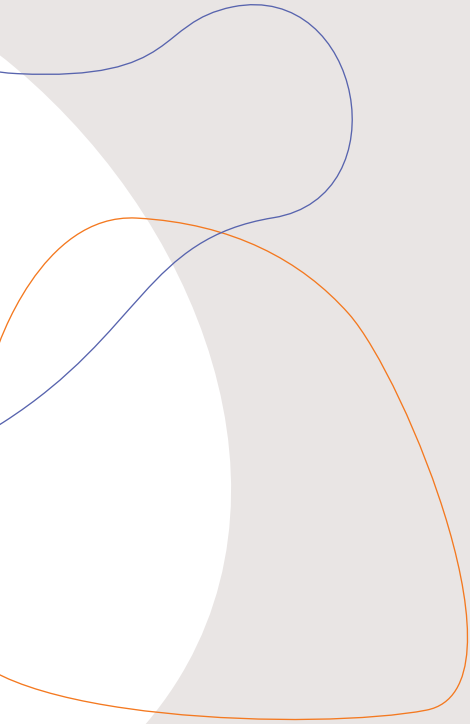


#chatsafe: A young person's guide to communicating safely online about self-harm and suicide

Edition two





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The current version of this resource has been adapted in partnership with The Mental Health Commission of Canada for parents and carers living in Canada. We would like to thank everyone who provided their input through the consultation process.

What is #chatsafe?

#chatsafe is a suicide prevention program that aims to empower and equip young people to communicate safely online about self-harm and suicide. To achieve this aim, in 2018, we developed the world's first evidence-informed guidelines specifically for young people on communicating safely online about suicide [1]. Following publication, the guidelines were supported by a national social media campaign that was co-designed with young people from across Australia [2]. The guidelines have been translated and are available in up to 25 different regions [3] and are also available via the safety centers on both Facebook and Instagram. They are also supported by a suite of complementary resources for parents, educators, and bereaved communities.

Although the original guidelines and the associated social media content was shown to be useful and effective [4, 5], an obvious gap was the absence of any guidance regarding communication about self-harm (defined here as any behavioral act of intentional self-injury or self-poisoning, irrespective of motive or suicidal intent [6]). To address this, and to keep up with the ever-changing world of social media, this new edition of the guidelines has been updated to include specific guidance regarding self-harm and to reflect the ways in which young people use social media now.

As previously, we used the Delphi method to develop the guidelines [1]. This involves a panel of young people and a panel of suicide prevention experts reaching agreement on the items included in this document. Panel members are listed on page 6.

Who is this guide for?

These guidelines are designed to support safe peer to peer online communication about self-harm and suicide among young people aged between 12 and 25 years.

This can include fictional or non-fictional content; pre-made or livestreamed content; and explicit or implied content depicting thoughts, feelings, or acts of self-harm or suicide [7].

Although the guidelines are designed for young people, we hope that they will be useful for anyone creating or consuming online content related to self-harm or suicide.

Specific resources have also been developed for parents and carers, educators, and communities impacted by suicide. You can access these here: orygen.org.au/chatsafe

How to use these guidelines

The guidelines have been broken down into eight sections and tips apply across all sections.

Items that reached consensus for inclusion in the Delphi study are accompanied by an asterisk symbol (*).

Guidelines, not rules

The tips in these guidelines are things that you could do to communicate safely online. They are not rigid rules. We appreciate that each online interaction is unique, there is no such thing as a perfect conversation, and it is important to consider context when making decisions on what to include in your own content, and if/how to respond to someone.

If you are under 18 years old

- * If you are under 18 years old, do not keep communications about self-harm or suicide secret (even if asked to) and tell one or more trusted adults who can provide you with support or take over. Trusted adults could include parents, siblings, other family members, teachers, and clinicians.

1

General tips

The information in this section applies to all online content and communication, and to both creators and consumers of content.

A content creator is the author of an original online post or comment. A content consumer is someone who views or interacts with online content created by others. Interactions can include reacting, commenting, and sharing. Most people are both creators and consumers.



Reminders on how to stay safe online

Pause before you post

Online communications can be persistent, visible, spreadable, and searchable; therefore, before communicating online, it is important to pause and think about what you are posting and why, and what the possible impact of your communications may be. Your actions online can affect you and others in both helpful and harmful ways.

Once on the internet, always on the internet

Remember that anything you do online, such as posting, sharing, commenting, liking, and saving, may be found again. Even deleted content may still exist on the internet and can be found again.

Anyone and everyone could possibly see your content

Your online content may be viewed by people you did not intend to see it. Other people may also share, download, screenshot, screen record, or alter your content. This can have long-lasting effects, and may negatively impact you, your relationships, and your career.

Algorithms

What shows up on your feed, and the order in which it appears, can be influenced by what posts and accounts you interact with the most. This means that you will get more of what and who you interact with.



Looking after yourself

Remember that you cannot control other people, and sometimes you may not get the type of responses that you want. This may be a disappointing and even upsetting.

Although online communication about self-harm and suicide can be helpful, it can also be potentially harmful.

- * It is important to have a plan in place, in case you don't feel good after creating your own content or viewing or responding to someone else's.

Here are some general things you could do to look after yourself:

- **Notice the signs that indicate your online activity is negatively impacting you.** These can look different for each person, but common signs include comparing yourself unfavorably with others online, experiencing online abuse, spending too much time online at the expense of doing other things, anxiety, lower mood, feeling overwhelmed by what other people are posting, and feeling stuck in conversations.
- **Reduce your time online.** This can involve taking a break and physically stepping away for a while, limiting time spent online, turning off or muting notifications, logging out of apps, or temporarily turning off devices.
- **Limit exposure to unhelpful or harmful content.** You can unfollow, unfriend, mute, hide, block, or delete people/content. Follow accounts that make you feel good about yourself. These actions will also inform the algorithms that you do not want to see certain types of content.
- **Take some time to engage in self-care activities.** This could include getting enough sleep, eating nutritious meals, moving your body, spending time in nature, spending time with friends, and doing activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others.** It might be helpful to talk or spend some time with your friends and family, online or offline.
- **Think about professional help.** This can include a doctor or psychologist.

How to get help for yourself and others

Get support for yourself

- * It may be helpful to contact a trusted person and get support for yourself.
- * You can also consider seeking advice and support from a helpline or professional.

Emergency services (988)

- * If your life or someone else's life is in immediate danger, or you need urgent assistance, call emergency services on 911 or go in person to your local emergency department.
- * If you are calling to get help for someone else who is unable or unwilling to call themselves, get the person's permission first if you can. If that is not possible, then let them know that you have called emergency services.

National helplines

- * If you are posting about self-harm or suicide or responding to someone who is engaging in self-harm or is suicidal, include links to national helplines. This information could be included in the content itself and/or in the caption, description box, or comment section. You can also include the helpline's tag, hashtag, or handle.

We have included the details of a few free support services below. This is not an exhaustive list, but it is a starting point. You can also try: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services/mental-health-get-help.html>

Report to platforms

Most social media companies have safety policies and procedures, and their platforms have reporting features as well as help centers.

- * If you come across unsafe content, report it to the platform.



