



Monitoring social media

Guidelines for parents after a death in the school community

The term ‘social media’ commonly refers to websites that facilitate communication and networking between people. These include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and MySpace. Social networking can also occur via mobile phone text messaging.

Messages posted on these social media platforms can have a large impact because they can quickly reach an enormous number of people.

This new and evolving form of communication can cause anxiety for parents, in the emotion-charged atmosphere that follows a death.

Your young person is likely to turn to social media for a variety of purposes. These include sending news out about a death, posting online messages (both appropriate and inappropriate), calling for impromptu gatherings and creating virtual memorials.

Speaking to your young person

When speaking with your young person ask them to make you aware of:

- Information about upcoming or impromptu gatherings;
- Derogatory messages about the deceased;
- Messages that bully or victimise current students;
- Comments indicating students who may themselves be at risk (such as “I am going to join you soon” or “I can’t take life without you”).

Check security settings

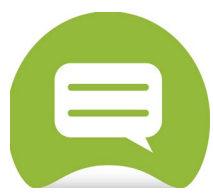
If your young person wishes to post messages, pictures or start a memorial page it is important that they do this in a safe way. All social media applications have security settings where the user can control who can access their information and posts. It is important that your young person has strong privacy settings so what they are posting can’t be seen by internet trolls. It is also important that they know how to block unwanted comments and attentions. Please see the step by step guide to securing each social

media application on the back of this page or visit **cybersmart.gov.au**

It’s important that young people know who to contact if they are aware of or concerned about messages they see on social media sites.

Your young person should be reassured that parents and school staff are only interested in supporting a healthy response to their friend’s death, not in interfering with their communication, so if they see something that is concerning it is important that they tell a trusted adult.

In some cases it may be important for parents to alert the authorities, this may be about the need for security at a late-night student gathering, comments that may identify that a student is at risk or if people are posting deliberately offensive messages and pictures. Most sites allow you to report offensive material and request that it be removed (although be aware this process can often take weeks or even months).



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Social media can feel overwhelming in a time like this, however it is important to remember that it can be used in a positive way to help share health promotion and connect people through a difficult and emotional time.

Where can parents and young people get more information and help?

headspace centres provide support, information and advice to young people aged 12 to 25. For locations and other information, go to **headspace.org.au**

eheadspace provides online counselling and telephone support to young people aged 12 to 25. Its services are available at **eheadspace.org.au** and on **1800 650 890**

Other resources

beyondblue's youth program, **Youthbeyondblue**, promotes the message that it's acceptable to talk about depression. It

encourages young people, their families and friends to look out for each other and to get help when it is needed. A set of youth fact sheets can be downloaded from **youthbeyondblue.com**

Reach Out! is a web based service that encourages young people to help themselves through tough times. The service aims to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing by providing support, information and referrals in a format designed for young people. You can find them at; **au.reachout.com**

Kids Helpline is a 24-hour telephone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. They be contacted on **180055 1800** and at **kidshelpline.com.au**.

Lifeline (13 11 14) is a 24-hour telephone counselling service. **lifeline.org.au** has other online information and referral services.

The information provided in this document has been adapted from the headspace School

Support viewed at;
<http://www.headspace.org.au/what-works/school-support/resources>