

Straying from the Path

Recognising and Reacting to Harmful Sexual Behaviour in our Children and Youth

with Dr Elizabeth Ross



Children and young people living in our increasingly digital world are bombarded with messages, images and videos from a very young age. Some of these are harmless, but often they contain adult content or themes that our youth are not able to process. Coupled with normative sexual development and sadly, sometimes, trauma, this can at times lead them to display Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB). Additionally, children with ASD and/or ADHD can find it challenging to manage impulsivity, social cues and sensory needs, making them even more susceptible to HSB. Recognising the difference between normative sexual development, concerning behaviour and harmful sexual behaviour can be difficult, leading to either unnecessary stigma and shaming or genuine issues escalating.

As helping professionals, and/or educators, it is important that we learn to recognise Harmful Sexual Behaviour, understand why it happens and equip ourselves to help children and teens develop the skills they need to navigate their normative sexual development safely.

This transformative and interactive presentation aims to increase confidence in recognising and managing HSB. Dr Elizabeth Ross will address what HSB is, how to recognise it, and present a range of practical, evidence-based interventions and tools to help professionals manage HSB calmly, keep others safe, and prevent it from occurring. Participants will work through real-world case studies to explore how key concepts and strategies can be applied in practice, supporting confident and effective implementation in day-to-day work. The training will also include valuable resources, websites and appropriate services to refer children and youth to who may need further support.

Some of the key content areas Dr Ross will discuss include:

- Definitions of Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)
- Differentiating HSB from developmentally normative sexual behaviour
- The problem with pornography- its role, and effect on the brain, including looking at messaging
- Learning why children and young people develop HSB, including how neurodivergence can be a pathway
- Safety Plans - practical strategies for professionals working in the field
- Trauma informed care and Te Ao Maori approaches
- How to react to HSB in a calm, non-shaming manner
- A suite of practical evidence-based tools and techniques to promote healthy body boundaries and behaviours for children and young people
- Exploring useful resources and possible referral pathways



Elizabeth Ross, Ph.D., DipClinPsy, is a Registered Clinical Psychologist from Havelock North. She has 15 years' experience in the field and worked with children, young people and adults in a wide variety of contexts. This has included Department of Corrections, Child & Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS), ACC Sensitive Claims and most recently WellStop as their Child and Adolescent Consultant, overseeing their clinicians who work with Tamariki and Rangatahi who engage in Harmful Sexual Behaviour. Elizabeth has presented on various topics to colleagues, schools and at National and International conferences. She is a passionate speaker who mixes humour and interactive approaches to keep audiences engaged.

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Seminar Details:

- 📍 AUCKLAND: Monday 16 March 2026, Rydges Hotel, 59 Federal Street, Auckland Central
- 🕒 9:00am - 3:00pm
- 💰 \$325 (inc GST). Price includes full catering, presentation notes, certificate and live bookstore
- 📞 Contact the Compass Seminars team on 06 7591647 or office@compass.ac.nz

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