How to look after your mental wellbeing on social media

Social media can be a great way to keep in touch with friends and it's important to make sure your experience is fun and positive.

These tips and resources have been created for young people. Use them to look after your mental wellbeing online when you're playing games, chatting to others or posting stories.

1. Choose how and when you chat

Group chats are a good way to talk with close friends, but being available 24/7 can be stressful.

• Take a break from the conversation by <u>muting</u> notifications on WhatsApp or choosing one of the <u>privacy settings</u> on Snapchat.

• Change your <u>status</u> and location on WhatsApp to private, so your friends don't always know what you're doing and expect you to chat.

2. Think about the impact your story might have

Sharing online is a great way to express yourself but posting personal or confronting content can hurt you and others.

• Think about who will see your story and whether they will respect your post – especially if it contains personal information, like how you are feeling. You can change your settings to <u>close friends only</u> on Instagram for example, to control who sees the information.

• When you live stream and share content like an <u>Instagram Reel</u>, work out what you might do if people respond in a negative way. Consider what could happen if the content is reposted.

• If you think your content might upset or hurt other people, warn them and suggest they scroll past it.

• If you are worried your post might hurt others, show it to a trusted person before you share it and see what they think.

3. Choose what appears in your feed

Scrolling through YouTube or Tik Tok can be a great way to relieve stress and even learn new skills, but some material could make you feel uncomfortable.
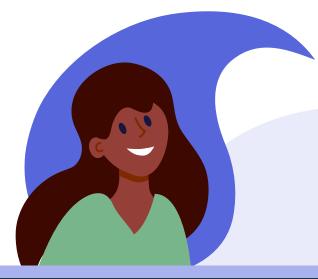
• Be aware of the type of content that might upset you. For example, most apps and social media sites ban content glorifying eating disorders, self-harm and suicide.

• Limit the amount of distressing content that you see.
You can **hide content** on Snapchat 👎 or flag videos as **not interested** on Tik Tok 💔 to stop stories appearing in your feed.

• Use **The eSafety Guide** to help you block or report users. You can use the **mute feature** on Instagram or select **unfollow** on Tik Tok to stop users you don't like coming up in your feed.

4. Keep it positive

Use the resources on social networks to help you and others maintain a healthy state of mind.

• Look out for safety and wellbeing tips. **Tik Tok tips** offers technical and mental health advice for staying safe and Snapchat provides wellbeing support.

• Check how much time you spend looking at negative news or 'doomscrolling'. Try swapping your news time for more positive content instead.

• Check-in with your friends and send a direct message to them if they seem upset. Follow the advice on the **R U OK? website** to start the chat.

• Join moderated online groups like **ReachOut Forums** to talk with others if you need support.

5. Stay safe while gaming

Online gaming can be a healthy way to connect with friends. It can also provide stress relief, as long as it's enjoyable and positive.

• Use an app to record the number of hours you spend playing online games. Is it too much? Talk to a trusted adult about how gaming affects you.

• Avoid gaming communities that use online hate or negative talk.

• Check the advice provided by eSafety if you're being bullied, harassed or threatened during a game. Find out how to screenshot the evidence, report and block other gamers who behave badly.

6. Take a break

Spending lots of time online might affect your mood or make you feel like you're missing out on other things.

• Use your Apple or Android device to measure the amount of time you spend online or spend using certain apps.

• Set up your device to send you an alert after a chosen amount of time, so you know how long you have been online. For example use the wellbeing settings on Tik Tok or view how much time you've spent on Instagram.

Visit eSafety's young people pages for tips about how to have positive experiences online.

Use The eSafety Guide to get advice about safety features on the latest apps, games and social media sites.

Check out The Butterfly Foundation's #TheWholeMe toolkit for young people, about positive body image and authentic sharing on Instagram. Find other helpful tips on Tik Tok's Youth Portal, Snapchat's Tips for staying safe and Instagram's Wellbeing Guide.

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