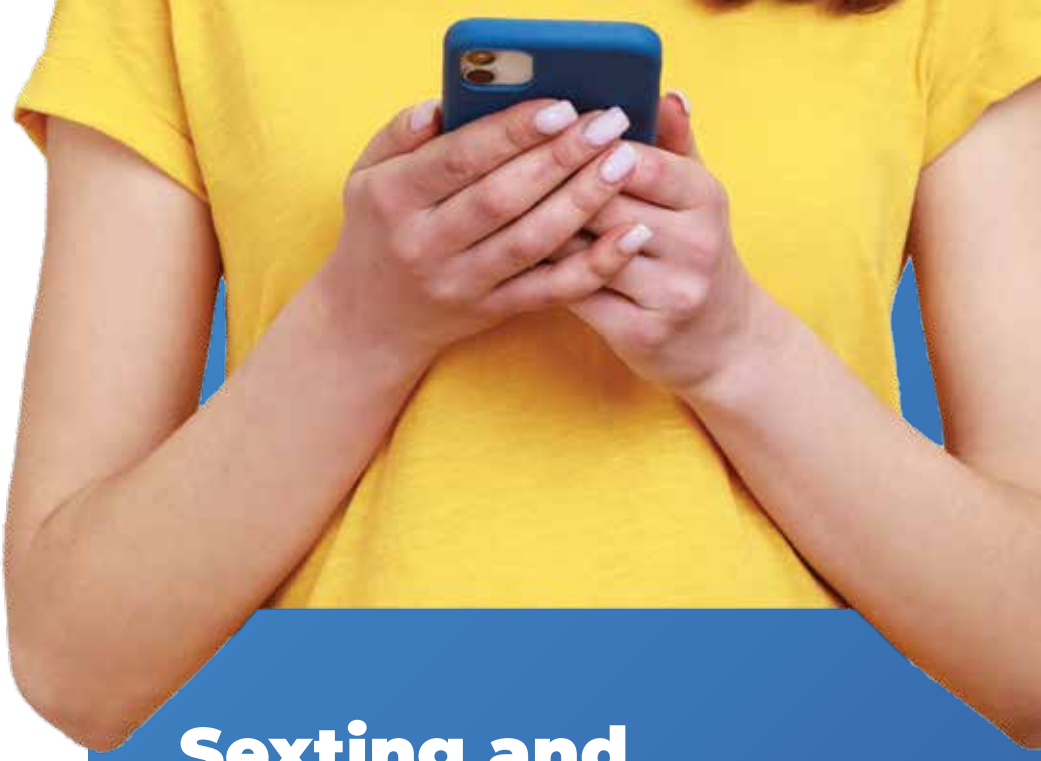
Nobody owes another person sexual contact because they're dating, because something happened before or because one person paid for a date, gave them a gift or did something nice for them.

Alcohol, drugs and consent

What if someone's drunk or affected by drugs?

Alcohol and other drugs can affect a person's ability to make decisions and communicate what they want. If someone is too affected to freely understand and agree to what's happening, don't continue.

If you're unsure, stop.



Sexting and sending nudes

Sexting can mean sending sexual messages, photos or videos. You might also hear people simply call it ‘sending nudes’.

Whatever the situation, nobody should pressure you to send intimate content. And receiving something privately doesn't give you permission to save, screenshot, show or send it to someone else.

If you're under 18

Laws around sexual images of people under 18 are complex and can apply even when the people involved are both young.

The safest choice is not to create, keep or share sexual images of anyone under 18. If something has already happened, don't panic or keep sharing the image - get advice from a trusted adult, eSafety or Youth Law Australia.

Image-based abuse

Sharing, or threatening to share, someone's intimate image or video without their consent is image-based abuse.

It doesn't matter if the person originally chose to send the image. Agreeing to send it to one person is not agreeing for it to be shown or shared with others.

Image-based abuse can also include screenshots, recordings and fake or AI-generated intimate images.

Unwanted nudes

Sending someone an unwanted nude isn't flirting if they haven't agreed to receive it.

If you receive an unwanted nude, you don't owe the sender a reply, an image in return or an explanation.

Here’s what to do if this happens to you:

- Save evidence
- Don't keep sharing the image
- Tell someone you trust
- Report it to eSafety.

If you're being blackmailed, don't pay or send more images. Tell someone you trust!

Sexuality

Sexuality is about who you may be emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to. People experience attraction in different ways, and the words people use to describe their sexuality can be different too.

You might know exactly how you describe yourself. You might still be figuring it out. You might not want a label at all. There's no rush to have an answer.

Sex, gender and gender identity

Sex and gender, what's the difference?

These words are sometimes used as though they mean the same thing, but they describe different things.

Sex

Sex relates to physical and biological characteristics such as reproductive anatomy, hormones and chromosomes.

Gender

Gender relates to identities, roles and expectations associated with being a man, woman or another gender.

Gender identity

Gender identity is a person's internal sense of their gender.

