THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION

THE
CHANGEMAKER
TOOLKIT

WHAT IS A CHANGEMAKER?

A changemaker is someone who has decided to use the power of the internet for positive purpose through a combination of upstanding, allyship and online activism.

Changemaking is a form of positive activism that can range from simply reporting online abuse anonymously through to more committed upstanding and allyship related activities. Changemakers can change everything from laws to lives.

WHY BECOME A CHANGEMAKER?

Becoming a changemaker empowers people to make the world a better place and to make a real difference to the lives of others.

Having the know-how and commitment to help individuals and minority groups can change and even save lives on and offline.

HOW DO WE BECOME A CHANGEMAKER?

With a little determination to make a difference, anybody can become a changemaker by learning the basics about upstanding, allyship, digital civility and personal wellbeing.

A combination of taking the time to read through this toolkit, completing the six module changemakers curriculum and carefully considering what changes you would like to see in the world is a great starting point.

UPSTANDING

One of the roles you will learn about on your journey to becoming a changemaker, is that of an 'upstander.'

An upstander is someone who chooses to take action when they feel somebody needs extra support or when an injustice is taking place. Upstander intervention can include anonymously reporting abusive posts or comments, making platforms aware of users in crisis, reaching out to a person being targeted with bullying or intervening publicly to challenge toxic or offensive users.

TOP TIP

CHECKING IF THE PERSON BEING TARGETED IS COMFORTABLE WITH AN INTERVENTION, MAINTAINING RESPECTFUL DIALOGUE WITHOUT PERSONAL ATTACKS AND IDENTIFYING USERS IN CRISIS CAN ALL MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO THE OUTCOME OF THE SITUATION.

When it is appropriate to intervene or act as an upstander?

Upstanding is appropriate in situations when you see someone being targeted with bullying or abuse online, if you think someone is being treated unfairly or discriminated against, or if you think someone needs crisis support. Upstanding can change and even save lives if done in a timely, informed and considered way. If you are not comfortable with publicly upstanding, or contacting the person being targeted you can anonymously report anything that concerns you to the platform.

HOW TO UPSTAND IN A SAFE AND RESPONSIBLE WAY

1 If possible, check with the person being targeted before you intervene publicly. A simple DM to ask them if they are comfortable can help someone feel in control of the situation.

2 Try to intervene in a reasoned and rational way. Emotional interventions often lead to the problem escalating further.

3 Challenge the conversation and not the person. Personal attacks will result in further conflict.

4 Direct anybody requiring extra help to the platform safety center or support organization.

5 Report abusive posts and users who might be displaying signs of crisis directly to the platform.

MAKE YOUR UPSTANDING COUNT!

To keep things positive, avoid being drawn into abusive, aggressive and hostile exchanges with people who are not prepared to have meaningful or productive conversation.

When upstanding, try to address the problematic behavior and not the person demonstrating it. Calling out flawed logic, hypocrisy and ill-informed judgments is not the same as personally attacking a person, and can lead to a more meaningful discussion instead of unhelpful like-for-like conflict. Retaliating with personal and abusive comments will escalate the situation instead of resolving it. Misjudged interventions can lead to the intended target feeling responsible and isolated or even being blamed for making things worse.

Identifying and supporting people in crisis

People talking about harming themselves, harming someone else or using phrases that suggest they are becoming overwhelmed by a situation are all potential signs that someone is struggling and might be in crisis. In addition to ideation of suicide and self-harm, phrases such as 'I can't take this anymore,' 'I can't cope' or 'I can't go on like this' are all signs that a person might be struggling to cope with a situation and would benefit from support.

TOP TIP

MOST SOCIAL PLATFORMS OFFER ACCESS TO THIRD-PARTY ORGANIZATIONS THAT DEAL WITH A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH AND CRISIS SUPPORT. PROVIDING A LINK OR EVEN DIRECTING SOMEONE TO EXPERT RESOURCES AT THE RIGHT TIME COULD CHANGE OR EVEN SAVE A LIFE.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE SOMEONE STRUGGLING ONLINE

1 If you feel comfortable doing so, reach out to the person privately and let them know that you are there for them if they need you.

2 Report your concerns to the social media platform using the available reporting tools.

3 Remind the person that people care about their wellbeing and that there is lots of help available to them.

4 Refer them to the social media platforms' safety resources and suggest they contact crisis support organizations or medical professionals local to them.

TOP TIP

NORMALIZE THE USE OF BLOCKING AND REPORTING TOOLS WHEN ENCOUNTERING THOSE WHO CHOOSE ABUSE OVER REASON.

ALLYSHIP

Allyship or being an ally is about using our voice online to show solidarity with marginalized and underrepresented groups while being open to learning about the lived experiences of others who face identity-based discrimination.

True allyship is supporting oppressed or marginalized groups as well as reflecting on our own relationships with groups that perpetuate discriminating behaviors.

TOP TIP

LEARNING MORE ABOUT OTHER'S EXPERIENCES AND REALITIES AND ALSO HOW YOU CAN EFFECT POSITIVE CHANGE WITHIN YOURSELF AND OTHERS IS A PERSONAL JOURNEY OF UNDERSTANDING AND LEARNING – NOT AN IDENTITY YOU ASSUME OR A SOCIAL STATUS.

