

Mental Health, Suicide, Self-Injury & Social Media

Understanding Mental Health

Mental health refers to how people think, feel, handle stress, and connect with others. Everyone has mental health, and it changes over time and life events. When mental health is supported, people are better able to cope with challenges and recover from stress. When it is strained, people may feel overwhelmed, isolated, anxious, or unsure where to turn.

Understanding Suicide and Self-Injury

Suicide is a serious public health concern and is often connected to overwhelming emotional distress. Some individuals experience this distress through self-injury, which is a coping behavior and not always linked to suicidal intent. Feelings of hopelessness, isolation, or being trapped can increase risk, particularly when support feels out of reach. Strong support systems, early access to care and treatment can help prevent suicide.

Why social media is Part of the Conversation

Social media is a part of everyday life, especially for young people. It can offer connection, creativity, and support. At the same time, for some it can also create pressure, comparison, and exposure to content that can feel overwhelming or harmful. The way platforms are designed include features that encourage engagement, shape what people see, and can influence how individuals feel and interact online.

What is SOS?

Safe Online Standards (SOS) is an independent, expert developed and user informed initiative that assesses how digital platforms approach safety, mental health, well-being and suicide and self-harm across five areas: policy, functionality, governance and transparency, content, and digital literacy and well-being. The goal of SOS is to provide parents and youth with information to make informed decisions on the safety of digital platforms, as well as make digital spaces safer and more responsible, without expecting people to step away from technology altogether.

Key Concerns

Concerns related to social media and mental health include increased stress or anxiety, exposure to distressing content, and difficulty recognizing when online experiences begin to affect well-being. These experiences do not impact everyone in the same way, but they are important to acknowledge and address, especially for teens and young adults.

What Helps

Supporting mental health in a digital world is a shared effort. Platforms can consider safety and well-being in how they design and operate. Families, schools, and communities can encourage awareness and open conversation, rather than relying only on rules. Individuals can learn to notice how online experiences affect them and their friends, adjust when needed, and reach out for help when something doesn't feel right. Awareness, connection, and early support matter.