



ConnectSafely

A Parent's Guide to Instagram

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Introduction

Some adults make a distinction between teens' social media lives and their "real lives." But in reality, the two are closely intertwined. Instagram and other social media apps are where they express themselves, hang out with friends, explore ideas, grow and learn. Like all human interaction, there will be times of joy, kindness and compassion. There will also be moments of drama and anxiety – not necessarily because of the technology, but because that's the nature of relationships, online and off.

As parents and guardians, it's our job to support our teens, which may sometimes include helping them cope or recover from negative experiences. That's part of their learning process and part of our nurturing.

In most ways, helping teens thrive online is no different than helping them in other parts of their lives. It involves listening (not lecturing) and supporting your child and knowing when it's necessary to take action to protect them. But stay calm, don't overreact and don't do anything to discourage them from confiding with you in the future. Taking away a device or banning an app is rarely the right way to respond.

This guide provides parents and guardians with what you need to know about Instagram's safety, security and privacy tools. But it's mostly a conversation starter to arm you with information to do what you probably already do very well as a loving parent.

Larry Magid
CEO, ConnectSafely.org

Children and teens seem very grown-up these days, competent with technology and apps parents struggle with. If we do our job as parents, taking advantage of the information available to us, we can steer our children toward beneficial online experiences and help them benefit from this way of communicating.

Certain research shows that more time spent using social media can be tied to mental health impacts. At the same time, kids often benefit from finding communities to embrace them, from being able to interact freely and practice social skills in a safe space online. Social media can have positive effects on social-emotional well-being by helping teens feel less lonely and more confident.

As a mental health professional, I know how important it is to support children and adolescents in having age-appropriate experiences and access to positive social media and online content.

Harold S. Koplewicz, MD
President, Child Mind Institute



“The majority of us teens use Instagram and social media as an expression of our voice and ourselves. It allows us to find others with similar interests and delve deeper into the things and hobbies we are passionate about.”

Vanessa, 18





Instagram is a photo, video, and message sharing app with a community of people that use it to connect to each other through their passions and interests.

Instagram is especially popular among young people who use it to capture special moments, connect to one another, and carry conversations in a fun way - using photos, videos, filters, comments, captions, emoji, and hashtags. Instagram runs on Apple iOS, Android devices, and the web.

The minimum age to have an Instagram account is 13.

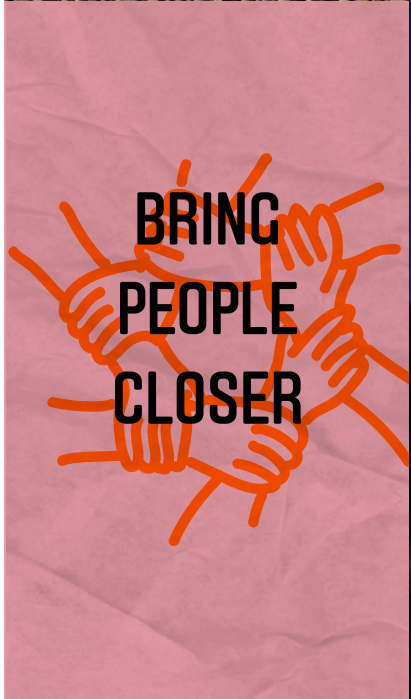
Whether it's through Stories, Reels, Feed, Live, IGTV or Direct, our mission is to bring people closer to the people and things they love. For people to express themselves freely, it's essential to make Instagram a safe and supportive place.



**COMMUNITY
OF PEOPLE
CONNECT TO
EACH OTHER**



**CAPTURE
AND SHARE
SPECIAL
MOMENTS**



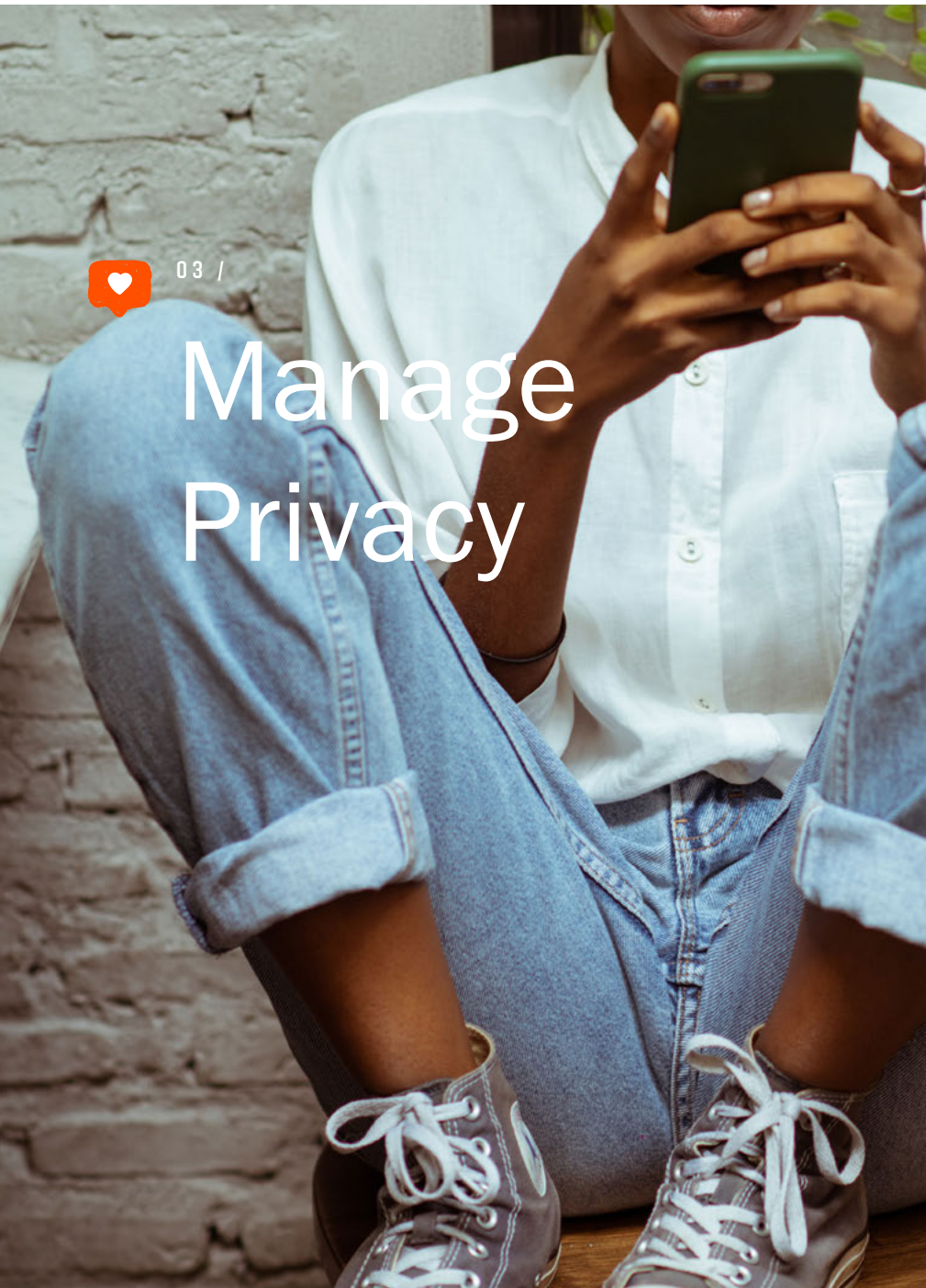
**BRING
PEOPLE
CLOSER**



**PUSH
CULTURE
FORWARD**



**SAFE AND
SUPPORTIVE
PLACE**



Manage Privacy

“One of the best ways to help your child online is to be proactive and make sure that your child is very careful about privacy. Research privacy settings with them and make sure they understand when something is public or private — or somewhere in the middle — and how that should affect what they post. As a general rule, they shouldn’t share anything online that they wouldn’t be comfortable with the entire world reading. Including their grandmother.”

**– Dave Anderson, PhD, Clinical Psychologist,
VP of School & Community Programs, Child Mind Institute**

Instagram offers several tools that give your teen control over their privacy and digital footprint.

One of the first things you may want to talk about with your teen is whether their account is going to be public or private. Understanding that they have control over who sees and interacts with the things they post online will empower them to be themselves on Instagram while remaining safe online.

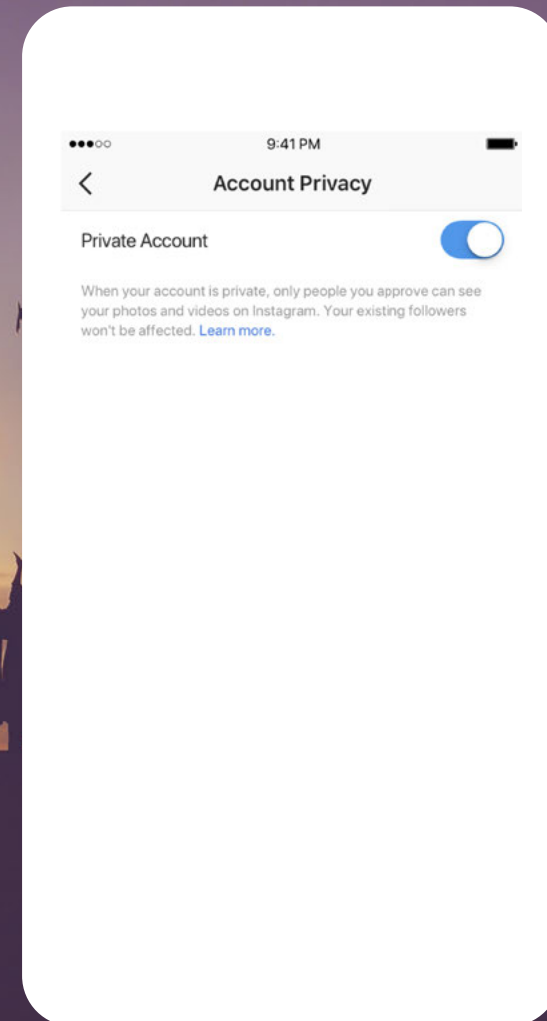
Instagram recently began exploring ways to make it more difficult for adults who have been exhibiting potentially suspicious behavior to interact with teens. This may include things like restricting these adults from seeing teen accounts in ‘Suggested Users’, preventing them from discovering teen content in Reels or Explore, and automatically hiding their comments on public posts by teens.

Understanding account privacy options

If your teen's account is private, they approve who follows them. This means your child's content cannot be seen by anyone they haven't approved. We encourage teens to make their account private.

If your teen's account is public, anyone can see the content they post to Stories, Feed, or Live, and follow them without needing approval. If your teen already has a public account, they can switch to private at any time.

Plus, your teen can remove followers, choose who can comment on their posts, and turn off their activity status so people can't see when they are online.

