

# How to Find Healthy Online Communities

Sometimes we find support and connections in online communities and on social media that we can't find in real life. This support helps us feel seen and heard and validates our interests and identities. We can connect to others with similar ideas, experiences, and struggles, which can make us feel less alone when we find it difficult to connect to those around us physically.

But not every online community is healthy. So how can we determine what a healthy one looks like? The truth is that the perfect safe space doesn't exist online, but you can determine what feels healthy and safe for you.



## WHAT DOES A HEALTHY ONLINE COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

For many young people, social media leads to better overall well-being. A majority of adolescents report that social media helps them feel more accepted (58%), like they have people who can support them through tough times (67%), like they have a place to show their creative side (71%), and are more connected to what's going on in their friends' lives (80%). Being a part of healthy online communities has a positive impact on our mental health.

But what does a healthy online community look like, and how do you know if you are a part of one? Here are some ways to determine if you are:

### IT FEELS SAFE.

A healthy online community is free from bullying, offensive content, judgment, and harassment. It doesn't require you to send anything – pictures, contact information, address, etc. – that makes you feel uncomfortable.

### IT HOLDS EVERYONE ACCOUNTABLE.

In a healthy online community, there are moderators and rules that are enforced to protect and defend users from offensive language, content, and trolls trying to hurt, harm, or demean others.

### IT'S A SPACE WHERE YOU FEEL CONNECTED TO OTHERS.

You can express yourself and discuss your hobbies, ideas, opinions, and perspectives. You freely like, share, comment, and have conversations.

