

Support Sheet



International Society
for the Study of Trauma
and Dissociation

Wise Social Media Use for Survivors of Complex Trauma and Dissociation

Social media is an accessible form of support for many people who experience complex trauma and dissociation, with a variety of platforms available. This can be especially important for people learning about a diagnosis, seeking peer support, and fighting stigma. However, social media use can also be unhelpful at times. Adopting a wise and balanced approach is important.

It can be helpful to remember that not all information in social media platforms is accurate or correct. Trauma and dissociation are complex topics, and sometimes social media platforms can present information that is biased or lacking



professional consensus. It is important to approach information on social media with caution and an open mind. Try to find connections with helpful health professionals and respected online groups when dealing with any information related to diagnosis, symptoms, or treatment.

Be aware that the internet is very diverse and not all groups will be right for you. Some groups will support interventions or treatments that are not right for you, or they may not be suited to your level of recovery. In addition, some groups may advocate a pace of recovery that feels too fast or too slow for you. It is important to look around and find a group that feels a good fit.

For survivors who have DID, it is also important to realise that there are many groups on the internet who have a different experience of having multiple identities than that which people with trauma-related DID experience. In the internet space these are broadly called 'plural communities'. They may include people who embrace and celebrate a sense of being multiple, or having plural identities for spiritual reasons, or

for personal reasons that do not include trauma. Survivors with DID caused by early childhood trauma may find this is so different to their own experience of being multiple, that they cannot relate or connect. They may even find it distressing. Again, it is important to look around and find the right group for you.

General Safety Principles

General safety principles for social media and online communities may include the following:

General Internet Safety

While some groups or sites work hard to create safe places, anything you share online should be considered public information at risk of being seen or shared with others who may not be safe. Be mindful that while most people in survivor groups are well-intentioned, these groups can also attract perpetrators and abusive people. It's also not usually safe to publicly share personal details, such as where you live, where you work, or bank account details. Be very mindful that any information shared using your real name could affect your future privacy and even your employment. Also consider the impacts of posting photos and videos, even under a pseudonym.

Take Charge of What You Read

Remember that anyone can post anything on any platform, but you can set boundaries about the types of online content you view.

Regulate Your Time on Social Media

It is important to monitor how often you are on social media, and how long for. Experiment with times and find a timeframe that suits you.

Consider setting an alarm to remind you to get off social media. Caring for yourself physically, emotionally, and mentally is most important.



Have a Safety Plan Ready for Managing Triggering Content

Some ideas are taking a timeout from digital content, using grounding skills to re-connect with your body, or take a stretch or walk outside. It may also help to do something creative, like journaling, painting, building something, or some mindful movement. Most apps have safety features that allow you to block certain keywords, disable access to adult content, turn off video auto-play, or mute/block certain accounts that cause you distress. Utilizing these features, whether you're simply feeling more vulnerable that day or know you never want to interact with that content, can limit exposure to known triggers in the first place.

Be Aware That Scrolling Digital Content Can Be Dissociative in Nature

It may feel like rest or relief because it is a familiar and comforting brain process, but it may not always meet your needs. It can help to set a timer, prioritize other projects, or agree on boundaries for how often or when are appropriate times to engage with digital content.

Know That You Have Options

Even if you prefer a specific platform or type of social media, there are a variety of sources for accurate information and safe interactions. Learn to discern what is true, what is helpful, and what is supportive for you specifically – and let go of what is not.

Be Mindful of Attachment and Intensity in Social Media Relationships

Keep in mind that relational trauma leaves a person wanting attunement, so connections online with others who have similar experiences as you may feel intense at times. However, intensity is not the same as intimacy. In healthy relationships intimacy develops over time and takes both time and effort. It can sometimes be helpful to talk over concerns about relationships and intimacy with a therapist.

Being your authentic, whole self doesn't mean giving away pieces of yourself. You can support others in shared experiences, but also take your turn at being vulnerable, sharing and receiving support.



Real Relationships are Mutual and Real Connection Helps Your Body and Your Brain Feel Safe

If you don't feel safe, that's important information to notice and respond to. Take precautions and discuss your concerns and feelings with someone you do trust.

Monitor the Usefulness of Your Social Media Use

Regularly check in with yourself and ask yourself some questions. Is your consumption of digital media contributing to your progress, or hindering it? Is it helping you connect with others, or enabling your avoidance of others? Is it helping you feel better about ALL of you? It can sometimes help to explore these questions with a therapist.

Tips for People Living with Dissociated Identities

People with DID may feel isolated and alone. They may have an urge to 'stop hiding themselves' when on the internet. As natural as these feelings are, not all spaces on the internet are safe or respectful. Take your time. Get to know the space in which you share. Get to know the people that you are sharing with.

Young parts who did not grow up with the internet may not fully understand what being known in any online context means or what it fully entails. Practice informed consent before sharing things that are personal to them or the whole system.

Take care when talking about yourself and parts inside. It is common for parts to have different feelings about what they want to share. Communicate inside to ensure that social media use is collaborative and respectful of the privacy needs of all parts of you. Generally, it's not safe to disclose all of your system, or information about how to access parts of you.

A potentially safe way to share your experience online, without making oneself vulnerable to those who may wish to cause harm, call parts forward, etc, is to consider using different names for system members, locations, and other factors.

When sharing, Pseudonyms are an exercise of boundaries - ones that protect the whole system - while still allowing you to receive the benefits of finding community, doing public education, or other activities.