

STARTING EARLY

The Role of RSE in Addressing Harmful Online Sexual Material



Today's tamariki and rangatahi are exposed to harmful sexual material online at younger ages than ever before.

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE), when started early and delivered in a culturally responsive way, equips them with the knowledge, confidence, and resilience to navigate these challenges safely.



KEY MESSAGES

PROTECTIVE

RSE builds protective factors – it fosters body autonomy, consent skills, and positive identity.

REDUCE RISK

Early, age-appropriate RSE delays sexual activity and reduces risky behaviours (UNESCO, 2018).

TRUSTED KŌRERO

Young people value honest, non-judgemental kōrero with trusted adults.

BUILD RESILIENCE

Culturally responsive RSE grounded in manaakitanga and whanaungatanga strengthens identity and resilience.

SAFETY FIRST

Digital harms are increasing: RSE must include online safety, media literacy, and critical thinking.





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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Start age-appropriate kōrero early – use simple language and examples.
- ✓ Model safe digital behaviours and talk openly about online risks.
- ✓ Support teacher training in RSE and digital wellbeing.
- ✓ Advocate for culturally inclusive and strengths-based RSE.
- ✓ Partner with local youth, whānau, and community voices.

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For Research & Training in Youth Health & Development



HOW YOUTH ARE EXPOSED ONLINE

NUDES

Unsolicited nudes (e.g., TikTok, YouTube).

ADS

Explicit or sexualised ads during age-appropriate content.

CHATS

Anonymous chat sites (e.g., Omegle) and unsafe strangers.

CONTENT

Sexualised mainstream content and weak content moderation.

FEATURES

Location-tracking features like SnapMap increasing risks.

