Online Safety Parent Toolkit

Netsafe's guide to help parents and whānau keep their children safe

netsafe

netsafe.org.nz

Young people are growing up with greater access to digital technology than any other generation. They understand and adapt quickly to the opportunities. And sometimes face challenges too.

This is why every parent needs to understand online risks and how to support their child to have a better experience.

While there might be a gap between what your child knows and how much you know about digital technology, you don't have to be a tech expert to help. Right and wrong are the same online as they are offline. You can offer life skills, maturity and experience your child hasn't developed yet especially when it comes to safety and security behaviours.

So, how do you get started?

Netsafe has put this Online Safety Parent Toolkit together to help families talk about online safety.

This Toolkit is a practical seven step framework that guides parents through relevant conversations with their child.

By working through the framework, parents will get to a place where they can confidently speak to their children about their activities and help them avoid or minimise possible harm.

Find out more at **netsafe.org.nz/digitalparenting.**

Seven steps to get you started

This Toolkit is designed to enhance your digital parenting knowledge and reinforces key online safety concepts. These seven steps will guide you through the things parents consistently say they want to know about.

1 UNDERSTAND

Read about the potential online risks, challenges and sometimes illegal behaviour young people face to understand what may happen.

2 LEARN

Ask your child what they do, who they talk to and how they use devices to learn about their activities. Check-in regularly to see what has changed.

3 EXPLORE

Take the time yourself to explore the sites, apps and technologies your child uses to improve your knowledge and understand their experience.

4 AGREE

Create a Family Safe Online Treaty to agree on what your child can do including, sites to visit, appropriate behaviours, privacy settings and limitations.

5 TEACH

Recognise each child has unique needs, but some online safety concepts are universal. Start by teaching yours the **5 tips to help your child thrive.**

6 MODEL

Be a good example to your child. Make sure you role model the sort of behaviours you want to see your child use online and offline.

7 PLAN

Make a plan so everybody knows what to do if something goes wrong and where you will get advice and support in challenging times.

Online safety advice for parents and whānau

There are various things you can do to help you and the family have a safer experience. Our advice better equips you to talk with your child and have ongoing conversations.

Understand challenges

Learn about the risks and challenges your child may face.

Young people find the internet an easier place to explore their identity, challenge adult norms and boundaries, experiment with relationships and practice a range of behaviours. But many of the consequences and implications of these things are amplified online.

Netsafe's research has identified that nearly 19 percent of teens have experienced an unwanted digital communication negatively impact on their daily activities.

The same research identified that most teens response to unwanted contact was to block the person, ignore the situation or report the problem to an adult. While the difficulties young people face varies depending on their age and what they do online, there are some key challenges every parent should know.

The five challenges we have shared in detail are:

1. Online bullying
2. Unwanted contact
3. Social media
4. Sexting
5. Inappropriate content

You can learn more about other challenges on Netsafe's website. For further information visit **netsafe.org.nz/understand.**
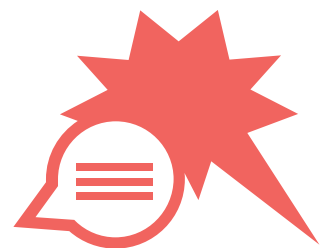
Online bullying

According to Netsafe research, one in five young people are bullied online every year. It happens when someone or a group of people does something that causes another person distress, fear or other negative emotions. They are doing it on purpose to hurt the recipient, and it's not just a one-off thing.

The Harmful Digital Communications Act was created to help people in New Zealand who are being targeted online. This law covers some types of bullying. It lays out 10 communication principles that guide how to communicate. The law also covers other things like encouraging people to take their own life (this is illegal) and sharing naked or nearly nude images without the consent of the person in it.

How to help

Teach your child what to do if they encounter online bullying so they have the tools to deal with it. Explain that often it doesn't go away, but can escalate and possibly involve others.

Talk to your child about how you expect them to behave towards others. This includes:

- Letting them know that if it's not acceptable offline, it's not acceptable online
- Asking your child to think about how the recipient of the online bullying would feel
- Reminding them to come to you, whānau, a trusted adult, their school or Netsafe for help
- Explaining there's a law about how to communicate online. It provides rights for people, but also responsibilities about the ways to communicate with others

If your child has been bullied, you should take screenshots and/or record the URLs of the content and report it to the platform that it's on (e.g. the social media or gaming platform).