Kids Help Phone	Phone, text and online counselling	Young people of any age	24/7 (online chat from 7:00 p.m. to midnight ET)	https://kidshelpphone.ca/	Call: 1-800-668-6868 Text CONNECT to 686868
Youthspace.ca	Online chat	Ages 30 and younger	6:00 p.m. to midnight, every day	https://youthspace.ca/	Text: 778 783 0177
Suicide Crisis Helpline	Phone counselling	All ages	24/7		Call or text: 988
Hope for Wellness Helpline	Phone and online chat for all Indigenous people across Canada	All ages	24/7	https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/	Call: 1-855-242-3310

Myths and facts about self-harm and suicide

Self-harm and suicide are highly stigmatized. Many people are afraid to talk about these topics because they are afraid to say the wrong thing, or believe that talking about it will increase risk. However, this is not the case, and talking about these topics safely can in fact reduce risk for people.

The table below separates fact from fiction by debunking some common myths associated with suicide with research facts. Please note that this not an exhaustive list.



Myth...	Fact...
Self-harm is an attempt at suicide or means that the person is suicidal.	Self-harm is often a coping mechanism and the reasons people engage in it varies. It is not necessarily a suicide attempt, nor does it mean the person is thinking about suicide; however, there is an association between self-harm and suicide. People who self-harm are at higher risk of future suicide. A person can also accidentally harm themselves more severely than intended and put their life at risk.
Self-harm is attention seeking.	Most people who engage in self-harm are not trying to get attention. In fact, many people go to great lengths to hide their self-harm behavior.
Self-harm is a trend or only certain types of people self-harm.	Anyone can think about or engage in self-harm behavior. It is not a trend or fashion, nor is it associated with certain youth subcultures.
People who self-harm have a mental disorder.	Self-harm is a behavior, it is not a disorder. However, many people who self-harm may be experiencing mental health problems.
It is not a good idea to ask someone if they are feeling suicidal.	Using the word suicide and asking a person directly about suicidal thoughts or attempts does not increase feelings of distress or risk of harm.

Table continued on next page

Myth...	Fact...
Talking about suicide will put the idea in someone's head or encourage them to attempt suicide.	Talking about suicide safely does not put ideas into someone's head and increase the likelihood of suicidal thoughts or acts and not talking about it does not make it go away. An opportunity to talk about these thoughts, feelings, or actions may be beneficial and reduce the risk of harm.
It's fine to say whatever we want to about suicide.	<p>Certain language or content about suicide can be unhelpful, distressing, and/or stigmatizing. Using unsafe language, or sharing content that depicts a suicide attempt, location, or method can increase the risk of harm to vulnerable people who may see it.</p> <p>It is important to use safe language when talking about suicide online, and to ensure that unsafe content is reported or removed.</p>
Only certain people will feel suicidal in their lifetime, for example, people experiencing mental ill-health.	While lots of factors can make a person vulnerable to suicidal thoughts or acts, suicide can affect anyone.
It's easy to tell if someone is feeling suicidal online.	It can be hard to tell if someone is suicidal online. Many people will not directly tell anyone that they are having thoughts of suicide, and warning signs may be overlooked as they lack context or visual cues that would be present in-person.
People who talk about having suicidal thoughts or plans online are just looking for attention and will never attempt or die by suicide.	Feelings of severe distress or hopelessness are common in people who experience suicidal thoughts and may lead them to think that suicide is their only option. It is important to take all warning signs or conversations about suicide seriously, and to use non-judgmental language when communicating online.
Suicide is the result of a single cause or event.	Suicide is a complex issue and cannot be explained by any single cause or event. Most often, several risk factors contribute to a person's vulnerability to suicide. These risk factors will impact each person differently, and what constitutes a risk factor for one person may not be the same for someone else.
People who experience suicidal thoughts or attempts are determined to die.	Sometimes people who experience suicidal thoughts or make a suicide attempt do not necessarily want to die. Rather, they may believe that they have no ways to cope or no other options. Getting support at the right time can reduce this distress and prevent suicide.
There is nothing anyone can do to stop suicide. Suicide attempts and death happen without warning.	Suicide is preventable. Appropriate help is very effective at preventing suicide attempts and deaths. It is important to know how to recognize when a person is at risk, and to be able to support them to seek help.

Verbal and visual communication tips

Words matter

When talking about self-harm and suicide it is important to be mindful of the language that you use. When words are used in an unhelpful or harmful way, suicide can be seen as glamorous or as a potential solution to problems. Language can also contribute to stigma and discrimination, preventing people from seeking help and hampering their recovery. It may also lead to ‘contagion’, which refers to the process whereby exposure and proximity to self-harm or suicide increases the likelihood that others will engage in self-harm or suicide acts.

Please see the table below for examples of potentially harmful language and helpful alternatives when communicating about self-harm and suicide. These tips apply to all written forms of communication including text (in messages, posts, stories, videos, comments, captions, description boxes etc.) and hashtags.



Unsafe language	Safe alternatives	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Describing suicide as criminal or sinful, for example, “committed suicide”. 	Use non-judgmental language, for example, “took their own life”, “died by suicide”, or “suicide death”.	Describing suicide as criminal or sinful increases stigma for those with lived experience of suicide thoughts or attempts, and for people who have been bereaved by suicide. This can also be alienating for vulnerable people and may discourage them from seeking help.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Describing suicide as a “solution” to problems, stressors, or mental health disorders and difficulties, for example, “they are in a better place now” or “their suffering has ended”. 	Use neutral language, for example, “suicide attempt” or “suicide death”.	Glamorizing suicide can influence vulnerable people to think it is appealing and may lead to contagion.

Table continued on next page

Unsafe language	Safe alternatives	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trivializing suicide or making it seem less complex than it really is, for example, blaming one single event or implying suicide was the result of a single cause. 	<p>Talk about warning signs for suicide and remind people that there is no single cause. Be mindful not to speculate about the specific causes or risk factors that may have led to a particular suicide death. Gossiping in this context can be intrusive and harmful.</p>	<p>Suicide is a complex issue and is rarely the result of a single cause. Oversimplifying suicide can contribute to harmful stereotypes and make it more difficult for people to become aware of different warning signs and risk factors. Simplifying causes of suicide can also put people who identify with a specific cause at increased risk.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensationalizing suicide, for example, everyone is killing themselves. 	<p>Use more neutral and accurate language, for example, “increasing rates of suicide”, and emphasize that suicide is preventable.</p>	<p>Overstating or sensationalizing language can make suicide feel inevitable, which may create a sense of hopelessness for vulnerable people.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being judgmental and reinforcing myths, stigma, or stereotypes, for example, “suicide is for cowards”, or “it is a trend, fashion, or emo or goth thing”. 	<p>Use non-judgmental language and provide facts about suicide to combat myths or stereotypes.</p>	<p>Myths and stereotypes about suicide can stop you from recognizing when someone is at risk. Stigma also contributes to harmful perceptions about people who are vulnerable to suicide risk, and may make them feel isolated or discouraged from seeking help.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing detailed information about a suicide or suicide attempt, for example, method, location. 	<p>Reconsider whether it is necessary to mention any details about a suicide death or suicide attempt and use broad or general terms instead.</p>	<p>Detailed information about self-harm or suicide can be upsetting to people who view it. It may also lead some people to engage in similar acts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describing suicide as a desired outcome, for example, “successful”, “unsuccessful”, or “failed attempts”. 	<p>Use neutral language such as “died by suicide”, “suicide attempt” or “non-fatal attempt”.</p>	<p>Framing a suicide as “successful” implies that something positive has been achieved, even though suicide is a tragic outcome. On the other hand, “unsuccessful” or “failed attempts” suggests that the person has not achieved a desired outcome, which can lead to people using more lethal methods.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labelling the person, for example, as an “attention seeker” or a “liar”. Making judgmental or minimizing comments, for example, “not again” or “stop attention seeking”. 	<p>Take conversations about suicide seriously and use non-judgmental language when talking about someone who has made a suicide attempt.</p>	<p>People who talk about suicide are often experiencing severe distress or hopelessness. Stigmatizing or judgmental language can make vulnerable people feel more isolated, but support at the right time can prevent a suicide attempt.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging self-harm or suicide, for example, “just do it”, or “what are you waiting for?”. 	<p>Be empathetic and encourage the person to seek help.</p>	<p>Expressions of self-harm and suicide should always be taken seriously. A vulnerable person may act on comments encouraging self-harm or suicidal behavior, which could lead to injury or death. Encouraging help-seeking behavior can prevent self-harm and suicide.</p>

