

# Ngā Kākano

A whānau guide to talking with your tamariki about sex and sexuality



# Kupu Whakataki

## Introduction

**E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangīātea.**

*A seed sown in Rangīātea will never be lost.*

This whakataukī expresses that we each have our own mana and tapu which is passed down to us through our whakapapa and is expressed throughout our lives in our connection to the environment and to others.

Just like a seed, our tamariki are unique and have their own inherent potential.

They are the faces of those that have gone before us, and will become the caretakers of our precious heritage for the next generation. Our role is to nourish and protect them as they grow.

This booklet contains some suggestions of ways to talk about sex and sexuality with your tamariki. We hope it provides an opportunity for you and your whānau to discuss what is important to you and what you want your tamaiti to know about who they are and their relationships with others.

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# Te Hōkakatanga

## Sexuality

Tāne searched everywhere to find the special element that would make human-kind. His first attempts to find it resulted in the trees, animals and plant-life. Finally, his mother, Papatūānuku, instructed him to go to Kurawaka. Here he found the special red clay between her thighs from which he made the first woman, Hineahuone.

Our creation stories, mōteatea, whakapapa and pūrākau are rich with examples of how our tīpuna expressed themselves and their sexuality. Concepts such as whānau, whenua and whare tangata clearly express our connections, roles and responsibilities to each other.

Sexuality is about more than just sex. It is about who we are as beings. It's our physical and spiritual make up, our feelings, our attitudes to our own bodies, our relationships, as well as our perceptions about male and female roles.

We have used the analogy of a tree to describe our aspirations for our tamariki and how we want them to grow. The leaves of our tree represent how we would like our tamariki to be as adults. The roots symbolise the values, knowledge and attitudes we instill in them and the trunk is how we pass those things on to our tamariki.

**Kaitiaki and whānau are the first educators. What you do and say matters.**

# Tō Tamaiti

## Your Child

When considering how to approach sexuality with your tamaiti one of the most important things we can do is to make sure they know and respect themselves.

Praising their achievements, however big or small, listening to their ideas and concerns, or perhaps sharing some of your own whānau stories with them, helps tamariki grow into confident, self-assured adults.

Some questions to think about or discuss with other whānau members may be:

- » Who is my tamaiti?
- » What is it that makes them unique?
- » What do they enjoy?
- » What are they curious about?
- » What can they do well?
- » What do they want to know about?
- » What do they know about our whānau?
- » What great stories can we share with them about our whānau?

Knowing your child and building a strong sense of identity and self-worth is an important first step to growing a great adult.

**Ko te piko  
o te māhuri,  
tērā te tipu  
o te rākau.**

How the  
sapling is  
nurtured  
determines  
how the tree  
will grow.

**Ko Hine  
Titama koe,  
matawai  
ana ngā  
whatu i te  
tirohanga  
atu.**

You are like the first child, Hine Titama. As I gaze upon you my eyes well up with tears of love.

## What to expect

All children grow and develop at different times - physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. The most important thing they need from you is your aroha and tautoko. Here are some behaviours you may experience with young children.

## **UNDER FOUR YEARS**

- Playing dress-up.
- Repeating words and naming body parts.
- Asking questions about what they see.
- Curiosity about what is under toys' clothes.
- Having same as well as different gender friends.
- Curiosity about others' genitals (same or different sex).
- Playing doctors and nurses.
- Self-touching, including genital area.
- Boys may have erections.
- Girls' vaginas may lubricate.
- Curiosity about gender differences.
- Prefer playing with certain toys.

### **What you can do:**

- Give them short, truthful, age-appropriate answers to questions.
- Allow them to enjoy playing harmless games like dress-ups or choosing their own toys.
- Become comfortable with, and use the formal or anatomical terms for body parts, as well as family names for them.
- Talk about parts of the body that are private or special.
- Talk about things that are to be done in private, such as exploring their bodies.
- Talk about when touch is not ok and what to do if someone touches them in a way they don't like (see pages 23-24).
- Teach them to use words for feelings such as happy, sad, angry or excited.

