



Australian Government



Parents and carers

Supporting your child with friendships and navigating conflict

If your child or young person, or any other child, is in immediate danger, call Triple Zero (000).

Making friends, changes in friendship groups and conflict can be a normal part of growing up and school life. However, sometimes these things are not always easy to talk about. When you understand your child's or young person's social world, you are better placed to notice when something is wrong – and more likely to be the person they open up to or come to for help.

This resource gives you conversation starters to help you connect with your child, including about difficult issues, and to understand what is going on for them. Use them across everyday conversations over time. Pick the ones that feel most natural to you and start there.

'From the outside, friendship problems can look small. From the inside, they can shape how safe a young person feels every single day at school.'

– YOUNG PERSON, 16,
PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL
YOUTH COLLECTIVE

How to use these conversation starters

- ⦿ **Choose a good moment.**
These conversations work best when neither you nor your child is rushed, distracted or upset. Try to avoid raising them straight after school, during a conflict or when you are short on time.
- ⦿ **Take it slowly.** You do not need to cover everything at once. Build on conversations gradually over time rather than all at once.
- ⦿ **Follow your child's lead.** Adjust the questions to suit how your child is feeling on the day. Use your own words that feel natural, not scripted.
- ⦿ **Keep the conversation going.**
Ask open-ended follow-up questions that cannot be answered with 'yes' or 'no'. This will help encourage your child to keep talking and thinking.
- ⦿ **Find the right setting.** If your child tends to avoid these kinds of conversations, do not push. Try a relaxed, side-by-side moment instead – a car trip, a walk or an activity you are doing together. Talking feels easier when it does not feel like a formal check-in.
- ⦿ The conversation starters on the next page include options for primary school and secondary school age groups.

Conversation starters

For more information about connecting with your child or about issues or concerns identified from using these conversation starters, see the connected resources listed at the end of this resource.

If your child is in primary school:

- ◉ Who are your best friends at school right now? What do you like about spending time with them?
- ◉ Is there anyone at school you find it hard to get along with? What makes it difficult?
- ◉ What happens when you and a friend disagree about something? How does it usually end up?
- ◉ Have you ever seen someone being left out or treated unkindly at school? What did you do, or think about doing?
- ◉ Is there anything about school that you wish were different?
- ◉ If something happened at school that upset you, who would you tell first?
- ◉ What do you think I would do if you told me something that was upsetting you at school? Would that feel okay?

Online life

- ◉ What do you like doing online at the moment?
- ◉ Has anything ever happened online that felt a bit strange or made you uncomfortable? What did you do?

If your young person is in secondary school:

- ◉ Who is a friend you really trust? What makes them a good friend to you?
- ◉ What do you find hard about friendships and getting along with others at school?
- ◉ Are friendship groups at your school settled, or do people move between them? How does that feel?
- ◉ What kind of role do you think you play in your friendship group?
- ◉ How well does your friendship group get along? What happens if there's conflict?
- ◉ How do you feel about conflict in general? Do you tend to avoid it, go toward it or do something else?
- ◉ Do you ever witness things you do not agree with but are not sure what to do when they happen? What stops you from acting?
- ◉ Have you ever felt left out or treated differently because of who you are (the way you look, your background or identity, or something about you that others notice)?
- ◉ What do you think you have learnt about conflict from watching me? I honestly want to know anything good or bad that you have noticed.
- ◉ Are there things about how you handle conflict or friendships that you want to get better at?

Online life

- ◉ What are you most interested in online at the moment? What do you like about it?
- ◉ What are your friends most interested in online at the moment?
- ◉ If something felt off in a group chat or your feed, what would you do?
- ◉ Have you seen anything online lately that surprised you or felt wrong?

'I wish adults understood that the online world isn't purely evil. It can be a space full of light and fun but only if we use and navigate them correctly.'

– YOUNG PERSON, 15,
PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL
YOUTH COLLECTIVE

Great conversations about friendships, the social world of your child or conflict do not happen all at once; they build over time. Children are more likely to tell a trusted adult when something serious is happening if they know that adult is interested and will not overreact.

These conversations are how you build that trust. Come back to them as often as you like.

Connected resources

- ◉ Strategies to connect with your child or young person
- ◉ First response guide
- ◉ Something does not seem right: Early signs of harm

Where to get more help

If you need further support, help is available:

For children and young people

Kids Helpline (national): 1800 55 1800.
Free, confidential counselling for bullying, school issues, online harm and wellbeing, available 24/7.

headspace/ehedspace: 1800 650 890
or headspace.org.au. Mental health, wellbeing and early intervention support, available 9 am–1 am daily.

For parents and carers

Parenting support lines

ACT: 02 6287 3833

New South Wales: 1300 1300 52

Queensland and Northern Territory:
1300 30 1300 or parentline.com.au

South Australia: 1300 364 100

Tasmania: 1300 808 178

Victoria: 13 22 89

Western Australia: 08 9368 9368

For all ages

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au. Mental health support for stress, anxiety and overwhelm, available 24/7.

Dolly's Dream Bullying Support Line: 13 36 55 (13 DOLLY) or dollysdream.org.au. Free, confidential bullying support for children, young people, young adults, parents and carers, available 24/7.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au. Crisis support and counselling if things feel overwhelming, available 24/7.

13YARN: 13 92 76. Culturally safe 24/7 support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers.

QLife (LGBTIQA+ young people):

1800 184 527 or qlife.org.au.

Free, anonymous peer support and referral service, available 3 pm–9 pm daily.

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732 or 1800respect.org.au. Available for free 24/7 to support people impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence.

eSafety Commissioner:

esafety.gov.au. Report cyberbullying, get advice, and request content removal support.

Australian Human Rights Commission:

humanrights.gov.au. Support for cases involving discriminatory harm. Reports can be made via the website or by emailing infoservice@humanrights.gov.au.

State, territory and non-government education sectors will reflect the expectations of the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian schools in their policies and procedures by Term 1 2027. This includes making reasonable efforts to initiate a response to bullying and harmful behaviour within two school days, recognising that further time may be required to fully address the issue. By Term 1 2027, all schools will also publish or link to policies and procedures that align with the National Framework (or equivalent contemporary jurisdiction specific Frameworks) and their local polices and school context.