Gender expression

Gender expression is how someone presents or expresses themselves, which might include clothing, hairstyle, name, voice or behaviour.



Gender stereotypes

Who says?

Boys don't cry. Girls aren't as good at sport. Boys always want sex. Girls care more about relationships.

You've probably heard versions of these before.

Stereotypes about how boys and girls are "supposed" to behave can affect how we treat other people - and what we expect from ourselves.

You don't have to fit someone else's idea of what a girl, boy, man or woman should be.

Support/where to go

1800RESPECT – Sexual violence, domestic and family violence support

eSafety – Online sexual abuse, image-based abuse and sextortion

kids helpline (anytime, any reason.) – Counselling and support for young people

LIFE – LGBTIQA+ peer support

Youth Law Australia – Legal information for young people

Words to describe sexuality

Lesbian

A woman who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to women.

Gay

Commonly describes someone who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.

Bisexual

Someone who is attracted to more than one gender.

Asexual

Someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction.

Transgender/trans

Someone whose gender is different from the sex recorded for them at birth.

Cisgender/cis

Someone whose gender aligns with the sex recorded for them at birth.

Non-binary

A term used by some people whose gender doesn't fit exclusively within "man" or "woman".

Intersex / innate variations of sex characteristics

A broad description for people born with sex characteristics that don't fit typical definitions of female or male bodies.

Queer

A term some people use to describe their sexuality or gender. Not everyone uses or is comfortable with the term, so don't apply it to someone unless you know they use it themselves.

Questioning

Someone who is exploring or unsure about their sexuality or gender.

Pronouns

Pronouns are words we use when talking about someone, such as she/her, he/him or they/them. If you're not sure what someone uses, it's okay to ask respectfully.

If you get it wrong, correct yourself and move on.



Connection starts with time together

By Kristi High

Ever noticed that some conversations are easier when you're doing something else?

Maybe you're in the car, walking the dog, cooking, kicking a footy or just hanging out.

You're not sitting across from someone being asked how you feel. You're doing something together and the conversation just happens.

Sisters Kristy and Amanda Lee have spent much of their working lives around children, young people and families. Amanda has more than 20 years' experience in social welfare, while Kristy has spent more than two decades teaching primary school children.

Together they founded *Encompassed*, which runs mother-and-daughter and mother-and-son retreats where families step away from their usual routines and distractions to talk, have fun and do things together. It's a model Kristy and Amanda are looking to expand.



(L–R) Kristy and Amanda Lee founded Encompassed to help parents/guardians and their children connect, communicate and spend quality time together in an away-from-home, camp-style, environment.





But you don't need to go away for a weekend to spend that kind of time together.

Amanda says there's a reason talking can feel easier when you're doing something alongside someone instead of sitting opposite them for a serious conversation.

"The intensity of eye contact disappears, the environment feels safer, and the conversation becomes natural rather than formal," she says.

Driving, cooking, walking or drawing can take some of the pressure off. You can talk at your own pace without feeling like all the attention is on you.

Who you choose to talk to matters too.

Amanda says look for an adult who listens, stays calm and tries to understand what you're saying before jumping in with advice or judgement.

That might be a parent, grandparent, teacher, coach, family friend or another adult you trust.

Sometimes the hardest part is simply getting started.

If there's something you want to talk about but saying it out loud feels too hard, Amanda suggests writing it down or sending a text.

"It gives you space to think, choose your words and share things you might not feel ready to say out loud," she says.

After more than 20 years in the classroom, Kristy says one thing children have taught her is that they want adults to be present and listen.

Phones can get in the way of that.

There's always a message, email or something else demanding attention. Kristy says putting the technology away gives everyone a chance to focus on each other.

She and Amanda see it at Encompassed retreats too, when mothers and their sons or daughters leave their usual routines behind and spend time together without the normal distractions.

And spending time together doesn't have to mean sitting down for a big heart-to-heart.

"Do something fun, laugh, achieve something together," Kristy says.

For Kristy, doing something together gives you something else too — shared memories. It doesn't need to be elaborate or expensive. Sometimes the simple stuff is best, especially when you can get outside, put the phones away and give each other your full attention.

Go for a walk, cook something, kick a ball, get outside or try something new together.

That can be especially helpful if you feel like you and your parent don't have much in common anymore.

Kristy says give each other a chance to reconnect. Doing something together gives you something to share, even if you don't have much to say at first.

So, if talking feels awkward, don't make talking the whole point.

Ask your mum or dad to go for a walk. Help cook dinner. Go for a drive. Shoot some hoops. Put the phones away.

See what happens.



Find out more

Visit **encompassed.com.au** for more information and upcoming events.