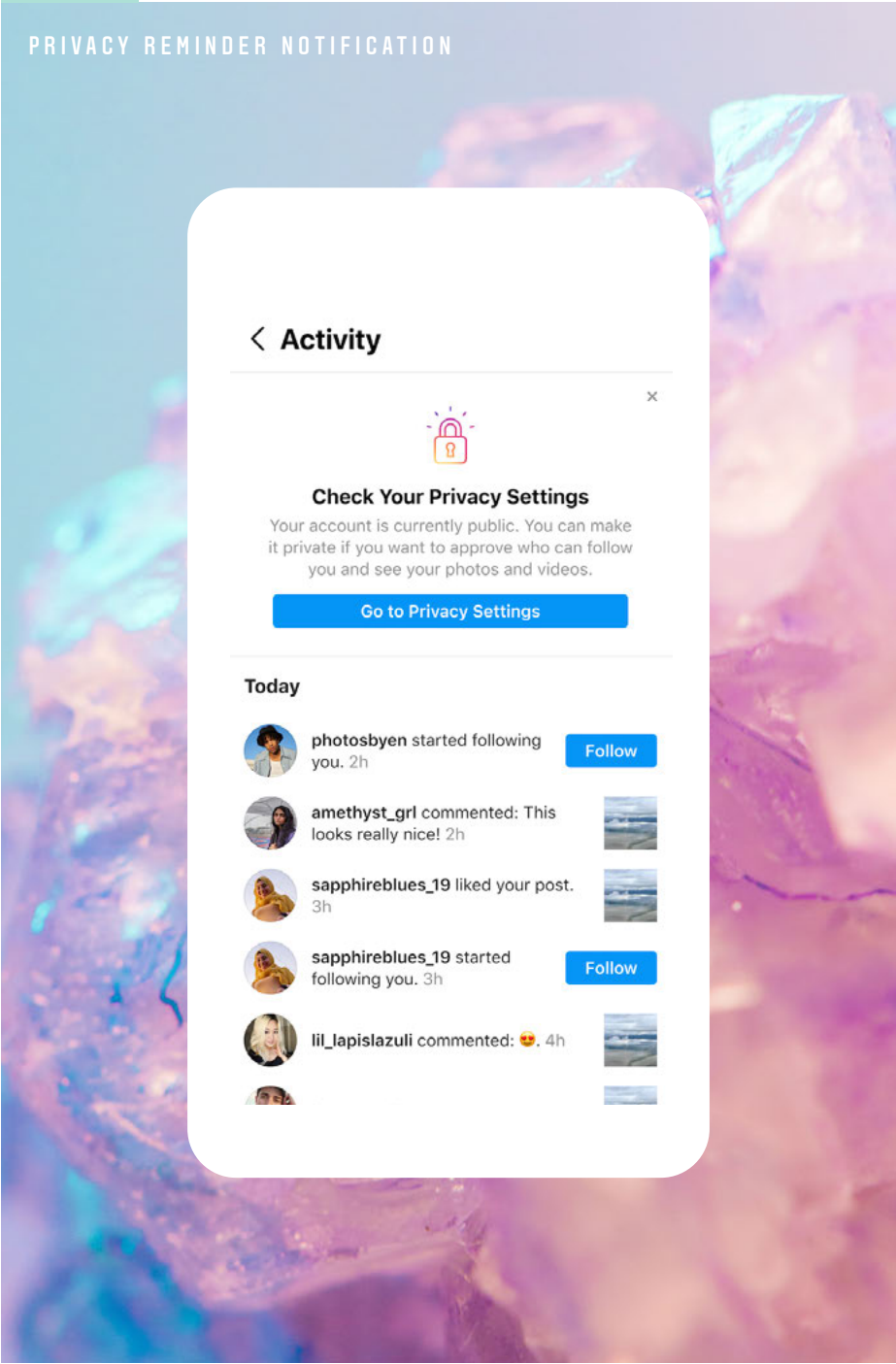
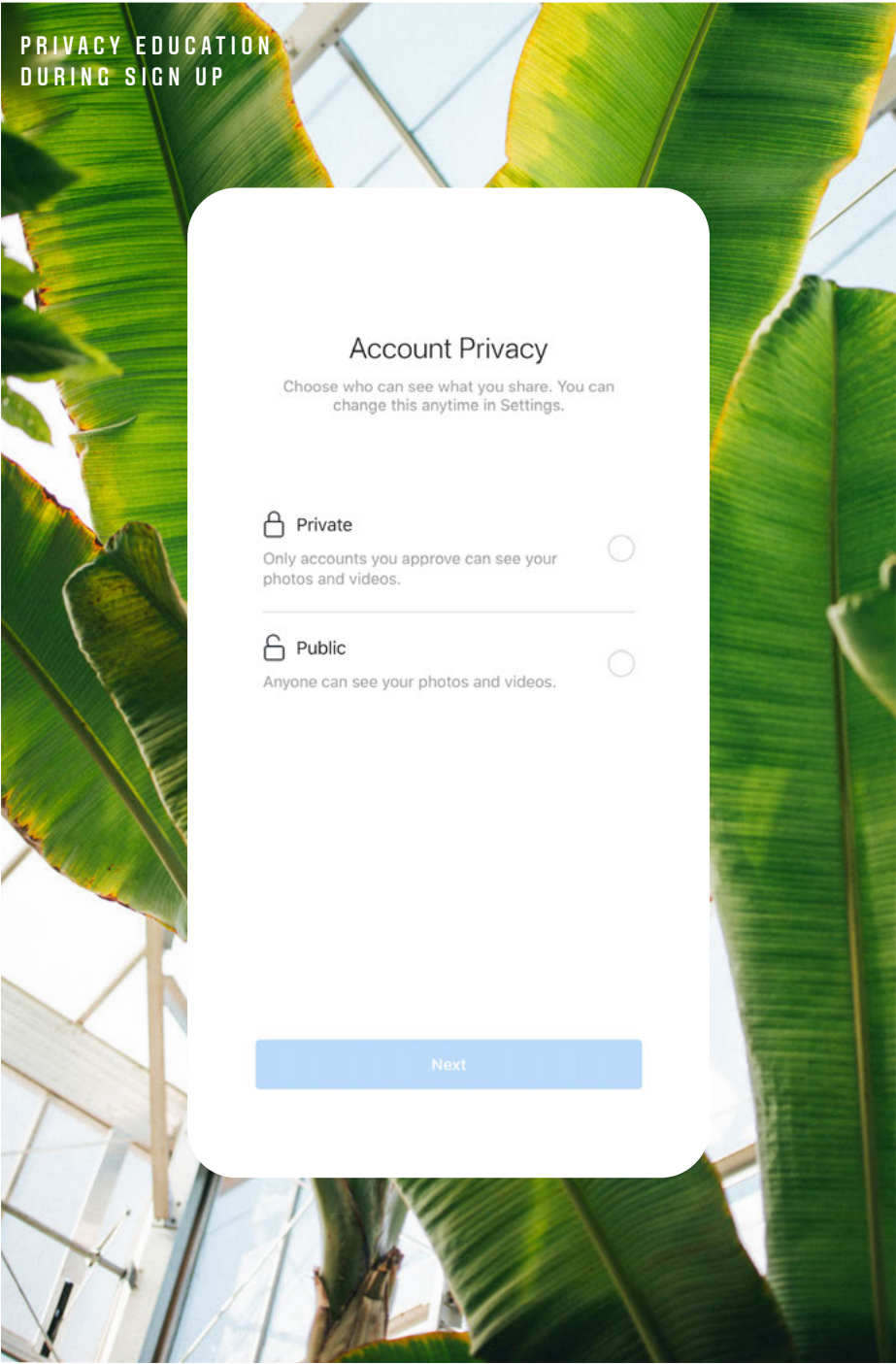


Encouraging private accounts

When someone under 18 signs up for an Instagram account, there is a new step in the process that gives them the option to choose between a public or private account. Our aim is to encourage young people to opt for a private account by equipping them with information on what the different settings mean.

We know some young people find value in public accounts, so teens can still opt for a public account if they choose to do so after learning more about what it means. If the teen doesn't choose 'private' when signing up, we send them a notification later on highlighting the benefits of a private account and reminding them to check their settings.