Visuals matter

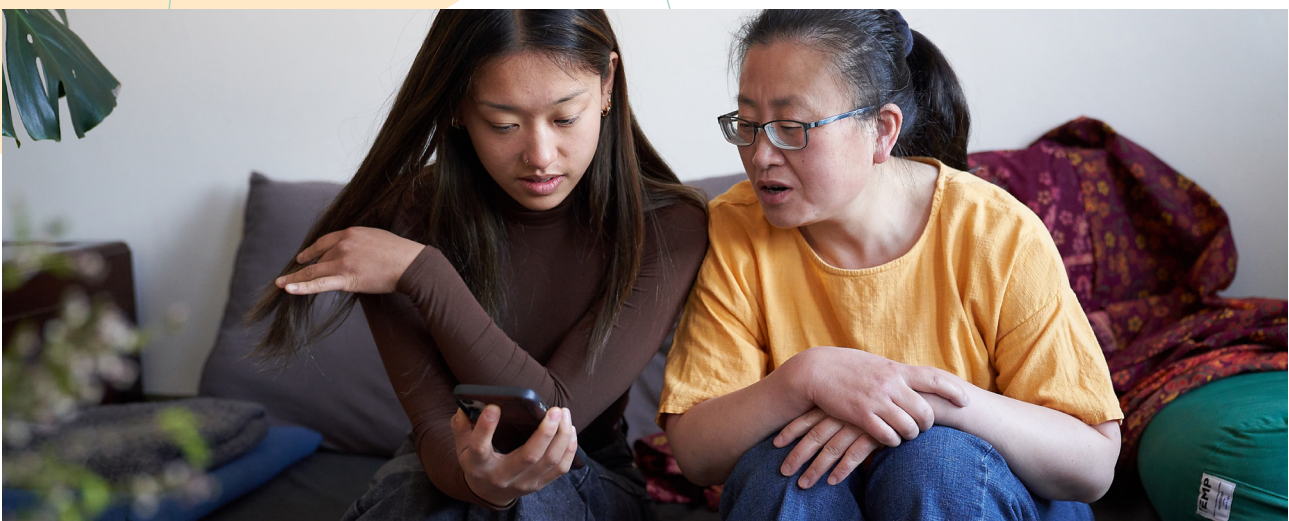
Like words, exposure to certain visual content may have negative effects on yourself and others. The table to the right includes the types of visual content that may have negative influence or effects on those who are depicted in or view them. For example, unsafe images can violate privacy, cause or increase distress, promote certain methods or locations of self-harm and suicide, and influence vulnerable people to copy self-harm or suicide behaviors.

Visual content refers to photos, videos (pre-recorded and live streams), GIFS, memes, stories, reels, animations, emojis, stickers, and other imagery-based content.

When posting visual content, you may want to consider captions or description boxes to provide context. For example, background information, or why you are posting.

Unsafe content

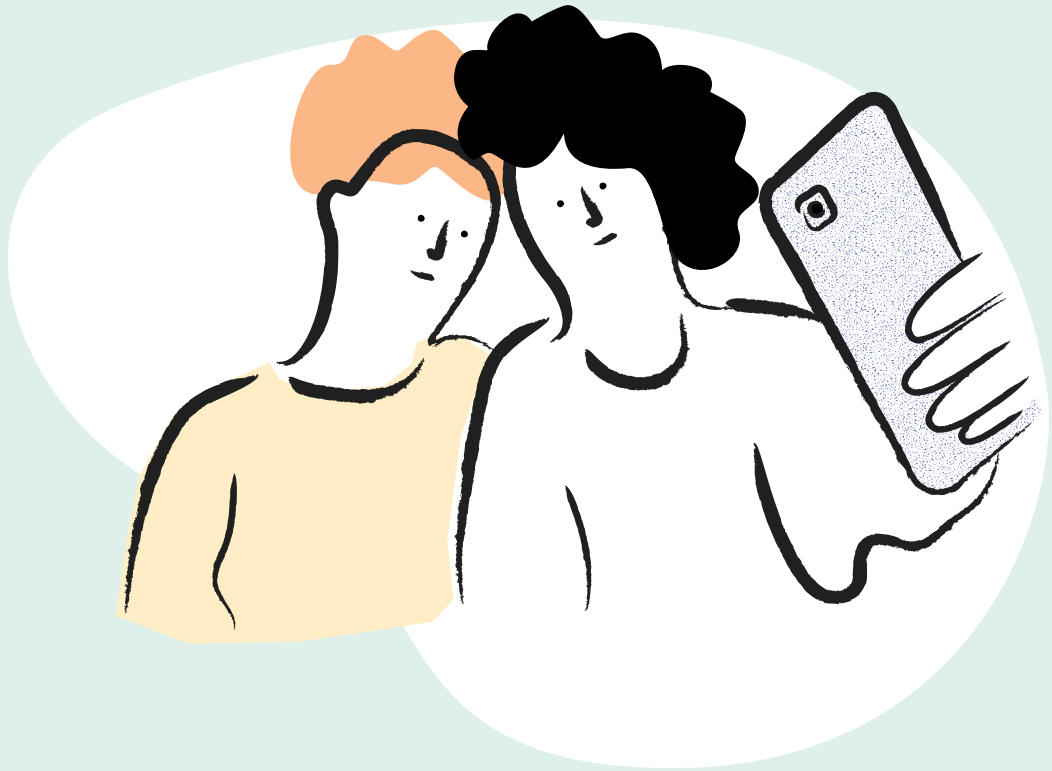
- * Content that depicts the location of self-harm or suicide (when and where).
- * Content that depicts the method, process, or lead up to self-harm or suicide (what or how).
- * Instructional content on how to engage in self-harm or suicidal behavior.
- * Content that depicts the outcome or result of self-harm or suicide or before and after content of self-harm and suicidal behavior. For example, photos or videos that compares individuals or body parts before and after they have engaged in self-harm.
- * Content that depicts grieving family members or friends of those who have died by suicide, without their permission.
- * Photos or videos of the deceased person's body, for example, at the location of their death, or photos or videos from a funeral viewing.
- * Content that blurs methods yet includes details of methods in the accompanying text, for example, in the caption, description box, or hashtags.