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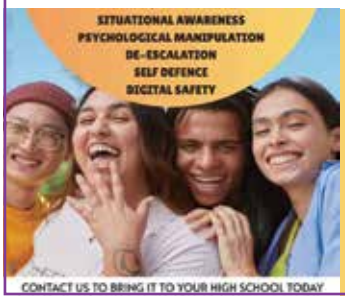
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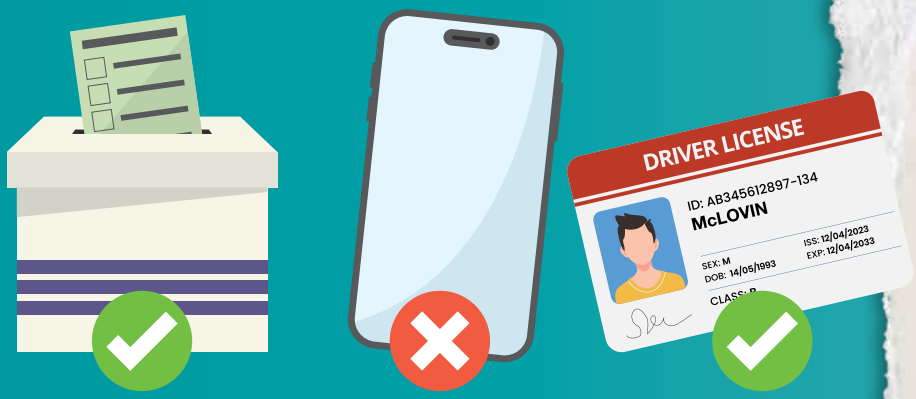
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OPINION

Old enough to drive, too young for a phone



This year my school introduced a new rule: phones are handed in at the start of the day and returned when we go home.

I understand the idea. Nobody needs someone watching TikTok under the desk during Maths. But I'm in Year 12. I can drive to school, have a part-time job and will vote in Victoria's next state election this coming November. Apparently, though, I cannot be trusted to have a phone in my pocket.

In six years at my school, I had never received a detention. This year I've had three. All for using my phone.

I'd like to say I was running an illegal Snapchat empire from the back of English. Unfortunately, it was much less exciting. My phone is how my parents tell me plans have changed, my boss asks if I can cover a shift and my footy club tells me training has moved.

The problem isn't banning phones in classrooms. I actually agree with that. The problem is treating responsible use and misuse as exactly the same thing.

If someone is scrolling Instagram during class, confiscate their phone. If they keep doing it, give them a detention. But why should every Year 12 student hand over their phone for seven hours because some students can't leave theirs alone?

Schools spend years telling us that greater maturity brings greater responsibility. Year 12 should come with some greater trust as well.

A rule designed to improve student behaviour has given me three detentions after five years without one. Maybe that's worth thinking about.

The school hasn't fixed my behaviour. It has turned perfectly normal behaviour into something I'm punished for.

By Will

Year 12 student, Hawthorn, VIC

haiku

THREE SWEET MOMENTS

By students in year 10, Mount Lawley (WA)



Rain freckles the glass
One magpie shakes out its wings
Morning starts again

Sophie



Shoes beside the door
The hallway holds yesterday
Wind moves through the trees

Mia



Clouds cover the moon
A possum crosses the fence
No one sees it go

Grace



FILM
REVIEW

Spider-Man: Brand New Day

When being Spider-Man is the easy part.



Most Spider-Man movies are about Peter Parker struggling to balance being a superhero with having a normal life. *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* turns that idea around. This time, Peter has almost given up on having a normal life at all.

Following the events of *No Way Home*, nobody remembers Peter Parker. Four years later, he spends most of his time fighting crime as Spider-Man while watching the people he once loved continue their lives without him.

At first, Peter seems more capable because of this. Without school, friends or relationships getting in the way, he can concentrate on being Spider-Man. Tom Holland plays him with more confidence than in the earlier films, and the action scenes show a hero who knows exactly what he is doing.

But that is also what makes the film interesting. Being Spider-Man has become the easy part of Peter's life. Wearing a mask, chasing criminals and saving strangers allows him to avoid the much harder risk of actually letting people know him.

The film does not always explore this as deeply as it could. At 145 minutes, there are too many characters and storylines competing for attention, and some of the large action sequences feel longer than necessary. The mysterious threat facing New York also becomes complicated when the simpler parts of Peter's story are often more engaging.

