

**If required, please comment about which content should be aligned differently to the age of the learner.**

### **YEARS 0-3 (ages 5-7)**

There are three areas on which we are providing feedback: relationships, safety and consent, and knowledge of one's body. For each of these sections we have bullet points of specific recommendations.

#### **Relationships:**

- Begin to explore qualities in relationships – “what makes a good friend” and “what makes others a good friend” at years 0-1
- Provide information on how to identify and address peer pressure; include way to communicate about peer pressure with parents and trusted adults.
- Start to build negotiation skills using assertive (firm but kind) communication .
- In Year 3, begin to talk about crushes and introduce knowledge of romantic relationships; they will be seeing this at school, in their community, online, and children their age will be talking about it.

#### **Safety and consent:**

- Provide more information on digital safety and literacy for this age group which gradually progresses from age 5. Many young people are using devices and have freely available access to sites like YouTube and are playing online games designed for older children and adults. Many can't process what they are watching, and don't understand when something is inappropriate .
- Online bullying should be described and discussed as many children in this age group may have access to messaging services and may be having this experience.
- Start to build skills to recognise if someone is uncomfortable or feeling scared and what to do (in the context of 'you' making them feel scared, or if they are scared by someone/something else – e.g. bullying). This includes information on different emotions and how those might be experienced in the body.
- Provide a clear differentiation between secrets vs. surprises (surprises will be told eventually, like a birthday gift, secrets are meant to stay hidden, which is not safe).

#### **Knowledge of one's body:**

- Normalise different and diverse bodies as it relates to disabled bodies, body shapes and body hair. Emphasize acceptance and inclusion of all people.
- Start conversations to build confidence and skills to talk about their body with safe adults.
- Drawing on the Te Whare Tapa Whā health framework, highlight the various aspects of wellbeing instead of a sole focus on physical health.
- Include more specific detail about holistic pubertal changes from year 3. Many children of this age will notice changes in others at school and in their communities. This information should include menstruation, spontaneous erections and increased sweating; this can be included in the general messaging around how their whole bodies change and grow (e.g. losing baby teeth).

- Conception and reproduction should be covered earlier from years 2-3 - many children will already know what this is, would have seen something online or could already have misinformation.

### **YEARS 4-6 (ages 8-11)**

There are three areas on which we are providing feedback: relationships, safety and consent, and knowledge of one's body. For each of these sections we have bullet points of specific recommendations.

#### **Relationships:**

- There should be increased information on skill building around how to communicate clearly and assertively.
- Include more information on age-appropriate romantic relationships from Year 4 onwards. This is important to build a foundation of respectful communication and behaviour for all relationship types.
- Include more information on equality within peer and romantic relationships; this will help to address peer pressure and identify unhealthy and abusive romantic relationships.
- Include more information around 'what's important to you' from Year 4. This includes identifying what is important in friendship, and that it's okay to not be friends with everyone; this helps to encourage autonomy and empowerment.

#### **Safety and Consent**

- Introduce the notion of coercion when discussing peer pressure from Year 4.
- Build on knowledge of consent by including scenarios where consent is not clear, and how to identify and respond to these situations.
- Build on skills to distinguish surprises from secrets including skills on what to do if a friend tells you something unsafe or that worries you and asks you not to tell anyone.
- Note that some children's parents will be posting their images/videos online. Build skills and knowledge on how to approach this and how to ask for help if they are uncomfortable.
- Address literacy around mis and disinformation starting at Year 4. This should include more than just behaviours that they might copy from what they've seen, but also opinions, views and values.
- Build skills on how to know if information is truthful and reliable online; this includes seeking sources and understanding which are more trustworthy than others.
- From year 4, introduce the concept of "how much is too much" for online use. This will help set the foundations for later discussion on pornography and social media and online addictions.

#### **Knowledge of one's body**

- Normalise diversity of bodies, including disabled bodies, body shapes, body sizes and other differences. Emphasize that it is not possible to determine a person's gender by looking at their body. Conveying messages about inclusivity is important to engender respect for the individuals and communities in which young people live.
- Provide information about how to identify if a body part isn't healthy, specifically genitals, from Year 4.
- Provide more information about pubertal change including menstruation, discharge, spontaneous erections, thoughts and feelings, breast development, body hair from Year 4.