2

Creating self-harm and suicide content

The way that you communicate about self-harm or suicide can have positive or negative effects on both yourself and others.



Safely posting about your own story

Safely posting about your story of self-harm or suicide can be helpful for you and others. Safe stories can normalize experiences, instill hope, and encourage help-seeking. Unsafe stories can make self-harm or suicide seem like coping strategies or solutions, cause emotional distress, lead to copycat behavior (imitating others), or worsen existing behavior.

Help, hope, and recovery

When posting about your own experiences, emphasize help, hope, and recovery. For example, include:

- * Things that stopped you from acting on your thoughts or urges.
- * The people, places, strategies, and personal strengths that helped you cope.
- * Things you have achieved.
- * Experiences of positive help-seeking, for example, talking to a friend or family member.
- * That recovery is an up and down process and can look different for everyone. Be mindful that recovery can mean different things to different people.
- * Messages that encourage help-seeking.
- * Links to helplines.

To reduce the risk of negative effects to others, exclude or avoid the following:

- * Current or previous self-harm or suicide plans or attempts (what, how, when, and where).
- * Information about or instructions on how to self-harm or die by suicide.



- * Information on how to self-harm more severely.
- * Promoting self-harm or suicide.
- * Encouraging others to engage in self-harm or die by suicide.
- * Encouraging others to copy or imitate self-harm or suicide acts.
- * Providing links to pro-self-harm or pro-suicide websites or communities.
- * Suicide notes or goodbye messages.
- * Graphic content depicting self-harm or suicide.
- * Before and after self-harm or suicide content.
- * Content depicting self-harm or suicide acts in-progress.
- * Content depicting a method of self-harm, for example, items used.
- * Content depicting the location of self-harm or suicide.
- * Including hashtags that promote self-harm or suicide.
- * Including emojis that depict methods of self-harm or suicide.
- * Making other people feel responsible for your safety.

Reflect

Posting about your own self-harm or suicide thoughts, feelings, behavior, and experiences can make you vulnerable. Before posting perhaps ask yourself the following questions:

- Why am I posting?
- What am I hoping to achieve?
- Is this the most effective way to achieve my goal?
- Do I need help?
- If I need help, who is the best person to reach out to? Who is best placed to help me?
- What do I feel comfortable sharing?
- What would I prefer to leave out or keep private?
- Who will see this post? Remember that posts can be permanent and potentially anyone and everyone could see your content.
- What are the consequences of sharing?
- Do the pros outweigh the cons?
- How might my post impact others?
- What will I do if other people send me their stories and ask for help?
- How can I look after myself after I have posted?

The following tips could help you tell your story in a safe way. Before pressing post, it can be helpful to double-check your post for safety and make edits.

Content, trigger, or advisory warnings

You may choose to include a content, trigger or advisory warning on your post.

Trigger, content, or advisory warnings can give people a heads up about what is to come and they can decide if they wish to look at it or not. This may be particularly important for some cultural groups and Indigenous peoples.

Decide if you will allow comments

- * Before you post content, decide if you will allow comments.
- * If you allow comments, it is important to regularly monitor and moderate the comments. If people indicate that they need help, you could provide the contact details of national helplines. If comments include unsafe information or are aggressive, you could hide or delete the comment and/or report the person. This is to prevent harm to yourself and others.
- * If you are unwilling or unable to frequently monitor and moderate comments, turn off commenting for your post at the outset.
- * Whether you opt to turn comments on or off, include the contact details of the helplines in your post, caption, description box, or comments.

Posting during a crisis

Intense emotions can affect your thoughts and actions, and it can be difficult to remember these tips and post safely. What may seem like a good idea in the moment may not afterwards and may have lasting consequences. If you do feel overwhelmed perhaps wait until the crisis has passed before posting publicly.

Message instead of posting

- * Expressing yourself and asking for help is important. However, if you are struggling, need urgent support, or feel unable to keep yourself safe, send a private or direct message to someone you know such as a friend or family member whom you trust and who can help you instead of posting publicly.

Ask for help

- * In your message, make it clear that you need help.
- * Recognize that others are not responsible for your safety.

Remember that you can also call a helpline or speak with a professional.



Posting about other people

Get their permission

It is important to respect other people's privacy and consent.

- * Avoid posting about someone else's story without their permission.

Avoid the following:

- * Making fun of them or their self-harm or suicidal thoughts, feelings, and acts.
- * Using humor (even if it is good faith or there is an inside joke, it can come across as insensitive and others may not 'get it').
- * Expressing support for self-harm or suicide acts.
- * Posting their suicide notes or goodbye messages.

How to safely share or repost another person or organization's content

Be mindful about what you repost or share. It can be helpful to share or repost stories of help, hope, and recovery, as well as educational self-harm and suicide prevention information from reputable sources. If the post is unsafe, avoid sharing or reposting. This is to reduce potential negative consequences for the creator as well as consumers.



3

Consuming self-harm and suicide content

- * If you see a post indicating someone is self-harming or is suicidal, always take it seriously even if it is posed as a joke. It is normal to feel worried and uncertain about what to do.

The information in this section includes tips to help you respond safely and supportively, as well as what to do if you do not want to respond.



If you think the person is in immediate danger

Immediate risk means that someone is at an immediate or impending risk of death or substantial physical injury. In this situation, it is important that the person gets help quickly.

Getting them help is more important than any promises to keep things secret.

Contact emergency services (988)

- * If you are not already engaged in conversation, they are not open to receiving help, or there is no time to spare, then call emergency services immediately.
- * If you are already engaged in conversation with the person, and it is appropriate, you could encourage them to call emergency services.
- * If you call emergency services, it is helpful to take screenshots or screen record the content, so that you can share these, if needed.
- * After emergency services have been contacted, and if it is possible, then contact the person's friends or family and let them know what has happened.



If the person is not in immediate danger but you are still worried

If the person is not at immediate risk yet is still communicating about self-harm or suicide, and you choose to respond, there are several things you could do.

Decide if you want to respond

- * Respond only if you feel able and willing to do so. There are different levels of responding. For example, you can react, send an emoji, send a one-off comment with links to helplines and well wishes, or you could engage in a conversation. Only engage in a conversation if you feel comfortable.

If you do not respond directly to the person, there are other things you could do.

Here are some questions that you may ask yourself to help you decide what to do:

- How am I feeling?
- Who is the other person I am talking to and what is my relationship with them?
- Is this an emergency and do they need urgent help?
- Do I need to respond?
- Has anyone else responded?
- What support do they need?
- Do I feel able and willing to support someone?
- What support can I provide?
- How much time do I have?
- What time of the day is it?
- What platform am I on?
- Where do I want to respond?
- Do I know how to start and end the conversation?
- If I choose not to respond, is there something else I could do?
- Do I know where to refer the person for more support?
- How can I look after myself?
- Who can support me?
- Am I prepared for the possible outcomes? They may not respond positively or want to accept help.

Know and communicate your boundaries and limitations

- * Responding to someone who is self-harming or suicidal can be hard, so if you choose to respond, set boundaries for yourself regarding how much time you have available and the type of support you can and cannot offer.

