

# Privacy & Safety

on Facebook

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A GUIDE FOR SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

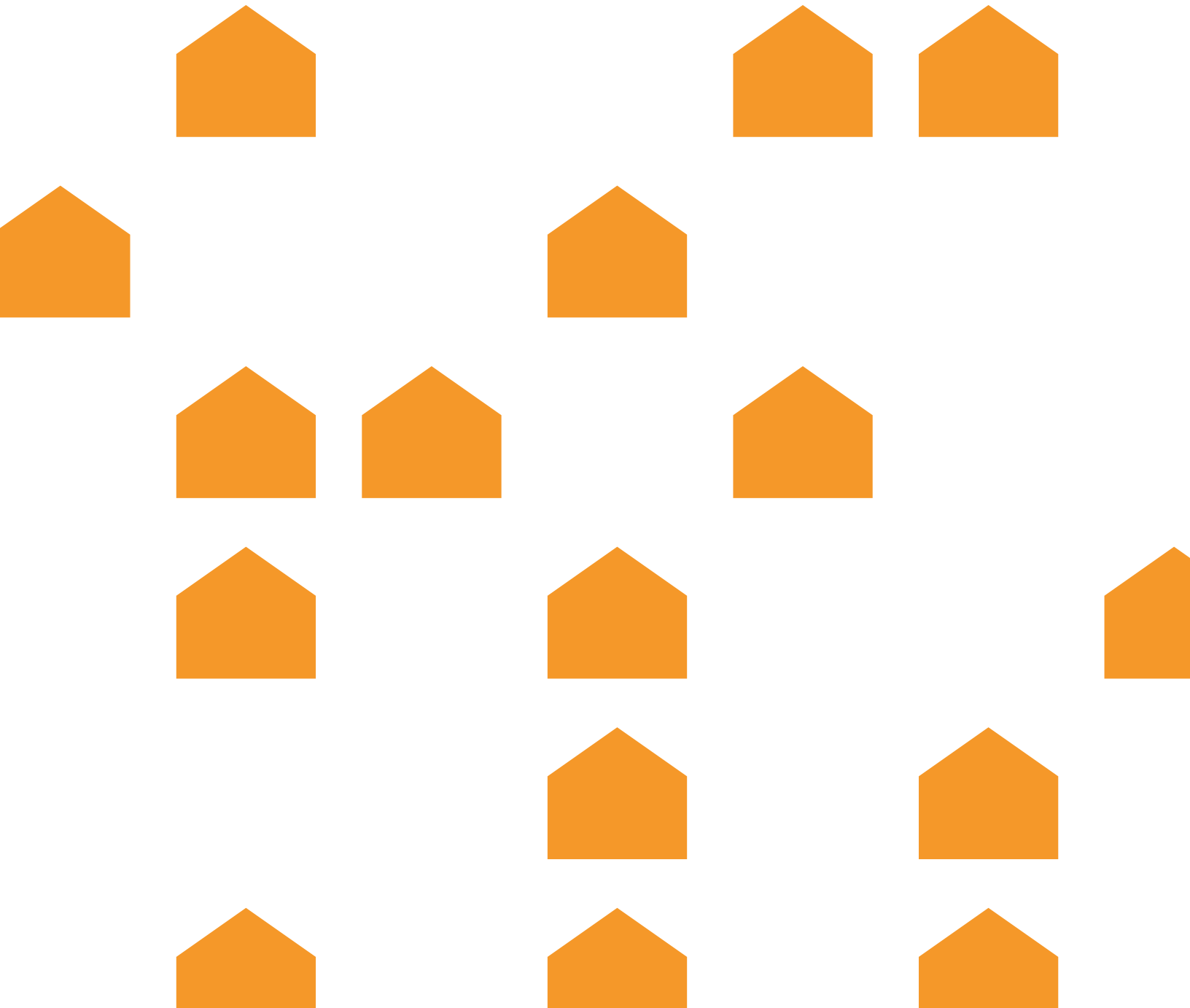


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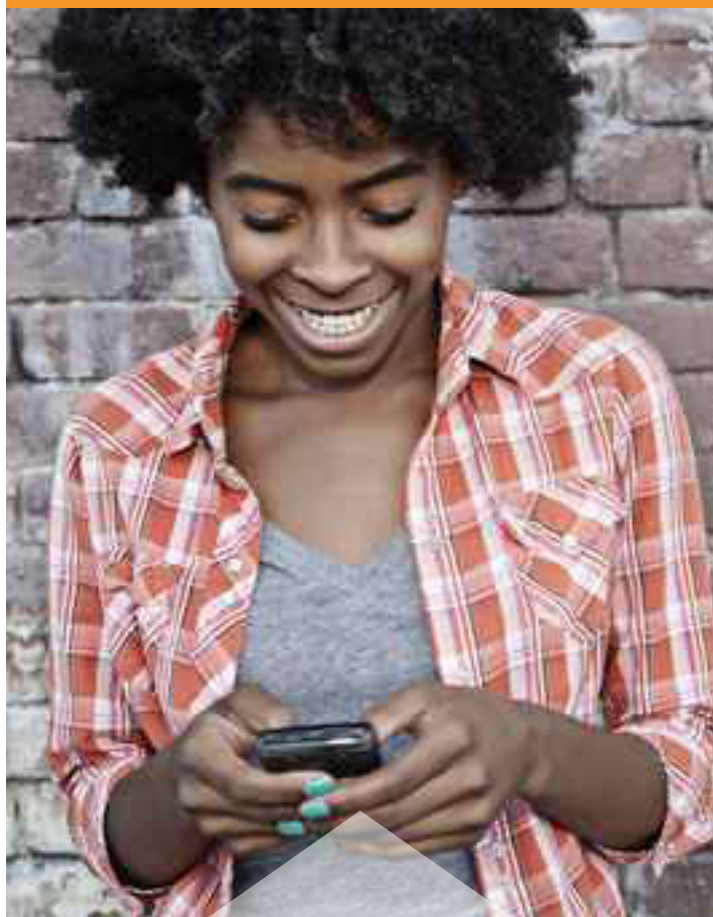
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▶▶▶ Social media is creating a world that **is more open and connected**, enabling people to share the most important parts of their lives with families, friends and communities.



The National Network to End Domestic Violence and Facebook have teamed up to offer tips for survivors of abuse so that you can still use Facebook but maintain safety and control over your information. This guide is aimed at helping survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking know how to use Facebook in a way that ensures that they stay connected with friends and family, but control their safety and privacy to help prevent misuse by abusers, stalkers, and perpetrators to stalk and harass.

### **REMEMBER:**

If you are dealing with a stalker or abusive individual contact the police or call the Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-SAFE(7233)**.



# the first line of defense: MANAGE YOUR FRIENDS



In general, every friend you add may be able to see what you post, and depending on your privacy settings, your friends' friends may be able to see what you post as well. For some survivors, refusing to be friends with their abuser or even blocking them may not be possible and could escalate dangerous and controlling behavior by the abuser. The following are ways to manage what you share and with whom.

## DID YOU KNOW?

You can choose who sees your Facebook activity either by setting a default setting or by choosing your audience on individual posts.

### Select your audience.

When you post content on Facebook, you can select the audience that can see the content. You can limit who can see what you're sharing by blocking content from particular users or choosing to only post updates that a few people can see. Using your privacy settings, you can also choose to approve all tags before they appear on your Timeline. When posting a status update, a picture, or other content, you can select to post to a list of people, or choose individual people to share with, so that only those on that list can see what you're posting. Whenever you share anything, you have the option of sharing it with the Public, Friends, Only Me, or Custom. The Custom option is where you can choose more specifically how to share the post.

