

Butterfly
Foundation for Eating Disorders

#TheWholeMe

Talking to young people about positive body image
and authentic sharing on Instagram

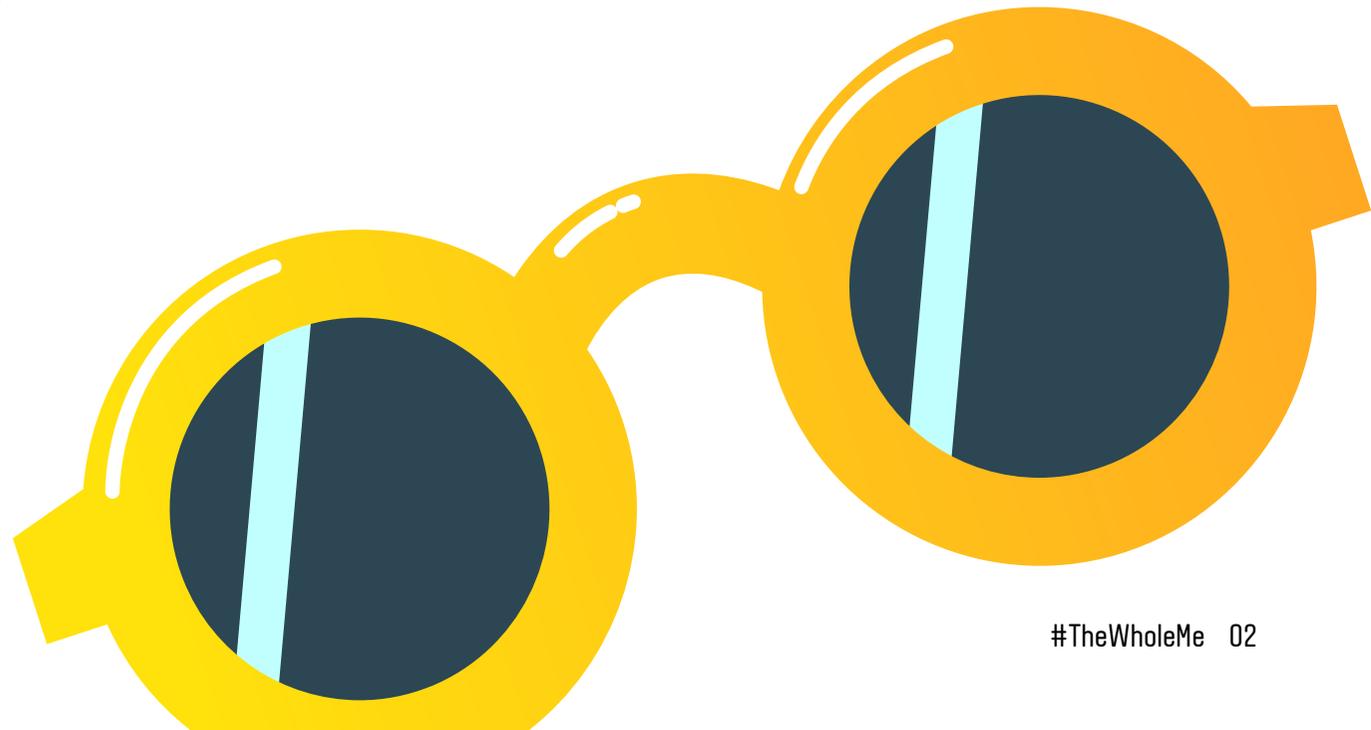
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#TheWholeMe is a collaboration between Instagram and the Butterfly Foundation

This toolkit is intended to help parents, teachers and others with young people in their lives to navigate conversations about Instagram usage, so that the time young people spend on social media is positive, inspiring and balanced.

There is an accompanying toolkit for teens; we suggest you download that and read it as well, and share with the young people in your life.

This toolkit talks openly about how time online can impact our emotional wellbeing, particularly our body image

Research suggests that social media platforms have the potential to impact how young people view their bodies. We know that when people are dissatisfied with their bodies, they can turn to quick fixes including unhealthy eating and exercise behaviours, and for some this may develop into an eating disorder.

When young people gain self-awareness they can make informed decisions about how they use Instagram and other social media platforms. Take some of the quizzes in the teen version of this toolkit with your teen and discuss the results to open up a vital channel of communication.



Getting the Most out of Instagram

Today's teens have the ability to share their thoughts, feelings, images and videos at the click of a button. Part of using social media means they may be exposed to posts showcasing 'perfect bodies' and 'perfect lives'. Exposure to stylised, filtered, and carefully curated images may put unrealistic expectations on some young people to look and act a certain way.