- Give information about how social media, images and media influences how we think and feel about our bodies.
- Build more on communicating with trusted adults about their bodies, especially considering households where it's taboo to talk about these issues.

### **YEARS 7-8 (ages 11-13)**

There are three areas on which we are providing feedback: relationships, safety and consent, and knowledge of one's body. For each of these sections we have bullet points of specific recommendations.

#### **Relationships:**

- Ensure that messages about relationships are balanced. For example, in Year 7 the message that *"love can be very intense... and at times be confusing and distracting"* should be countered with a messages and recognition of the positive experiences around love and healthy relationships.
- Include more of a balance when talking about 'doing harm' and 'being harmed.' There should be a focus on teaching young people not to harm others.
- Continue to build skills on how to talk to safe adults about relationships.
- Provide students and teachers with evidence-based, credible sources when discussing terminology around LGBTQIA+ communities.
- More skill building around assertive communication, including for online relationships.

#### **Safety and Consent:**

- From year 7, explore more about when consent isn't clear, how to identify this and what to do. When talking about laws of consent in NZ, include laws around sharing online content and using apps such as 'Deep Fake' to create false images.
- Introduce discussions about pornography – what it is, that it doesn't represent real-life sex and relationships, and what to do if they see it. Note that 67% of NZ teenagers have seen porn, and 25% of those saw it before the age of 12 (NZ Youth and Porn, Office of Film and Literature Classification, 2018, page 9).

#### **Knowledge of one's body**

- Given that a very small proportion of young people in this age group are sexually active, it is important to convey some basic knowledge of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

### **YEARS 9-10 (ages 13-15)**

#### **Relationships:**

- Include communication about sexual contact including how to communicate needs, desire and consent.

#### **Safety and consent**

- Build more advanced knowledge about asking someone to share a nude image and the social impact and legal implications.
- Build on understanding and critical perspective of pornography.
- Avoid language around "victims" and "perpetrators" and replace with language that focuses on the behaviour instead of the person: "people who have been harmed" and "people who have done harm" to align with the language sexual violence organisations use.

- Expand information about impacts of sexual violence to include all aspects of Te Whare Tapa Whā model and the impacts of all disrespectful behaviour towards others, even if not unlawful. The current content only talks about impacts of unlawful behaviour.

### **Knowledge of one's body**

- Provide information about the multiple uses of contraception including that it can help to safely alleviate difficult menstruation.
- Give more information about young people's rights to access sexual health services and support services.
- Remove 'diaphragms' as these are no longer easily accessible in NZ.
- Build skills and confidence to talk about sexual and reproductive wellbeing with safe adults and health providers.
- Acknowledge sexual feelings and pleasure are normal and that sex should be a positive experience with clear consent.

## **YEAR 11-13 (ages 15-18)**

### **Relationships**

- Ensure that the emphasis is on teaching people not to engage in harmful behaviours, rather than on people identifying and avoiding unhealthy relationships. Identifying and avoiding unhealthy relationships are important skills but it needs to be clear that the responsibility lies with the person who causes harm.
- Include ways to identify coercive control and subtle abusive behaviours
- Include relationship abuse relating to reproductive abuse and monitoring and stalking using technology.
- Build bystander intervention skills and knowledge around if they see relationship abuse/violence.
- Continue to build communication skills around sexual negotiation; including how to discuss condom use, what they like and don't like, asking their partner to get an STI check.

### **Safety and Consent**

- Include help for those that are using harmful behaviours.
- Include the rainbow communities when talking about gender/bodies being treated differently in society.
- Acknowledge that some people chose to engage in rough sex, choking and/or strangulation and how this links to pornography and consent. Give information about the risks and reinforce messages about consent.
- Encourage skill-build around bystander intervention and creating communities that don't accept sexual and relationship violence.

### **Knowledge of one's body**

- Include peri-menopause when talking about the menstrual cycle and fertility
- Continue to teach about how social media can impact body image.
- Talk more about sexual pleasure and normalise messaging around this.
- Include factual information and support services relating to pregnancy loss and miscarriage given that it happens to 1 in 4 pregnancies.
- Teach evidence-based knowledge of pregnancy options, providing information about services and their rights.
- Encourage consulting a medical professional about what contraception option is best for them when they become sexually active.