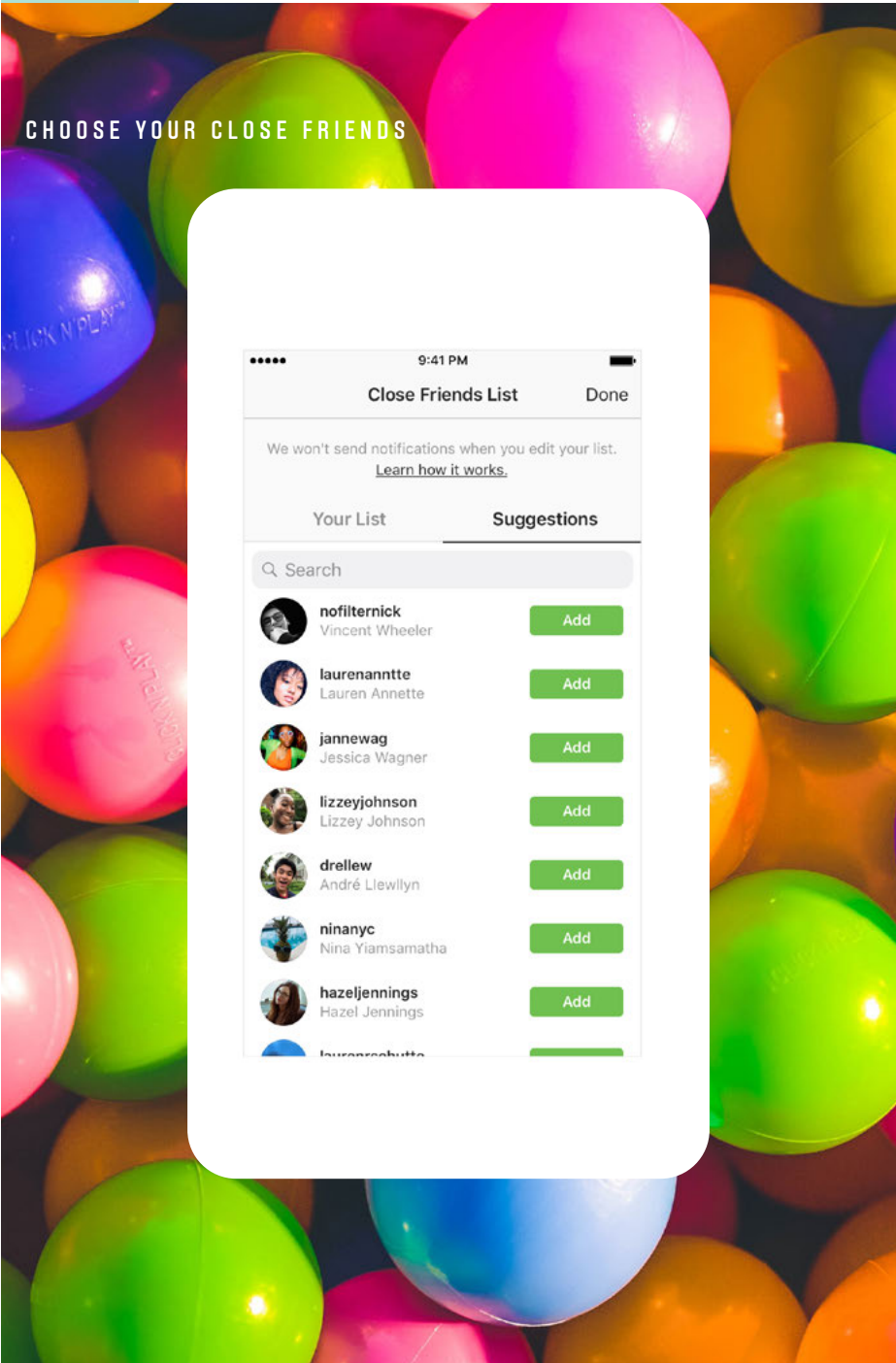
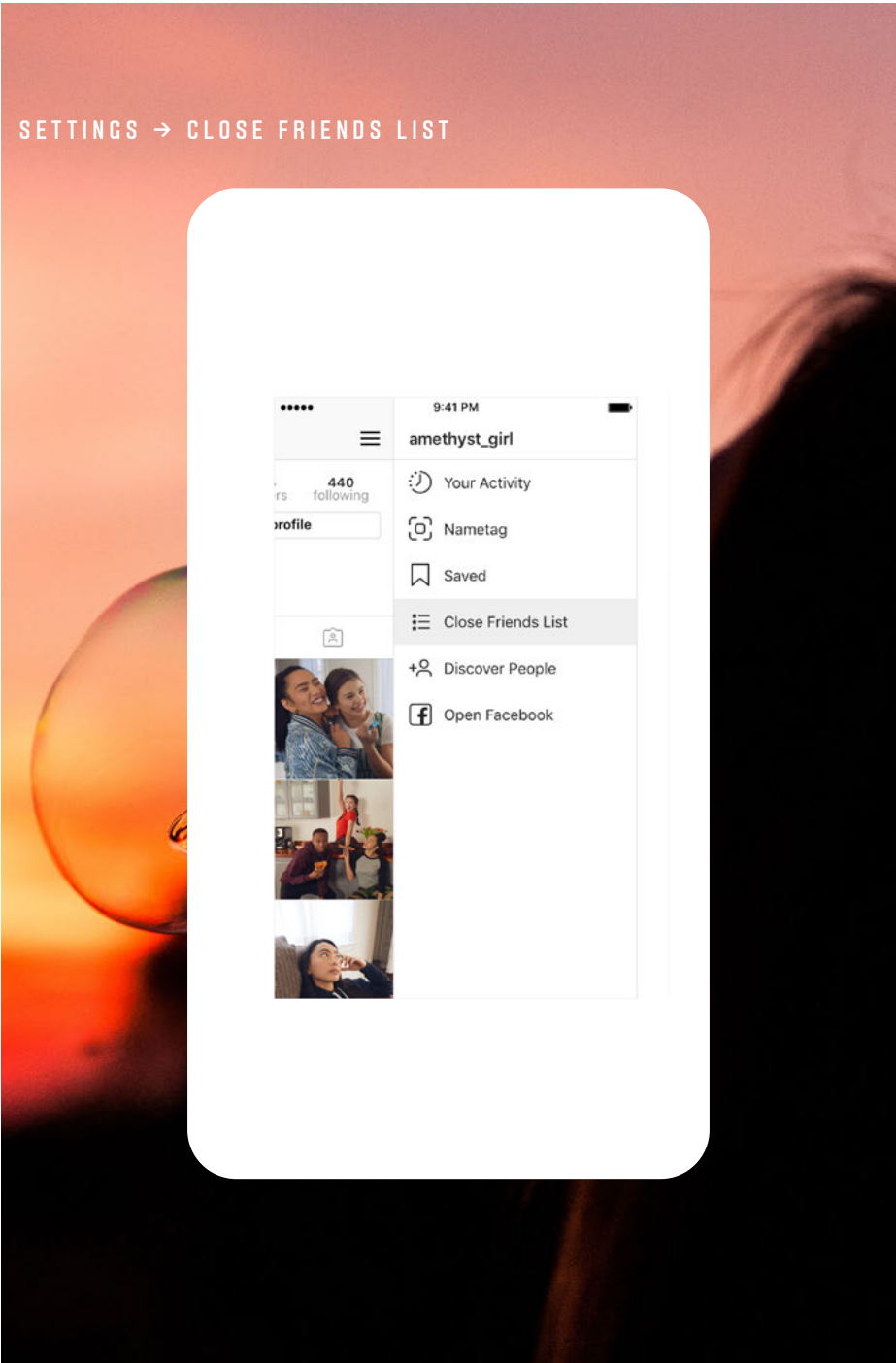


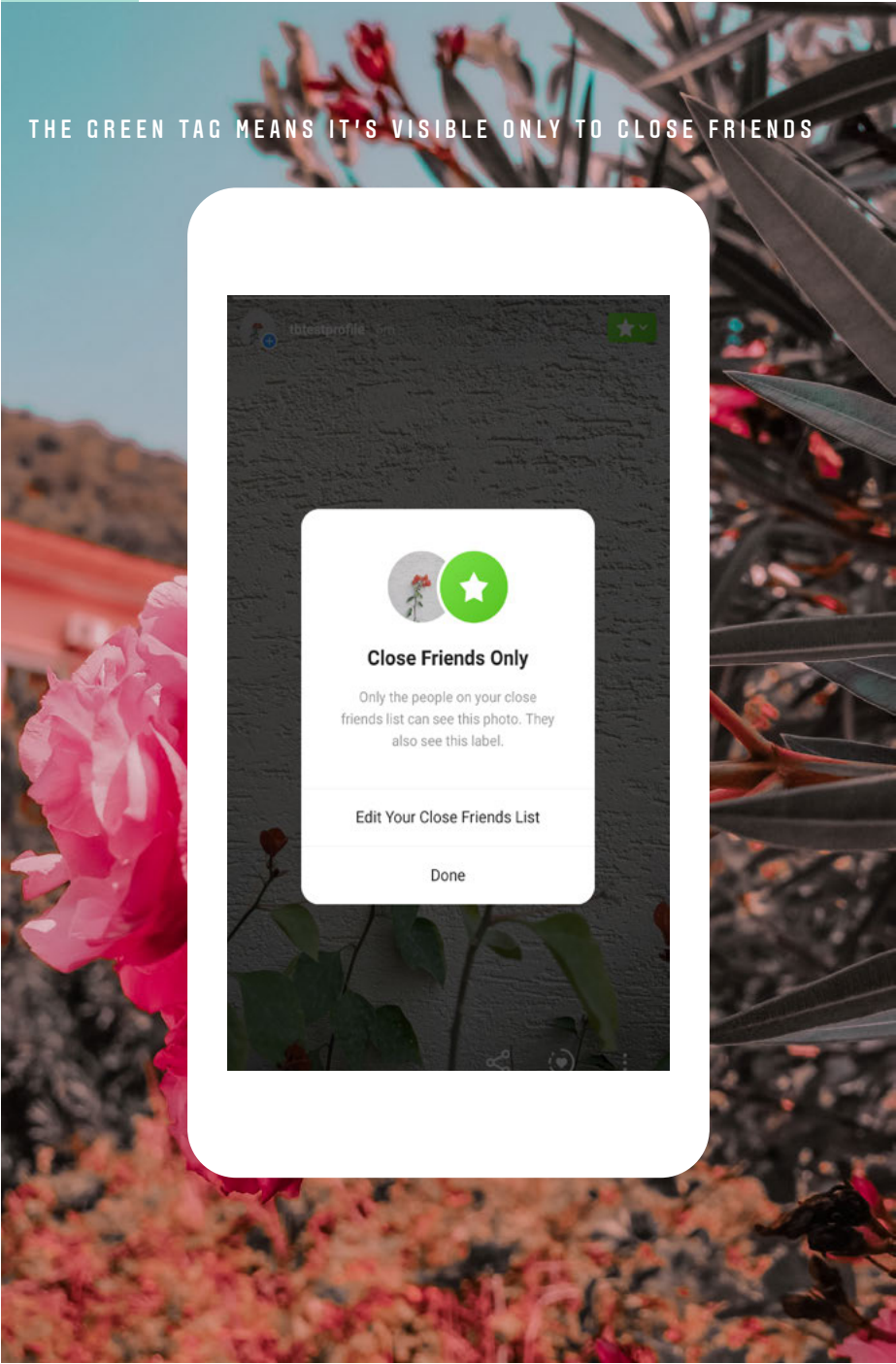
Share with close friends

Teens can create a Close Friends list and share their story with only the people on that list. They can update their list and remove people at any time. People won't be notified when they are added or removed from their list.

With Close Friends, teens have the flexibility to share more personal moments with a smaller group that they choose.







Message Controls

Your teen can choose who can message (DM) them on Instagram and who can add them to groups on Instagram Direct. They can also decide whether message requests go to their Message Requests folder or whether they receive them at all.

