



support for families

to help young people on social media

Secondary school can be a challenging time for young people affected by social media.

Social media has become an integral part of the daily lives of many young people. Its constant presence can have a profound impact on mental health and wellbeing. On one hand, social media provides a platform for young people to connect with others, share interests and express themselves creatively. On the other, it can also negatively impact their mental health and wellbeing, causing feelings of anxiety, depression, and insecurity.

Sometimes these stressors can feel overwhelming. It's important that your young

person knows that they don't have to wait to ask for help — that now is a good time to talk.

Having the support of family and friends can make a difference to a young person's life and their emotional wellbeing. For you, it means acknowledging when they're struggling emotionally, and what to do to support them.

This is where the headspace NIP in the bud framework can help to resolve problems before they feel too overwhelming to manage. The NIP framework helps you to **Notice** changes in mood and behaviour, **Inquire** sensitively and competently and **Provide** information to help young people access the right support.



Notice

The first step is to notice changes in your young person's behaviour.

You may want to consider whether they're being affected by other things — like what's happening at school, interactions on social media, issues in the media etc.

If you have noticed changes in their behaviour, try to work out how long it might have gone on for. There might be other symptoms of emerging mental wellbeing problems that they may need extra support for.

Signs to look out for:

- Unable to switch off from social media, distracting attention from other things
- Pressure to stay relevant and up-to-date
- Comparing their lives with those of others on social media
- Attempts to monetise their social media content
- Negative effects from cyberbullying
- Noticeable changes in behaviour e.g. feelings of anger, sadness, lack of focus
- No longer enjoying things that interest them
- Easily irritated and having problems with friends e.g. withdrawal, acting out.



Inquire

This is your opportunity to find out what's going on. By asking questions and listening, you see what other support or action you may need to take. It's important to ask what the young person needs, rather than assume. Remember, listening can be just as powerful as offering solutions.

There's no perfect way to start a conversation about mental health. Find a time and place where everyone involved is feeling safe to talk about it.

You're trying to understand their experience so you're in a better place to help. Some ways to try having this conversation might be:

- "Hey, I've noticed you seem to have a lot on your mind at the moment. Do you want to talk about it?"

- "How are your friends at the moment, how have things been going with them?"
- A way to start a conversation could even just as an invitation to do something together. Then, you can try asking about things once you're doing the activity. Asking straight up could be too intense.

Be mindful how you bring up the topic of social media with your young person. Avoid things like commenting on the amount of time they spend on it, as they may become defensive and less likely to open up.

How to help:

1. Don't be judgmental, and actively listen
2. Choose an appropriate place and time, with the right people there
3. Be aware of your body language and theirs
4. Acknowledge their experience
5. Reflect and clarify the details
6. Give them reassurance and be hopeful
7. Normalise their experience, don't minimise it
8. Validate and encourage them to seek help (see next step: Provide)



Provide

It's about having a two-way conversation with your young person to help them decide what they might need at that time, and you as a family member helping them plan the steps to access it. Responding in a way that shows you are there for them.

While suggesting they take a break from social media may sound like good advice, a young person may not feel like that's an option. They may be open to finding a balance or reducing their time. There are many smaller steps they can take like turning off notifications or unfollowing accounts that make them feel bad.

Based on what comes out of your conversation, you'll have a direction for what further support you may need.

Questions you could ask:

- "It sounds like being on social media is a bit stressful at the moment? How would you feel about us having a brainstorm on some things we could try to ease the stress?"
- "I'd like to find a way that I can be helpful for you. Would that be OK for you?"
- "I'm not feeling very confident about the best way to help at the moment. Would it be OK if we called a service to help us figure out the best way forward?"
- "I'm hearing that X is really difficult at the moment, and I'm really glad you've come to me. I don't know a lot about X, but I'd really like to learn so that we can work through this together — how do you feel about that?"



For more information on how to support your young person using the NIP it in the bud framework, visit headspace.org.au/nipitinthebud

