



# RESTORING SAFE SPACES

**Advice for parents when creating and maintaining  
safe spaces for young people.**



**Young people need support and guidance to build and maintain safe social media spaces.**

When their personal social media becomes unsafe, it's up to us as the adults who love and care for them to support them to rebuild their sense of safety.

We can help them find ways to manage their online presence so they have the skills, tools and confidence they'll need as they grow older and navigate an increasingly complex online world.

By having meaningful, ongoing kōrero (conversations) with our young people, we can work with them to restore their social media spaces and stay safe and well online.



# How do I prepare for this kōrero?

## **1. Ask yourself why are you having this kōrero? Do you know what's happened? Why do you need to talk to them about their social media?**

Has someone else shared something with you that's worrying you? Have you seen something on their phone/computer? Has your young person approached you, or shown signs they aren't safe online? Establish the facts before jumping in.

## **2. Is there anything you don't know? What gaps are there in your own knowledge about social media?**

You might like to check out our Social Media 101, Netsafe, talk to the school or seek advice from other parents. You don't have to be an expert, you just need to know enough to work through this problem with your young person. Our other resources on our website might help prepare you for this kōrero, especially if you're unfamiliar with the social media platforms your young person is using.

## **3. Tell your young person you want to talk to them about this. Ask them what they think you should talk about and plan together.** Who should be part of this kōrero? When should it take place? Where?

## **4. Get in the right headspace. Check in with how you're feeling. Are you feeling angry or stressed?**

Take some time to breathe and return to the kōrero when you feel able to talk in a calm, supportive and non-judgemental way. Get help and support for yourself if you need it. This is about keeping a young person safe and making sure they'll come back to you again if they're worried or uncertain – it's unlikely they will get everything right after just one conversation.



## Have the kōrero

### Open the kōrero.

Start the conversation in a way that's natural to you, by taking them for a drive, with some deep breaths, or just by sharing your intentions.

### Talk about what's happened.

Why are you having this kōrero today? You and your young person need to be on the same page about this. Do they agree their social media is unsafe? Is it just one platform, or multiple? Are there things they'd like to share with you? Things you'd like to share with them? How are they feeling?

### Set a new way forward together.

Make a new plan for how things will work in the future. This might involve screen-free time, weekly check-ins, or occasionally reviewing their social media together. If there are multiple platforms you need to address you might need to come back to it later. Close the conversation and then check in with them later on.

### Set some goals and make some decisions.

It's best if your young person leads the goal-setting, because they need to know how to use social media safely. Goals should be specific enough that you can work together to achieve them. Is this a refresh of their existing profiles or a restart, with all new profiles? The second option is likely to be much more difficult for young people, who place value in their existing profiles. Work with them to make this decision.

### Assess your young person's social media platforms together.

It's really important to do this with your young person's consent. You've already talked about what's happened to make them unsafe, now let's address the issues.

Depending on the platform, together you might need to:

- Look at their privacy settings and ensure their profile(s) are private and only friends can follow, talk to or tag them.
- Review their friends/followers, and remove anyone who is unknown or who makes them feel unsafe. If one of their friends needs help, talk about what options are available (including connecting them to support, talking to the school, support services, whānau/parents or a helpline). Block people who are making them feel unsafe.
- If necessary, screenshot, report and delete any content that is actively harmful, illegal or against the platform's policy. [Make a report with Netsafe.](#)
- Review things they have been tagged in.
- Look at what they have been sharing and commenting, and remove past posts if you agree it's necessary.
- Look at who they're following, the games they're playing and the content they're liking/engaging with. Talk to them about how it makes them feel and whether this needs to change. Some key words, hashtags and users may need to be blocked to support this. Check out Social Media 101's for more information about how to do this.
- Keep talking to them about what you're seeing, how you feel about it, how it makes them feel and why or how things need to change.



## Top tips

**Be sincere and genuine:** young people can sniff out inauthenticity, and they cringe easily and often. Your best response to this is being open and honest: tell them this is new to you (if it is), don't pretend to know more than you do, don't try to be cool. You're there to help them and guide them to make their own good choices.

**Let your young person be the leader:** your young person set up their social media on their own, and the goal is for them to be able to continue to use it safely and openly (not in secret). Let them lead this rebuild to create a space where they feel comfortable and confident. Be open with them about what you need to see so you feel safe, too. Ask them to show you why they like using each platform, how they use it and what they've learned on it. This is a chance for you both to learn from each other.

**Be there, stay involved:** this isn't a one-time kōrero. Keep the conversation open, stay up to date with what's happening on social media yourself, and be supportive and understanding if something goes wrong. We're all lifelong learners and this is a lifelong skill you're helping them to build.

**Don't ban them from social media:** it's tempting to take social media away, particularly when it has become unsafe. But it's a huge part of normal life for our young people – they need to know how to use it safely, responsibly and carefully. The time to teach them is now – be there for them and support them, listen to them and guide them. Find boundaries, tools and guidance that works for you and your young person. You can do this!



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MINISTRY OF HEALTH

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