

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RISK TAKING

1. Positive risks are risks that take courage

Positive risk-taking is about learning new things and exploring new places. The risk is positive because, while it still has a feeling of uncertainty or fear, you develop a new skill or there's a possibility of a positive outcome. Good examples could be something as simple as being the one to answer the question instead of sitting back. Or it could be learning to rock climb, learning the taiaha, taking a role in a play, standing for the first time to do your mihi or perhaps sing a solo at church.



Positive risks take courage and commitment. They are worth taking. There is risk because you have to leave the safety of your comfort zone. In our comfort zone, there is a sense of familiarity, security and certainty.

When we step outside of our comfort zone, we're taking a risk, and opening ourselves up to the possibility of stress and anxiety; we're not quite sure what will happen and how we'll react. These are good risks, however, as these are the times when we grow and discover ourselves the most.

2. Negative Risk Taking

Negative risk taking is something different. This is about seeking thrills and testing your limits, sometimes in dangerous ways. Thrill seekers talk about the highs and the rush that comes from dangerous activities and how easily it is to become addicted to the short-lived highs. The rush of adrenaline helped them to forget their problems for a short time. These sorts of risks are nearly always not worth taking.

Examples include:

- Driving dangerously
- abusing alcohol and drugs
- having unprotected sex
- diving off cliffs into the ocean
- high-speed skating down motorways

Often this behaviour is linked to wanting to be liked and admired by peers. Too often people are seriously hurt. There are many better and safer ways to win and influence friends.



3. Surviving Peer Pressure

Watch this video for some ideas on how to manage peer pressure:



1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZA09vyY76g8>

4. Identifying the difference between positive and negative risk taking

The following exercise is a list of actions for you to practice identifying which are positive and which are negative risk-taking activities. Put a tick in the column you think is correct. If you are not sure which is the right answer, put a tick in the 'not sure' column. Chat to your teacher / youth worker / whānau / friends about this exercise and see if they agree with your answers.

Getting clear about risks

ACTIONS	POSITIVE RISK	NEGATIVE RISK	NOT SURE
You go do some supervised rock climbing.			
You get into a car with a driver who has been drinking.			
You don't speak up when the person driving the car starts racing another car along the motorway because you don't want to seem like a scaredy-cat or buzzkill.			
You stand to do your pepeha.			
You have sex without protection.			
You help your friend cheat on his exam.			
You are asked to take a leadership role in a community project.			
You find a \$50 note on the floor in McDonalds and pocket it.			
You skateboard on the road.			
You enter a singing competition.			
You go for a surf alone when the sea is rough.			
You have been asked to go mountain biking. You have never done this before.			
Your friend shoplifts some cigarettes and shares them with you.			
You take a shortcut through the park after dark alone.			
You're so drunk you can't stand up anymore but you keep drinking.			
You go for a late-night walk on the beach with someone you've only just met at a party.			
You talk to your boss about getting a raise. You are getting paid much less than everyone else but are doing the same work.			
You ask someone out on a blind date.			
You have been asked out on a blind date.			
You want to break up with your boy/girlfriend. You know they will be hurt and angry. You ring to tell them.			