

Gendered harassment

What to do if someone you know experiences online abuse

More than 70% of online abuse complaints received by eSafety are reported by women and girls.

The nature of abuse is often sexist or racist and has the potential to lead to real life harm and violence. It can damage a person's confidence and affect their sense of personal safety.

Use this guide to support a friend or colleague who is experiencing online abuse. Even if you're not technically skilled, you can provide valuable support and help her feel safe online.



1. Acknowledge her experience

Many women don't share or report online abuse because they are afraid of being dismissed or not taken seriously. Validate what has happened. Help them to collect evidence which might be needed if they decide to report the abuse.

Learn how to take a screenshot and save URLs on a device:

esafety.gov.au/collect-evidence



2. Check-in and ask about her wellbeing

Online abuse can seriously impact a woman's wellbeing and self-esteem. Some women might lose their confidence and avoid going online. Listen without judgement and ask your friend or colleague what action they want to take. You could suggest they contact a specialist service for support.

For wellbeing support contact:

1800respect.org.au or lifeline.org.au or beyondblue.org.au



3. Support her to assess the threat

Talk about the type of abuse she is experiencing and who could be responsible. This will help to decide whether to block, mute, ignore or report the incident. If the abuse happens in the workplace, support your colleague through your workplace process for dealing with online abuse.

Always call Triple Zero (000) if you feel there is a threat to physical safety.

Learn about the types of online abuse:

esafety.gov.au/wits/online-abuse

Find out when and how to mute, block or ignore abuse:

esafety.gov.au/wits/taking-action



4. Discuss reporting the incident

eSafety recommends reporting online abuse to the social media platform hosting the conversation. It can also be reported to eSafety or the police, depending on the level of harm. If your friend chooses to report, be clear what your role is and how you can best support her. Most platforms accept reports from third parties, so you can report the abuse on behalf of your friend.

Find out how to report to social media platforms:
esafety.gov.au/report-to-social-media-services

Find out how to report to eSafety:
esafety.gov.au/report

Find tips to help you when reporting to police:
esafety.gov.au/get-help-from-police



5. Consider being an upstander

Sometimes a woman's voice can be silenced by online abuse. You can choose to be an upstander (as opposed to being a 'bystander') and support the person experiencing online abuse. If it feels safe and right, you can acknowledge and call-out the abuse online. You can make a comment or simply post a 'thumbs down' emoji for example. Use the hashtags #womenwithWITS and #ReportandSupport.

Help others to take control of their online space:
esafety.gov.au/wits/taking-action



6. Review privacy and safety settings

Check that your friend's privacy and security settings on their social media platforms and devices are current and give them enough protection. Simple solutions, such as two-factor authentication, provide extra layers of security and protection.

Use The eSafety Guide to learn about the different social media platforms and how to keep your account safe:

esafety.gov.au/key-issues/esafety-guide

Book an eSafety social media self defence session for your workplace:

esafety.gov.au/wits/social-media-self-defence

It is important to maintain your own mental health while you're supporting someone experiencing online abuse. Visit the [eSafety](https://esafety.gov.au) website or contact [Beyond Blue](https://www.beyondblue.org.au) or [1800RESPECT](https://www.1800respect.org.au) for support and information.