



**EXPECT OTHERS IN YOUR WHĀNAU  
TO TREAT YOUR CHILD WITH RESPECT.**

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If you make it clear you expect other people in your whānau to treat your child (or your niece or nephew or nibling or grandchild or cousin etc) with respect and love, this will help your child feel safer and help everyone understand that rainbow rangatahi deserve respect as part of the whānau. It's important that rainbow rangatahi feel safe amongst their whānau. You can be a role model for other family members about how to be respectful and caring towards your child, for example, showing them how to use the young person's correct name and pronouns. When a young person knows that they have people standing up for them, they are more likely to feel valued and supported. This includes not letting other people get away with discriminatory language or cruel jokes, and also showing appreciation when other people do or say things that support rainbow rangatahi.

Be There is a new national initiative by the Youth Sector Rainbow Collective, a collaborative effort between the organisations across Aotearoa that serve our rainbow (LGBTQIA+), gender and sex diverse rangatahi.

Find more information, support, and resources at [be-there.nz](http://be-there.nz)





**SHOW UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.**

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Many rainbow rangatahi fear being pushed away or isolated by members of their whānau for who they are. This can cause many to hide their authentic selves for fear of not being accepted to the detriment of their wellbeing. By showing unconditional love to your child, you can help keep them safe and give them space to grow into healthy adults. It's normal and natural to want the best for your child, and you might have worries about the difficulties they'll face having diverse gender or sexualities. However, it's important to recognise how your own fears and beliefs can impact them. For rangatahi to be able to express themselves healthily and fully, they need to feel confident your love and support isn't going to disappear overnight. Clear and careful communication of your love and support of them and their journey is key to this.

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**USE VALIDATING LANGUAGE.**

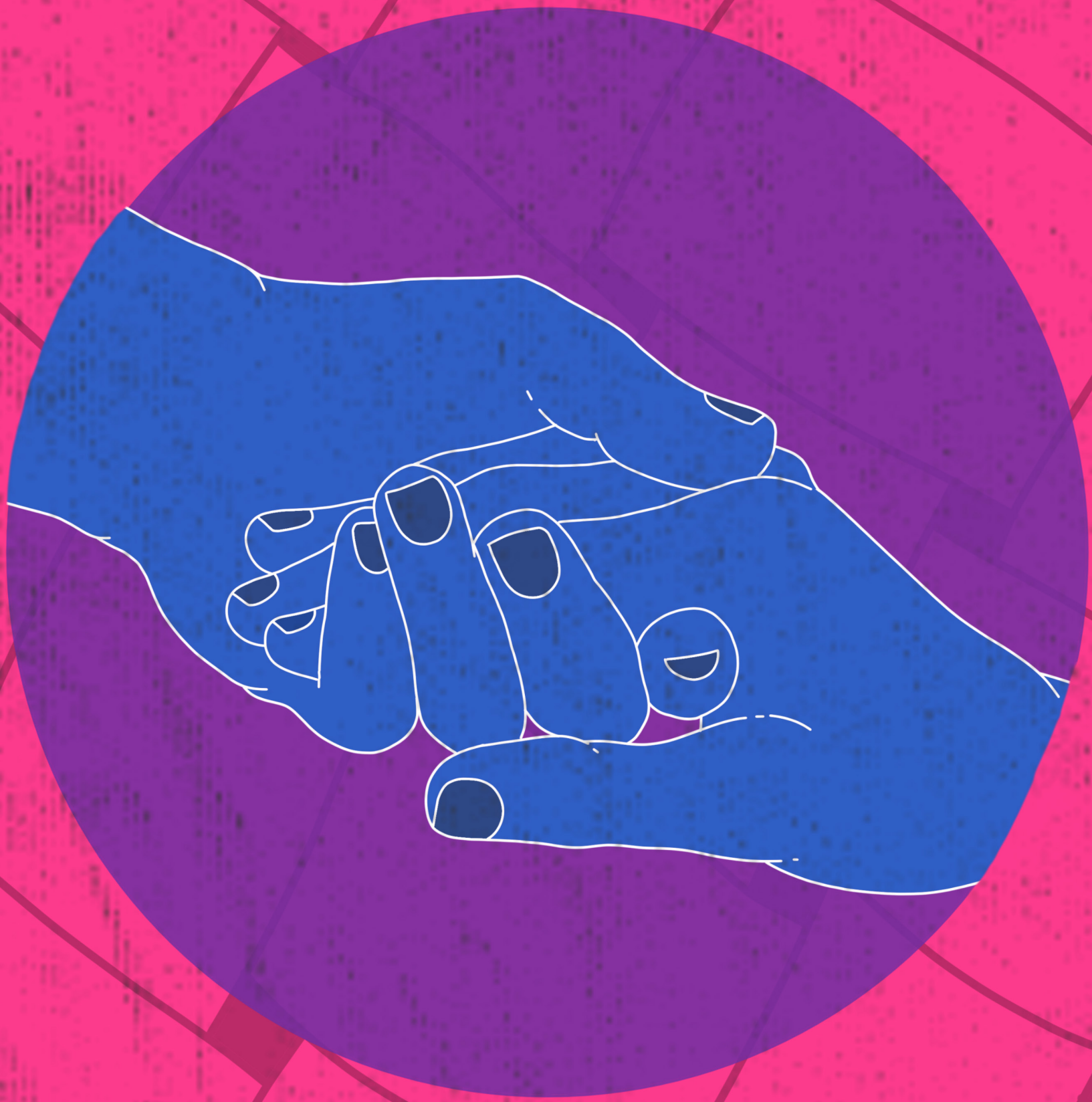
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The language that parents, caregivers and whānau use when speaking to children about gender, bodies and sexuality can have a big impact on how children grow up to think about rainbow identities. It will also indicate to them how open you are to letting them question and explore these things for themselves. This is why it's important to use language that doesn't exclude or 'other' the identities and experiences of the rainbow community. Letting children know that you are open to having conversations about these topics and that you will listen to what they tell you about themselves will be hugely helpful to their sense of safety and wellbeing. Additionally, thinking about your own relationship to your gender and the language that you use when talking about it will help to normalise your child's exploration of this part of themselves.

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**YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

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A sense of community can help empower behaviour change. This is also essential for helping our rainbow rangatahi feel safe and good about themselves. This message applies both to people who are supporting rangatahi, as well as the rainbow rangatahi themselves. Positive role models and shared experiences help to fight isolation and give people a sense of belonging.

For rainbow rangatahi, existing in a world where they feel alone or different can be overwhelmingly isolating and cause negative mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health impacts, and increase the chances of risk taking behaviors. By supporting them to connect with community, we help to develop positive behaviours, lower the risk of harm and encourage them to thrive in a supportive environment.

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**YOU DON'T NEED TO GET IT,  
JUST BE THERE.**

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When you've grown up in a world that has really limited visibility and awareness of the diversity of gender, sexuality and variations of sex characteristics, it's understandable that you might be overwhelmed by how much there is to learn. Rest assured, your child doesn't need you to understand all the acronyms and different identities, they just need you to be there and walk alongside them on their journey. You might not fully understand what they're going through, and that's okay, you don't need to. You just need to make sure that your child knows that you are there for them, and you aren't going anywhere.

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# HELP YOUR CHILD ACCESS COMMUNITY.

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Meeting another person like yourself can be a hugely validating and empowering experience for rainbow young people. Many rainbow youth will draw strength from having a community of like minded peers, and it can help them to develop resilience. Your child might be understandably very nervous about initiating this, and also have no idea where to start. Helping them to access community is a small thing you can do as a parent which could have a big impact on your child's wellbeing and happiness.

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