SETTINGS → PRIVACY → MESSAGE CONTROLS

← Privacy

Account Privacy

 Private Account 

Interactions

 Comments

 Tags Everyone

 Mentions People You Follow

 Story

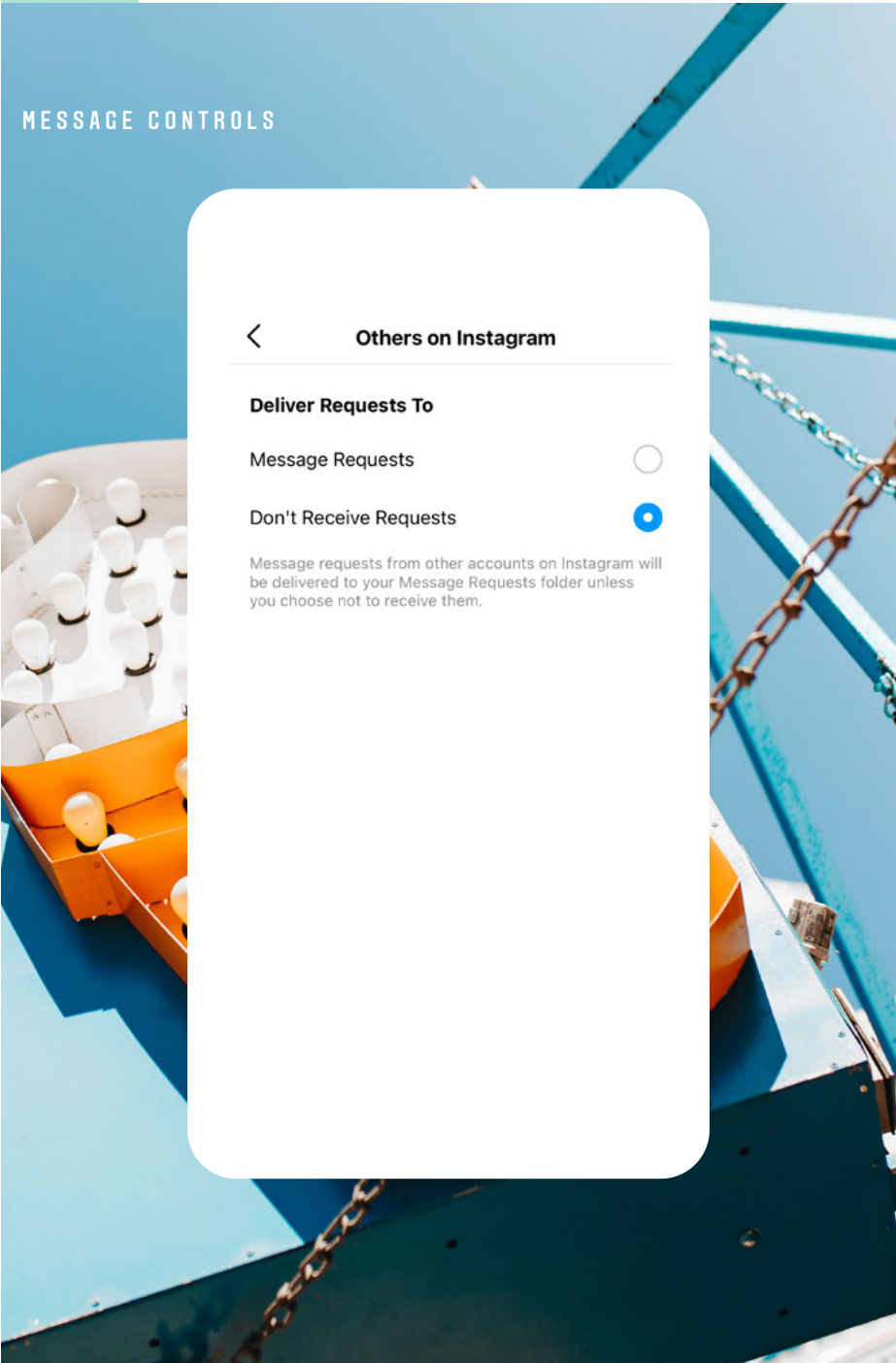
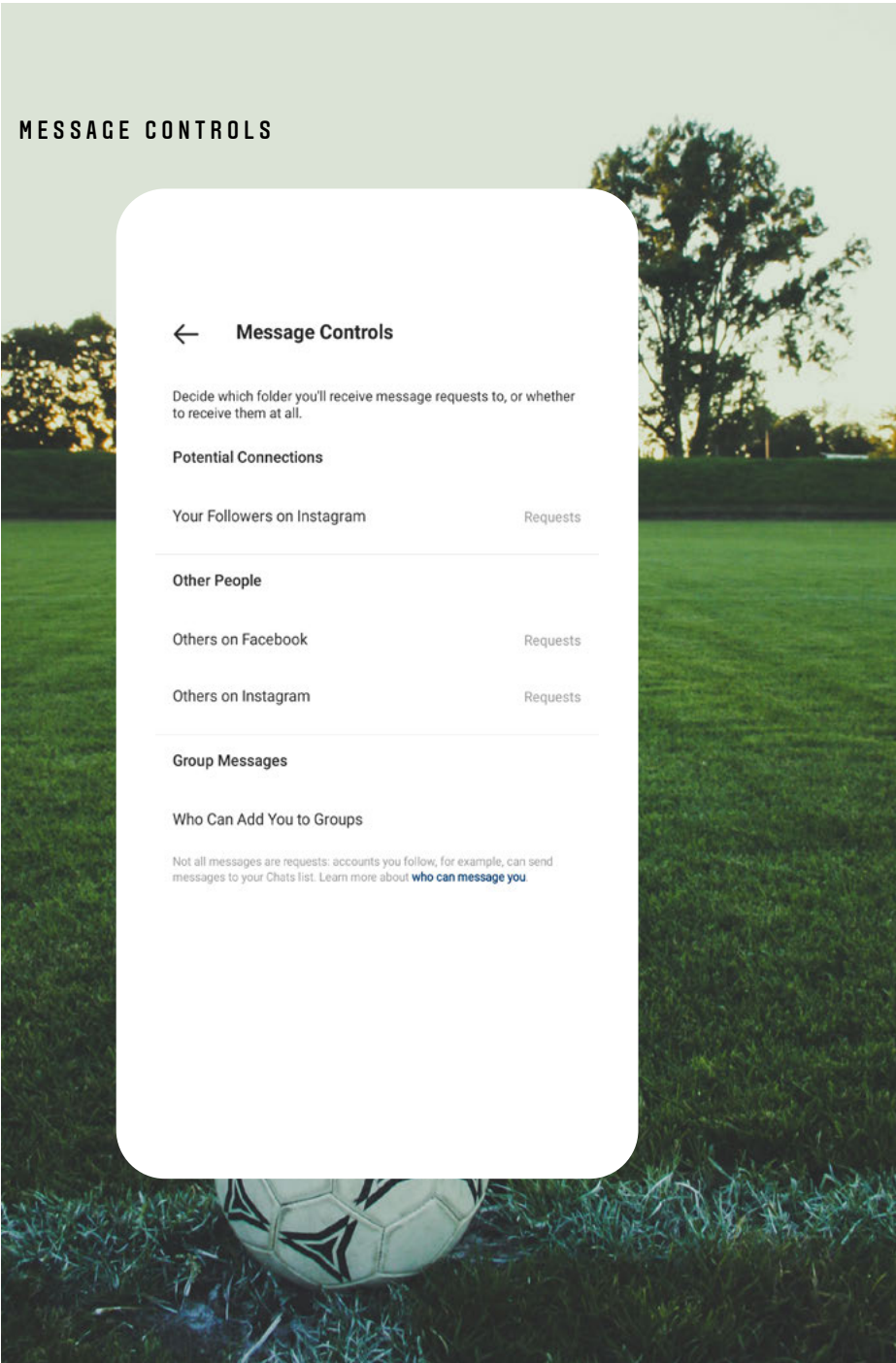
 Guides

 Activity Status

 Messages

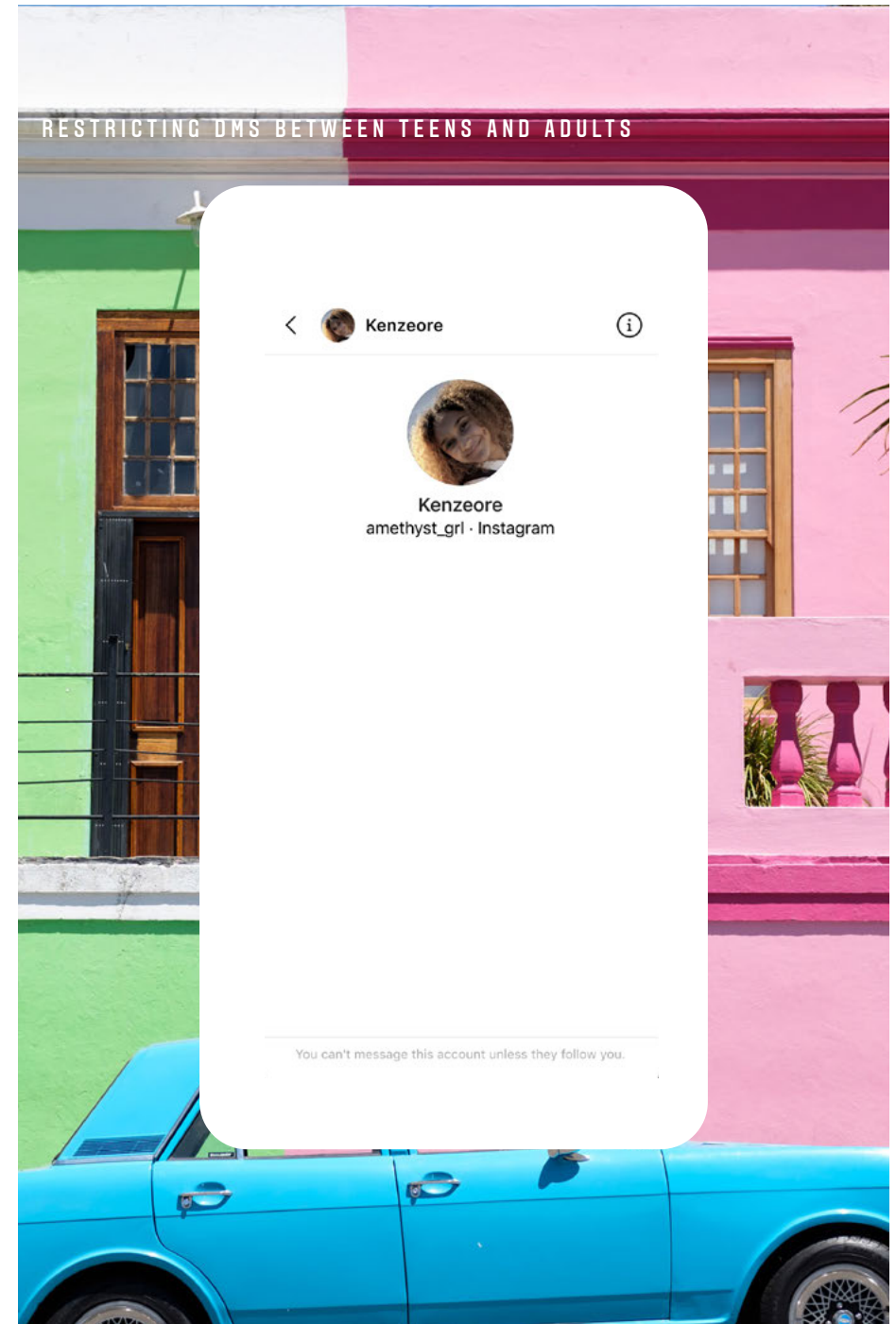
Connections

 Restricted Accounts



Restricting DMs

To protect teens from unwanted contact from adults, we're introducing a new feature that prevents adults from sending messages to people under 18 who don't follow them. For example, when an adult tries to message a teen who doesn't follow them, they receive a notification that DM'ing them isn't an option.