More help is available at **netsafe.org.nz/what-is-online-bullying**

Unwanted contact

As your child becomes more independent, they can connect and communicate with people they don't know. Often this is a positive experience, but sometimes your child could be being groomed or talking to someone who isn't who they say they are.

Online grooming is when a person tries to create a sexually abusive situation using digital technology. Some people will pretend to be a young person and use a fake profile (similar to catfishing), while others might use their actual profile if they aren't old themselves. They might pretend to have an interest or a friend in common by looking at the young person's social media profile.

If they aren't already talking to the young person using direct messaging or text, they'll try to move the conversation somewhere where others can't see. The groomer will try to get close with the young person and may spend a long time doing this before trying to do anything sexual. Often, they use techniques and language that is positive and encourages a child to disclose personal information or their interests to try to build trust in their relationship.

How to help

It is important your child knows that they can talk to you when something goes wrong online - no matter what happened or who caused it. Depending on your child, you might also want to think about turning off the chat functions on the game they play to reduce the potential for harm.

Explain to your child:

- How easy it is for someone to pretend to be someone else
- Reasons why people pretend to be someone else
- Ways to safely manage online friends
- What to do if someone they don't know wants to chat or become a friend
- How to work out if the person is who they say they are
- What to do if things start to become uncomfortable when talking to an online friend

If you suspect your child is being groomed, contact the Police and try to capture all of the evidence.

More help is available at **netsafe.org.nz/grooming-and-online-predators**

Social media

The minimum sign up age for Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and YouTube is 13. This is because a child's social and emotional capability is still developing, making it more difficult to identify and manage challenges that occur on a platform designed for adults and teens.

If your child is under 13 and keen to use social media, consider their capability to manage potential challenges before setting up a profile. It's better your child is honest with you then you can help them to stay safe.

How to help

Make sure you've taught your child the online safety basics before they start using social media. You can also help them by:

- Setting up the account together
- Using your email instead of your child's (depending on their age)
- Entering their actual birthday so they're less likely to see inappropriate content
- Becoming their friend or following them
- Visiting the safety centres of the social media sites they use
- Talking regularly about the need for privacy settings, how to handle social conflict and what to do when concerned

More help is available at
netsafe.org.nz/privacy-settings-on-social-networks

Sexting

Sexting describes sending or receiving intimate content. It can include naked pictures, underwear shots and sexual text messages, pictures and videos. There are many reasons young people get involved in sexting including exploring sex and relationships or pressure from a partner or friends.

Research in New Zealand suggests the rates of young people sharing nude images of themselves are low (just four percent of people aged between 14-17 surveyed had done so). What is more common and can create pressure by thinking everybody is doing it, is that one in five young people report having been asked to send a nude image.

How to help

Having an open conversation can help your young person understand the implications of sending a nude image. Talk to them about the risks of sharing personal information and sexual images and what can happen once created and shared.

Ensure your child understands how easy it is for private content to be shared outside of their audience.

More help is available at
netsafe.org.nz/sending-nudes-parents

Inappropriate content

Sometimes young people can see inappropriate, offensive or illegal content even if they haven't sought it out. It can pop up during a game, someone could send them a link, a simple video search can show explicit images, or a misspelt word could return unexpected content.

Offensive or illegal content may include topics, images or other information prohibited in New Zealand. The content can also be upsetting to a young person when they discover it.

How to help

Some of the things your child may see can be distressing. Try to build your child's resiliency when they start to go online and continue to have regular conversations about what they are seeing and doing.

Some of the other things you can do are:

- Monitor what your child is doing
- Use parental control tools to filter content your child can access
- Respond calmly if your child has seen inappropriate content and has come to you for help
- Explain the approach you plan to take if this happens and try not to take away their devices or remove access to it if they do come across this type of content

More help is available at
netsafe.org.nz/upsetting-content

Learn about your child's activities

The easiest way to find out about their activities is to ask.