It is okay to end the conversation at any time and suggest that the person seek professional help. This is especially important if the level of risk increases, and the person seems more distressed.

If you do choose to respond, remember that your role is not to try to provide therapeutic support.

Report

- * Report the content to the relevant social media platform. Do not assume someone else has done this.

Even if you do choose to respond, you can still report the content.

Interactions

- * If you choose to interact with the content, don't use reactions or emojis that positively reinforce unsafe self-harm or suicide content, or ridicule self-harm or suicide.

Decide how you will respond

- * If you choose to respond, pick the medium that you feel most comfortable with and is most appropriate for the relationship and situation. For example, public comments, private messages, phone or video call, offline visit. You could also ask the person how they would prefer you to respond.

Opening, continuing, and ending the conversation

If you choose to respond, you could start the conversation by:

- * Acknowledging their feelings and specify exactly why you are worried about them (based on what is in their content).
- * Telling the person that you care.

During the conversation, you could:

- * Let the person explain their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in their own words.
- * Respond without judgment, assumptions, or interruptions.

During the conversation, avoid:

- * Encouraging or endorsing self-harm or suicide acts. For example, asking for a joint suicide, encouraging them to take their life, or giving advice on how to self-harm or die by suicide.
- * Using emojis that positively reinforce or ridicule self-harm or suicide.
- * Comparing the person's distress to something bigger. For example, say that there are worse things happening in the world or someone else's situation is better or worse.
- * Accusing the person of lying or attention seeking.
- * Saying anything you would not say directly to them in-person.
- * Mocking or making fun of the person.
- * Using humor when discussing self-harm and suicide even if it is intended in good faith. However, this is contextual. If you are having a one-on-one conversation, are close with the person, and it is appropriate to your relationship, humor may be helpful.
- * Expressing support for self-harm and suicide.

To end the conversation, you could:

- * Encourage the person to call a helpline or seek professional help.
- * Provide links to national helplines. If you are aware of local supports, you can also provide contact details of these services.

Check in

- * If you feel comfortable, follow up and check in with the person later to see how they are doing.

The conversation tips above also apply again here.

Take control of what you see

- * Depending on the platform, you will have options to limit or remove content from your feed, for example, by "muting", "snoozing", or "hiding" posts.
- * You can also unfollow, delete, or block users or accounts that you no longer want to see. If you are concerned that a post is unsafe, you can report it to the platform.

Responding to self-harm content

People self-harm in different ways and for different reasons. Although some people who self-harm may be suicidal, some are not. However, self-harm can result in accidental death.

If someone has posted about self-harm, they may not necessarily be in immediate danger, but need information and support.

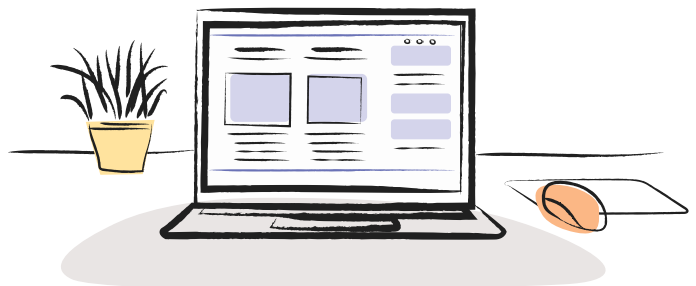
If the communication is about self-harm, the tips above still apply.

Here are some additional helpful things that you could do:

- * Encourage them to keep trying to stop self-harming.
- * If appropriate, urge the person to seek professional help for any injuries.
- * Suggest alternatives to self-harm, for example, self-soothing strategies.
- * Suggest distractions, for example, talking to a friend.
- * Suggest wider coping strategies for dealing with the underlying problem/s, for example, engage with a psychologist.
- * Share educational information, for example, what self-harm is and how people can stop self-harming.
- * Remind them that 'lapses' or 'relapses' are normal and can be part of the recovery process.
- * Praise their milestones and progress.

Some things to avoid:

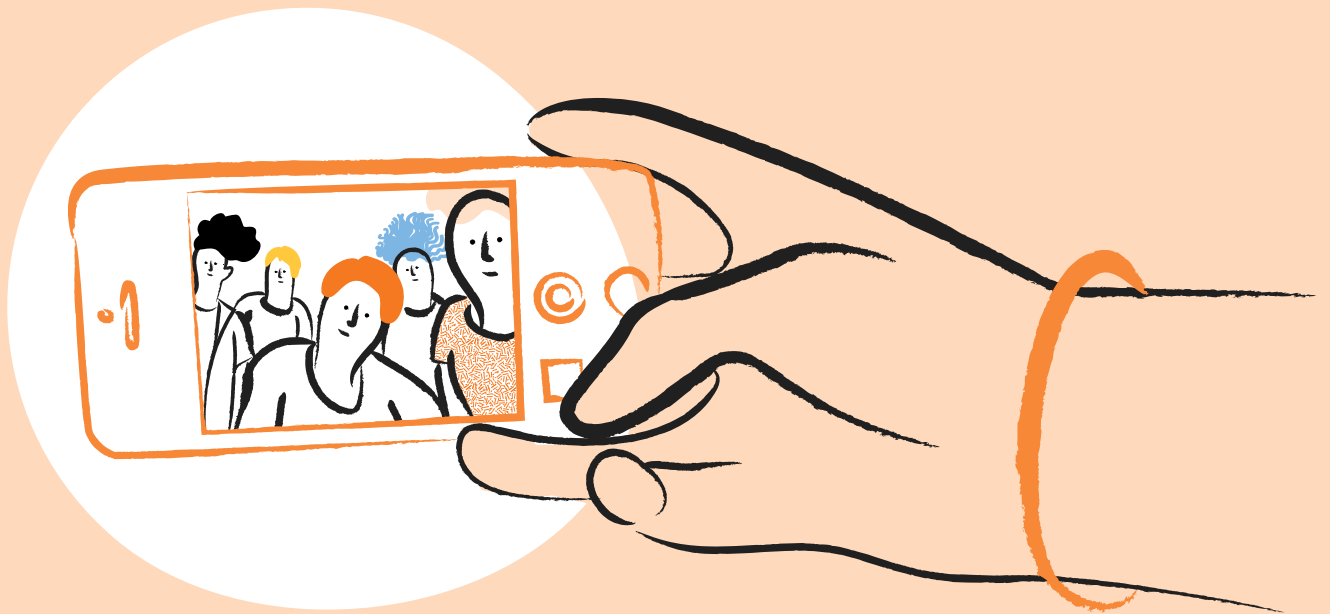
- * Complimenting photos or videos of self-harm injuries.
- * Encouraging others to share photos of their self-harm injuries.
- * Celebrating or admiring self-harm.
- * Supporting self-harm acts.
- * Comparing self-harm scars or injuries.
- * Competing with other people who self-harm.
- * Suggesting self-harm methods or techniques.
- * Posting advice on how to self-harm more severely.
- * Mocking or making fun of those who have self-harmed.
- * Using humor when someone has self-harmed.



4

Livestreams of self-harm and suicide acts

A livestream refers to a video (and other content) that is sent or transmitted over the internet in real time. Due to their unedited nature and lack of time delays, you may encounter distressing content very quickly. For example, death and injury. Engagement can unintentionally make the livestream available to more people via algorithms.