## **FIVE TO EIGHT YEARS**

- Begin to form close friendships.
- Showing a preference for certain toys and games.
- Asking questions.
- Toilet humour.
- Imitating sexual behaviour with the same or other sex.
- Curiosity about pregnancy, babies and childbirth.
- Self-touching.
- Body development and growth.
- Interest in music and popular activities or clothing.
- Playing dress-ups and acting out music videos or TV characters.
- Menstruation may begin around 8 years

### **What you can do:**

- Give your child lots of praise and look for what they are good at.
- Share your thoughts about love and relationships.
- Keep explanations short and simple still, but build on what they already know.
- Ask your child questions and find out what they already know.
- Start to talk about puberty and body changes.
- Understand that imitating sexual behaviour does not mean that young children are having sexual feelings.



## Puberty

Although perhaps the most obvious changes at puberty are physical there are many changes which we don't see. We need to provide guidance and support for our tamariki in many different ways during puberty. Here are some of the changes your tamaiti may experience.

### **TAHA HINENGARO INTELLECTUAL CHANGES**

- May feel self-conscious.
- May change their mind often.
- May find a subject that they become intensely interested in.
- May question family values and will be forming their own.
- May show interest and/or embarrassment about kissing or sexual touching on TV or movies.

**He kokonga  
whare e kitea,  
he kokonga  
ngākau e  
kore e kitea.**

The walls of a house can be seen, the walls of the heart cannot.

## **TAHA WHĀNAU**

### **SOCIAL CHANGES**

- Identifying more strongly with one gender.
- May want more time to themselves and more privacy.
- May have a strong desire to fit in.
- May have feelings for the same or other sex.
- May become more argumentative.
- May model themselves on outside influences such as family members, sports, pop stars or peers.
- May be easily embarrassed or become shy.
- May want to spend more time with friends or on social networking sites.
- May not want to be with family or siblings very much.

## **TAHA TINANA**

### **PHYSICAL CHANGES**

- Changes in height and weight.
- Appearance of body hair and breast growth (boys may experience short term growth in breasts also).
- Periods may start.
- Boys may have wet dreams.
- May be sweating more and producing more odour.
- May have pimples or acne.
- Hair becomes more oily.
- May masturbate.
- May be hungrier and eat more.
- Voice may change – becomes higher or lower (boys and girls).

## **TAHA WAIRUA**

### **SPIRITUAL CHANGES**

- May have mood swings and/or strong emotional outbursts.
- May become quieter and more thoughtful.
- May feel bullet-proof.
- May be feeling alone or misunderstood.
- May be feeling obvious and self-conscious.

### **What you can do:**

- Listen to what is important to them.
- Answer their questions.
- Tell them they are special and important.
- Keep clarifying what they know and build on it.
- Leave books or leaflets about growing up around the house.
- Ask questions about what they think or know.
- Discuss TV stories and internet or music videos.
- Tell them what your values are and what is important to you.

**He tamaiti  
akona ki  
te kāinga,  
tū ki te  
marae,  
tau ana.**

A child  
who is  
taught well  
at home  
will stand  
tall on the  
marae.

## **Whānau** Family

All whānau have a role to play in growing our tamariki, including influencing their attitudes and values. Although it may feel uncomfortable talking about sex with your tamaiti, with practice it will get easier. Mātua and kaitiaki can support each other by talking about what they want their tamariki to know about sex and sexuality and working together to make that happen.

### **Frequently asked questions**

You may want to discuss some of these FAQs with whānau or a close friend.

#### **WHERE DO I START?**

You don't have to worry about where to start when talking about sex and sexuality with your tamaiti – they will let you know. Become aware of opportunities to talk with your child and respond to their questions or actions. For example, you might notice some behaviour you can discuss with them such as mimicking music videos.

## **WHAT IS NORMAL?**

Puberty can start anywhere between eight and seventeen years old. You can expect to see a range of behaviours before your tamaiti becomes a teenager.

## **WHEN DO I START TALKING ABOUT 'IT'?**

Talking and answering questions about sex from an early age means that there may be no need for 'the big talk' scenario. It is important to 'seize the moment' and respond to your child's questions or actions regarding sexuality as they arise. The more naturally we can talk about things like names for body parts, development and relationships from an early age, the more comfortable your child will become with this part of life.

## **WHAT IF THEY DON'T WANT TO TALK TO ME?**

Rather than having a 'sit down' kōrero, try to strike up a conversation when you are doing an activity together. Otherwise, you can try leaving pamphlets or books around the house for them to read. Sometimes movies, video clips and TV programmes are good as a casual starter to your discussions.

