

**#SafeWithYou**



**What makes a child feel safe?**

## What makes a safe home?

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### A safe home is:

- Children are free to express their thoughts, feelings, opinions and attitudes
- Children are free to be themselves and feel valued within the family
- A child feels loved, cared for, and nurtured
- Children have boundaries that are clear and consistent. Rule and expectations are set and enforced in a fair and predictable manner.
- Children are raised by positive role models who exhibit positive behaviours and attitudes, providing good examples for children to follow.



### A safe home is not:

- A child feeling like they are 'walking on eggshells' in fear of disappointing parents
- A controlling environment to discipline a child
- Emotionally neglectful. Children's emotional needs are ignored, leading to feelings of neglect and lack of support.
- Children have inconsistent boundaries where rules are either non-existent or erratically enforced, leading to confusion and insecurity.
- Negative influences. Adults in the home engage in harmful behaviours, such as substance abuse or violence, setting a poor example.
- Poor communication. Children are afraid to speak up or share their feelings due to fear of ridicule or punishment.

# What makes a child feel emotionally safe?

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## **Consistency**

Regularly being there for the child, showing reliability and stability.

## **Affection**

Providing hugs, kisses and gentle touches that convey love and warmth and communicate to a child they are loved and cared for.

## **Active listening**

Practising active listening when a child is talking, paying attention and validating their thoughts and feelings.

## **Encouragement and praise**

Offering positive reinforcement and celebrating their achievements, big or small.

## **Respect for feelings**

Acknowledging and respecting their emotions without judgment or dismissal.

## **Predictable routines**

Establishing and maintaining daily routines that provide a sense of security and structure.

## **Open communication**

Creating an environment where the child feels safe to express themselves openly.

## **Empathy and understanding**

Demonstrating empathy and understanding towards the child's experiences and emotions.

## **Boundaries and limits**

When a child has clear and consistent rules and boundaries it helps them understand expectations and feel secure.

## **Quality time**

Spending dedicated, focused time together, participating in activities the child enjoys.

# 10 ways a child can feel emotionally unsafe

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## **Inconsistency**

Unpredictable behaviour or absence, leading to feelings of instability and insecurity.

## **Criticism and negativity**

Constant criticism, negative comments, or lack of encouragement.

## **Ignoring or dismissing feelings**

Not acknowledging or invalidating the child's emotions and experiences.

## **Harsh discipline**

Using aggressive or punitive disciplinary methods that create fear and anxiety in a child.

## **Emotional unavailability**

Being emotionally distant or unresponsive to the child's needs for connection.

## **Conflict and tension**

Exposing the child to frequent arguments or tense situations at home.

## **Lack of clear boundaries**

Either having no boundaries or inconsistent enforcement, leading to confusion and insecurity.

## **Neglect**

Failing to provide adequate attention, affection, or support on a day to day basis.

## **Unreliable communication**

Mixed messages, broken promises, or dishonesty that erodes trust. There may be times where we might have promised something but unable to follow through – it happens. However, when a child is constantly let down time and time again, it can negatively impact their wellbeing and trust for their parent.

## **Overprotection or control**

Restricting the child's independence excessively, leading to feelings of helplessness and anxiety.

## **Crisis numbers and helplines**

If you, or someone you know is currently experiencing threats to their safety, or emotional or physical abuse there is support available. Please refer to the numbers below. You can also access further support services by heading to: <https://thefatheringproject.org/about-us/support-services/>

### **Child Protection Helpline**

Phone (NSW): 13 21 11

### **Domestic Violence Line**

Free phone call: 1800 656 463

### **Kids Helpline**

Phone: 1800 551 800

### **Lifeline**

Phone: 13 11 14

### **Link2Home Homelessness**

Phone: 1800 152 152

### **NSW Sexual Violence Helpline**

Phone: 1800 424 017

### **Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline**

Phone: 1800 497 212