### Know the Mutual Friends

It's important to know who the mutual Facebook friends are and limit what you share with them. Mutual Facebook friends are sometimes unavoidable, as they can be "real-life" friends, family members, or your children's friends. Even if you don't set your privacy setting to "friends of friends," don't forget that a friend-of-a-friend could allow the abusive person to see your content or even forward

information about you to the abuser. Digital information of any kind can always be re-shared – on Facebook or other platforms.

### Be cautious when accepting new friends.

Facebook is based on real names and authentic identities, where people represent who they are in the real world. Unfortunately, some abusive individuals use clever tactics to gain access to a victim's information. If you receive a friend request from someone you thought you were already friends with, ask them if they created a new page. In some instances, abusive individuals maliciously create accounts impersonating a friend of the person they want to connect with.

### Teach your kids.

Some teens may believe that having many "friends" is a status and popularity symbol. Talk about privacy and safety with your children and why they should be hesitant to accept friend requests from people they don't know.



For more information about how to create lists on Facebook, click here:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/135312293276793/>



# take back control: REVIEW YOUR PRIVACY SETTINGS

## Who can see what you share?

You can choose who sees your Facebook activity either by setting a default setting under “Privacy Settings”/ “Who can see my stuff”, or by selecting your audience when you make an individual post. Anytime you select an audience in either place, it is remembered and set as your default for the next post you make. In other words, if you set something “Public” or to “Friends”, that will be the audience for your next post unless you change it. You can block an individual friend from seeing a particular post or limit your post to only be viewable by selected friends through using lists, as explained on the previous page. You can also limit the audiences for past posts if you weren’t using privacy settings previously. Take note that you control the privacy of your own information, but if you post something on someone else’s page, who can see what you posted will be dictated by their privacy settings.