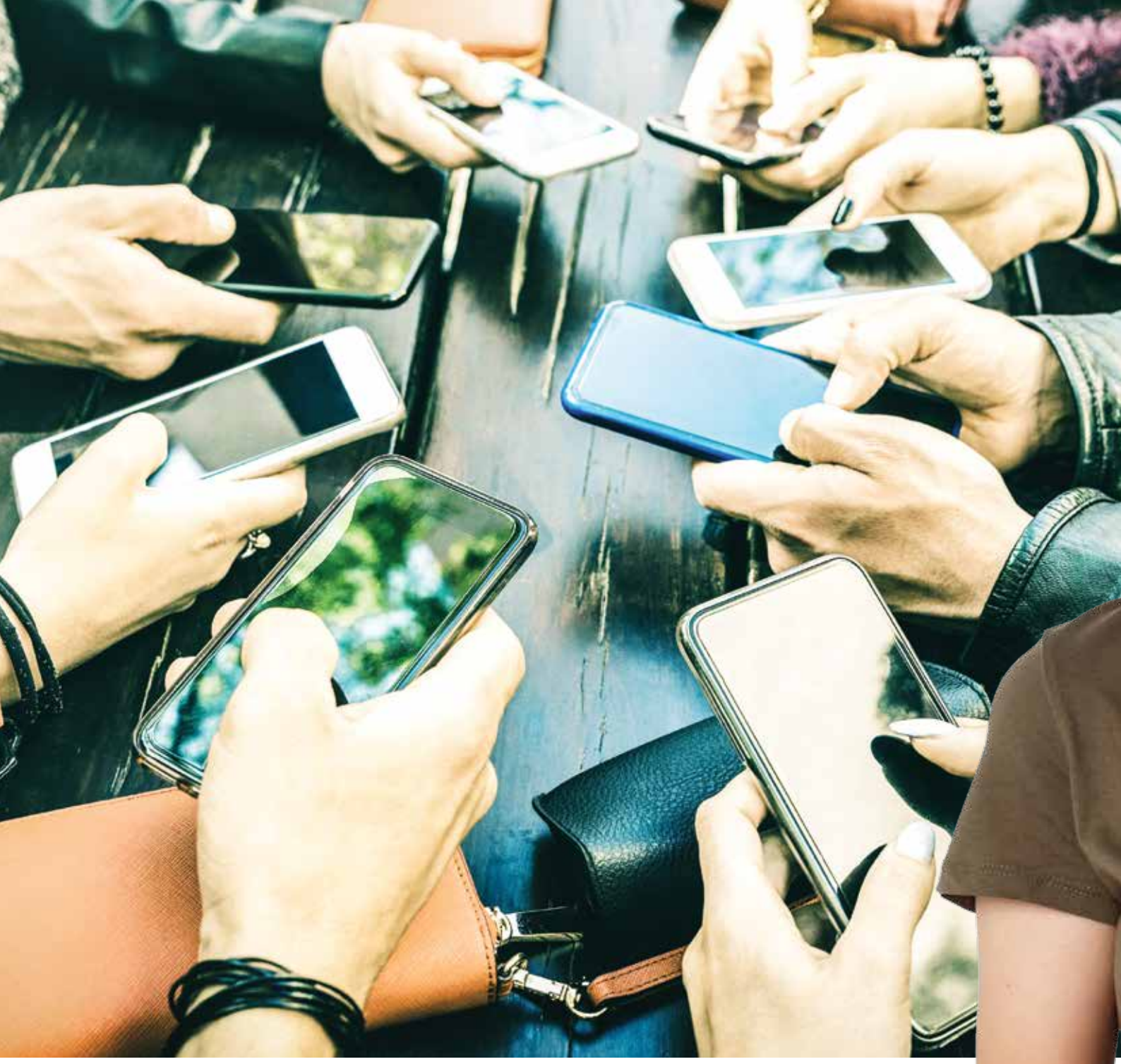
Holland is most convincing when Peter isn't being Spider-Man. Seeing Peter on the outside of his old friends' lives gives the film a sadness that is unusual for a Marvel blockbuster.

The title *Brand New Day* suggests starting again, but the film shows that a fresh start means more than leaving the past behind. Peter eventually has to decide whether protecting himself from being hurt is really the same thing as moving forward.

For a superhero who can climb walls and swing between skyscrapers, being Peter Parker may now be the bravest thing he can do.

By Lachlan

Year 11 student, Chatswood, NSW



Staying safe online



Being online is part of everyday life – for school, entertainment, shopping and staying connected. Most of the time it's a positive part of life, but things can go wrong.

From cyberbullying and unwanted contact to your digital reputation, this chapter looks at some simple ways to protect yourself online and what to do when you need help.

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Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when someone uses technology to repeatedly hurt, embarrass, threaten or target another person.

It might include abusive messages, spreading rumours, creating fake accounts, sharing embarrassing content or deliberately excluding or humiliating someone online.

What to do

Don't retaliate

It can be tempting to fire back, but responding can make things worse. Step away from the conversation if you need to.

Collect evidence

Before you block or delete harmful content, save usernames, dates, links and screenshots that may help if you need to report it.

If sexual images of someone under 18 are involved, don't save or screenshot them. See Sexting and Sending Nudes on page 19.

Report and block

Use the platform's reporting tools and block the account if you need to stop further contact.

Tell someone

Talk to someone you trust – a parent or carer, teacher, counsellor or another adult who can help.

Get more help

If serious cyberbullying continues, visit **eSafety.gov.au** for advice and reporting options.



Got someone's back?

If someone is being targeted online, check in with them privately. You don't have to jump into the argument yourself to let them know they're not dealing with it alone.

If what's happening is serious, encourage them to tell someone they trust or get help.



Your digital rep

What you post, comment on, like and share can become part of your digital footprint – and so can things other people post about you.