It's important you understand your child's activities and experiences or the ones they want to explore. **Talk to them about what they do, how they use devices and who they're talking to.**

Take the time to tune in to the conversation – what might seem like a game to you might be the way your child is connecting and interacting with people they don't know.

Research shows parents are critical to the success of young people becoming safe, confident and capable in their use of digital technology. Regular proactive conversations at home help to minimise the damage if things do go wrong online.

Why they like certain apps or sites?

Who is their network?

Are they making music or videos?

What they are playing?

What information they share?

Asking your child about the advice they would give to a friend facing an online challenge can make it easier for them to discuss theirs. It also helps you understand what they know, what they do and how they behave.

Showing an interest makes it easier to have more difficult conversations if a challenge arises later on.

For further infomation visit **netsafe.org.nz/learn.**

Explore technology

If you don't understand what your child is doing online, try it out.

Explore the websites, apps and technology your child uses. This will help improve your knowledge, and it also gives you a greater understanding of the challenges they could face.

Don't ignore new technologies as young people will use them - if not at home then at their friends' houses or school.

Ask your child to show you how their favourite website or device works as a way to start an online safety conversation. Ask them to explain how they keep themselves safe, what features they use and how they protect their identity.

Make sure you also take the time to read terms and conditions. They explain how old someone should be before using the product or service and what happens to the information your child provides.

For further information visit **netsafe.org.nz/explore.**

Agree and set expectations

Sometimes young people don't know the rules or how to moderate their own lives.

Discuss the experience your child might have online including the benefits and challenges. Talk to your child about the type of behaviours you'd like them to adopt and reinforce that what they do leaves a permanent digital footprint.

Set expectations about:

- A balanced amount of time
- The apps and sites that are appropriate to use
- How their behaviour impacts others
- What types of information is safe to share
- Where they should go for advice, including you, another trusted adult, a teacher, or Netsafe.

The conversation will be different depending on the age and stage of your child - and what you feel comfortable discussing.

Technological options like parental controls can help, but they work best when teamed with online safety education.

Setting aside time to create a Family Safe Online Treaty is a practical step the whole family can be involved in.

It allows you to talk about what you value as a family and what suits you all best.

Young people also need to understand everyone faces challenges using the internet. Talk about the issues you have encountered even if it's as simple as you forgot your password and explain how you resolved it.

Encourage your child to talk to you about what they are doing and when anything is worrying them. Regardless of what it is and what caused it, try not to overreact.

For further information visit **netsafe.org.nz/agree.**

Find out how to use parental controls at **netsafe.org.nz/filters**

Read more about spending time online at **netsafe.org.nz/screen-time**

Teach the basics

Let them know about online safety.

Most social media and gaming organisations have a safety centre. Look at the safety centres with your child and teach them how to use the tools available. Start with how to block people, how to report content and how to use privacy settings. Teach your child to capture screenshots or URLs in case something goes wrong and this information is needed.

One of the other things parents may think about is whether their child needs a device. If you're considering giving your child one, check out the advice at **netsafe.org.nz/byod**

Netsafe's **5 tips to help your child thrive** are some of the best online safety tools you can teach:

1 Keep it locked
Passwords and pin codes help protect your child's profiles and accounts. Set up pins and passwords with them – and reinforce they shouldn't share it with anyone except you. Get more information at **netsafe.org.nz/passwords**

2 Keep it private
Some information when shared publicly can make your child more vulnerable to identity theft or grooming. It's important to be cautious when sharing:

- Passwords
- Address
- Birthdate
- Bank account details
- School details
- Their location on apps
- Personal information that can be used to guess security questions

3 Keep it helpful
A digital footprint is the trail of 'electronic breadcrumbs' you leave behind online, and it needs to be managed carefully. It can last long after they think something has been deleted and may follow them into adulthood. Learn more at **netsafe.org.nz/digital-footprint**

4 Keep it real
It can seem like common knowledge to adults, but it is hard for children to understand that not everyone is who they say they are. It can be exciting when people want to friend, communicate or follow them. Talk to your child about invites or conversations with strangers, why this is not safe and how they should handle it.

