

'ADULTS HAVE THE GREATEST POTENTIAL INFLUENCE TO SHAPE POSITIVE ATTITUDES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE.'

As parents and role models of young people we do our best to set a good example and talk about values, attitudes and behaviours we hope our children will develop as they grow. But sometimes, without meaning to, we might say things that excuse disrespectful behaviour in young people.

When we say things like "it's just boys being boys" or "he only did it because he likes you", we're allowing disrespect to become a normal part of growing up.

- › **1 in 4** young people don't think it's serious when guys insult or verbally harass girls in the street
- › **1 in 5** young people believe there are times when women bear some responsibility for sexual assault
- › **1 in 4** young people don't think it's serious if a guy who's normally gentle sometimes slaps his girlfriend when he's drunk and they're arguing
- › **Over 1 in 4** young men believe that girls like guys who are in charge of the relationship

Statistics:

- › TNS, *Reducing violence against women and their children* campaign research, 2015
- › Our Watch, *The Line* campaign research, 2015
- › VicHealth, *National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey*, 2013

Keeping communication open through continuing to have conversations about respect can help prepare our children for the future. Then, when they face a situation, they know there are options, and they know there are different ways they can react.

As parents, we have the strongest influence. This is multiplied when we work together with other people who are influential in our children's lives such as other family members, teachers, coaches, managers, religious and community leaders.

By positively challenging attitudes and behaviours, we can all play a role in reducing the prevalence of violence against women and their children across our society.

STOP the excuses.

START a conversation about respect with boys and girls.

LEARN more at respect.gov.au

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN LET'S STOP IT AT THE START



Australian Government

A joint Australian, state and territory government initiative.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DOESN'T JUST START. IT GROWS.

The cycle of violence against women starts with disrespectful behaviour. When we excuse these behaviours in our kids, we let it grow.

A guide to having conversations with young people.



WE CAN INFLUENCE OUR CHILDREN'S BELIEFS FROM A YOUNG AGE

There are many influences on young people's ideas about the role of men and women and how they should relate, however it's often the adults in their lives that can have the greatest impact.

It is important to be aware of the things we say to children and understand that the excuses we make can have a lasting impact. We can help them understand what is and what's not acceptable, right from the start.

To break the cycle of violence against women we must understand how it is linked to disrespect.

What is disrespectful behaviour?

- › putting pressure on someone to do something they are not comfortable with
- › using power to control, abuse or harm someone
- › treating someone as though they are not as important as you
- › treating someone differently because of their gender, religion, cultural background, sexuality or skin colour
- › dismissing someone's beliefs, or how they feel about something.

The importance of self-reflection

Before we can have a conversation with young people we need to self-reflect and think about how we react in certain situations. We may be surprised that sometimes we may unintentionally excuse disrespectful and aggressive behaviour by:

1. Playing down the behaviour by thinking or saying "just ignore it, it wasn't that bad" or "he's probably just trying to get your attention".
2. Accepting aggression as just part of being a boy by thinking or saying "boys will be boys" or "he was having a bad day, it's tough being a boy".
3. Blaming girls by thinking or saying "did you say something he didn't like" or "there are two sides to every story".

THE CONVERSATION

As parents and role models, you never know when a situation might come up for a conversation with young people about respect. It could be a proactive, preventative conversation, or it could be that you've seen an incident that needs addressing. It's not always going to be easy, but it's a conversation worth having.

Every time we speak out against disrespectful behaviour, we're one step closer to stopping the cycle of violence against women. For many of us, knowing where to start is the hardest part.

1. Think about the conversation

By thinking through what you believe, what you might say and how you can have a positive conversation with young people, you will feel more confident to make the most of each opportunity.



2. Start the conversation

Disrespectful and aggressive behaviour aren't always easy subjects to discuss. The following suggested topic areas will help you take that first important step to start a conversation.

Some topics:

- › Explaining respect
- › Recognising disrespect and aggression
- › Respectful relationships and treating people how you would like to be treated
- › Gender equality

3. Have the conversation

In your everyday interactions with young people, listen out for cues, and be ready to respond by having a conversation

- ✓ When responding to children's experience of disrespect or aggressive behaviour you could let them know:
 - › these attitudes are not OK
 - › everyone deserves to be treated with respect
 - › they are not to blame for other people's behaviour
 - › people who care about each other treat each other with respect
- ✓ When responding to barriers or negative responses from children:
 - › Calmly set out the issues as you see them and encourage your child to think about them.
 - › Always work at keeping the conversation open and let them know you appreciate them speaking to you.
 - › Discuss the difficult issues they face and acknowledge it can be challenging to work out what is right.
 - › Talk about successes as well as hard times. Recall a time that they showed respect and remind them that it is part of them.
 - › Let them know if they ever want to talk or if they feel unsure they can come to you.