## **HOW DO I TALK TO THEM ABOUT PUBERTY AND SEX?**

Keep it simple and positive. Try to answer questions as they are asked and check that they have understood what you said.

## **THEY SEEM TO KNOW IT ALL ALREADY!**

Television and other media may show them a lot of the mechanics, but that doesn't mean they understand the whole picture or necessarily have the skills to make positive choices for themselves. Young people are especially good at making it seem like we are not needed – hang in there, what you have to offer is important.

## **WHAT IF I'M ON MY OWN?**

The onset of puberty or issues to do with sexuality can seem very daunting to many single parents. Don't be shy to ask a friend or extended family member for advice, or to talk with your child. Find out as much information as you can about what is happening with your tamaiti and let them know that you are learning too.

## **WHAT IF I'M JUST NOT IN TO TALKING ABOUT THAT STUFF?**

If you can't say it in words, then model what you want your tamaiti to do with your actions – there may be someone else in the whānau who can help with the talking side of things.

## **WHO CAN HELP?**

Talking to whānau members or close friends about the changes our tamariki are going through can be really helpful. See page 25 for some support services and web-sites.

**E tipu e rea  
mō ngā rā  
o tō ao.**

Grow and  
mature  
according to  
the needs of  
your time.

## **Te Ao Hurihuri** Our Changing Society

Social networking, texting, television and internet access have a huge influence on our children's knowledge and perceptions of the world. If we are not so familiar with technology ourselves it can be easy to leave them to it and assume that 'playing quietly' on the computer or watching DVDs are relatively harmless activities when you are around. Our tamariki need to be taught how to make good judgements and choices for themselves.



## **MOVIES AND VIDEO GAMES**

A DVD with an M or R rating is considered suitable for an audience of the specified age or older. If you have cousins or other tamariki over, let them know what the rules in your house are about DVD watching. Ratings of G or even PG mean that it is suitable for any age.

## **TV VIEWING**

Decide the type of show you would like your child to watch and encourage them to watch it. Be just as clear about programmes you don't want them to watch, and reinforce your decisions by directing your tamariki to other activities during that time if necessary.

## **INTERNET**

Even though young children may be able to use the various technologies around, they do not always have the skills and awareness to understand some of the risks involved. You can ensure your tamariki are supported in their use of the technology by:

- Having the home computer in a family space such as the lounge or other shared living area.
- Checking out the sites your tamaiti wants to use so you know what is on them.
- Asking your tamaiti what they will be doing on the internet and setting a time limit.
- Encouraging the purposeful use of the internet for homework, learning games or light entertainment. Do not allow them to make random searches.

- Being aware of the popular video clips that young people like to watch and monitoring their suitability for younger children.
- Checking the age limits of social networking sites and knowing who is using them.
- Telling children that just like movies or TV everything on the internet is not necessarily real or the truth.
- Encouraging them to show you if they come across images or other material that they are concerned about.
- Talking with them about what they see and whether they think it reflects real life. Help them to develop critical thinking skills.

**Ruia taitea  
kia toitū  
ko taikākā  
anake.**

Cast away  
the sapwood  
so that  
only the  
heartwood  
remains.

## Peer pressure

Can you remember what it was like for you growing up? Did you want to be playing with certain friends? Did you feel left out if you didn't have a certain type of clothing or play a certain type of sport? This whakataukī reminds us to pay little attention to that which does not serve or support us and hold on to the things that matter.

## Here's some things that you can do to help your child cope with peer pressure:

- Talk to them about what really matters to them about problems involving peers (e.g. loss of friendships, what others will think).
- Ask them what type of friends they want to have and what makes a good friend.
- Help them to identify who they consider to be a good friend.
- Reinforce that good friends are there no matter what.
- Encourage them to be active and involved in a variety of activities and groups.
- Talk about the age that you think is appropriate to have a cell phone, to get piercings, tāmoko or tattoo, to dye hair, to have a boy or girlfriend etc ... and why.
- Give them genuine praise often.

Try not to solve your child's problems for them or rush in and protect them from every disappointment or unhappiness. Disappointment or sadness is not wrong or harmful to our tamariki – it is an opportunity for growth and builds resilience.

**Ko te mahi a te tamariki he wāwāhi tahā.**

This refers to the nature of children who will often push boundaries.

## Ngā Pātai Uaua

### Dealing with Tricky Questions

Our tamariki can come up with some tricky questions usually at tricky times!