Do not livestream acts of self-harm or suicide

Due to the potential risk of harm to the content creator and consumers, do not livestream acts of self-harm or suicide.

- * Avoid promoting the livestream of self-harm and suicide before, during, or after the event, for example, sharing it, tagging others etc.

Report

Avoid interacting

- * If you come across a livestream depicting acts of self-harm or suicide, do not interact with it, for example, react, comment, share.

Instead:

- * Report a livestream to the platform immediately.
- * If the person is at immediate risk, and you have enough information, call emergency services (988). Once you have called and connected with the switchboard, you can select to be connected to the ambulance service.
- * If appropriate and known, contact the person's family and/or friends and notify them.



5

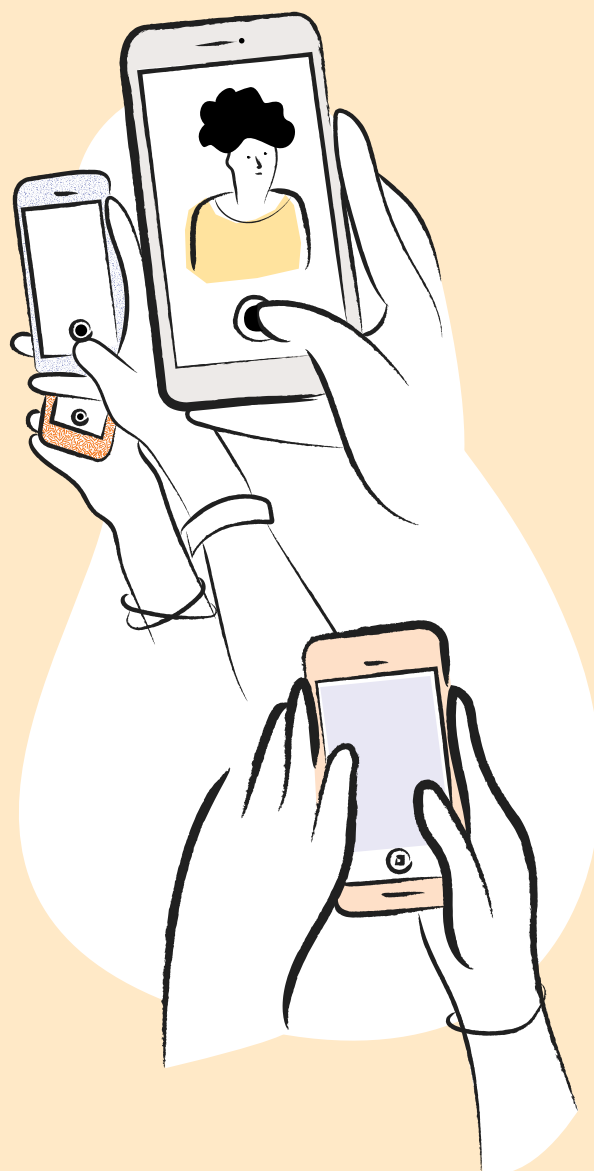
Self-harm and suicide games, pacts, and hoaxes

Suicide or self-harm games (also known as challenges, trends, or dares) consist of a series of progressive tasks, over a set period, which might seem harmless at first but eventually can include self-harm and can end in requiring the player to die by suicide.

A self-harm or suicide pact is where two or more individuals make an agreement to engage in self-harm acts or die by suicide together.

A suicide hoax is a deliberate false report of a death, game, or pact that is later proven to be untrue. This type of content is also called fake news, misinformation, or disinformation. Hoaxes can be distressing and harmful, and interacting with this content, even if it is to spread awareness, could increase its reach.

Suicide games, pacts, and hoaxes are unsafe.



Do not create or promote self-harm or suicide games, pacts, or hoaxes

- * Do not create or share content related to self-harm or suicide games, pacts or hoaxes.

This includes the following:

- * Coordinating a self-harm or suicide game or pact, for example, selecting tasks, picking a location, identifying methods, assigning roles etc.
- * Creating or sharing invitational content that asks others to join and engage in suicide or self-harm games or pacts.
- * Creating or sharing information or instructions on self-harm or suicide games and pacts.
- * Promoting games, pacts, or hoaxes.

Avoid interacting

- * If you come across a self-harm or suicide game or pact, do not join, or interact with the content in any way.
- * If you become aware of a hoax, do not interact with it.

Report

- * Report the self-harm or suicide game, pact, or hoax to the platform.



6

Self-harm and suicide communities

Online communities can provide a sense of belonging, as well as being sources of support and information. However, they can become unhelpful or even harmful. Harms can include emotional distress and interference with recovery.

Before joining a community, perhaps ask yourself if you think it will be helpful for you at this time. You can also speak with a professional. If you notice that a community is unhelpful or harmful, you can leave at any time.

The information in this section applies to accounts, channels, forums, groups, and any other online community environments regardless of format or size.



Members

Keep yourself and others safe

If you happen to find yourself in a pro-self-harm or pro-suicide community and you recognize that it is unhelpful or harmful, you do not have to stay and participate, and can choose to leave at any time. You can also report the community to the platform.

As a member of a community, it is important to avoid doing the following:

- * Self-harming to remain part of an online community.
 - * Copying, screenshotting, screen recording, sharing, forwarding, or distributing content without permission from the content creator unless you are reporting them or their content for safety reasons.
 - * Encouraging others to engage in self-harm or suicidal behaviour, or providing instructions on how to engage in these behaviors.
 - * Hosting or engaging in online self-harm social activities, for example, self-harming as a group.
- * Providing contact details of helplines and ensuring these are clearly visible and easily accessible, for example, pin or stick details.
 - * Providing information on how members can contact you and when they can expect a reply.
 - * Asking potential members to complete membership or participation questions before joining the community.
 - * Creating rules that outline the agreements for joining and participating in the community and the actions that will be taken if these agreements are broken. Rules should be read and agreed to at the outset.
 - * Ensuring the rules are clearly visible and easily accessible.
 - * Consider monitoring and moderating posts and comments for potentially harmful or unsafe content.
 - * If you choose to monitor and moderate posts and comments, consider a pre-approval process, and clearly communicate this to members.
 - * Have a plan on how you will respond to members who express that they are at risk of suicide and outline this process.
 - * Delete comments that violate the rules.
 - * Mute, suspend, remove, or block members who violate the rules.
 - * Report content to the platform if it is beyond your moderator role or abilities.
 - * Remind members that they can report content and members directly to the platform.
 - * If you decide to suspend, delete, block, or report a member, contact the member to inform them and explain why. It may also be helpful to send them links to helplines.

Moderators

Creating, managing, and moderating a community can be a rewarding but also stressful and time-consuming. Consider how much time you will need to dedicate to the community, be clear on what your role and responsibilities are, have clear pathways on what to do if things are beyond your knowledge and skills, and make sure you look after yourself and access support.

Helpful things you could do for the community include:

- * Advising members that this community is not a replacement for professional support.
 - * Encouraging members to look after their own wellbeing.
- * Requiring members to share evidence of self-harm or suicide as part of their application to join, or remain engaged in, the community.