It's worth checking what someone can find when they search your name and reviewing who can see your accounts and posts.

Quick check

- ☑ Search your name online
- ☑ Check what's public on your social accounts
- ☑ Review old posts, tags and photos
- ☑ Check your privacy and location-sharing settings
- ☑ Remove or untag anything you're no longer comfortable having online



Under 16?

Australia introduced social media age restrictions in December 2025. Many age-restricted social media platforms are now required to prevent Australians under 16 from having accounts.

Check **eSafety.gov.au** for current information.



What to do



Google yourself

Anyone can Google your name or find info from your social media accounts if you don't keep them private, including potential employers (or dates!) – so be really careful what you post because you may not be able to get rid of it once it's public.



Check your privacy settings

If you find a few random photos or posts that are publicly available and you didn't think they were, it's a good time to change your privacy settings. Check out the eSafety Guide to find out more about the privacy settings for particular social media platforms and how to change them.



Say no to posts or photos

You may have heard the saying 'if it isn't on social media it didn't happen' but we know that this is not true. Opt out of photos or ignore tag requests if you want to protect your digital reputation.



Get posts/photos/ videos taken down

If the posts are from someone else and you're tagged in them – try to un-tag yourself or ask the person who posted them to take them down.



Think before you post, like or follow something

Make sure that the pages, groups, photos, tweets or videos you like, follow subscribe to or comment on, are true reflections of you and actually things you want to be associated with. Remember, a potential employer may not know that you've liked a page or uploaded a photo as a joke or understand its wider context.

As the saying goes, if in doubt,

don't post it!

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Abbie Smith



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Unsafe or unwanted contact

Not everyone online is who they say they are. If someone you know – or someone you've never met – starts contacting you in a way that feels uncomfortable, pressuring or unsafe, trust that feeling

Protect yourself



Stop responding

You don't owe anyone an online conversation.



Collect safe evidence

Keep usernames, account details, links and relevant messages.

Report and block

Use the platform's reporting tools, then block the account.



Tell someone you trust

You don't have to work out what to do on your own.

If it's more serious

If you're under 18 and think someone may be grooming or sexually exploiting you online, get help through the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE).

If you are in immediate danger, call 000.

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How to protect yourself from unwanted contact

Make your accounts private

By adjusting your privacy settings, you can stay in control of who sees what you post online and who can contact you directly.

For example, you can update your settings to only accept messages from people on your 'friends' list.

It's also a good idea to check your location sharing options to make sure your location is only available to you or to specific friends.

If you want to know how to check what is public, see page 37 about managing your digital reputation.

You could even sit down for 30 minutes and check all the privacy settings in your social media apps – it will be time well spent!

Delete contacts you don't talk to

Go through all the people who are your online friends or who follow you on social media and check that you actually know them. If you don't, it's probably a good idea to delete them.

Bonus tip — when you get a notification that it's someone's birthday and you don't know them well enough to say HBD on their profile, think about deleting them from your account.

Delete requests from strangers

When you get a friend or follow request from someone you don't know, check if you have mutual friends. Remember, it's easy for a person online to pretend to be someone they are not. If you're unsure, delete the request.

How to deal with unwanted contact

If contact with a stranger, or with someone you know, makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, stop responding to the other person straight away.

In situations like this, it's really important to talk to a trusted adult about what's been happening.

Screenshot evidence

It's best to take screenshots of anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Report and block

Once you have all your screenshots, you can report the other person directly to the platform and then block their account to prevent them sending you further messages. It's also a good idea to talk to a trusted adult about it.

Report to eSafety

If the contact continues, get help. You might be able to make a cyberbullying report via eSafety, visit eSafety.gov.au

Report to police

If you feel you are in immediate danger, contact your local police, or in an emergency call triple 000.







Where to go for help

For free, confidential support contact:

For more information

eSafety has legal powers to help protect people who live in Australia from the most serious online abuse and harmful content. This includes content that appears on social media, games, chat apps, emails, messages (including SMS), forums and websites.

If you've been cyberbullied and need help with what to do next, read our tips on this page and find out more in the cyberbullying section of the eSafety website at **www.esafety.gov.au**

eSafety

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Be the ally we all need



Being an ally is about noticing when people are excluded or treated unfairly and choosing to support them. That might mean listening, learning, speaking up or simply standing beside someone who needs it. This chapter explores practical ways to be an ally across different experiences and communities, and shows how everyday actions can help create a fairer, safer and more inclusive world.

Content for pages 44-47 is courtesy of

Australian Human Rights Commission

Visit **https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/** for more.



Racism ally

Being an ally is not about 'saving' people who are living with racism – it's about being aware of inequality, calling it out where it exists, and above all listening to people who experience it, and elevating their voices.

Here are some suggestions for how you can be a good ally to people from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Social settings

If you see someone being racially targeted in public, a powerful symbol of support is to go and sit or stand next to them and check if they're okay. This also sends a message to the perpetrator that their actions are not acceptable.