As a parent, adult or guardian, social media creates a unique challenge particularly when it comes to supporting body image in young people. It can be hard to know what to do!

It's human nature to compare ourselves to others (we all do it) and to want to create a good impression. But in today's social media world some teens may find themselves feeling 'not good enough'. One of the most important things we can do for the teens in our lives is to help them focus on their strengths and qualities beyond their physical selves.

Tips for helping teens stay body confident on Instagram

1. Become media savvy

If you are not too sure how everything works, asking your teen to show you around Instagram is a great way to open up communication. This toolkit highlights Instagram features for a positive online experience, and you can also jump on to [esafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au) to learn about the latest social media, apps and games and staying safe online.

2. Look beyond the physical

Putting too much emphasis on appearance and how other people see us can have a negative impact on self-esteem and body image. Remind your teen that there is so much more to them than how they look. Placing value on skills, personal attributes and uniqueness will help them develop a strong sense of who they are as a person.

3. Critically evaluate/Build social media literacy skills

Research suggests that media literacy – the ability to critically analyse and evaluate media messaging – can help young people have a more positive view of their bodies. Talk to your child about the realities of airbrushing, filtering and enhanced body parts and how what they see online is not always #TheWholeMe or realistic.

4. Help young people become conscious consumers

Get your teen practiced in how a post or online interaction makes them feel. Does it motivate and inspire? Or lead to criticism or negative comparison? If it's not a positive feeling, then look to the strategies in this booklet under "Tips on making Instagram work for young people" to help manage this.

5. Challenge the ideals

Help young people understand that all bodies are good bodies and worthy of respect. Ideas about beauty and the ideal body change over time and are unrealistic for the majority, so encourage young people to channel their efforts into things that give them a purpose and a true sense of who they are.

6. Encourage your teen to be the change

Encourage your child to 'be the change' and post content that shows the #TheWholeMe and not just pictures and posts that represent an idealised version of themselves.

7. Take control/Fill feeds with positivity

The more young people think of being actively in control of their feeds, and choosing to engage with them rather than passively consuming them, the more the content will reflect their true passions and interests. Suggest your young person steer away from content that reinforces narrow, rigid and idealised eating and exercise behaviours, using stereotypical body ideals to accompany messages. Encourage them to diversify their feeds so that it includes a range of body types. There is a growing body positivity movement that encourages positive messaging and real sharing (but remember that body positivity doesn't necessarily mean showing off your body).

8. Keep communication open

It's important to recognise the pressure young people feel to post images online to fit in and be part of the crowd. Look for opportunities to talk to your child about their online lives without criticising, and let them know you are there to support them.

9. Manage the pitfalls

The message is simple. If you wouldn't say it to someone's face, don't say it online. Appearance is an easy target for online teasing and bullying but has very real impacts. Get familiar with the strategies and reporting tools in this Guide so your child knows how to shut down appearance based bullying.

10. Become aware

Know the signs of body dissatisfaction and if you are at all worried, reach out for help. You can find information on body image on the Butterfly website and you can talk to one of our trained professionals 7 days a week, 8am – midnight (AEST) Tel: **1800 334673** (1800 ED HOPE) Email: support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au or on [Webchat](#).

For more tips on supporting body confidence in children and young people online and offline see [Butterfly's Tips Sheet for Parents](#).

Body dissatisfaction: what to look out for?

- Preoccupation with body weight, shape or size
- Frequent body comparisons to others and feelings of anxiety, shame and self-consciousness.
- Frequent self-scrutiny – such as weighing or excessively looking at reflection.
- Negative comments about body shape, size or body parts.
- Social withdrawal and avoidance of previously enjoyed activities.
- Using unhealthy behaviours such as dieting or excessive exercise to change weight or shape.



It's Personal: Tips on making Instagram work for young people

Instagram provides a number of tools that allow users to control their privacy levels and customise their experience. For young people, these tools can be especially helpful for creating a safe space to connect with others. A discussion of the toolkit could be a good jumping-off point to talk about the emotional impact of time online—you can then use the tools, as well as the tips below, to fine-tune their settings.

Be sure to read the explanation of these tools in the teen version of #TheWholeMe.

1. Manage privacy

We encourage parents to discuss whether it's best for an account to be public or private. If the account is private, they approve the people who follow them, and can remove followers at any time. Private accounts mean content can't be seen by anyone who hasn't been approved. If an account is public, anyone can see the content posted on Stories, Feed, or Live, and can follow without needing approval.

If your teen already has a public account, they can switch to private at any time; they can also go from private to public. They can remove followers, choose who can comment, and more. Your teen can also turn off "Show Activity Status," so friends can't see when they're online.