## Who can find you?

Some survivors may want to use Facebook to stay connected with a limited group of friends but don’t want others to be able to find them. (Remember that even if you choose the most restrictive option, “Friends”, it is possible that others can find you through a friend’s page.) You can also choose to allow or not allow search engines to directly link to your timeline. If this selection is “off” when someone searches your name in a search engine, such as Google or Bing, or on people-finder sites, your Facebook page will not come up. This option is important for survivors who want to minimize the amount of information that comes up when someone does an online search for them. It is important to note, however, that if you post content as “Public”, that content could still show up in a search engine. If you are concerned about your profile being found, set this privacy setting to “off” and use the audience filter for both past and future posts.

## Who can tag you?

Tagging is another function within Facebook that may allow others to find your timeline. Using your privacy settings, you can choose to approve all tags before they appear on your timeline, you can limit the audience of posts that you are tagged in, and you can turn off the “tag suggestions” feature. You can also remove tags of yourself, although removing a tag or not approving a tag does not remove the post, the tag or the photo from Facebook completely. Those options only allow you to control what shows up on your own timeline. If you are concerned about your privacy, you can use Facebook’s social reporting tools to ask the individuals to remove photos or posts with the individuals who made them. If something is posted

that is harmful to you and violates Facebook’s community standards, you can report it to Facebook. **For more information on reporting options, please see the Facebook Safety: Tips for Survivors** **handout Third Line of Defense: Be Safe** on pages 4-5 of this document.

## What are others saying about you?

Although you can’t control what others say about you on their own timeline and elsewhere on Facebook, you can control what they say about you on your own timeline. Under Timeline and Tagging, you can control who can post on your timeline and who can see your timeline.

## By Default: What Will Always Be Public

Although Facebook gives you many options to expand your privacy, some information will always be available if someone comes across your timeline. This information includes your name, profile photo, cover photo, network you belong to, gender, username and user ID. Survivors may want to strategize about what information to share, use a generic profile or cover photo, or determine whether they want to be a part of any network in order to maintain their privacy.

**Liking or commenting on public posts.** Note that posts or photos that are on other people’s or organization’s pages take on the privacy settings they set for that item. In other words, if someone else’s photo is set to public (anyone can see it) and if you like it or make a comment, your comment and the fact that you liked it will also be public.

## Learn about Graph Search.

Keep in mind that Facebook introduced an improved search tool in early 2013. Graph Search helps you find more of the people, places and things you’re looking for and discover new connections based on what others have shared with you on Facebook. This means that other people will see things that you’ve shared based on your privacy settings.

Keep up to date on Graph Search privacy by visiting:  
<https://www.facebook.com/help/383929585028154/>



# the second line of defense: SECURITY SETTINGS & NOTIFICATIONS



Another area that is very important for survivors to review is their security settings. Some abusers will try to access the survivor's account by guessing the password and logging into the account. In the security settings, you can enable a variety of settings to ensure that someone else doesn't log into your account. Some settings that are important for survivors are the following:

## **Security questions.**

Most of the security questions are standard personal questions that the abusive person may know the answer to or be able to guess. It's not necessary to answer these questions honestly. You can be strategic with your answer, using a word or phrase that only you will remember, so that the abuser can't reset your password by guessing the answer.

## **Login notifications.**

You can be notified, either by email or text message, if someone tries to access your account from a computer or device that you haven't used before.

## **Login approvals.**

If you are logging into your account from a different web browser or device, you must have a security code to access your account.

## **Recognized devices.**

You can manage the devices that are allowed to have access to your account and be notified if an unknown device tries to access your account. This is particularly helpful for a survivor who may have wanted to access their account from their partner's device, but now no longer want that device to have access.

## **Active sessions.**

This is important to note because it shows sessions that are currently active or logged on. You may have active sessions if you've accessed your account and forgot to log off or are using an app and have not logged off. This also will show if someone else might have accessed your account.

## **Notifications.**

The next area survivors should go through is the notification settings. Facebook allows you to be notified of a variety of activities, including when someone asks to be your friend, tags you, or comments on something you posted. Go through each of these notifications and determine when you want to be notified of any of the 62 activities that could occur. You can select to be notified by email, on Facebook, or text messaging.