You can say something to the perpetrator if it feels safe. This doesn't have to be aggressive – in fact it's much better if you stay calm. It could be as simple: "Why don't you leave him/her alone?"

A useful tip is to avoid calling the person racist, because this will only make them defensive, and they'll probably stop listening to you. Better to criticise the comments, not the person.

Asking open-ended questions is often a good way to make the perpetrator think about their actions. For example:

- "Why did you say that?"
- "Why do you think that's funny?"
- "What do you mean by that?"

You might also feel comfortable offering your own thoughts or feelings about the person's actions, such as:

- "I don't agree with you"
- "I don't think that's really fair"
- "I find that pretty offensive"

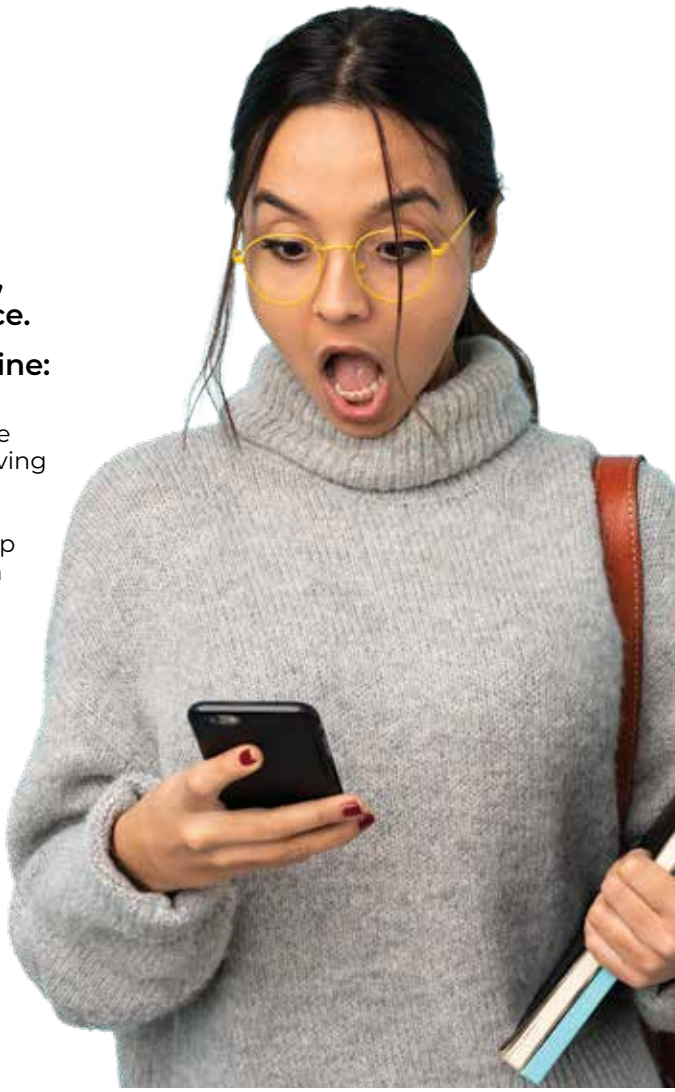
Allies can be important in public settings. Often, if you speak up others will support you. When a few people come together as strangers to speak against racism, it sends a powerful message for change.

Online

Racism also occurs online, particularly on social media, and is just as hurtful as if it was said to the person's face.

If you witness racism on social media or elsewhere online:

- It's often best to ignore the post and consider blocking future posts from the person. It may be better not to engage with them, as they often want you to react in order to start an argument.
- In some situations you may feel it is productive to comment. If someone is personally targeted online, offering support can be a powerful statement of solidarity. Sometimes, if the person who has made offensive remarks happens to be a friend, consider letting them know you disagree with what they've said. A positive attitude always sets a good example and is likely to prompt a more positive response. Beware of feeding the trolls and getting sucked into an argument.
- If the post is on a page you moderate, consider hiding or deleting the comment.
- Taking a screenshot of the offensive material and saving it to your computer can be a good idea. It may be useful later if any follow up is needed and the person deletes what they have published.
- Most social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, have systems for handling complaints about offensive content. Consider alerting the platform, because they can remove the content.
- You can also report the content to the office of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. They can investigate the matter and follow up with the perpetrator.





Speaking up

Hearing racist comments in social situations can be awkward – especially if they come from family or friends.

Speaking up to the people closest to you, whether in response to a single incident or an ongoing pattern, is a unique challenge. Social dynamics, and the nature of peoples' relationships come into play, and these can affect how comfortable we feel about speaking up.

Calling out racism does not need to be confrontational. Here are some ideas about how you can engage with people productively.