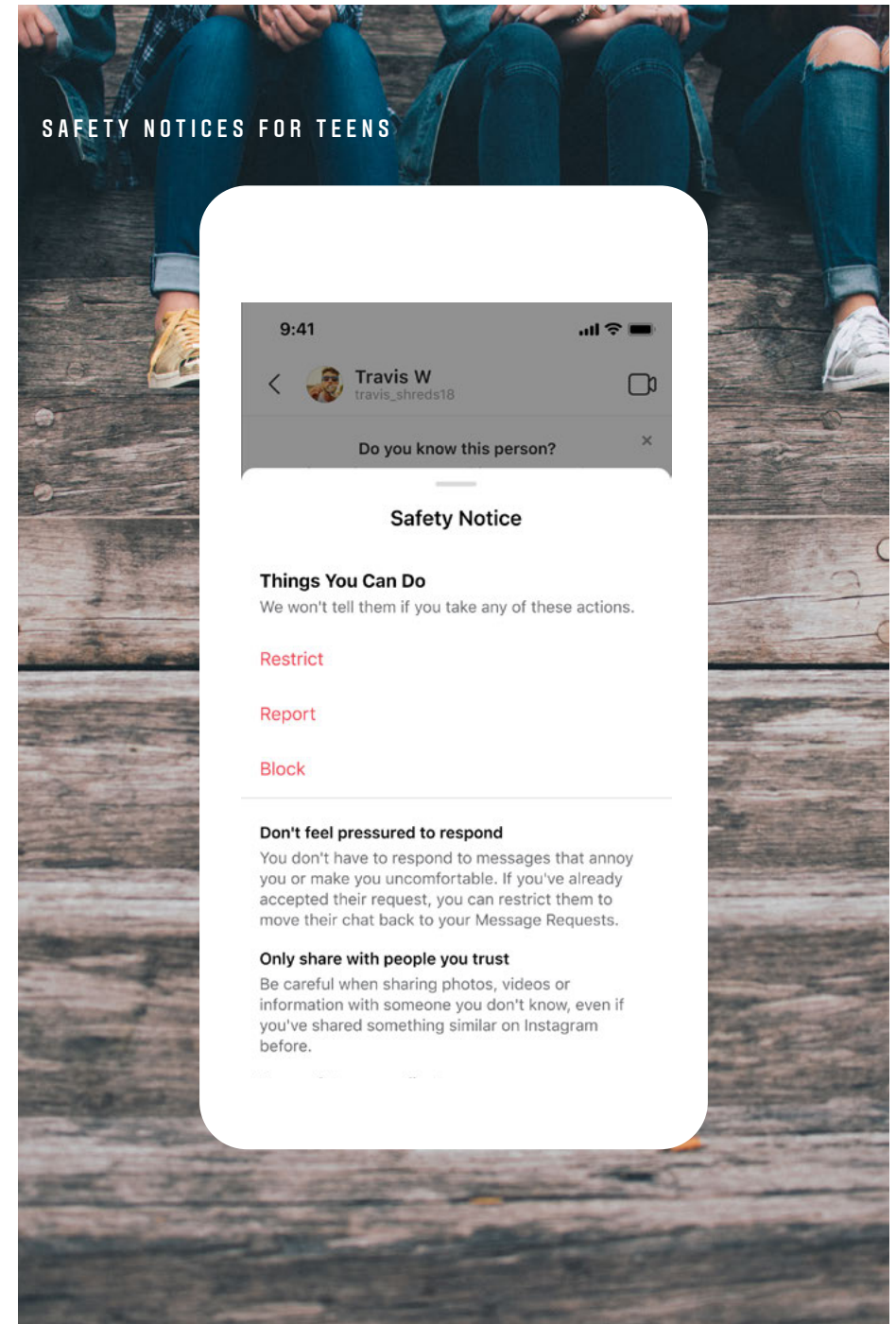
Safety in DMs

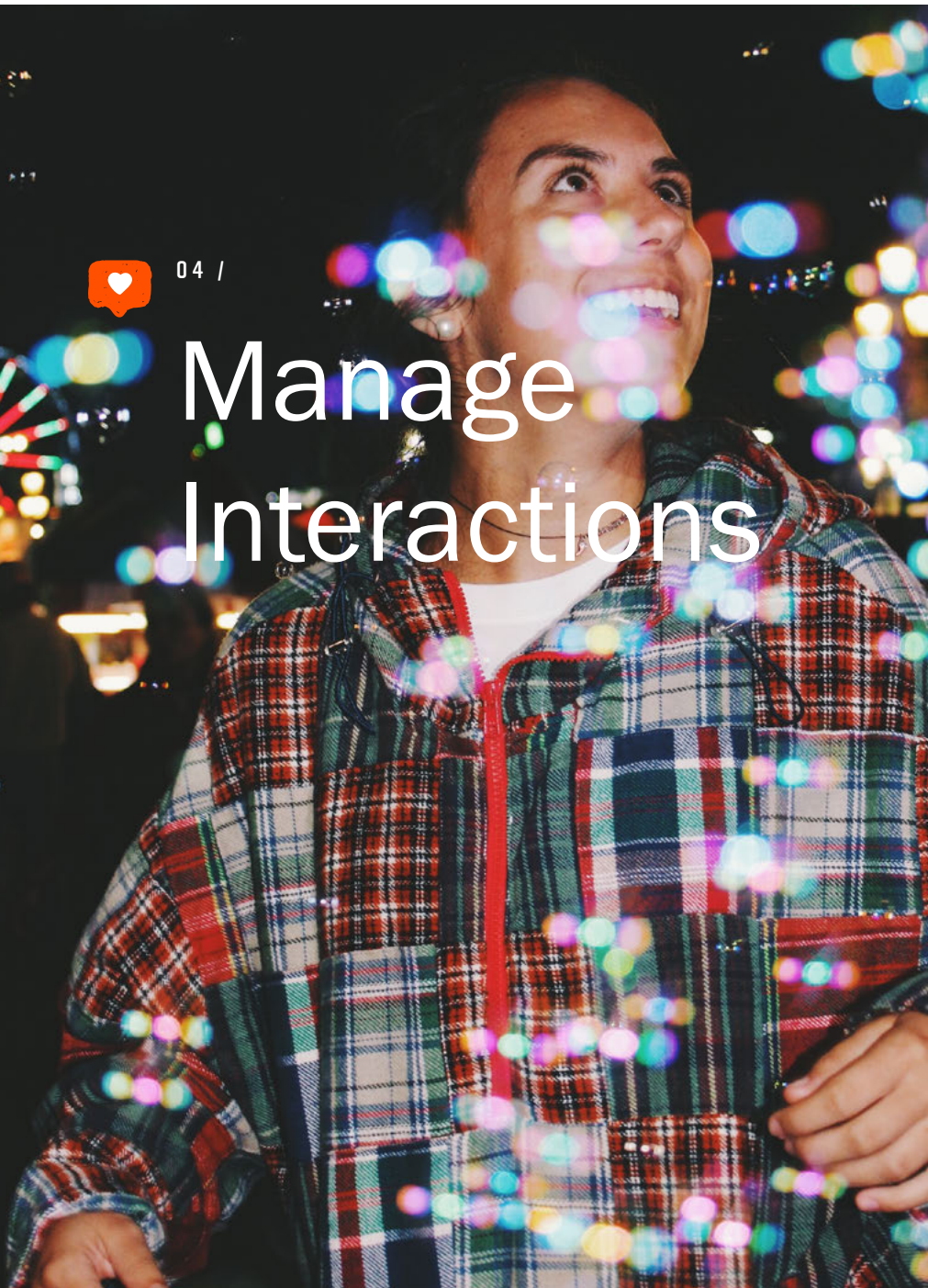
“There are cases where it is appropriate for adults and teens to interact on Instagram but it’s important that teens be protected against unwanted contact from adults. Requiring that the teen – not the adult – establish the connection empowers teens to protect themselves. It puts them in the driver’s seat and gives them more control over their experiences on Instagram.”

– **Larry Magid, CEO**
ConnectSafely.org

Instagram will soon begin using prompts — or safety notices — to encourage teens to be cautious in conversations with adults they’re already connected to.

Safety notices in DMs will notify young people when an adult who has been exhibiting potentially suspicious behavior is interacting with them in DMs. For example, if an adult is sending a large amount of friend or message requests to people under 18, we’ll use this tool to alert the recipients within their DMs and give them an option to end the conversation, or block, report, or restrict the adult.





Manage Interactions

There is no place for bullying of any kind on Instagram. It's against our policies to create an account or post photos or comments for the purpose of bullying or harassing someone else.

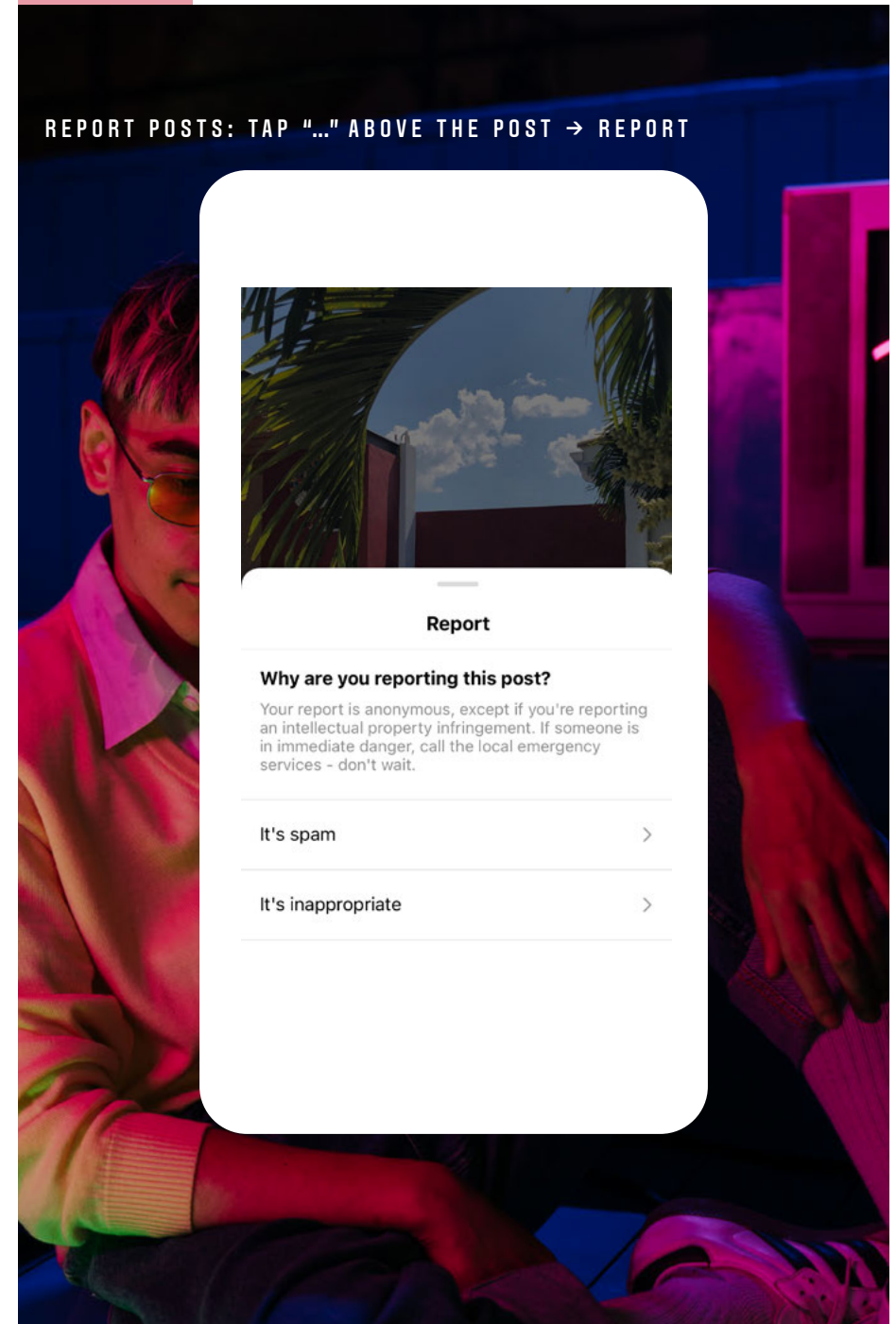
Let your teen know that if they see an account, post, comment, or message that is intended to bully or harass someone, they can report it within the app.

