

BEHAVIOUR CHANGES: A guide for caregivers

While children and young people often display observable behaviour and emotional changes when something is amiss, sometimes they don't, here are some indicators or signs they may be exposed to harmful content online or when screen use becomes problematic.



Changes in behaviour, including:

- increasingly distant, withdrawn or secretive
- decreased interest in school and learning
- irritable, frustrated, mood swings or experiencing angry outbursts
- noticeable drop in self-esteem and more tired than usual
- unexpected weight gain or loss
- evidence of substance abuse
- exhibiting signs of self-harm and suicide ideation
- engagement in high risk, sexualised behaviour
- struggling to sleep
- missing meals or responsibilities
- spending all their free time on one app/game

Changes in conversation topics, questions asked and vocabulary used, including:

- adult themed topics for example sexual content, new names for body parts
- age-inappropriate vocabulary especially around sex, body parts and relationships
- expressing self-loathing and talking about self-harm
- talking about people you don't know or haven't heard about before



Increased device use, including:

- having their device with them constantly
- overreacting when asked to put their device away
- being secretive about online engagement

Where to go for help ...

If you're in danger or a crime is being committed, call 111 immediately or 105 for non emergency.

Netsafe help New Zealanders keep safe by providing free support and advice for young people, parents and organisations.

Netsafe Helpline

Email help@netsafe.org.nz
Phone 0508 638 723
Text 'Netsafe' to 4282
[netsafe.org.nz](https://www.netsafe.org.nz)

Contact centre available from 8am – 8pm weekdays and 9am – 5pm weekends and public holidays.

Youthline is a “with youth, for youth” organisation that supports young people throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

Youthline

Free 24/7 text 234
Free 24/7 call 0800 37 66 33
DM Instagram @youthlinenz
WhatsApp: 09 886 5696
Chat via Webchat 10am – 10pm
[youthline.co.nz](https://www.youthline.co.nz)