5 Keep it friendly
Teach your child to be kind and respectful online, and to be careful talking to, or sharing information with, people they don't know. For further information visit **netsafe.org.nz/agree.**
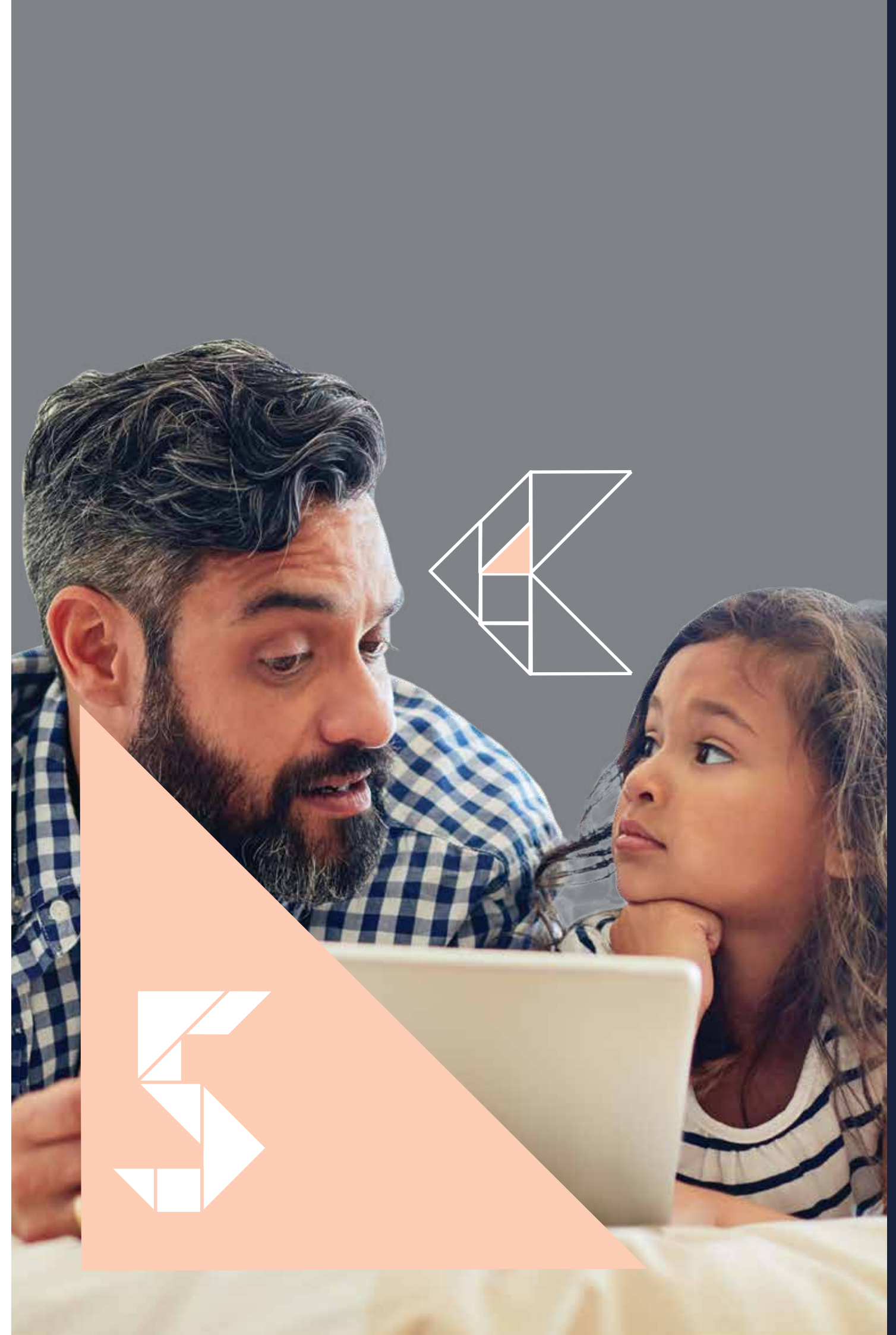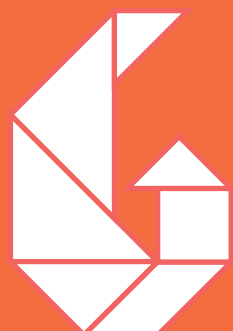
Model for them

Young people always watch what happens around them, so try not to be a hypocrite.