- It's important to stay calm. Getting angry or emotional will make the situation more difficult. It gives the person a reason to ignore you.
- It might be more productive to take the person aside for a private conversation, instead of talking to them in front of others.
- Don't accuse the person of being racist because doing so will make them defensive and argumentative. Criticise the comment not the person.
- Telling the person how their statement makes you feel can be a non-confrontational way to make your point.
- You could ask them questions. Asking them to clarify what they mean might help them explore their own ideas in a constructive way.
- You might appeal to their sense of empathy. Ask 'How would you feel if that comment was made about you?'. This is often better than presenting facts or figures.
- It's very important to listen to their perspective. As abhorrent as their views might seem, if you don't listen to them they will not listen to you. Learning about their existing views might also provide opportunities for them to reflect and see things from a new perspective.



Be an ally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

For advice on how to be a good ally to Indigenous Australians, the Australian Human Rights Commission sought input from Summer May Finlay. She's a Yorta Yorta woman, a writer, academic and public health practitioner. Here's what she had to say:

Don't expect Indigenous people to educate you

Allies know Indigenous history through self-education. Indigenous people are only about 3% of the population, and have different levels of knowledge about culture history. Therefore, it's not reasonable to expect Indigenous people to educate you.

Example: learn about the impact of the stolen generations by watching Healing Foundation videos.



healingfoundation.org.au/videos/



Appreciate the diversity among Indigenous people

Indigenous people are not all the same. Differences may be based on age, gender, connection to culture, geography and nation. And remember, differences don't make people more or less Indigenous.

Example: appreciate that Indigenous people may have different views on the same topic.



Please stick with us even when things are tough

Championing Indigenous equity isn't always easy. An ally stands with us at all times, not just when it is easy or fun.

Example: Add your name to Indigenous-led campaigns and share them on social media.

Promote Indigenous voices

Allies allow Indigenous people to speak for themselves. Centring Indigenous people on issues impacting them means making sure that their voices are heard.

Example: on social media, promote articles, infographics and videos by Indigenous people or their organisations.





Be prepared to not be part of decision-making

Indigenous people live their culture, they experience the world as an Indigenous person and know their communities best. Therefore, a good ally appreciates Indigenous need to make the decisions impacting them.

Example: Ask Indigenous people their views on matters relating to them rather than making decisions yourself.



Don't go it alone

Indigenous people should be leading events or issues involving Indigenous people. This means non-Indigenous people need to support Indigenous people to take the leadership role.

Example: If a NAIDOC school event is being organised, make sure you ask the Indigenous person who is leading what you can do to help.



RACISM. IT STOPS WITH ME

If you experience racism, support is available.

Visit **https://humanrights.gov.au/education/students/get-help** to find the right support service in your state.

If it is persistent, you can make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Call **1300 656 419** or **(02) 9284 9600**.

Australian Human Rights Commission

Racism has no place in Australia.

Join us in taking a stand.

Become a supporter



Be an ally to people with disability

Being an ally to people with disability means listening, challenging ableism and supporting inclusion and accessibility.



Start by:

Educating yourself

Start by seeking to understand the experiences and challenges that people with disabilities face. Read articles, watch documentaries, and follow disability activists on social media. Educating yourself about different types of disabilities, the social model of disability, and the history of disability rights can help you better grasp the issues at hand.

Listening and empathising

Listening is a powerful tool in allyship. Take the time to listen to the stories and perspectives of people living with a disability. Empathise with their experiences, feelings, and frustrations. When they choose to share their experiences, validate their feelings, and create a safe space for open dialogue.

Never assuming

It's important not to make assumptions about what someone with a disability can or cannot do. Each person's experience is unique, and assumptions can perpetuate stereotypes. Instead, ask respectful and open-ended questions to better understand their needs and preferences.

Speaking up and advocating

Being an ally means using your voice to amplify the concerns and needs of people with disabilities. Speak up when you witness ableism or exclusion. Whether it's addressing derogatory language, advocating for accessible spaces, or supporting inclusive policies, your voice can make a difference.

Being a good ally

Turning your allyship into action is an important step. Here's how you can actively support people living with a disability:



1 Accessibility matters

Advocate for accessible environments by raising awareness about the importance of ramps, elevators, accessible bathrooms, and other facilities. Encourage your school and community places to implement accessible features that benefit everyone.



2 Offer assistance respectfully

If you believe someone might need assistance, always ask first. Offer help respectfully, and respect their choice if they decline. Treat people living with a disability as equals. Don't focus on their disability.



3 Support inclusive initiatives

Join or support organisations that work toward disability rights and inclusivity. Participate in events, fundraisers, and campaigns that promote understanding and raise awareness.



4 Foster inclusive conversations

Include people with disabilities in your social circles and conversations. By normalising these interactions, you help break down societal barriers.



5 Challenge stereotypes

Educate those around you about the harmful impact of stereotypes and ableism. Challenge misconceptions and promote a more accepting perspective.



Remember that while some disabilities are visible, like using a wheelchair to get around or wearing hearing aids, others are not so easy to see – like having difficulty reading or processing information quickly. Disabilities can be things people are born with, or they might happen because of an accident or an illness. Be kind to everyone and take a moment to get to know the person, understand what is going on for them and how they might like to be supported!



