



STAY TRUE TO YOU

**Information for parents/carers and
those who support young people:**

Advice on how to help young people
stay safe from conflict and violence



StayTrueToYou.co.uk



We all want our children to grow up safe and out of harm's way.

The best way we can help young people is to support and educate them from the earliest age, helping them to make the right, positive choices for themselves.

While young people want to be independent, they still need to know there are adults they can trust around them. They need to feel they can ask for help when they need it, without judgement or consequence.


We want to help parents, family or carers, and members of our communities, look out for the signs and symptoms, to be confident of having that difficult conversation and to know what to do and who to speak to with your concern.

Stay True to You is a campaign to help support adults and children by providing some simple, practical advice and further information.

Together we can help young people to stay true to themselves, to be the best they can be and to stay safe.



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Help build confidence to do the right thing

As they get older and more independent, young people will make more of their own decisions, without their parent being there.

They need to build their confidence in what the right thing to do is, to trust their instincts when something isn't right and what to do to stay safe, whether that's in the real world or online.

Try to explore these three simple themes with them, focusing on what a young person can do for themselves:



THINK AHEAD



TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS



FIND SOMEONE TO TRUST



THINK AHEAD

Young people live in the here and now – they’re not thinking too far ahead or about what the consequences may be. Being young means they’re still learning and taking risks.

Thinking ahead means both considering the practical things, and trying to think of the consequences of their actions.

So it can help to encourage them to think about where they’re going, who with, what they’re going to do and to think **for themselves** about how they can stay safe.

It may be about how they travel, about keeping in touch with you, letting you know they’ve arrived or when they are about to come home, or if they need help.

Ask them to think about any areas they don’t feel safe or comfortable in – and how can they avoid these. Or maybe there are people that they want to stay away from and how they can do that.

It’s about them learning to plan ahead, knowing that you’re on hand to offer help to them, without judgement, if they need it.



Staying safe starts with staying calm and being confident to trust your instincts on when to walk away from a situation. But it can be hard when emotions are running high.

Encourage them to know when to take a breath.

By keeping their cool, not responding immediately and by trusting their instincts they'll make better decisions.

Encourage them to let a situation calm down, de-escalate an argument, walk away. And the same goes when online – know when the best thing is to just exit the chat.

And as a parent, carer, family member or friend – the same goes for us too! No one gives good advice when they're angry – take a breath yourself, however hard it is. Wait until you've both calmed down. Much of their behaviour is learned from us, so let's keep calm whenever we can.



FIND SOMEONE TO TRUST

Everyone needs to ask for help at times – no matter how scary it may be. It is vital that young people have trusted adults who they know they can ask for help.

Also, that trusted adult may not be you, their parent.

Young people told us that the biggest barrier to them sharing their worries with parents and teachers is the fear of judgement and consequence because of their mistakes.

So it's helpful to create a calm, trusting and non-judgemental relationship where you help them learn from their mistakes, rather than respond with your own emotions.

And who else is there that they can be encouraged to talk to? Another family member, a friend's parent, a sports coach or someone at a club they attend? It's important they have someone to talk to, even if it's not you.

Finally, there are other services – the police, Crimestoppers, Childline – remind them that they are there to help. See the end of this leaflet.



Having difficult conversations

Having important and difficult conversations with young people – particularly teenagers – can feel like walking a tightrope.

When we offer advice on how to stay safe, it's important to take the time to have a quality conversation, particularly if we have a concern. So:

- **Make the time** – ideally neither of you should be rushed or tired – let them know you want a chat, and agree a time that suits
- **Try some neutral ground** – while taking a car journey, or while sharing a household chore helps distract and makes it feel less intense
- **Properly listen, try to understand their perspective, their motivations** – even if different to your own
- **Don't be judgemental** – teenagers tell us they're far more willing to talk to people who don't judge them
- **Try to talk about tricky subjects often** – the more you both practice, the more likely they'll come to you when they need to
- **Let them know that you're always there** – but so too are other people if they want to talk to someone else
- **Trust them to do the right thing.**



Fear and self-defence

Thankfully, the vast majority of young people will not be exposed to violence. Only a tiny number of people carry a weapon – it is not normal.

For young people, it is fear that is the biggest driver to weapon-carrying and in particular knife crime.

That fear comes from their influences – what they experience in the real world and what they see online. This can change their view of the world around them, of what is normal and it can shape the way they behave.

There can be a sense of vulnerability and not knowing what to do, and that carrying a knife gives some self-defence protection.

We have to counter that by carefully explaining the risks, the consequences, offering up the facts and being there to provide help when needed.

- Carrying a weapon puts you in greater danger – it escalates a situation and could be used against you
- There is no legal defence that you were “only carrying a knife for your own protection”
- If you’re scared – speak to someone you trust. You won’t get into trouble.



Training and information for parents/carers

There are further training and information sessions available to all parents/carers, from online webinars run by expert trainers, to short bite-size learning and videos you can watch in your own time, exploring a range of topics associated with helping keep young people safe.

Visit the parents section of the Stay True to You website:

www.staytruetoyou.co.uk/parents

Get in touch via info@staytruetoyou.co.uk



Further information

If you are worried about a young person, speak to your local Children's Services team. Just search "report a concern about a child" and include your local council area.

- **Stay True to You:** Containing information for parents, practitioners and young people. Latest training events and new resources. www.staytrueto you.co.uk/parents
- **Thames Valley Police:** There to keep us all safe. Report a crime or share a concern by calling **101**. If it is an emergency and someone is in danger call **999**. You can also report information online via www.thamesvalley.police.uk
- **Crimestoppers:** Share information and report crime without giving your name or any details. Call **0800 555 111**. Or visit their website www.fearless.org
- **Childline:** A confidential service for children and young people to talk to someone and get advice on a range of issues, from mental health to abuse. Free 24/7 telephone line **0800 1111**. www.childline.org.uk
- **NSPCC:** Lots of advice and support on how to keep children safe. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>
- **CEOP Safety Centre:** If you're worried about someone making inappropriate contact online or online sexual abuse, or just need guidance on safe use of the internet. www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/

This booklet – and the wider Stay True to You campaign – has been produced by the Thames Valley Violence Prevention Partnership. We work with a wide range of partners and communities to help keep young people safe and to prevent violence and knife crime.

The Violence Prevention Partnership programme is part of the wider Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley.

