internet
matters.org

Advice for young people:

Supporting your friends online Help for hard conversations

An important part of addressing the pressure to be perfect is being kind and supportive to others, in the same way, you expect others to be kind and supportive to you.
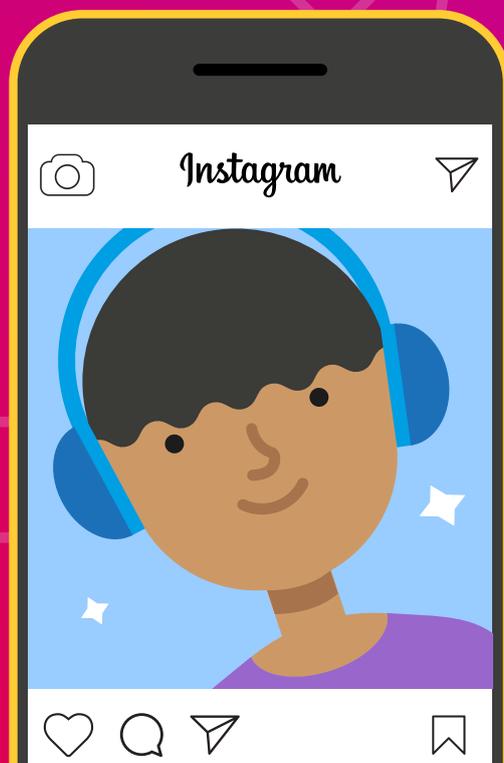
Instagram

There might be times when you notice someone on Instagram who seems to be feeling sad or angry almost all of the time. It can be really difficult to know what to say or do in those moments. **Here are some ideas.**

Always take care of yourself first

If **you** are the person who is feeling sad or angry or bullied, talk to someone. If you don't have an adult or a peer you feel comfortable with, there are a number of organisations that can offer you one-to-one support.
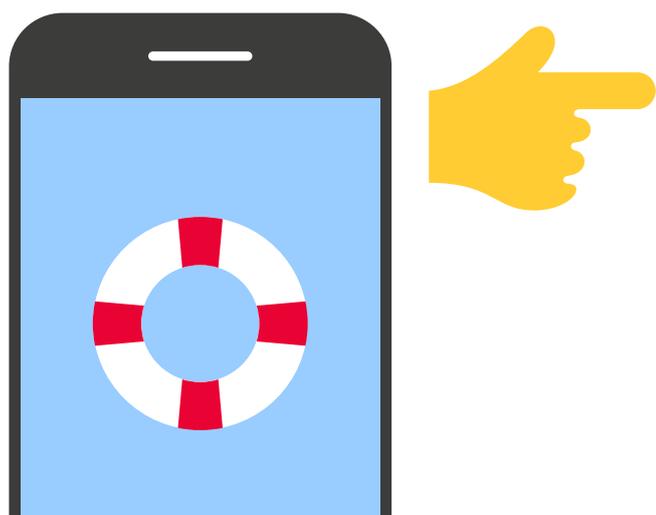
Support and counselling services

- **Childline** – a free, private and confidential service where you can talk about anything ☎ **0800 1111**

- **Shout** – available 24/7 and totally anonymous unless they need to contact emergency services to keep you or someone else safe. Text **SHOUT** to **85258.**

- **The Mix** – offers a range of advice and support for under 25s ☎ **0808 808 4994**

- **Papyrus** – Charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide ☎ **0800 068 41 41**

- **Samaritans** – 24 hour confidential listening and support ☎ **116 123**

Know the signs to watch for in others

People may communicate their feelings in different ways, **but there are things that can give you clues to their emotional state**. Here is a list of things you could look out for:

- They're **not acting like themselves**

- They are **taking more risks than usua**l

- They talk about **feeling hopeless**

- They're taking **more drugs** or **drinking more**

- They are **harming themselves**

- They **don't feel like hanging out** as much

- Their mind seems to be **somewhere else**

- They are **so anxious they can't relax**

- They've gotten **negative about life**
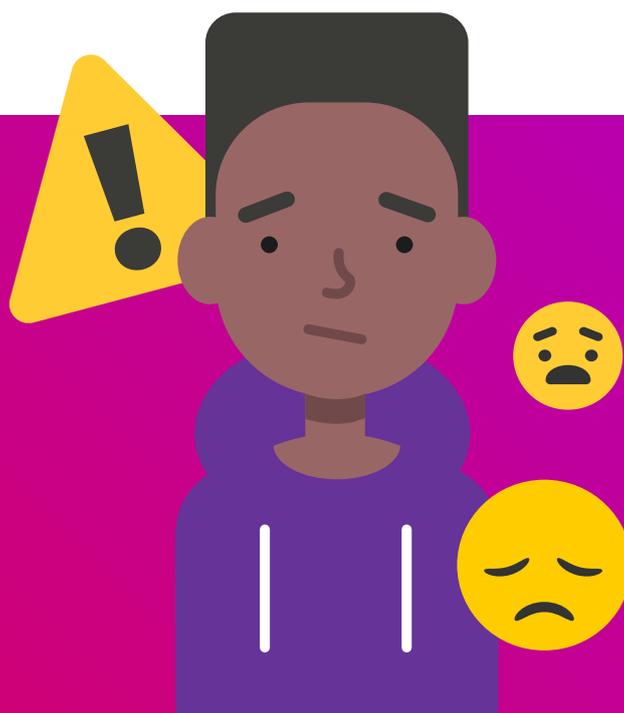
Everyone has some bad days, but if you notice someone exhibiting any of the above behaviours repeatedly, **the tips below can help you figure out what to do.**

Reach out

A phone call, text or DM **telling someone that you care about them can mean a lot.** You don't have to have all the answers – just letting them know that they aren't alone and that you care about them is a kind thing to do.
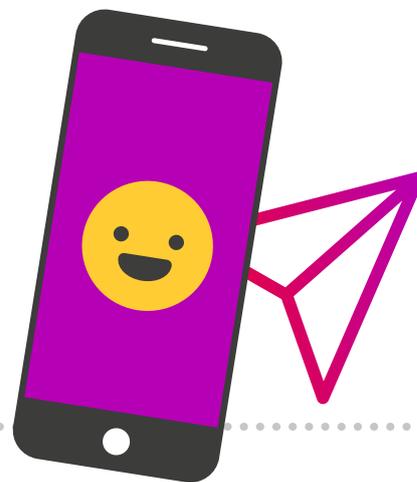
What to say

It's best to keep it casual. Try things like, "I've noticed you posting a lot of sad memes lately, are you OK?" or "I'm checking in on you because you seemed really upset the other day, how are you?"

Don't assume someone else will do it

You might think that a person has a lot of other friends or that you don't know them well enough to talk to – but you never really know. **It's likely better to check in and find out they're fine** than to ignore something that's worrying you.

If they open up, listen

Avoid offering advice or talking about yourself – keep the focus on the other person and how they are feeling. Asking questions like "Have you talked to anyone else about this?" can be ways to see if they have support in the other parts of their life. Childline has some good guidelines for this.

Encourage them to get help

Sometimes we can **get so caught up in our feelings that we don't see a way out.** You can suggest that your friend talks to their parents or another responsible adult or share resources like the Shout free text line.

Report concerning content

If you believe that someone may be thinking about hurting themselves, **report this to Instagram so they 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. To make a report, tap ••• above the post, then tap Report. Select **"It's Inappropriate > Self injury."**

When to tell someone

If the person you've reached out to doesn't show any signs of feeling better, if you start feeling uncomfortable with what you are asked to keep secret, or if their behaviour gets more extreme, **talk to an adult or a friend you trust**