



Who do you want to be?

There is almost always a gap between who you want to be and how you show up in real life. You may value kindness, but you have stayed quiet when someone was excluded. Or you may value honesty, but you have gone along with a rumour just to fit in.

Noticing that gap is not about guilt, and it is not a reason to feel shame. It is just the starting point. You have control over who you want to be and the kind of culture you build around you. Notice how you are showing up and how different spaces affect you.

The questions in this resource are designed to help you explore how you want to show up for yourself, your family and your friends.

This resource has 2 parts: some conversation starters to explore first, then a private reflection tool just for you at the end. You can work through the conversation starters on your own or with friends. There are no right or wrong answers. Just share what feels comfortable.

Thinking about you

Think of 3 words that describe the person you want to be in your friendships (e.g. loyal, funny, supportive, honest, relaxed, kind).

1. Think about your actions over the last week. When did your actions match the words that you thought of in step one? What was happening when your actions didn't match those words? (Were you tired? Anxious? Trying to impress someone? Just not thinking?)
2. Have you ever felt like you had to hide or play down a part of yourself? Like your culture, your identity, a diagnosis, who you're attracted to or just a random hobby you love? What do you think would happen if you shared that part of yourself?
3. Some people face much more pressure than others just for being who they are. This might be because of their background, their identity, a disability or who they love. If you see someone trying to defend or hide a part of themselves, how can you support them?
4. Think about the group chat or social circle where you feel the most relaxed. What is it about those people that lets you relax and be yourself? Are group or social relations becoming exhausting or just don't feel right?
5. Think of a time someone in your life responded helpfully to a harmful moment or a mean joke without starting a fight or acting superior. What did they say or do to change the situation?

6. You find out your core friend group hung out on the weekend, and you were left out. How do you react when that happens? Do you laugh and pretend you don't care, get quiet and freeze them out or make a sarcastic comment? Why is it so hard to say, 'Why didn't you guys invite me?'
7. What is the difference between being 'included' (being allowed to sit at the table) and truly 'belonging' (feeling like people actually want you there)? When was the last time you made someone else feel like they truly belonged? Is there someone you know who makes others feel like they belong? What do they do?

'Peer pressure can also look like not wanting to be the only person saying no.'

– YOUNG PERSON, PROJECT
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Scenario 1: The group chat echo chamber

You're in a big group chat with people from school. Someone shares a meme that unfairly targets a specific group of people, using a casual slur or a joke about disability, race or sexuality. Some people go along with the joke, but you notice a couple of people have gone quiet in the chat. You know the joke might have hurt them.

- ◉ What would you do if you wanted to change the energy without becoming the target yourself? Do you call it out publicly, message the person who shared the meme privately or check in on the friends who went quiet? What feels the most real to you?
- ◉ If this sounds familiar and you want some next steps, check out the 'Understanding the bystander effect' resource.

Scenario 2: The double standard

Your friendship group is usually great, but you notice there is a massive double standard. When certain 'dominant' people in the group tease others or change plans at the last minute, people say it's 'just a joke' or 'not a big deal'. But if you or someone else does the same thing, you get left out, ignored in the chat or heavily criticised.

- ◉ What would you do if you realised you were playing by a different set of rules? Would you call out the double standard next time it happens? Or would you adapt your behaviour to stay safe, or start looking for a different group where the rules apply equally to everyone?
- ◉ If this sounds familiar and you want some next steps, check out the 'What does courage look like?' resource.

Scenario 3: The identity chameleon

You have a friend who is open and proud of their identity when hanging out one-on-one with you (whether that's their culture, being LGBTIQA+, or a neurodivergent trait). But when you both hang out with the 'popular' crowd, this friend completely changes. They start making fun of the very things they love, or they act embarrassed by you to fit in with the group.

Who you are is not set in stone, and conversations like these are not a one-off. Your ideas, values and opinions develop and change with time and experience. Remember, great conversations and reflection time do not have to happen all at once. You can return to these questions at any time.

- ◉ What would you do if you noticed this happening repeatedly? Would you call them out in front of the group? Pull them aside later? Or would you ignore it, because you know they are just trying to survive the social hierarchy?
- ◉ Check out the 'Signs and symptoms: Noticing stress' resource.

'Were they trying to fit in? Feeling insecure? Having a rough week? Understanding the 'why' doesn't excuse behaviour but helps to understand and address the underlying issues.'

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Reflection tool

Now that you have explored some questions and scenarios about yourself in your social circle, it is time to bring it back to you. This part is not a test. No one is going to collect, read or display your answers. You do not have to share any of this with your friends, teachers or parents. This is just a quiet moment to be honest with yourself about how you are showing up.

1. My values

What 3 words would you want your friends to use to describe you?

2. Vibe versus reality

If someone secretly recorded how you treat people when you are stressed, tired or trying to fit in, what would that video show? Does it match the kind of person you want to be?

3. Being yourself

Think about the moments where you feel fully like yourself, where you do not have to hide your identity or watch what you say. What is different about you in those moments? What stops you from bringing that version of yourself into other parts of your life?

4. Silent agreement

Think back over the last few weeks. Did you laugh at a joke, or stay silent when someone was excluded? Did you go along with something in person or online that left you with a heavy feeling afterwards? If you could go back to that moment, what is one thing that you wish you had done differently?

5. Internal compass

You want to be liked, but fitting in often means adjusting who you are for other people. Where is the line for you? Think about the difference between compromising to get along with a group and compromising who you are just to stay included?

6. A mini reset

This isn't a contract or a public promise to the world. It's just a mini reset for the week ahead. Complete this sentence in your head or write it down where only you can see it: One small way I'm going to choose to show up differently this week is ...

7. Micro-actions

Choose one of the following micro-actions for the rest of the week.

☐ **The intercept:** Next time a conversation turns into a pile-on (when everyone jumps in to criticise one person) or gossip, be the person who changes the subject. Or check in on the person being targeted.

☐ **The definition:** Pick one core value and decide on a 'non-negotiable' behaviour for it. (E.g. 'If I value loyalty or respect, I don't let people talk negatively about my friends when they aren't there.')

☐ **The reset:** If you realise you have been short-tempered or withdrawn lately, own it. Try something like: 'Hey, sorry I've been a bit snappy lately, I've just been stressed out.' Owning your actions like this can help reset the mood and help your family and friends understand you. My friend has seemed much more emotional, easily annoyed or unusually flat and low on energy lately.

Awareness is the first step towards change. Taking this time to reflect and reset can help you show up the way you want to for yourself, your family and your friends.

Connected resources

- ◉ Understanding peer norms

Where to get more help

If you need further support, help is available:

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au. Free, confidential counselling for bullying and other harmful behaviours, school issues, online harm and wellbeing, available 24/7.

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

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

Dolly's Dream Bullying Support Line: 13 36 55 (13 DOLLY) or dollysdream.org.au. Counselling and guidance for children and young people experiencing bullying and other harmful behaviour, available 24/7.

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

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732 or 1800respect.org.au. Sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for anyone who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault, available 24/7.

13YARN: 13 92 76 or 13yarn.org.au. Culturally safe 24/7 support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

QLife (LGBTIQA+ young people): 1800 184 527 or qlife.org.au. Free, anonymous peer support and referral service, available 3 pm–9 pm daily.

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 their 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.