What is performative allyship?

Performative allyship is when those with privilege profess solidarity with a cause without authentic understanding of the problem or any meaningful actions. Otherwise known as 'talking the talk, without walking the walk.' Assumed solidarity, promoting ill-informed messaging and self-serving agendas can potentially harm underrepresented and marginalized groups. Performative actions can also be seen as a way of avoiding potential scrutiny or an attempt to gain positive social status.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING PERFORMATIVE ALLYSHIP

1 Use your voice but don't make it about you.

2 Learn about the lived experiences and personal truths of those you want to support. Don't assume anything - apart from the fact you probably know very little.

3 Do your research before sharing information online to make sure it is genuine, accurate and helpful.

4 Process any strong emotions you have regarding oppressed people with those that have privilege and do not suffer from discrimination, not with the group that are affected.

5 Always remember that authentic and informed allyship is about amplifying pre-existing voices. It is NOT a superficial show of solidarity which allows you to reap the perceived social benefits of being an 'ally.'

BE A GOOD ALLY!

Taking the time to understand and amplify the lived experiences of others is key to promoting an authentic, informative and meaningful message.

Remember that it's not about you or how you feel. Elevate the truth of others with their voice, not yours - hand over the mic. Make sure you use social media safety tools to moderate and safeguard any ally content you share from negative or abusive comments. Most social media platforms provide features that allow you to filter out unwanted users as well as specific words and phrases.

THE POWER OF ALLYSHIP

Allyship helps us to create more inclusive, understanding and supportive communities for underrepresented and marginalized groups - as well as individuals who face discrimination.

It also empowers people to challenge oppression and discrimination by learning about the lived experiences and truths of marginalized people, while elevating the voices of those who are not heard in an effort to bring about real tangible change.

PERSONAL SAFETY AND WELLBEING

To be able to be the change you want to see online it is important that you prioritize your own safety and wellbeing.

You're not going to be able to help and support others effectively if you are in need of help yourself. Always try to balance online and offline wellbeing to maintain good mental and physical health ensuring you don't neglect important routines such as sleep, diet, exercise and work or study.

TOP TIP

STRONG FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS CAN AFFECT THE WAY WE THINK, OUR REASONING AND OUR ABILITY TO DEAL WITH EVERYDAY LIFE.

TOP TIP

IF SOMETHING WE EXPERIENCE ONLINE MAKES US FEEL ANXIOUS OR UNCOMFORTABLE, WE SHOULD TAKE THE TIME TO CONSIDER IF CONSUMING THAT TYPE OF CONTENT IS A HEALTHY OR PRODUCTIVE CHOICE.

Social media and our mental health

The amount of time we spend on social media, the type of content we consume and the connections we make online can all affect our mental health and wellbeing. A concerning change of mood or severe emotional response such as fear, rage, anxiety, grief, depression or aggression in response to an online experience are all indications that our mental health might be affected.

Looking after our mental health on social media

Avoid consuming too much 'bad news' or online content that triggers overwhelming negative feelings. Try to establish and maintain self-care routines and learn to recognize when you are being drawn into consuming too much negative or triggering content.

Many social platforms serve content to us based on our searches and activities online, so if we spend time exploring content that is triggering to us, we are more likely to be served with more similar content by the platform algorithm - this can create an unhealthy cycle.

Using social media to improve our mental health.

Apart from all the positive connections and diverse experiences that social media offers, there are many self-help groups and organizations that promote useful mental health awareness content and effective wellbeing tips and advice. Connecting with individuals, groups or organizations that focus on wellbeing is a great way of maintaining and enhancing our own mental health. Most social media platforms also provide access to mental health support resources including independent crisis helplines and third-party expert organizations.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE TARGETED WITH CYBERBULLYING OR ABUSE

1. Don't retaliate. Your wellbeing is more important than engaging with someone who resorts to abuse. Normalize this response.

2. Block and report. Make use of the platforms' safety tools to block and report the user. Block and report should be normalized tools in your changemaking armory.

3. Take control. Use your safety tools to ensure your online space is protected from unwanted users and comments. Check your privacy and security settings and adjust them if needed.

4. It's not your fault. Remember that the person doing this has issues that they need help with, it has nothing to do with anything you have or have not done. There is never an excuse for bullying or abuse.

5. It's ok to not be ok. Talk to someone or reach out for support if you feel you need to. Most platforms have internal and external support resources for anyone experiencing issues on their platforms.

CRISIS SUPPORT

U.S.

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Mental Health America: www.mentalhealthamerica.net

CANADA

Crisis Services Canada: www.crisisservicescanada.ca
Canada Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca

U.K.

Samaritans: www.samaritans.org
Mind: www.mind.org.uk

EUROPE & INTERNATIONAL

Befrienders Worldwide: www.befrienders.org

MIDDLE EAST

The Lighthouse Arabia: www.lighthousearabia.com

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Lifeline: www.lifeline.org.au
Beyond Blue: www.beyondblue.org.au
Ministry of Health: www.health.govt.nz

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