



HOW CAN I HELP?

**A guide for trusted adults to support young people
affected by content about suicide on social media**



Why

Social media can be positive in many ways, but it can also impact young people's mental health and wellbeing.

This guide focuses on supporting young people affected by content related to suicide.

Some actively search for content about suicide, while others may find it through friends, strangers, or algorithms.

What kinds of content should I be worried about?

The answer to this question can vary depending on the individual, and if it's harming your young person, then it's harmful, this may include:

- Photos, videos and live streams of suicide and self-harm, both real and from art, music, memes and movies/TV.
- Social media challenges and suicide pacts encouraging people to hurt themselves.
- Discussions of high-profile suicides, including sharing suicide notes, talking about causes, sharing quotes and memorial pages.
- People sharing their own experiences of suicide and self-harm*.
- Memorial pages and posts for people who have died by suicide.
- Sharing quotes about suicide, with or without images.
- Content showing methods of suicide, particularly how to use that method.
- Content showing locations of suicide, particularly how to access it (and encouraging users to access it).

*If your young person is sharing, searching for or commenting on this type of content on social media, particularly if it's frequent or increasing, it's time to check in with them about how they're doing.

Why might young people be posting or looking for this content?

This is a great question! And it's a great place to start a kōrero or conversation with your young person if you're worried about the things they're posting or looking at on social media. Directly ask them why they're looking at/engaging with this material.

Reasons might include:

- Curiosity.
- Wanting to connect with others who share similar feelings or experiences, or understand their own thoughts, feelings and experiences.
- Looking for help and support.
- Wanting to help and support someone else, or understand what someone else is going through.
- Wanting to prevent suicide or raise awareness of suicide.
- A social media algorithm is pushing it on them without their knowledge or consent.

Unfortunately, on almost every platform, some users will encourage self-harm and suicide, teaching young people these behaviours and how to hide them (and their social media activity) from adults. It might take a few conversations with different trusted adults to understand what's going on. Don't give up, remain calm and seek support for yourself if needed.



If they are:

- **Wanting to find others who share similar experiences, looking for help or support for themselves:** they need help from trusted adults. Listen without judgement and be prepared to have some difficult conversations. Make sure you have support for yourself. Consider connecting them with someone else – you may not be the person they want to talk with right now, but this is also a good idea even if they are open with you about how they're feeling. If they have a plan to take their life, they need urgent, professional help. Some resources that might help you include:
[Suicide: coping with suicidal thoughts.](#)
[Having suicidal thoughts and finding a way back.](#)
[Are you worried someone is thinking of suicide.](#)
- **Curious:** talk to them about what they've seen and heard. Sometimes, content online can be graphic, confusing and distressing. Other times, it can be misleading. Ask if they have any questions – you don't have to have all the answers, you can search for them together. Talk to them about support available, and keep the conversation open to return to in the future. For further support check out [Connecting Through Kōrero](#) or Social Media 101's for resetting social media.
- **Looking for help for someone else, or trying to understand what a friend is going through:** young people are most likely to reach out to friends if they're feeling suicidal. This can be very hard for their friends – as adults we need to help young people to understand we're there to support them and they can't always solve things on their own. Talk with them about support options available for their friend, how they can look after themselves while they're caring for their friend, and have a look at these resources:
[Connecting Through Kōrero.](#)
[How to step in when a young person's supporting a mate.](#)
- **Wanting to prevent or raise awareness of suicide:** talk to them to understand why this is and what they'd like to do. Could they take part in events that increase mental health and wellbeing? Could they increase their understanding of what prevents suicide and share that information? Do they want to fundraise for a cause? If they want to take part in an event, there's some great information about running safe events here:
<https://mentalhealth.org.nz/our-events>.
- **Being pushed content by the algorithm:** That can be really hard! Check out our resource about re-setting social media spaces to support them to make their social media a safer and more comfortable place for them again.

Deciding what to do with social media accounts after death

You may want to make decisions about your loved ones account(s) following their death, particularly if they haven't made their preferences known.

When someone dies, you have three choices (depending on the platform) of what to do with their social media accounts;

1. Leave them active so people can remember your loved one and pay their respects or
2. Close social media accounts after death
3. Some social media platforms, like Facebook, offer memorialising the account. When an account is memorialised, nothing can be posted from the account, but people can still visit, view pictures, and watch videos. Friends and family might still be able to post to the page, depending on the privacy settings on the account.

If you don't do anything to close the accounts, they'll remain open and active.

Every social media platform has its own process for closing a social media account after death. However, you'll usually need four main things to gain access to online accounts after death:

1. The name of the person who's died
2. Their profile name, ID, or link
3. Proof of death (e.g., death certificate)
4. Proof of your relationship to them (e.g., a birth certificate or marriage license showing your relationship)

Reasons to close an account:

- Sometimes you might not want painful reminders or memories showing up unexpectedly eg: photo memories.
- You may want to prevent people from posting things that may be upsetting or triggering for you or anyone that can view the account.
- Depending on the settings you may want to prevent distressing comments or posts.
- You may want to prevent other people from using content or the platform for other purposes/priorities.
- Sometimes you have no control over who sees content or where it is shared which can impact others negatively and can increase anxiety and hopelessness, which is unhelpful and increases distress.

Remember:

You may want to discuss what to do as a family. If you decide to remove the account but want to keep photos and videos, these should be saved before the account is closed.



Facebook

Facebook gives you the option to either memorialise or delete a Facebook account when someone dies.

Memorialising an account means that it still exists for people to visit, however, no one can log in to the account. The profile also won't show up in public places, such as under "People you may know" or in birthday reminders.

Depending on the account settings, people may be able to post on the timeline of the memorialised account.

To request the memorialisation of a Facebook account for someone who's died, you'll need to submit a form to Facebook. [You can do that here.](#)

Alternatively, you can ask for an account to be deleted. Again, you'll need to submit a form through Facebook, [which you can find here.](#)



TikTok

TikTok does not have a process for when someone dies. You can send a request to deactivate the account through TikTok support. You may need to provide additional verification like a death certificate to support your request.

[You can find TikTok support here.](#)



Instagram

Instagram is owned by Facebook, so the process following someone's death is similar. You can either memorialise or delete the account.

[You can submit a request to memorialise an Instagram account here.](#)

[You can submit a request to delete the Instagram account of someone who's died here.](#)



Snapchat

Snapchat gives you the option to deactivate someone's account when they die. You can do this through their support page. You'll need to provide a copy of the death certificate so they can verify that the person's died. You can submit a request to deactivate an account [here](#). Under "What is your concern with this account?," select "The person passed away" and fill out the fields underneath. [You can do that here.](#)



X / Twitter

Twitter doesn't have a memorialisation option, but you can ask them to deactivate the account. You'll need to submit a form and say how you're connected to the person who's died. [You can fill out the form here.](#)



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MINISTRY OF HEALTH

**This resource was commissioned by the
Suicide Prevention Office within the Ministry of Health
with Alight and Social Good**

✦ Alight



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