7

Bereavement and communicating about someone who has died by suicide

This section is to help support you to safely post about someone who has died by suicide on your own social media accounts, or manage a community dedicated to someone who has died by suicide.

Posts may announce or acknowledge the death of a loved one, remember and celebrate the person and their life, mark a birthday or death anniversary, or include your own thoughts and feelings. Group spaces can be an outlet for grief, and a place for friends and families to share memories and exchange information and support.

The information in this section applies both to people you know and public figures. It also applies to online funerals, which, in addition to being shown live, are sometimes recorded and shared.

Think about how often you create or consume content. Too much exposure to suicide can have negative effects on yourself and others. If you feel the need to speak about what is going on for you, it can be helpful to reach out to people you trust privately either online or offline.



Communicating about someone who has died

It is respectful to get permission from the family of the deceased before announcing someone's death.

To reduce negative effects on others, make it clear that there is likely to be detailed information and images of people who have died. This is particularly important for certain cultural groups and Indigenous peoples.

If you need help managing the social media accounts of someone who has died, please see the relevant platforms' help centers. You may have the option of memorializing, deactivating, or deleting the account.

Helpful things you could include in your content:

- * Posting and sharing only what you know to be true. For example, that the person has died, without sharing any graphic details about how and where. Avoid speculating about how and why the person died, or attributing the death to one event even if this is to try and make sense of what has happened. Sense-making can facilitate the grieving process, but it may be more helpful to do this privately or offline with trusted people or professionals.
- * Correcting untrue information.
- * Asking others to demonstrate respect and empathy when communicating about the person who has died.
- * Posting or sharing content that educates others about suicide prevention. For example, that help is available, suicide is preventable, and many people have experienced suicidal thoughts and they have stopped or reduced or never acted on them.
- * Providing links to helplines.
- * Reminding others to be mindful of the impact their comments may have on others.

To reduce the risk of distress and potential negative effects, avoid:

- * Posting or sharing inaccurate or unverified information.
- * Posting or sharing content that depicts when, how, with whom, or where the person died.
- * Encouraging other people to die by suicide or imitate how the person died.
- * Speculating or forming theories without any evidence on why the person took their life or their thoughts, feelings, and actions in the lead-up to the suicide.
- * Using humor when talking about the suicide even if it is meant in good faith.



8

Guidance for influencers

Social media influencers are content creators with large online followings who can inspire or guide other people's behavior, for example, to buy a product or engage in a service. Because of their social power and sway over their audience, influencers can play a positive role in raising awareness, providing hope, promoting help-seeking, and reducing stigma about sensitive and complex topics such as self-harm and suicide. However, influencers who share unsafe content about these topics may negatively affect others, even if they have good intentions.

The information in this section is for influencers and other public figures who are communicating about self-harm and suicide. It will be helpful to also read the other sections to keep yourself and your audience safe.



Be clear about your role

- * Your audience may be impressionable and consider you to be an authority on topics that you speak about; therefore, it is important to be clear about your role as an influencer.
- * Explicitly state that you are not a qualified and registered mental health professional and do not have expertise in self-harm or suicide prevention (unless you do have the education and training).

Safely post about your lived experience

If you have lived experience of self-harm or suicide, and you feel comfortable disclosing that, it can be helpful to let your audience know. Again, reiterate that you are only sharing your own experiences, are not an expert, and are not dispensing medical advice. What may have been helpful or unhelpful for you, may not be helpful for someone else. You may want to consider adding a disclaimer as there are potential social and legal consequences for the information you post online.



Be mindful of your audience

- * When creating content, be mindful of who your audience is and consider the impact and implications of your posts, including potential negative consequences, for example, self-harm or suicide. Younger people may be more impressionable and impulsive.

Post and share evidence-based information

- * If you are providing advice on self-harm or suicide prevention, only post and share evidence-based information. This means information that is supported by scientific research and is produced by credible and reputable organizations.

Encourage help-seeking

- * Provide information about how and where people could receive support and access resources.

Due to your potential for international reach, you may want to consider including this link as a starting point: findahelpline.com.

Manage expectations

Your audience may have formed a strong connection with you via virtual proximity and may assume that they are talking directly to you when they interact with your social media accounts. This can create expectations around when and how you may respond.

To protect yourself, and create a safe space for your audience, you could do the following:

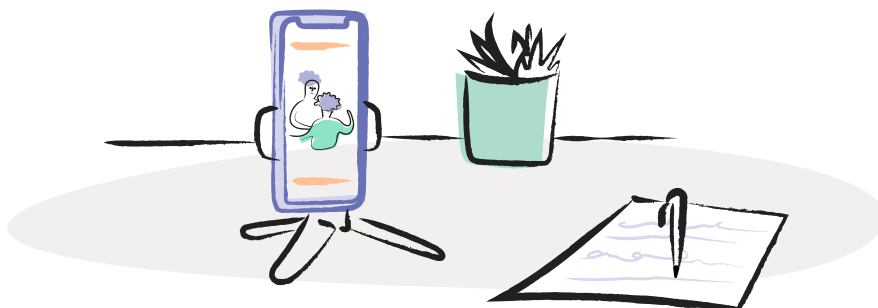
- * Set and clearly communicate your boundaries and limitations.
- * Be clear about whether messages and comments are being moderated and who is managing communications. For example, include a visible disclaimer.
- * Be clear about whether people can expect a response directly from you or someone on your team. For example, include in content, captions, description boxes, or pinned comments.