Take a look at the way technology is used by people in your home.

Think about if there are patterns, behaviours or activities that might need to be rethought. Are devices used at the table? How do you talk or post online?

It can be hard to set expectations for family when you are not doing it yourself, and it may cause conflicts.

Discuss some of the key safety aspects with your child, but make sure you're doing it too.

For further information visit **netsafe.org.nz/role-model.**

Plan with them

Young people need to know where to get help, before they need it.

Let your child know the options available to them if they are experiencing challenges. Do you want them to talk to you, whānau, a trusted adult, their school or Netsafe?

It is usually a big step when young people ask for help. Netsafe's research shows that many young people choose not to seek support when something goes wrong online. They often ignore the problem or try to fix it themselves, or think their parents will take the technology away as a first step.

If a young person comes to you, focus on fixing the issue, not on punishing those involved or confiscating devices - even if they did something wrong. If you take away their access to technology, then you're less likely to be the first port of call next time something happens.

Netsafe has created the Family Safe Online Treaty to help guide these conversations and make the experience easier.

There are versions for different age groups available at **netsafe.org.nz/family-safe-online-treaty**

For further information visit **netsafe.org.nz/plan.**
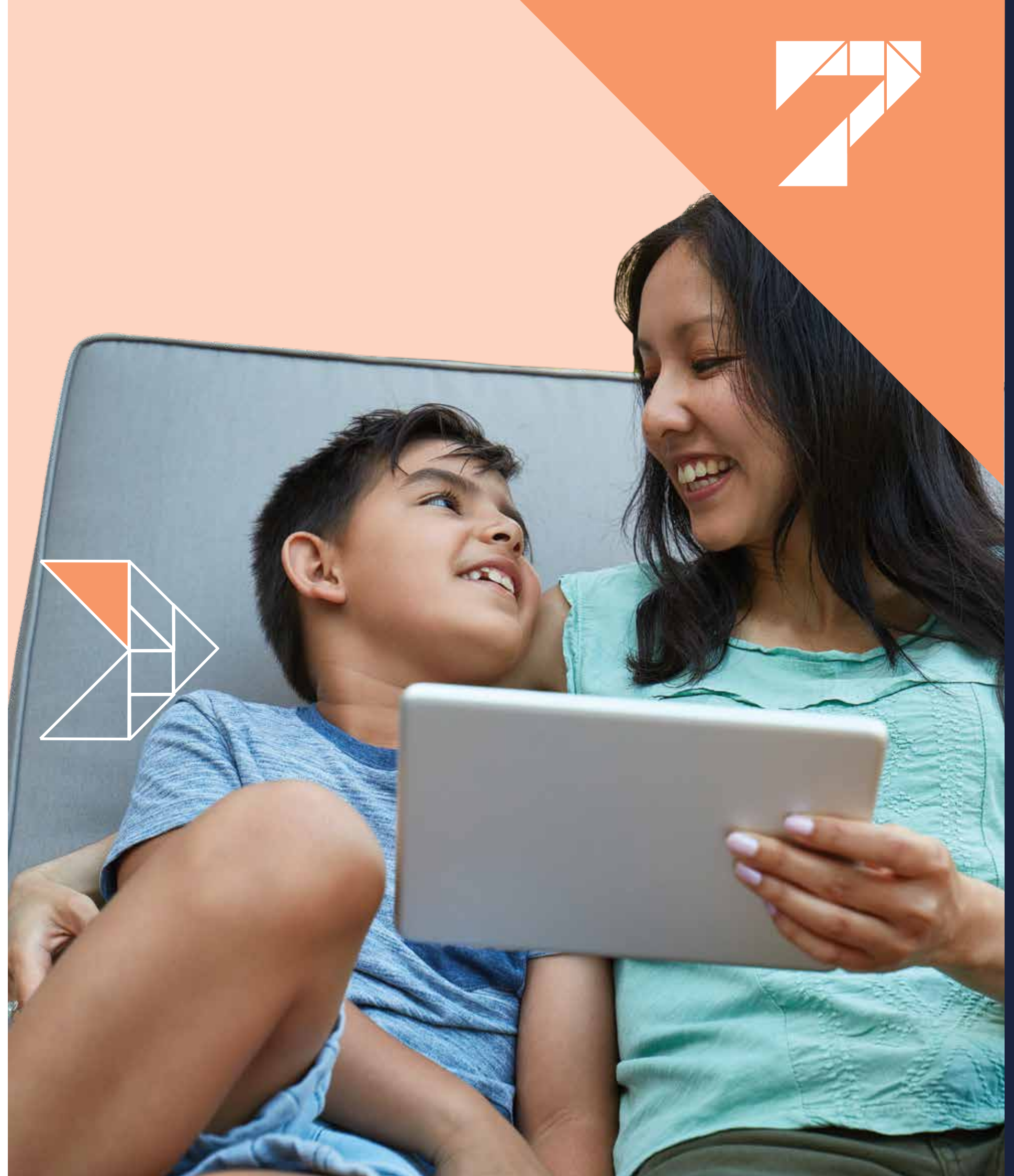
Family Safe Online Treaty

