

PROTECTING YOUR SPACE AND WELL-BEING ON INSTAGRAM



Illustrations by @drawnbymary

A NOTE FROM NEDA

Every day, people go to Instagram to express themselves, seek inspiration, and access supportive communities. For those who struggle with body image or an eating disorder, Instagram can be especially powerful for discovering and connecting with individuals, movements, messages and resources that are empowering and life-affirming.

As the largest nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by eating disorders, NEDA is committed to helping our community understand how to navigate not only their physical spaces, but also their online spaces in ways that are positive and conducive to recovery and acceptance. That's why we partnered with Instagram to develop a guide that provides

tips and tools on how you can manage your experience to support your well-being and help you practice self-care online.

It's important to be mindful of the media you consume and how it impacts you. We hope your time on Instagram is meaningful and supportive, and that this can serve as a resource to help.

If you or someone you know needs support, visit nationaleatingdisorders.org, or call 1-800-931-2238. If you are in crisis, text "NEDA" to 741-741.

Claire Mysko
Chief Executive Officer
National Eating Disorders Association

1. PROTECT YOUR SPACE

By switching to a private account, you can choose who follows you and views the photos and videos you share.

HOW TO ☺

Tap “profile button” on the bottom right and then either “options button” (for iOS) or “...” (for Android). Scroll down to “Private Account” and move the slider to the right. The slider will turn blue once the account is private.



2. BE THOUGHTFUL ABOUT WHO YOU SHARE WITH

If you're excited to share something, but only want a select group of friends or followers to see, share it through Direct or Close Friends.

HOW TO 🗨️

Instead of the main upload tool, click on the Instagram Direct icon in the top right corner and choose who to share it with (up to 15 people). With Stories, you can select individual followers or groups to share with, and you can identify a group of "Close Friends" to share any Story with instead of posting publicly.



3. DISCOVER POSITIVE COMMUNITIES

Make your Instagram feed a positive space by seeking out accounts that feature people – and bodies – that are both similar to and different from you. The more diverse bodies you see, the more you may be able to appreciate how natural and beautiful all bodies are – including your own. Follow hashtags that connect you to life-affirming content communities of support. Some commonly used hashtags for inspiration include [#EDRecovery](#), [#RecoveryWarrior](#), [#BodyPositivity](#), [#BodyLove](#), [#BodyLiberation](#), and [#FatAcceptance](#).



4. OWN YOUR FEED

Consider the people you follow and how they make you feel as you scroll through Instagram. If an account you're following makes you feel bad about yourself or your body, it may be time to unfollow them. No notification is sent when you unfollow an account. Think of it as a small and powerful way to practice self-care.

HOW TO ☺

Go to the profile of the account you'd like to unfollow and tap "Unfollow".



5. MUTE THE NOISE

It's okay if you need a break from an account you follow. Use "Mute" to hide their posts, and simply unmute them when you want to see what they're up to again. They won't be notified you've muted them.

HOW TO 🕒

To Mute, tap the "..." menu in the corner of the post. You can choose whether to mute feed posts, story posts, or both from an account. You can also mute them by pressing and holding on a story in your tray or from a profile.



6. BLOCK OR RESTRICT NEGATIVITY

If an account is negatively impacting your experience, you can block them. When you block an account, they're never notified, and they can no longer view your posts or search for your Instagram account. (You can also unblock them at any time.)

You can protect yourself from unwanted interactions with a new feature called Restrict. Restrict is designed to empower you to quietly protect your account while still keeping an eye on the bully. Once restricted, the account won't be able to see when you're online or if you've read their messages, their new comments on your posts will only be visible to that person (and you can choose to see the comment by tapping See Comment), and you won't receive any notifications for future comments from that person.



HOW TO ☺

Block an account by tapping “...” on their profile, then tapping “Block.” You can restrict someone by swiping left on a comment, through the Privacy tab in Settings, or directly on the profile of the account you intend to restrict.

7. CONTROL THE COMMENTS

Instagram automatically hides offensive comments on your posts. There are also comment controls available that allow you to choose who comments on your posts and which words, phrases, and emojis you want filtered out.

HOW TO 😊

You can find these tools in the “Comment Controls” section of the app settings. There, you can choose to allow comments from: 1) everyone, 2) people you follow and those people’s followers, 3) just the people you follow, or 4) your followers. You can also turn off comments entirely from your posts. To manually add specific words and phrases you find offensive to be filtered out from your comments, save them in the “Manual Filter” option. The “Offensive Comment” filter is switched on by default.



8. LOOK OUT FOR OTHERS

If you see a post that makes you worry that someone might hurt themselves, know that you don't have to handle it alone. Let Instagram know about the post and the next time the person opens the app they will see a message connecting them to support resources, such as talking to friends, contacting a helpline, or finding additional resources. It is completely anonymous. They will never know who alerted Instagram about the content. You are not telling on someone; you are helping them access support and resources.

HOW TO ☺

Tap "..." above the post, tap "Report," and select "It's Inappropriate > Self injury."



9. SET LIMITS

The time you spend on Instagram should be positive and intentional. When you find you aren't getting as much joy from it, the "Activity Dashboard" gives you tools to help you set boundaries and manage the time you spend on the platform.

HOW TO ☺

Go to "Settings" and tap "Your Activity." At the top of the page, you'll see a dashboard showing the average amount of time you spend on Instagram. Tap any bar to see your total time for that day. You can set a daily reminder to receive an alert when you've reached the amount of time you want to spend on Instagram for that day. You can also tap on "Notification Settings" to access the "Mute Push Notifications" setting.



“Before I follow anyone, I ask myself,
“How does this content serve me?
What role does it play in my recovery?”
Just like in the real world, we need the
spaces we spend a lot of time in to be
conducive to our healing. Digital spaces
are no different.”

“Instagram is one of the few media spaces that I get to control. So I make sure to follow a diverse range of people and bodies that make me feel empowered and uplifted.”

@THESHIRAROSE

“I use the custom comment filter to filter out specific words. Remember that this is your space - don't feel bad about taking steps to protect it.”