HOW TO: Choose a public or private account by selecting "Account Privacy" in settings.

2. Block unwanted interactions

Blocking is an immediate way to disengage from any negative interactions. This will block people from seeing and commenting on their posts. When you block an account, that person is not notified. You can unblock an account at any time.

HOW TO: Block an account by tapping "..." on their profile, then tapping "Block."

3. Manage comments

You can control who has the ability to comment on posts. In the “Comment Controls” section of the app settings, they can choose to: allow comments from everyone, people they follow and those people’s followers, just the people they follow, or their followers. They can also set up comment moderation so they can approve any comments before they are posted, or remove the ability to comment entirely.

HOW TO: In settings, select “Comment Controls.” Tap “Allow Comments From” to control who can comment. To block comments altogether, tap “Block Comments.”

4. Report bullying

Bullying is against Instagram’s community guidelines, and it’s against our policies to create an account, post photos, or make comments for the purpose of bullying or harassing someone else. Let your teen know that if they spot an account, photo, video, comment, message, or story that is intended to bully or harass someone, they can and should report it.

HOW TO: Tap “...” on the top right corner of a post or profile, swipe left on a comment, or tapping and holding a message, then tapping “Report.” Reporting is totally anonymous.

5. Block when necessary

Young people may keep following an account that is having a negative impact on them simply because they haven't stopped to check in with themselves and identify the issue. Encouraging an occasional edit of their follow list can help open up discussion and an opportunity to create some distance.

HOW TO: Click “Following.” Scroll through and tap the “Following” button next to any name you want to unfollow. The button will turn blue. You can also go to someone's profile and tap “Unfollow.”

6. Filter it out

Instagram has filters that automatically remove offensive words and phrases and bullying comments. Your teen can also create their own list of words or emojis they don't want to have appear in the comments section when they post by going to “Filters” in the Comment Controls section.

HOW TO: Tap “Manual Filter” and a field will appear where they can enter any words, phrases, or emojis that they never want to see on their posts.

7. Mute an account

There may be accounts that your teen isn't interested in interacting with but is hesitant to unfollow. Muting will keep posts from those accounts from showing up in their feed. The other person will not know they've been muted.

HOW TO: Tap the “...” menu in the corner of one of their posts. You can choose whether to mute feed posts, story posts, or both from an account. You can also mute someone by pressing and holding on a story.

8. Use "restrict" to control access

Restrict is a new way to reduce unwanted interactions. Comments from anyone on your "Restricted" list will not appear publicly unless you approve them. Restricted people also won't be able to see when you're online or when you've read their messages. Young people may feel more comfortable using "Restrict" as an initial response, and then blocking or unfollowing if the problem persists.

HOW TO: Access Restrict by swiping left on a comment, through the Privacy tab in Settings, or directly on the profile of the account you intend to restrict. Tap "Restrict" to add the account to your restricted list.

9. Make connections, not comparisons

We want young people to be inspired on Instagram, and feel empowered to explore new things and make changes in their lives (or the world!). However, it's important to check in and make sure your teen isn't becoming discouraged by comparing themselves with others and feeling they don't measure up to an unachievable ideal. Having conversations about how things like Instagram accounts, or people's lives on Instagram, can appear "perfect" when they actually aren't can be incredibly helpful, as can encouraging them to follow people who are just as inspiring but more relatable.

10. Use "Close Friends"

Even with have a private account, there are ways to post that are even more selective. The "Close Friends" setting on a story will prevent anyone who isn't on a "Close Friends" list from seeing the story. People who are unable to see the story won't know that they are missing something.

HOW TO: Create a "Close Friends" list by tapping "☰" on your home screen, then tapping "Close Friends." Then, after creating a story, choose "Close Friends" at the bottom of the screen instead of "Publish."

11. Send messages directly

Instagram Direct is the most private way to share on Instagram, so we suggest using it when sharing something very personal—after considering whether or not to share it at all.

HOW TO: To send a message (text, image, or video), click the "✉" icon at the top right of your Feed and choose who to share it with (up to 15 people). You can also message someone by clicking that same icon from their profile.



Balancing Act

Read the teen version of this page in the Teen [#TheWholeMe Toolkit](#).

As part of [#TheWholeMe](#), you may want to check in on how much time your teen is spending on Instagram. Every young person is different, so there's no magic formula for determining the right amount—instead, we encourage young people to track how much time they spend online, to check in with how they feel about that time, and to make adjustments based on those insights.

Launching a conversation about time spent online can spark defensiveness in a young person, especially if it is an adult who initiates it.