Be an LGBTQIA+ ally

It's important to recognise that we're all different, and that the things that feel right for us are different from the things that feel right for someone else. We should be respectful of and positive about other people's sexuality or sexual relationships, and support their right to explore their sexuality in a safe, consensual and responsible way.



Being an ally means:

- supporting equal rights for everyone – regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender or religion
- doing what you can to call out discrimination and to fight for equality
- trying to make the world a better place for anyone who identifies as LGBTQIA+.

For more about sexuality, gender and terminology, see Sex, Sexuality & Gender on page 20.

How to be a great ally

Learn about issues that are important to the community

Talk to people who identify as LGBTQIA+, read books and other publications, listen to podcasts, and visit businesses or websites run by people from the community. Immerse yourself in their world as much as you can and get a sense of what it's like to live in their shoes.

Be visible and support the community as much as you can

This means going to rallies and events, calling out homophobia, transphobia or queerphobia wherever you see it, and supporting businesses, charities or other initiatives owned or operated by LGBTQIA+ people.

Take care of the people in your life who need support

Whether it's friends, family, classmates or workmates, keep an eye on the people you know who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Part of being an ally means being there for people when they need you. Offer your shoulder to cry on, give them space to vent or rage, or spend time with them doing something they enjoy, to keep their spirits up.

Be aware of the space you take up

If people ask you questions about the community or for your opinion on an issue, recommend LGBTQIA+ books, magazines, podcasts or social media accounts they can follow. This allows everyone to hear the people in the community speak for themselves.

Talk to the people around you and support them to be an ally, too

The great thing about being an ally for one group of people is that it can open your eyes to be an ally for everyone. People don't fit into just one box. 'Intersectionality' is a term used to describe all the different identities or social categorisations a person has. If someone who identifies as LGBTQIA+ is also a person of colour or also lives with a disability, they might be discriminated against because of each of these identities. So, when you stand up for one marginalised group, you're standing up for them all.



To be an effective ally, we have to be intersectional – which means we can't just fight for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people. We have to be fighting for equality for everyone, regardless of their race, gender identity, disability or sexual preference.

Remember: you really can make a difference to other people.

Kick back with an app

Breakup Shakeup

Feeling down after a breakup? Or just finding it hard to find motivation for anything? Have you lost some of your spark?

Breakup Shakeup can help you come up with cool ideas what to do about it. Getting active and socialising are amongst the best things you can do to start feeling happier and stronger again.

So, give it a try, choose from a large library of activities, and find out some more about each of them using the provided links. Once you make your choice, the app allows you to invite a friend and lock it in your diary. The app can send you reminders, lets you rate your favourite activities and save them in your list, add notes, and much more. Before you know it you'll feel happier again!

Download on the App Store



Support services

These organisations provide information for young people and their parents and carers who may need support. They provide excellent resources, stories from people with lived experience, and information to guide better mental health in young people. Some also offer counselling and direct services.

13 92 76

www.13yarn.org.au

Confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. Speak with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter.

1300 22 4636

beyondblue.org.au

Beyond Blue provides information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whatever their age and wherever they live.

bullyingnoway.gov.au

This website provides information, resources and support services for young children, students, parents and teachers on a range of bullying issues and related matters.

1800 33 4673

butterfly.org.au

If you are suffering from an eating disorder, or suspect one of your friends might be, find out more and get support from the Butterfly Foundation.

1800 650 890

eheadspace.org.au

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. They began in 2006, and ever since have provided early intervention mental health services to 12-25-year-olds.

1800 55 1800

kidshelpline.com.au

Kids Helpline is Australia's only free, confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. Qualified counsellors at Kids Helpline are available via WebChat, phone or email anytime and for any reason.

13 11 14

lifeline.org.au

Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services. They are committed to empowering Australians to be suicide-safe.

1800 953 390

lifestart.org.au

Lifestart supports young people living with a disability. It also helps communities to become more inclusive. This organisation is a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme provider offering flexible, person-centred support.

myan.org.au

Multicultural Youth Advisory Network engages young people from around Australia from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Find out more about its work including the National Youth Ambassadors Network by visiting myan.org.au where you can be connected to your local state body.

1800 184 527

qlife.org.au

QLife provides anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identify, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.

raisingchildren.net.au

This website is designed for Australian parents, teachers and carers. It provides up-to-date, evidence-based, scientifically validated information about raising children up to 18 years and tips for parents and carers to look after themselves.

reachout.com

You can also join a ReachOut Online Community forum that is free, anonymous and available 24/7 for people aged 14-25 in Australia.

#FriendBetter with R U OK?™

Tips to help you support your mates



ruok.org.au

What's Next?



YouthNow

Need help getting into study or finding employment?

FREE services for young people:

Careers Advice, Resumes, Job Info, Future Skills,

New Technologies, Employment, Entrepreneurship

Call: **8311 5800** or Text: **0439 636 682**

Email: **info@youthnow.org.au** Like us on Facebook

Westjustice