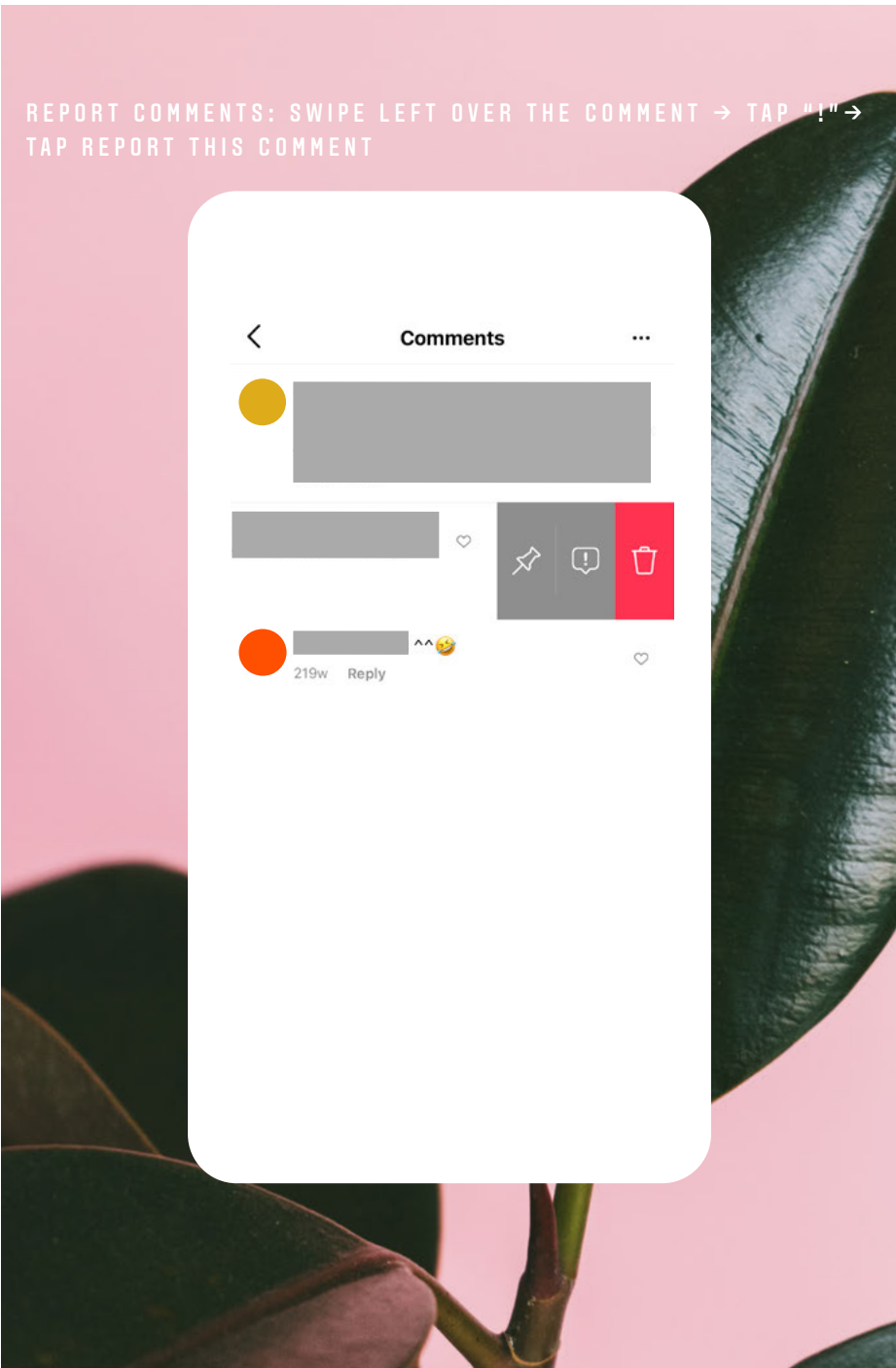
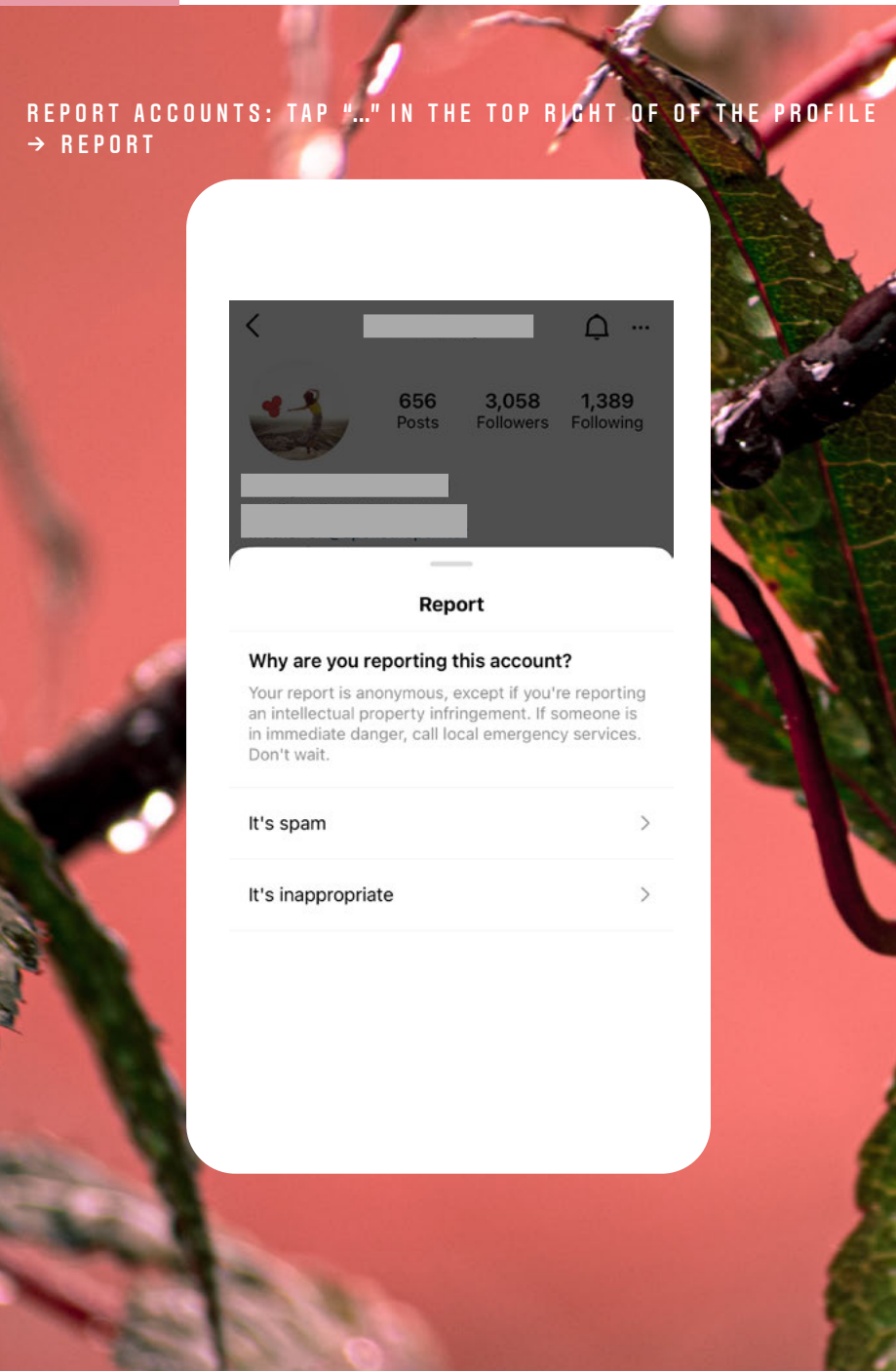
Reporting is totally anonymous. We never share your teen's information with the person they reported.

Report

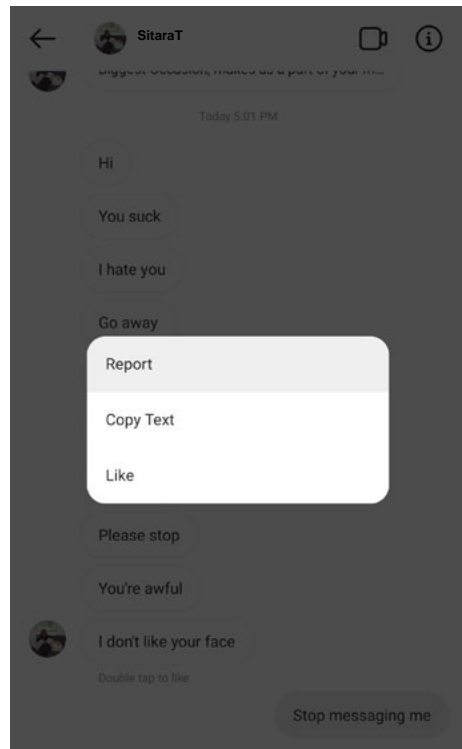
Anyone can report content on Instagram, from accounts, to posts, comments, DMs, Lives, Stories, IGTV and Reels.

Reporting is totally anonymous.

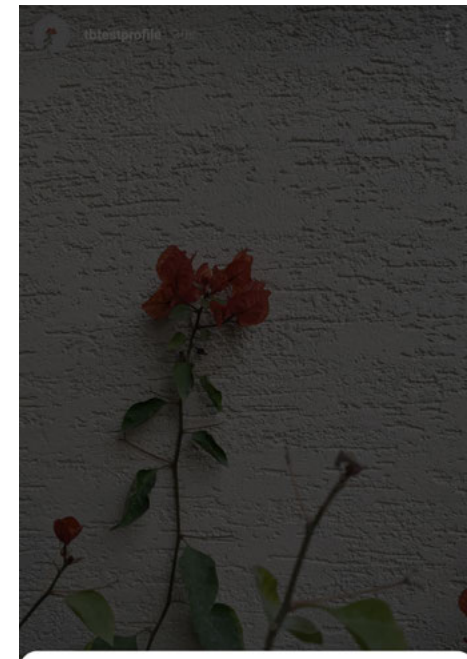




REPORT DMS: TAP AND HOLD THE MESSAGE YOU'D LIKE TO REPORT
→ TAP REPORT



REPORT STORY: TAP "...\" ON THE TOP RIGHT SIDE OF THE STORY →
REPORT



Report...

