

Social “Safer Usage” Handout

Practical tools for healthier, more confident online use

When Social Media Doesn't Feel Good Anymore

Social media apps are designed to grab and hold your attention. Features like feeds, likes, and alerts are built to keep you scrolling.

That doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong; it's simply how many apps are built. Knowing this can make it easier to pause, take breaks, and make choices that better support your mood and well-being.

For Teens

Quick Check: How Is This App Making Me Feel?

Before or after using an app, ask yourself:

- How do I feel right now? Calm Stressed Bored Drained Connected
- Did I open this app on purpose or just out of habit?
- Did anything I saw make me feel anxious, insecure, or like I needed to compare myself to others?
- Do I want to keep scrolling, or would a break feel better?

There are no right or wrong answers here. This isn't a test; it's just about noticing what's happening.

Over time, noticing these patterns can help you see which apps or habits support you, and which ones make things harder.

Small Things That Can Help

You don't have to change everything at once. Often, small adjustments can make a real difference.

You might try:

- Muting or unfollowing accounts that leave you feeling worse
- Turning off a few non-essential notifications
- Switching to apps that feel calmer or more fun
- Taking a short break to reset your mood or energy

Even one small change can be enough to improve how things feel.

For Parents & Caregivers

Start with Curiosity, Not Control

Opening with curiosity can help young people feel safer sharing. Instead of jumping to solutions, you might ask:

“What kinds of things have been showing up in your feed lately?”

Listen Without Fixing Right Away

Staying calm and listening first helps teens feel heard.

You don't need to solve everything in one conversation for it to matter. Sometimes simply listening, showing interest, and staying present makes it easier for them to share more overtime.

Work together

If something feels stressful or upsetting, explore options together. This might include:

- Adjusting privacy or notification settings
- Muting or blocking certain accounts
- Taking short breaks from specific apps
- Agreeing on small boundaries, like phone-free meals or planned offline time

Support works best when it feels like teamwork, not monitoring.

Safer Usage Checklist

I know how to block, mute, and report I've turned off some notifications I follow accounts that make me feel good I've muted or unfollowed ones that make me feel worse I take breaks when scrolling starts to feel bad I talk to someone I trust if something online feels upsetting

You don't have to do all of these. One or two can make a difference.

Key message

Digital platforms are designed to encourage engagement. Understanding these design choices helps teens and families use technology more thoughtfully, with better balance and less pressure.