Netsafe wants all kids and their whānau to have a safe and positive time while using the internet and devices. It can be useful for families to agree on some guidelines so this can be done.

1 KEEP IT KIND

When you are online, think about others and talk or share in a kind way.

2 KEEP IT TO YOURSELF

Keep your passwords and information about yourself or other people safe and private.

3 KEEP IT CAREFUL

Think carefully about what you share and make sure it's something you are proud of and would be happy sharing with someone else face to face.

4 KEEP IT REAL

Not everything you see online is real. It might look or sound real, but some things are made up or fake, so be careful to check or ask a teacher if you're not sure.

5 KEEP IT HONEST

When we copy or use words, pictures and ideas from the internet, we need to make sure we share these things in the right way and follow the rules for sharing things that don't belong to us.

6 KEEP IT FAIR

Make sure you check with others if it is okay to record them, or share photos or videos with them in it. They should have a say in what happens to things that go online if they are in them.

7 KEEP IT RESPONSIBLE

If you bring your own device to school, use it in ways, and at the times that your teacher says it is okay to.

8 KEEP IN MIND

There is free and confidential help available from Netsafe (**netsafe.org.nz** or **0508 NETSAFE**) if anyone faces online challenges.

What other guidelines are useful and what will happen if they aren't followed?

_____

_____

_____

If we need help because of a problem with this Treaty we will talk to:

_____

_____

My signature confirms I agree to the guidelines above

Child's signature_____   Date _____

I/we agree to help manage these guidelines fairly. The use of technology deserves respect from everyone and there will be a family discussion if these guidelines are not adhered to. I/we will friend and follow, but will not stalk you online.

Parent/guardian signature _____   Date _____

Get support

There are a variety of places to get support when it comes to online safety issues.

netsafe.org.nz

Offers a free and confidential online safety service for everyone. It helps people with online bullying, abuse, harassment and other challenges

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certnz

Provides practical information and advice on how to keep your information secure. You can also report cyber security problems.

NEW ZEALAND POLICE
Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa

If you think you or someone else is in immediate danger or if a crime has been committed, call 111. Call 105 to report crimes that don't require an urgent response.

Connect with Netsafe

We keep people safe online by providing free support, education and incident expertise seven days a week.

Contact Netsafe's helpline

Whether you're dealing with online bullying, scams or need advice about another issue for yourself or someone else, we can help.

Our service is free, non-judgemental and available seven days a week. You can contact the team in four ways.

- Call toll-free on 0508 NETSAFE
- Email help@netsafe.org.nz
- Text 'Netsafe' to 4282
- Report at netsafe.org.nz/report

Visit netsafe.org.nz

Our website has information, tips and self-help guides about a range of online safety topics. We also offer resources for the education sector and advice about the newest trends in online safety.

Stay informed

You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter at netsafe.org.nz/newsletter or follow 'NetsafeNZ' on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram to keep up with the latest news, advice and tips.

We keep people safe online

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