

# HOW CAN WE SUPPORT PARENTS IN TODAY'S WORLD? IT'S SO DIFFERENT!

As grandparents, we have an important role and sometimes a very special ability to help keep our grandchildren safe. If your grandkids are too scared to talk about being different, or if they are keeping a secret about who they are, this makes them an easier target for bullying and other kinds of harm. They will be safer if you talk with them and their parents so they can open up, which means showing you accept them exactly as they are. This can be challenging as we all have to be kind with ourselves and each other about things we might wish we had done differently in the past. But now we have the chance to get it right!

This tip sheet was created for Hohou te Rongo Kahukura from conversations held by Andrea Black in 2023. Andrea is a qualified counsellor and trainer with 30 years professional experience and a life time of personal experiences. These experiences have helped shape her to be passionate about the changes needed across our communities and as a grandparent of six grandchildren.



## How can I support my own children to be safe parents?

It is never too late to talk with your adult children about safety. Be honest about what you know now, and what you didn't know when they were children.

*"I used to think that babysitters inside the family were safer, but now I'm not so sure I did enough to check on what you thought as a kid. I'm sorry. What are you thinking about when it comes to babysitting?"*

*"I thought it mattered what you wore when you were a kid! I've realised that bad things can happen to children no matter what they wear. What do you think?"*

## Support your adult children to be gentle parents:

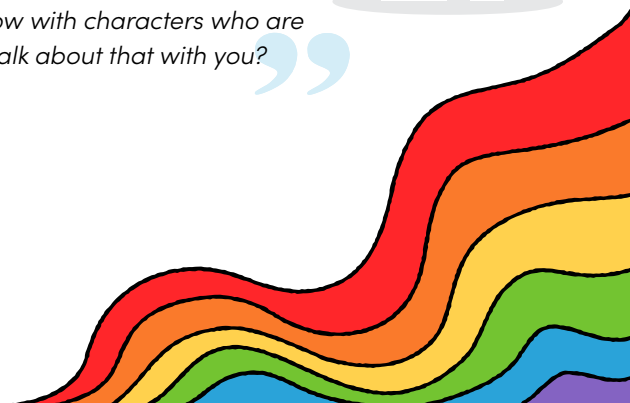
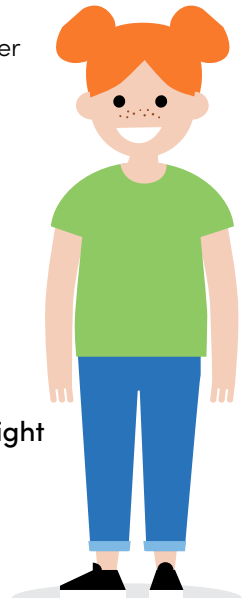
- 1 Be gentle with your grandchildren
- 2 Play with your grandchildren
- 3 Ask your grandchildren questions about their lives so their parents can hear the kōrero. They might try it out themselves!
- 4 Notice when your adult children are stressed and offer to do things to help them out
- 5 Focus on the values that you want to see for your family or whānau. Examples are:

- Adaptability
- Acceptance
- Openness
- Respect for children
- Connecting

## Don't be afraid to talk about Rainbow things. You might open up the conversation like this:

*"I never thought about what if you were gay. What would it be like if one of your kids was gay?"*

*"There's so many shows now with characters who are Rainbow. Do the kids talk about that with you?"*



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## How can I support my grandchildren directly?

- 1 Loving and accepting them just the way they are is wonderful!
- 2 Ask nosy questions about school, about what other children say about Rainbow people, and about sexuality. You don't have to get the words right! They will LOVE to teach you
- 3 Ask if their school has a 'healthy relationship' or 'bullying' programme and if so what messages they remember
- 4 Take an interest in Rainbow things. You could open up the conversation like this:  
*“ I was walking down the street the other day and I saw two men holding hands. What do you think about that? Do you know any gay people? ”*
- 5 Ask the questions that parents are afraid to ask  
*“ Who do you want to live with when you're older? Will you get married, like I am? ”*  
*Is everyone being nice to you at school? ”*  
*I have noticed you like wearing bright clothes, is that about your gender? ”*
- 6 Let them know it was different when you were young! They will be fascinated about what things were like when you were young, especially about sexuality and gender
- 7 If you watch or see things that are different from how your family does it, talk about this to help your grandchildren be curious and creative for themselves

