

## Guide 6:

# Helping children

Caring for your children when you are experiencing domestic or family violence can be challenging, and if this also includes abuse through technology it can be particularly hard.

This Guide details some of the ways to help your children stay connected online while also keeping themselves, and you, safe.

### Reassure and encourage them

Children need to be reassured that there are people who love them and can protect them. They may need extra support to help them feel safe and positive about the future. Keeping daily routines the same as much as possible, and surrounding them with kind, caring people will help.

### Involve children in safety planning

Include children and teenagers in any safety (including eSafety) planning. Keep them 'in the picture' in a way that's appropriate to their age, and emphasise how important it is not to share personal details or put location information online. Children and teenagers need to stay connected, but in a way that does not increase the risk to their safety or other people's.

It is very important to encourage them to keep talking — be it to you, a counsellor or a trusted friend. It is healthy for them to share their thoughts and emotions — it will help them not feel so alone.

### Setting rules to keep your family safe

Your family can work together to stay safe online. Start by talking with your children about the rules you can all follow to keep everyone safe.



For younger children, you can set the rules. For older children and teenagers, let them help you develop the rules. It is important they participate in keeping you all safe. This will also help them feel more in control of their situation.

Your family's safety rules could include:

- **No posting locations** online or sharing them with anyone. This includes addresses, suburbs, schools, clubs, shops you go to and friends or family you visit.
- **No posting photos** online for now.
- **No checking in** on social media or checking anybody else in.
- **No tagging family** members online until things are safer.
- **No enabling location services** on any devices. Turn off location services on all devices until things are safer. This will ensure that photos do not have a location tag embedded in them, and that the devices (and your location) cannot be easily tracked. This might mean not playing games in the short term. Remind your children that the most important thing is keeping you all safe.

- **Become familiar** with the apps and programs your children use and how to make them safer. Refer to our advice page (in English) for popular games and apps [esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking](https://esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking).
- **Use the privacy settings** on all social media accounts and remember to update them regularly, especially after software updates.
- Read through **Guide 3** and the **eSafety Checklist** [esafety.gov.au/women/take-control/esafety-planning/esafety-checklist](https://esafety.gov.au/women/take-control/esafety-planning/esafety-checklist) with older children and teenagers to make sure all devices and sites are being used safely.

**Depending on your situation, your children may also need help with:**

- **Being aware** of how the person who is being abusive might escalate their behaviour. For example, the person abusing you may want to 'friend' your children on social media. If it is not possible to say no to this, you and your child might set up a new account to limit what that person sees.
- **Knowing what information** they should not share with the person abusing you, or with people who know that person; for example, not sharing your address, when you go out and who you are in contact with. Children and teenagers may need you to help them practice answers to predictable questions, in case they are confronted by the person abusing you.
- **Communicating safely** with others. This might include using an agreed messaging app, provided that you know all the contacts on the app. Your child will also need to know how to hide the app, if the person abusing you is going to be near the device.
- **Using separate devices** at home and at their other parent's house. Even if one device is very old, at least your children

can safely keep their contacts on the home device.

Children and especially teenagers, may defy limits being placed on their social media use. They may not understand why restrictions, even temporary ones, are necessary, or the consequences of posting sensitive information online. It may be tempting to relent to their demands but remember, following the rules will help keep all of you safe.

**If your child wants to talk to someone about they feel**

Your child's kindergarten, pre-school, child-care or school will be able to provide additional support for your child. If you feel comfortable, let them know that your child has some extra worries and needs extra nurturing and understanding.

If your child is:

- at school, TAFE or university - you can seek support through their education provider. If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to the welfare officer, counsellor or student wellbeing coordinator. Schools also often have free counsellors or psychologists to support your child.
- aged 8 to 25 - contact **Kids Helpline** at [kidshelpline.com.au](https://kidshelpline.com.au) or 1800 55 1800. They are available on the phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and will also chat with your child online. Ask for translation or interpreting services if you need them.
- aged 12 to 25 - **eHeadspace** offers free online counselling for young people aged 12 to 25 and their families. Call 1800 650 890 or chat online from 9.00am to 1.00am (AEST), seven days a week at [headspace.org.au/eheadspace](https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace).

**Information about online safety for parents**

If you need more information about children and online safety, download our 'Parent's guide to online safety' in your language from the eSafety website [esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/resource-centre/brochure-parents-guide-to-online-safety](https://esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/resource-centre/brochure-parents-guide-to-online-safety). There are also a range of resources (in English) available for parents at [esafety.gov.au/iparent](https://esafety.gov.au/iparent)