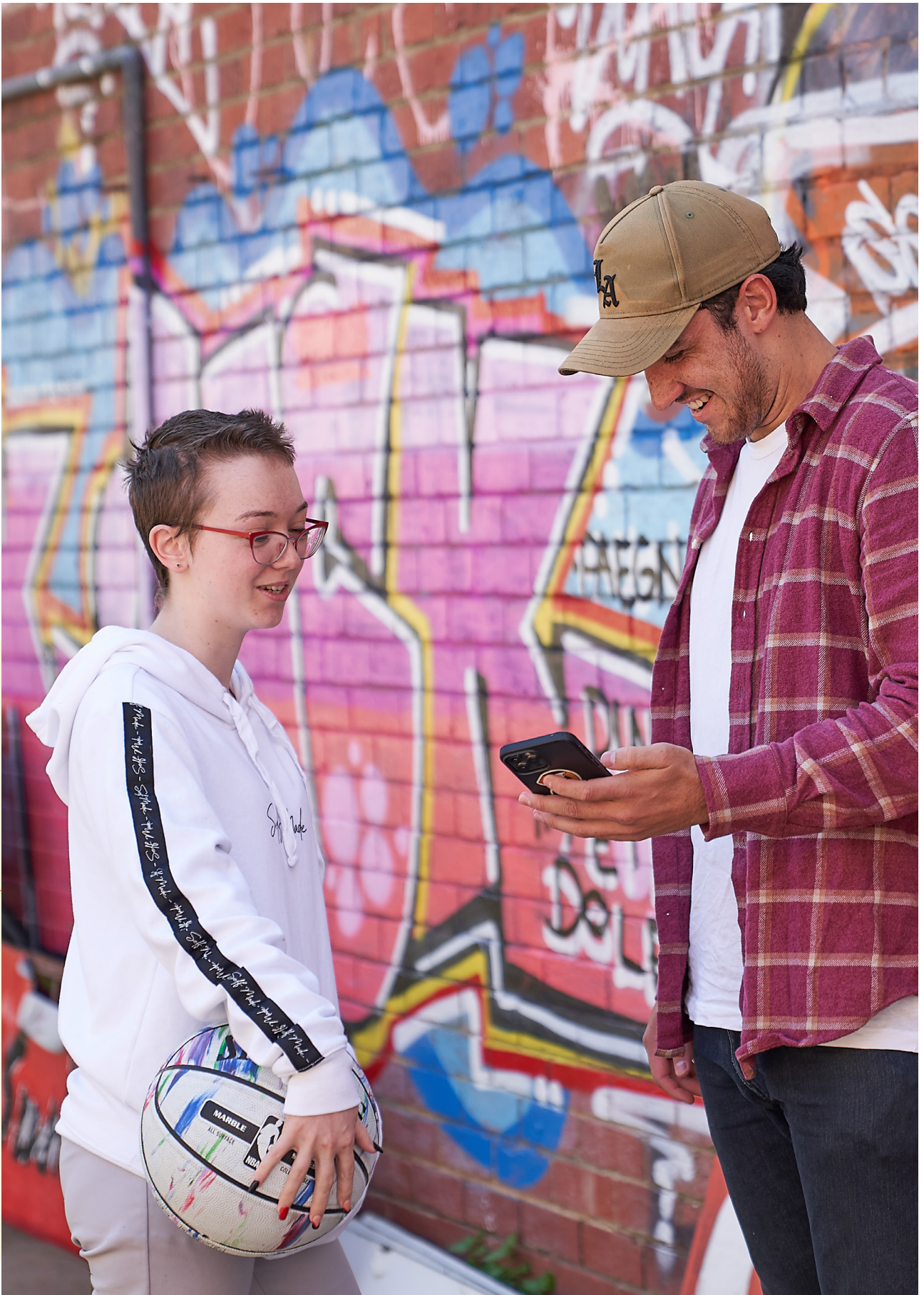
Have a plan

If you post about self-harm or suicide (and even if you do not), you may receive a large volume of messages and comments from other people who are struggling, engaging in self-harm, or are suicidal. It may be helpful to plan ahead for how you might respond to these types of messages or comments.

Consider consulting with an expert

If you are able and willing, you may wish to consult with a mental health professional before, during, and after content creation and communications related to self-harm and suicide.





Glossary

Consumer: A content consumer is someone who views or interacts with online content created by others. Consumers are also known as the audience.

Creator: A content creator is the author of an original online post or comment.

Game: Suicide or self-harm games (also known as challenges, trends, or dares) consist of a series of progressive tasks, over a set period, which might start off as harmless but eventually include self-harm and can end in requiring the player to die by suicide.

Hoax: A suicide hoax is a deliberate false report of a death, game, or pact that is later proven to be untrue. This type of content is also called “fake news”, misinformation, or disinformation.

Influencer: Social media influencers are digital content creators with large online followings who can inspire or guide other people’s behavior, for example, to buy a product or engage in a service.

Interaction: Interacting simply means engaging with online content. Interactions can include reacting, commenting, and sharing.

Livestream: A livestream refers to a video (and other content) that is sent or transmitted over the internet in real time. Due to their unedited nature and lack of time delays, you may encounter distressing content very quickly, for example, death and injury, and engagement can unintentionally make the livestream available to more people via social media algorithms.

Moderator: Moderators (also known as admins) are people who manage online communities across various accounts, channels, forums, and groups.

Pact: A self-harm or suicide pact is where two or more individuals make an agreement to engage in self-harm behavior or die by suicide together.

Rules: Agreements that everyone in the community must abide by. These are enforced by moderators/admins.

Self-harm: Behavioral act of intentional self-injury or self-poisoning, irrespective of motive or suicidal intent

Suicide: A behavioral action that a person takes to deliberately end their own life, which results in death.



Links to social media platform help centers:

BeReal help center:

<https://help.bereal.com/hc/en-us>

Discord help center:

<https://support.discord.com/hc/en-us>

Facebook help center:

<https://www.facebook.com/help>

Instagram help center:

<https://help.instagram.com/>

Messenger help center:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/messenger-app>

Pinterest help center:

<https://help.pinterest.com/en>

Reddit help center:

<https://reddit.zendesk.com/hc/en-us>

Snapchat help center:

<https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-us>

TikTok help center:

<https://support.tiktok.com/en/>

Tumblr help center:

<https://help.tumblr.com/hc/en-us>

Twitter help center:

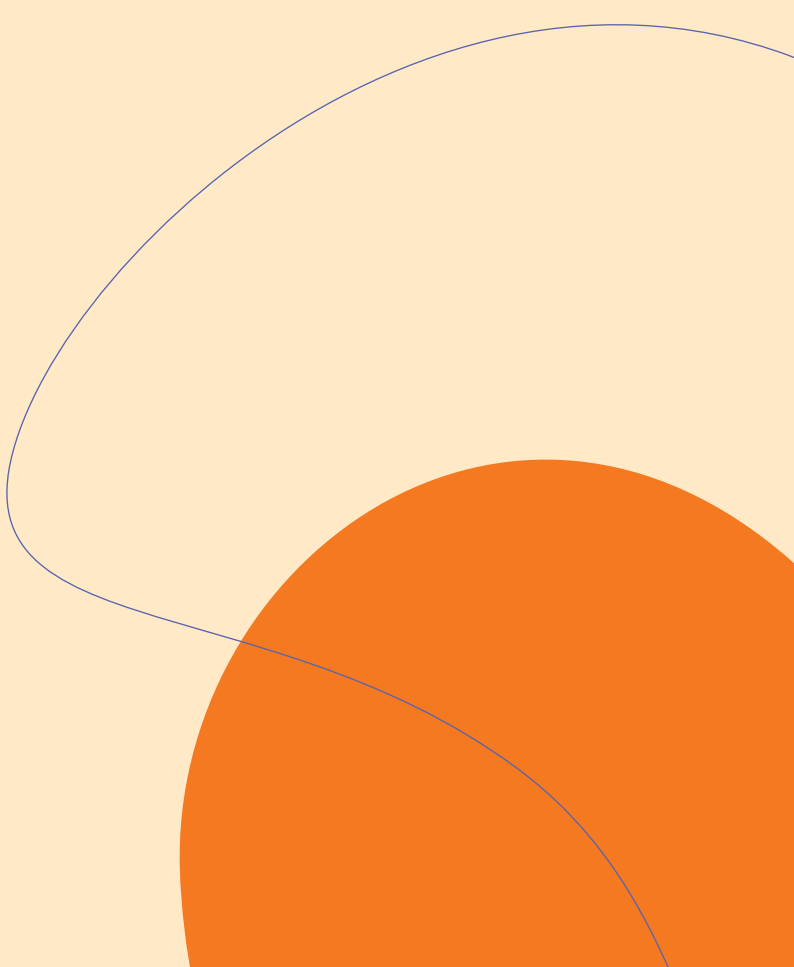
<https://help.twitter.com/en>

WhatsApp help center:

<https://faq.whatsapp.com/>

YouTube help center:

<https://support.google.com/youtube/?hl=en#topic=9257498>



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