

# Here's how to keep social media toxicity at bay

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The fear of missing out (FOMO) is real and in the age of social media, where staying connected and building your social network is primal, hitting snooze on notifications can be tough. Sadly, staying on top of your social media game (be it as an influencer or entrepreneur) comes with a huge set of challenges. One of the big roadblocks that we all need to tackle is social media toxicity, which could be from friends and influencers who set superficial goals, or even content pages that flush out toxic feeds for followers and likes.

Happiness and wellbeing coach Pooja Khera observes that social media has taken over our lives, but it doesn't mean that we have to get consumed by it. "Earlier, social media was simple — it was about 'poking' your friends and tagging them in pictures and posts. Now, it has become a big part of most of our lives. We are hooked to it and constantly scrolling through your feed can lead to early symptoms of progressive depression, or increased feeling of anxiety. But there are ways in which you can control it," says Pooja. We spoke further with her and other experts, who suggest ways in which you can restrict social media toxicity.

## **It is okay to unfollow a friend**

Experts stress on prioritising your mental health and hitting the ‘unfollow’ button, if following someone is negatively affecting you. “Hit the unfollow button even if it is a friend who is spreading toxicity. You are not obligated to follow someone if you do not think their content is healthy and helpful to you. Honestly, a real friend wouldn’t mind such petty things, so don’t feel guilty or fret over it. Setting boundaries is important — both offline and online,” shares life coach Surbhi Kumari.

## **Choose to respond with empathy**

If connecting with your followers is critical to your growth as an influencer, then keeping a check on how you respond to them goes a long way in keeping toxicity at bay. “It’s extremely easy to be toxic on social media because you can remain anonymous. I receive a lot of hate comments on my posts only because they are misinterpreted most of the time. My approach to this is to delay my response and put myself in the shoes of the other person. This helps me reply with empathy, rather than aggression,” says Surbhi.

## Follow people that inspire you

After cleansing your feed of what and who does not resonate with you and your goals, it is time to find people and handles that inspire you and help develop your lifeskills. “Follow people or pages that actually inspire you in some way. Connect with people who have similar hobbies and interests. Search for feeds that have several ideas for your personal growth,” suggests Pooja.

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