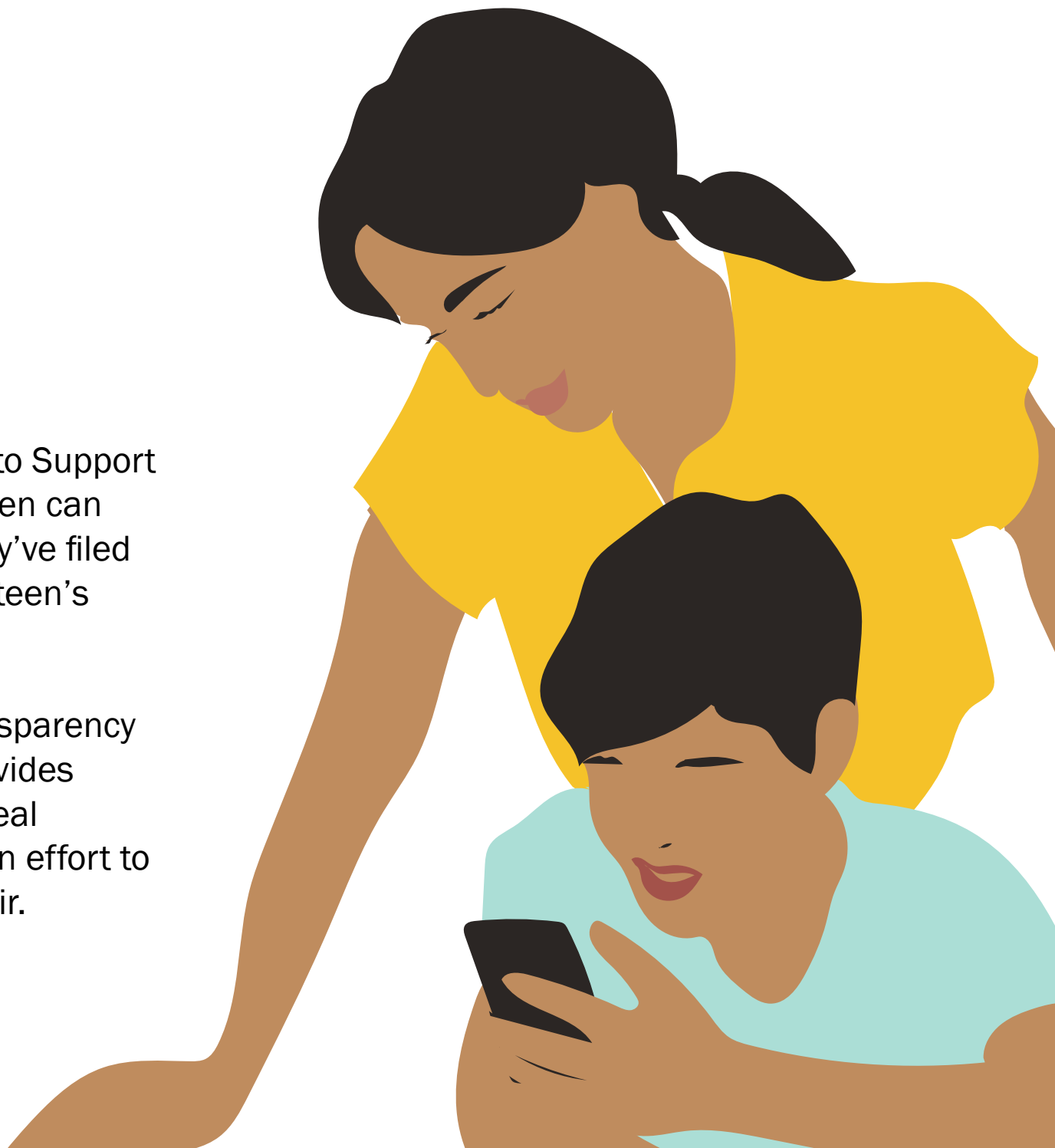
Mute

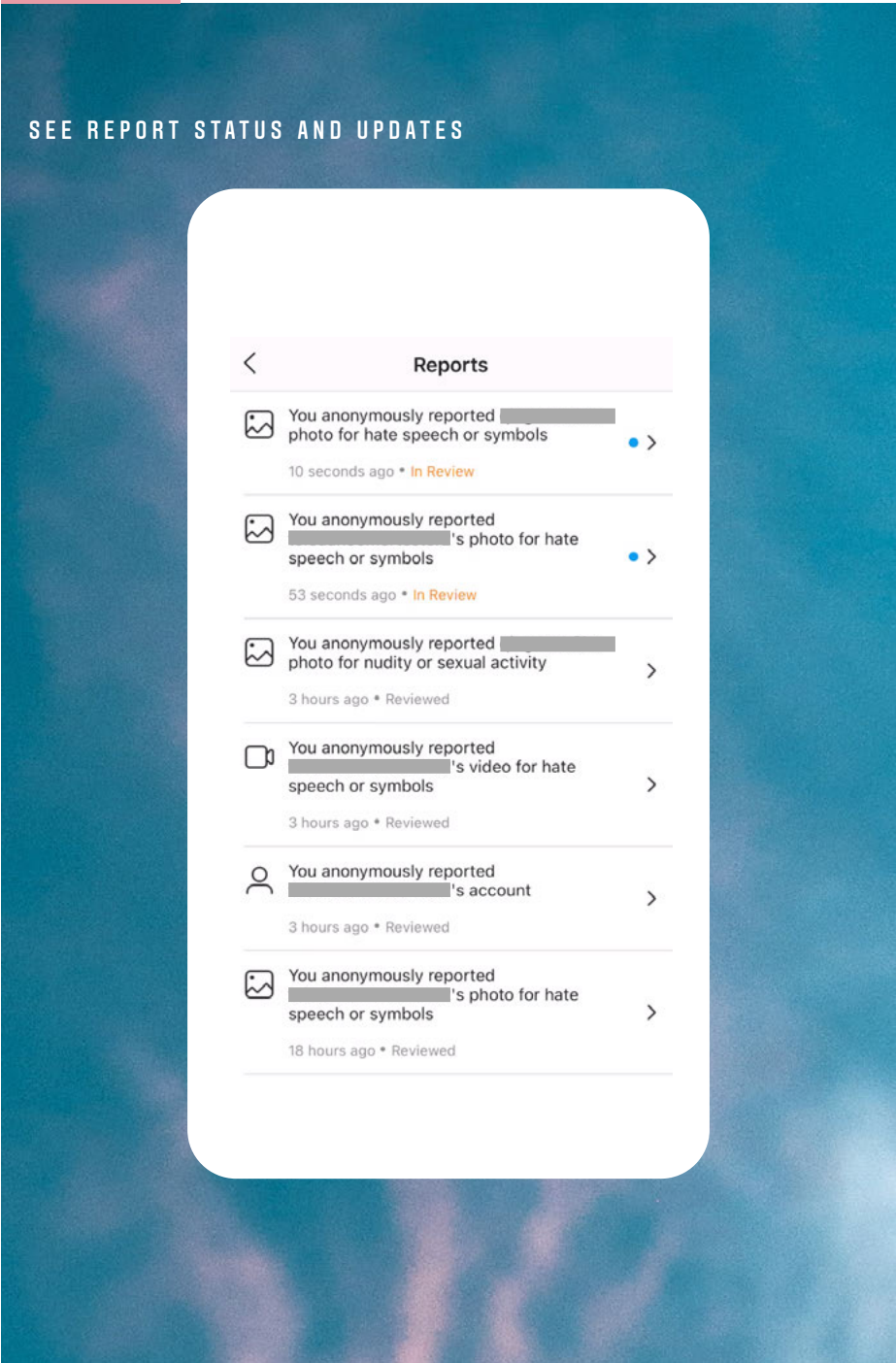
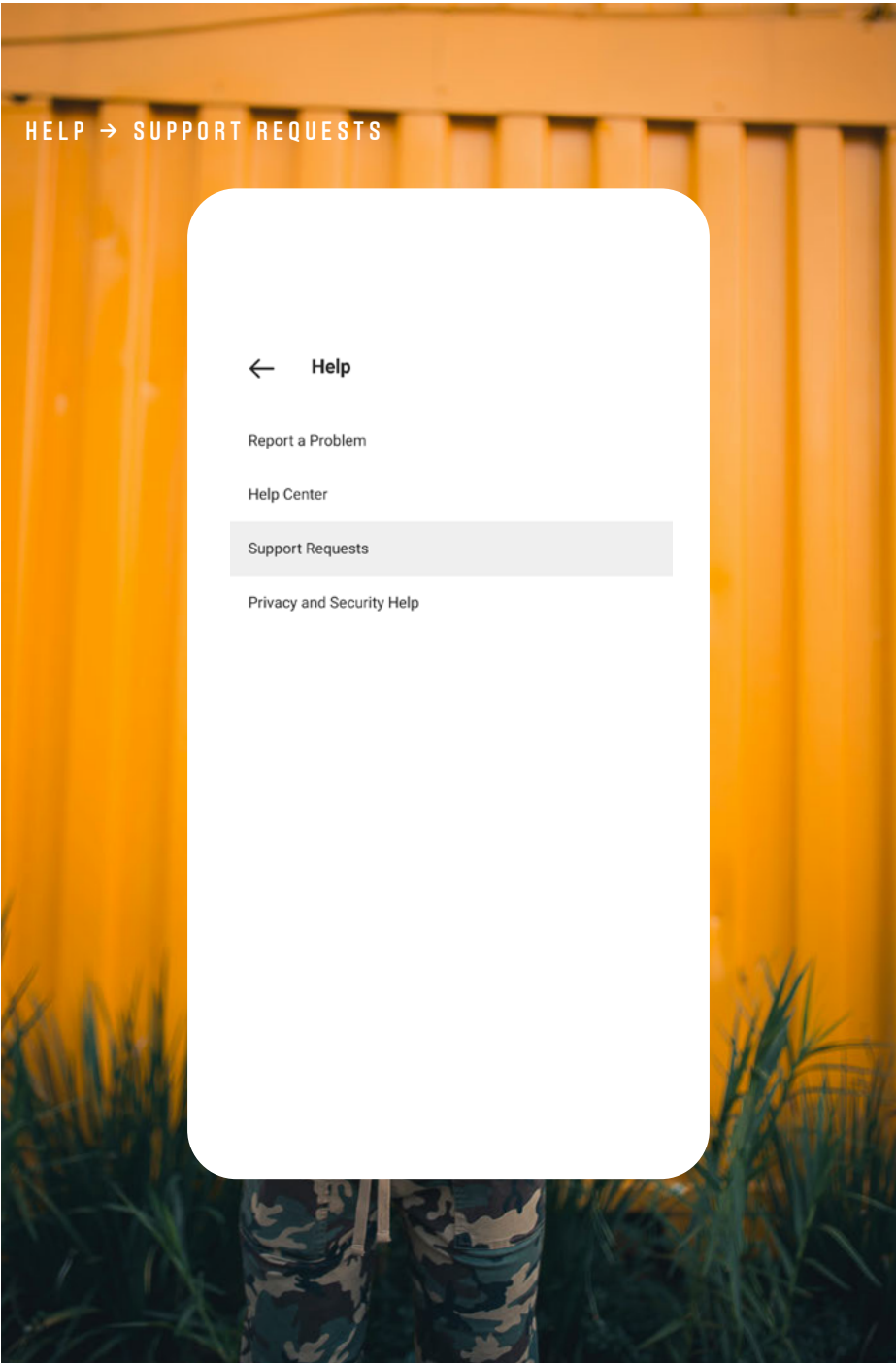


Support Requests

Our community now has access to Support Requests - a place where your teen can follow updates to the reports they've filed as well as any violations by your teen's account.

This is designed to increase transparency into our processes. This also provides people a dedicated place to appeal decisions they disagree with in an effort to ensure that our processes are fair.