**There is no content in the draft RSE framework that should be removed.**  
(Agree/Disagree scale)

### **What content should be included.**

All of the following points apply across the age groups.

- **Evidence-based and balanced approach:** To align with international best practice, we strongly encourage an evidence-based and balanced approach to all topics related to RSE. As noted in [UNESCO's technical guidelines for sexuality education](#), a balanced approach includes discussing the risks and potential negative outcomes alongside the positive dimensions and outcomes related to these topics. RSE should include comprehensive coverage of the various aspects of sexuality including those specified in the World Health Organization's definition of the term: "a central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors." ([WHO, 2006a](#)). With this multi-faceted approach, young people are better able to develop a positive sexual self-conception, maintain good sexual and reproductive health outcomes, and build skills for healthy, mutually respectful relationships. All information included in RSE should be factual and evidence-based and not based on opinions or values.
- **Effective and appropriate timing:** The timing at which different topics are discussed should be carefully considered and aligned to their typical time of relevance. In this draft framework, several topics are taught too late including puberty, menstruation, online safety, and romantic relationships. Young people are already exposed and engaged with these experiences before the ages at which they are included in the framework. For example, menstruation is not mentioned until year 6 (age 10-11) and puberty is first mentioned at year 5 (age 9-10). Average age for menstruation is 13.2 in New Zealand, and it is normal to happen as early as 9 years old or as late as 16, ([Donovan, University of Otago, 2018](#)). Given that puberty can begin as early as 8 or 9 ([Healthify](#)), it is essential that young people are taught about menstruation before they or their peers experience it.
- **Mātauranga Māori and Pacific knowledges:** We strongly advise to include Mātauranga Māori and Pacific knowledges throughout the curriculum for all age groups. It is important that Maori and Pacific young people can see themselves in what is taught. Given that current inequities in SRH burden Māori and Pacific the most, and the 2023 census identified that Māori and Pacific population is a growing youthful population. Including this information also gives all young people the opportunity to learn about diversity of sexual and reproductive health perspectives. Māori and Pacific conceptual frameworks such as Te Whare Tapa Wha and Fonofale Model should be

included as they are highly relevant to use when discussing the multi-faceted nature of sexuality and sexual health.

- **Diversity of sexuality, gender and sex characteristics:** The framework reduces gender to two categories: “man” and “woman” and reduces sexuality to four categories: heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and asexual. Diversity across various cultures, including Māori and Pacific identities such as takatāpui, fa’afafine, fakaleitī, akava’ine, or vakasalewalewa should be represented and acknowledged. In addition, it is important to note that the latest NZ census has found that at least 2.3% of the population are known to have variations of sex characteristics (commonly known as intersex) and this appears only once in the framework. It is critical to capture the diversity of identities across gender and sexuality to decrease stigma and shame which can lead to increased violence and discrimination. Furthermore, including information about these topics acknowledges and reflects the lived reality of individuals and communities in which young people live.
- **Open communication with parents and trusted adults:** Throughout the age groups, there should be less onus on the child to keep themselves safe and more emphasis on open communication with parents and trusted adults. Young people should be taught the importance of seeking information, clarification about their questions, concerns, and feelings with parents and trusted adults; this also applies to concerns or questions about all manner of topics related to sex, sexuality and relationships. It is important to provide information on how to raise a topic with a parent or trusted adult if something is wrong, what to do if they can’t keep you safe and if they don’t believe you or help you, to keep telling trusted adults until someone does.
- **Digital and online safety:** Digital safety including online safety and consent needs to be addressed in a balanced manner that reflects the lived reality of young people. This includes discussions of pornography (which is currently not mentioned once in the framework), online bullying, sexting and how much time is spent online. This should be balanced with a recognition of positive experiences online such as creating community, connections with friends and learning new information. It is important to highlight the omission of pornography in the draft framework; this is a critical topic to address given the ubiquity of access to and use of pornography among young people. Relatedly, media literacy and understanding misinformation and disinformation should be included across the age group. There should be more focus on upstanding, good digital citizenship and creating safe, healthy communities that don’t accept discrimination, violence and abuse. This will help shape our future communities and empower young people to take ownership over their futures.