

The Good Talk: Strengthening Everyday Conversations

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Exploring what helps conversations feel safe, simple, and possible

We began working alongside a group of parents who had reached out for support. They were finding it hard to navigate conversations with their young people, particularly on topics they hadn't been equipped to talk about themselves. Together, we started exploring what might help, landing on the idea of co-designing a tool they could use to guide these conversations.

As we spent more time with the group, something started to shift. While the idea of a tool made sense, the version we developed didn't quite land. It asked more of them than what felt realistic in the context of their lives. What we noticed was that they didn't step away from the idea of support, but instead reshaped it. They simplified it, using their own words and approaches that felt manageable and relevant to them.

That moment felt important. It reminded us that usefulness isn't just about what is created, but whether it fits. Rather than continuing to refine the tool for this group, we started to step back and ask a broader question. What actually helps people to have conversations well?

As we've continued to explore this, alongside both whānau and those working closely with them, we've started to see patterns emerge. What people find difficult varies, but there is often something underneath. It's not always the topic itself, but how to navigate emotion, difference, and uncertainty in a way that keeps the conversation open.

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From this, The Good Talk has begun to take shape as an initiative we are actively exploring and testing. We have shifted into a research phase, developing a short survey and beginning working groups to understand what feels easy, what feels challenging, and where people feel confident or unsure. Early insights show a wide range of experiences, with no single "right way" to have these conversations.

This process is helping us test what The Good Talk could become. Rather than teaching people what to say, the focus is on strengthening how conversations happen in real life, through simple prompts, language, and approaches that feel accessible and usable.

1. I feel comfortable having everyday conversations with children in my care *
 1 2 3 4
2. I feel comfortable starting a difficult conversation with a child in my care *
 1 2 3 4
3. I feel calm and clear when difficult conversations occur with a child in my care. *
 1 2 3 4

What is also becoming clearer is the role this plays in prevention. While there is a growing push to normalise conversations about sexual and family harm, conversation itself cannot be assumed to be safe or effective. Without the confidence or skills to hold them well, these conversations can shut down, escalate, or be avoided altogether.

This work points to something more foundational. By strengthening everyday conversations, we begin to build the conditions where more complex and sensitive topics can be held with care. Over time, this supports stronger connection, greater trust, and a more solid foundation for prevention within whānau and communities.



ToC If we can equip community storytellers and influencers to understand how their messages contribute to prevention, they can intentionally shape narratives that strengthen protective factors and model healthy norms, amplifying local voices as drivers of cultural and systems change.