Try starting with “respectful curiosity”—asking questions in an open way that helps you understand their experience and the role social media plays in their overall well-being and life. These may be helpful questions to ask: Do you feel more withdrawn or lonely after you’ve been on a particular app for a long time? Do you find yourself more irritable or anxious? Once emotions have been explored, you can mutually decide on parameters for usage.

Instagram has a set of tools that can help with those parameters. Below is an explanation of the tools and some tips on balancing screen time with off-line time.

The Tools

- 1. TRACKING TIME:** The Activity Dashboard shows how much time has been spent on Instagram for the past day and week, as well as average daily time on the app. Tap and hold the blue bars to see how much time has been spent on Instagram on a certain day. Using the tracking tool can open a discussion about time spent online and whether you might want to reduce it.
- 2. SETTLING LIMITS:** The daily reminder can be used to set a limit on the amount of time spent on Instagram. Talk with your teen about how they feel while using the app. Is there a point when they don't get as much out of it? Setting the daily reminder together can be a good way to talk about how Instagram is being used throughout the day.
- 3. MAKING PEACE:** The "Mute Push Notifications" feature can be used to silence Instagram notifications for a period of time. When the preset time is up, notifications will return to their normal settings without your having to reset them. With notifications off, it may be easier to focus on other things without interruption. Notifications can also be fine-tuned so that messages from a study group come through, but not party posts, for example.
- 4. HITTING PAUSE:** Young people can feel pressure to see and interact with all of their friends' posts. When they scroll through every post on their feed since they last logged on, they'll see a message that says "You're All Caught Up." This way, they'll know that they're up to date on everything their friends and communities are up to. "You're All Caught Up" is automatically enabled.

The Tips

- 1. MODEL THE HABITS YOU'D LIKE YOUR TEEN TO ADOPT:** Living a life with intentional screen time is an important part of #TheWholeMe and is good for you and for those around you. Come up with guidelines that work for you, and work with young people in your life to do the same. And be transparent if you struggle—if they know it's hard for you, they won't beat themselves up if it's hard for them.
- 2. CHANGE OVER TIME:** When younger teens first join Instagram, you can explore the app together and discuss who to follow and set parameters that you revisit from time to time. With older teens, it's important to understand that they need autonomous spaces where they can explore and interact with others. What's key for them is to be self-aware enough to make healthy decisions or to ask for help when they need it.
- 3. ENCOURAGE PHONE-FREE ACTIVITIES:** Quality time off-line helps keep what happens online in perspective. You might want to start some weekly traditions that bring the family together to interact with one another, like board games, sports, or a movie night with phones in the other room.



Support for Adults

It may never happen, but it's important for young people to know how to act if they are concerned for someone's emotional well-being on Instagram. You may have already had discussions about mental health. If not, try broaching the topic of skills for helping others with kindness and without judgment. Instagram provides a number of tools for reporting concerning behavior, which are explained below. We've also included signs of distress for you to look out for. Be sure to also read the teen version of [#TheWholeMe](#) to see the tips there.

1. In an emergency, contact authorities

If someone is in immediate physical danger, please contact **000** or Lifeline on **13 11 44** for crisis support.

2. Know the signs to watch for in others

ReachOut Australia has some helpful local resources to help understand mental health issues and how to identify potential issues in other people. Check out [their website](#), which suggests looking out for things like:

- Feeling more worried than usual
- Loss of interest in activities they normally enjoy
- Constantly being in a bad mood
- Having trouble sleeping, or sleeping way more than usual
- Crying for no apparent reason
- Feeling 'down', sad or unmotivated
- Struggling to concentrate
- Changes in eating habits (eating more or less)
- Having difficulty performing at school or at work
- Turning to alcohol or drugs to cope
- Having trouble coping with or participating in everyday activities
- Isolating themselves from family or friends.

If someone is exhibiting any of the above behaviors, we suggest reaching out, as well as using the Instagram reporting tool.

3. Reaching out

Helping someone can be as simple as sending a quick DM or text. Just letting them know that they aren't alone and that you care about them is a kind thing to do. Try a casual check-in like, "I've noticed you posting a lot of sad memes lately. Are you OK?"

Asking questions like, "Have you talked to anyone else about this?" can be a way to see if they have support in the other parts of their life. [ReachOut Australia](#) has some helpful local resources around identifying issues in other people and tips for talking about this [here](#), or you can share resources like the [Kids Help Line](#).

4. Reporting

We encourage young people who are worried that someone may be thinking about hurting themselves to let us know so we can help connect them to information and resources. There are teams all over the world working 24 hours a day, seven days a week to review these reports. The poster will not know who made the report, but they will get help the next time they open the app.

HOW TO: Tap "..." above the post, then tap Report. Select "It's Inappropriate > Self Injury."

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