# the third line of defense: BE SAFE

**Abuses, stalkers and perpetrators misuse a variety of online spaces to harass victims.** Misuse of Facebook to harass or stalk can include an abuser or stalker threatening or harassing someone through posts or private messages; posting personally identifying information or pictures without the person's consent in order to cause harm or distress; or accessing the victim's account without permission to monitor activity; or impersonating the victim.

Although these tactics of abuse are not acceptable, unfortunately, not all of these behaviors may violate Facebook's Terms of Service and, by itself, may or may not be illegal. Because of that, it is important for survivors to know what their options are and what recourses are available when someone is harassing them through Facebook.



## Tools Within Facebook:

**Unfriending or Blocking** a person are two options within Facebook for addressing someone who is bothering you.

- When you unfriend someone, it means that activities (pictures, updates, posts) that you set to the privacy setting "Friends" will no longer be seen by that person. Additionally, now that you are no longer friends, their activities will not show up on your timeline. However, they will still be able to see whatever is public on your profile, including any activities you post with a "Public" privacy setting, and posts made by mutual friends to your timeline or comments that you post on the mutual friend's timeline. They can also re-request you as a friend.
- When you block a person, they will not be able to view your timeline activity, nor will they be able to message or tag you or send you another friend request. You will also not be able to see their activity. They will still be able to see your public information and activity within apps or groups.

Use your judgment and instincts when considering the timing of these options. Since stalkers and abusers use monitoring and threats to maintain power and control over their victims, when a survivor limits access, abusers sometimes find other methods of control or escalate dangerous behavior, including increased threats and even assault. Ending a relationship or contact with an abusive person can be dangerous for many survivors so it is important to plan for safety and talk to a trained victim advocate. If you are concerned about what the person might do if you were to cut off contact, call your local domestic violence program or police for more information and help.

**Reporting someone, a post or a picture to Facebook** is a step that you can take if you feel that what is being posted or how the person is using the site is harmful. This can be done from your timeline, from a message someone sent you, or on your newsfeed.

You can report posts on your timeline, posts that you were tagged in, or private messages. You can also report a photo, with or without a tag of you. For quick instructions on how to report certain types of content, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/help/www/181495968648557>

For more general information about how to report something to Facebook, visit this site: [www.facebook.com/help/www/263149623790594/](http://www.facebook.com/help/www/263149623790594/).

When using the reporting option, you also have the choice of communicating with the person who posted the content to ask them to remove or edit the content and to inform another trusted person of the content you are concerned about

If the content violates Facebook's Terms of Service, it may be removed. Facebook has Community Standards and they will remove content if it contains violence or threats, bullying or harassment, hate speech, nudity or pornography, or is claiming to be someone else. Visit this link: <https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards> for a full list of Facebook's Community Standards and more information on how they define harassment and threats.

For more information about addressing abuse on Facebook, see the following links on Facebook's Help Center:

Tools for Addressing Abuse: <https://www.facebook.com/help/359033794168099/>

Tools for Parents & Educators: <https://www.facebook.com/help/441374602560317/>

# Outside of Facebook:



Some comments or posts may not violate the Terms of Service of Facebook in order to be removed, even if they are meant to be and are perceived by you as threatening or harassing.

## Legal Options

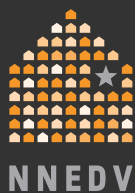
If someone is harassing you, threatening you, or making you feel unsafe, you can talk to a local domestic violence victim advocate or law enforcement about your options. They should be able to discuss how to preserve and document the online harassment, what legal options are available, and strategies for planning for your safety in case the harassment and threats escalate. Even if what the abusive person is doing on Facebook, by itself, doesn't violate Facebook's Terms of Service or break any laws, taken together (a series of vague harassing messages, for example) can constitute stalking or harassment.

If you have or are seeking an order of protection or a restraining order against the person, request that the order include language that restricts the person from contacting you through any means including online or posting information or photos of you online. Many states already include this in the template protection order forms. Existing orders can be amended to include this language.

Facebook has guidelines for how law enforcement can contact them for information needed in an investigation. You can share the following link with officers that you are working with: <https://www.facebook.com/safety/groups/law/guidelines/>.







**facebook**

**BE SAFE**

**For More Information:**

Visit the following links to learn more about your privacy & security options on Facebook:

**Facebook's Privacy Page:**

[www.facebook.com/privacy](https://www.facebook.com/privacy)

**Family Safety Center:**

[www.facebook.com/safety](https://www.facebook.com/safety)

**Basic Privacy Settings & Tools:**

<https://www.facebook.com/help/461169603901748>

**Security Tips & Tools:**

<https://www.facebook.com/help/379220725465972/>