



Safe Online Standards

IMPROVING DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH

GUIDE: When Something Online Doesn't Feel Right

A quick guide for teens - with tips for parents & caregivers

For Teens

If something online feels wrong

You don't have to figure everything out in the moment. If something feels off, intense, or upsetting, that's a real signal and it's okay to pause and take care of yourself.

1. Pause and step away

If something feels scary, overwhelming, or upsetting, stop scrolling. Close the app, put your phone down, or take a short break. Creating space can help your body and mind calm down.

2. Notice what you're feeling

You might feel anxious, angry, sad, confused, embarrassed, or numb. All these reactions are normal. Noticing how you feel can help you decide what you need next.

3. You don't have to respond right away

You don't owe anyone an immediate reply. It's okay to wait, ignore, or walk away while you decide what to do. Taking time can help you feel more in control.

Protect Yourself on the Platform

Block

Stop someone from contacting you if they make you uncomfortable or unsafe.

Mute

Hide posts or accounts that make you feel stressed or upset.

Report

If something is harmful or against the rules, you can report it. Reporting isn't about getting someone in trouble - it helps platforms understand what's happening and work to keep people safer.

Take Care of Yourself

Seeing upsetting content can stick with you. You might feel on edge, distracted, or keep thinking about it. That's a normal stress response.

Things that can help:

- Slow, deep breaths
- Moving your body or stretching
- Listening to music
- Stepping outside or changing rooms

It's okay to take a break from your phone. Giving your mind a rest is part of taking care of yourself.



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Helping a Friend

- Listen - you don't have to fix everything
- Be honest - don't promise to keep something dangerous a secret
- Get help - if someone is in danger or talking about hurting themselves, tell a trusted adult right away

Caring about a friend sometimes means bringing in more support.

For Parents & Caregivers

Start with listening

Thank them for telling you. Stay calm. Try not to blame or take away devices right away. Feeling heard makes it more likely they'll come to you again.

Focus on safety, not shame

Let them know they didn't do anything wrong and that asking for help is a strong choice.

Use safety tools together

Walk through blocking, reporting, and privacy settings so they learn how to protect themselves and feel more confident using these tools.

Know when to get extra help

If a young person seems overwhelmed, hopeless, threatened, or talks about self-harm, involve a counselor, healthcare provider, school staff member, or another trusted professional.

You're not alone

Whether you're a teen or a caregiver, support is available. If something online feels unsafe or overwhelming, it's okay to reach out. Getting help is part of staying safer online and offline.