

fact sheet #7.

ENCOURAGING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Encouraging children and young people to develop respectful and non-violent relationships is one of the most effective ways to prevent violence against women.

This is because boys and girls begin forming their beliefs and attitudes about how women and men should behave within relationships from a very young age. Helping young people develop respectful and non-violent relationships early can have a lasting and positive impact on their relationships later in life.

Young people are much more likely to witness, experience and tolerate violence against women than older people. Research shows that:

- As many as one in four young people report having witnessed an act of physical violence against their mother or stepmother¹.
- One in seven girls and young women aged 12 to 20 have experienced rape or sexual assault².
- 1 in 20 young people considered that forcing a partner to have sex, throwing things at each other, and regular slapping or punching are part of "normal conflict" rather than relationship violence³.

Young people who are exposed to physical and sexual violence in their daily lives as well as in the media, are more likely to report a higher level of acceptance and tolerance for violence against women.

Respectful relationships education programs support young people by

- Promoting attitudes and behaviours that support equality and respect.
- Discouraging attitudes and behaviours that enable violence against women.
- Giving them the skills to negotiate safe and mutual sexual relationships.
- Highlighting the positive side of respectful relationships instead of simply telling them not to be violent.

PREVENTING VIOLENCE EDUCATION: HOW TO'S

When developing or choosing a respectful relationships education program for young people in your community, it's important that the program is based on best practice principles. The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and VicHealth, and the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence have both developed materials which will complement this toolkit. These can be found in Recommended Reading.

What to look for?

- ✓ Whole-school approach- programs delivered in schools work with the whole school community (students, teachers, parents & carers, wider community) and involve the curriculum, school policies and the school culture
- ✓ Coherent conceptual approaches - programs use a theoretical approach that provides an understanding of the gendered nature of violence, why it occurs and how it should be prevented
- ✓ A theory of change - programs account for how the program activities will achieve the proposed program outcomes
- ✓ Relevant, inclusive and culturally sensitive practice - programs are tailored to the target group, are inclusive and culturally sensitive and where appropriate, involve consultation with representatives or leaders from the populations groups participating
- ✓ Effective development and delivery - program design considers how to deliver effective content, what teaching methods will be used, program structure including duration and intensity and who will deliver the program
- ✓ Effective strategies for impact evaluation - programs involve a comprehensive process of evaluation that indicates the effectiveness of the program in achieving its objectives
- ✓ Supporting thorough training and professional development of educators - programs provide resources and support to educators

^{1,2,3} Australian Institute of Criminology: Children's exposure to domestic violence in Australia, 2011



1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

A free 24 hour national domestic and family violence and sexual assault counselling service for people who have experienced violence, and for workers supporting them.

CASE STUDY: SOLVING THE JIGSAW

Solving the Jigsaw was developed in 1997 by the Centre for Non-Violence, a domestic violence support service based in Bendigo, Victoria. The program was developed in response to the devastating statistic that 25% of children and young people in Australia witness violence in their homes.

The award-winning program helps kids learn to manage the growing threats of bullying at school and violence at home and in the community. It does this by working with young people to develop their skills in conflict resolution, assertive communication, decision-making, anger-management and to promote increased self-knowledge, awareness, optimism and resilience. The program also takes a whole-of-school approach by developing curriculum-based strategies and strengthening the school's capacity to prevent and respond to violence.

In 2012, Solving the Jigsaw reached over 20,000 children throughout Victoria and is now available in Queensland and New South Wales. The program has also trained 650 teachers in violence prevention. To find out more about Solving the Jigsaw, visit their website www.solvingthejigsaw.org.au

RECOMMENDED READING



Title The National Standards for Sexual Assault Prevention Education
Author The National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence
Link www.nasasv.org.au/Standards.htm



Title The Line – A national social media campaign on respectful relationships
Author Australian Government
Link www.theline.gov.au



Title Violence Prevention and Respectful Relationships Education in Victorian Secondary Schools.
Author Victorian Health Promotion Association (VicHealth)
Link www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-violence



Title Love: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly
Author Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria
Link www.lovegoodbadugly.com



Title Relationship Things community resources
Author YWCA Canberra
Link www.ywca-canberra.org.au/community_resources/relationship_things



Title Sex and Ethics: Young People and Ethical Sex
Author Dr. Moira Carmody
Link Available for purchase online at www.sexualethics.org.au



This is 7 in a series of 15 fact sheets to help communities stop violence against women before it happens. Download the full set at www.nrwn.org.au