A simple way to answer tricky questions is to follow these three simple steps: clarify, respond, check (CRC):

**CLARIFY** Be clear what your tamaiti is asking. You can clarify what their questions is by asking; “What do you mean?” or “Where did you hear about that?”

**RESPOND** Answer their question succinctly and honestly. Don’t be afraid to buy yourself time by saying, “That’s a good question, let me think on it and get back to you at bedtime.”

**CHECK** Finally, check that you have answered their question and that they understand what you mean. You can check by asking “Does that answer your question?” or “Did I explain that ok?”

## Examples of tricky questions

### **WHERE DO BABIES COME FROM?**

Babies grow in the whare tangata, also called the uterus.

### **HOW DID THEY GET IN THERE?**

Sperm from the man and an egg from the woman have to join together. If your child is older you could add that this usually happens when the man puts his penis inside the woman's vagina.

### **WHAT IS SEX?**

Sex is different for everybody, but it's usually something people do because it feels nice. Sometimes people will do it to make a baby.

### **HOW DO YOU DO IT? (If questions persist)**

How people have sex is up to each person and their partner. This is something they both need to agree on when the time is right for them both.

### **WHY DO GIRLS GET PERIODS/BOYS HAVE WET-DREAMS?**

It means that their bodies are changing and developing. They are getting ready for when they become adults and may want to have children.

## WHERE DO TAMPONS GO?

Inside the vagina.

## WHY DO PEOPLE HAVE SEX?

Because it feels nice, and it can make people feel very close to each other. Sometimes people have sex to make babies.

## WHAT IS A VIRGIN?

Some people use that word to describe a person who hasn't had sex.

## Awkward situations

Sometimes the best thing to do is to walk away and take yourself through the CRC process first before you speak to your child as in the example below:

Maire goes in to say good night to her tamaiti and finds him/her masturbating in bed.

**1. CLARIFY** (for yourself) what is happening.

“My child is masturbating, alone in their own bedroom.”

**2. RESPOND** to the situation.

You may need to respond to your own reactions first. How do you feel about your child having sexual feelings?

**3. CHECK** Your child could be left feeling as awkward and embarrassed as you may be. It is important that you acknowledge what you saw – e.g. “I notice you are touching yourself” and ask if they have any questions.



# Kia Noho Haumarū tō Tamaiti

## Keeping your Tamaiti Safe

Talking about sex and sexuality with our tamariki is important because it not only empowers and protects them but also those around them. It is everybody's responsibility to ensure that our tamariki are safe and exposed to healthy attitudes, actions and experiences.

One of the most important things you can do to help keep your tamaiti safe is to build their self-esteem and confidence. Confident children who are connected to adults around them are more likely to speak out about any abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

**He taonga  
te tamaiti.**  
Children are  
precious.

Here is a list of other things you can do to keep your tamaiti safe:

- Talk about body parts using the formal, anatomical names as well as family names. This will enable them to explain inappropriate touching to you if they need to.
- Teach your tamaiti about 'ok' and 'not ok' touch, and how to tell if something doesn't feel ok (e.g. a bad feeling in their tummy) and teach them to say when touch is not ok.
- Be aware of situations which may increase risk e.g. presence of alcohol.
- Set limits and rules for internet usage (see page16).
- Give your tamaiti genuine praise and acknowledge what they are good at.
- Be aware of what your tamariki are doing or playing, wherever you are.
- Talk about how you can keep tamariki safe in your whānau and what the risks may be.

# Mā wai hei Āwhina?

## Who Can Help?

**FAMILY PLANNING** – provides Open and Honest workshops for parents and whānau about talking to tamariki about sex and sexuality; clinical services; and information for young people. Visit [familyplanning.org.nz](http://familyplanning.org.nz)

Netsafe – specialises in helping kaitiaki to keep their tamariki safe when using the internet. They have a range of information and services including a helpline which you can call on 0508 **NETSAFE** (0508 638 723).



**Mai i te kākano ka tipu te purapura  
i ruia mai i Rangiātea.**

From a seed grows the small shoot  
that was planted in Rangiātea.

Ngā Kākano means 'The seeds' and refers to our tamariki as a storehouse of limitless potential. It also refers to the values and information that we sow as our tamariki grow. Talking about sex and sexuality is a process of sowing and nurturing seeds with our tamariki so that they may blossom and develop in to happy, healthy adults.