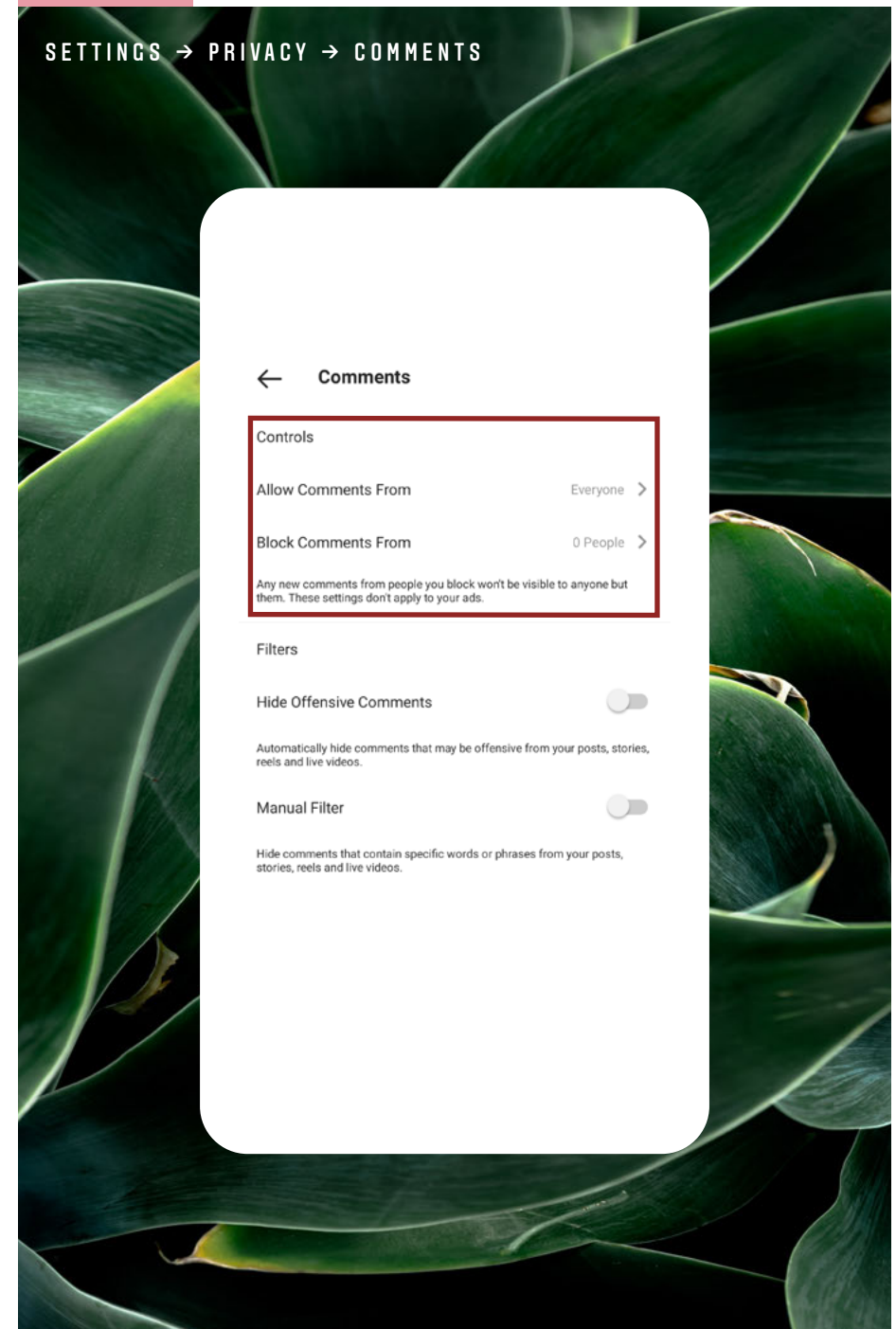


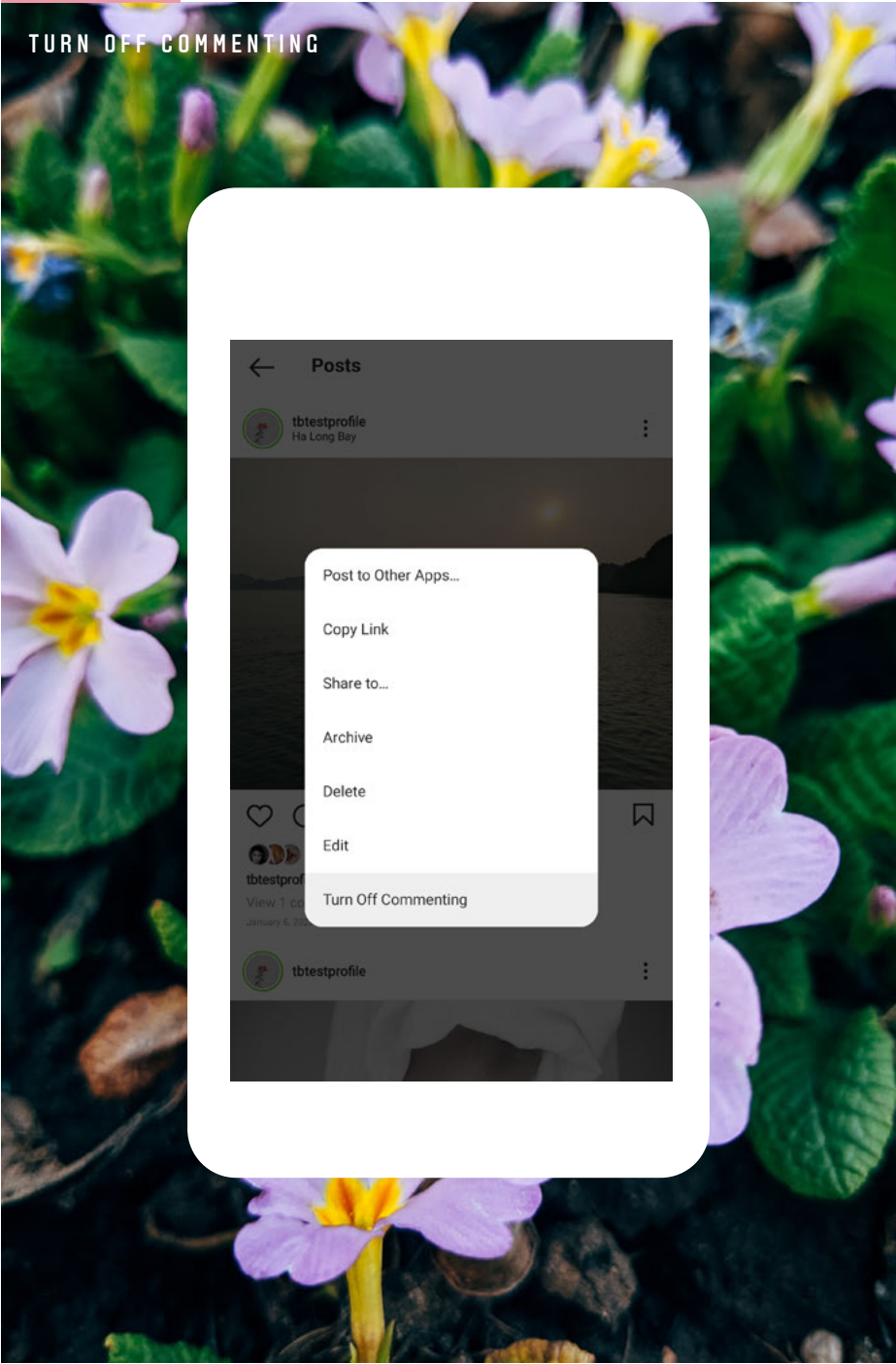
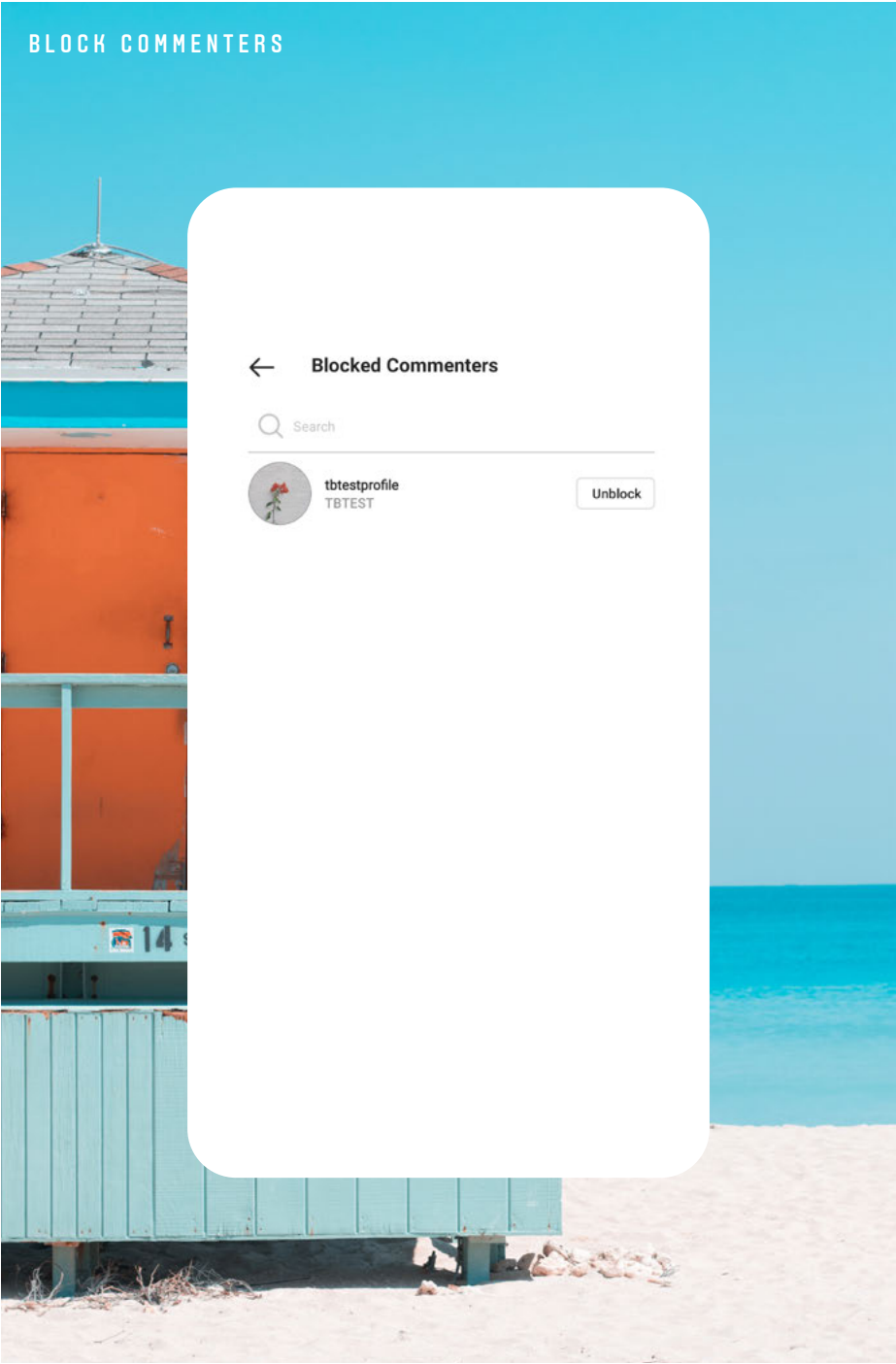


Manage Comments

Your teen is in control of who can comment on their photos and videos. In the “Comment Controls” section of the app settings, they can choose to allow comments from everyone, people they follow and those people’s followers, just the people they follow, or just their followers.

They can also block people from commenting.





Filter out Comments

We have several controls to help teens manage who can comment on their posts. Your teen can also create their own list of words or emojis they don't want to appear on their posts by using the “Manual Filter” feature in Comment Controls.

Additionally, with our “Offensive Comments” filter, we are leveraging technology to automatically hide comments that are intended to bully or harass.

SETTINGS → PRIVACY → COMMENTS

← Comments

Controls

Allow Comments From Everyone >Block Comments From 0 People >

Any new comments from people you block won't be visible to anyone but them. These settings don't apply to your ads.

Filters

Hide Offensive Comments ☐

Automatically hide comments that may be offensive from your posts, stories, reels and live videos.

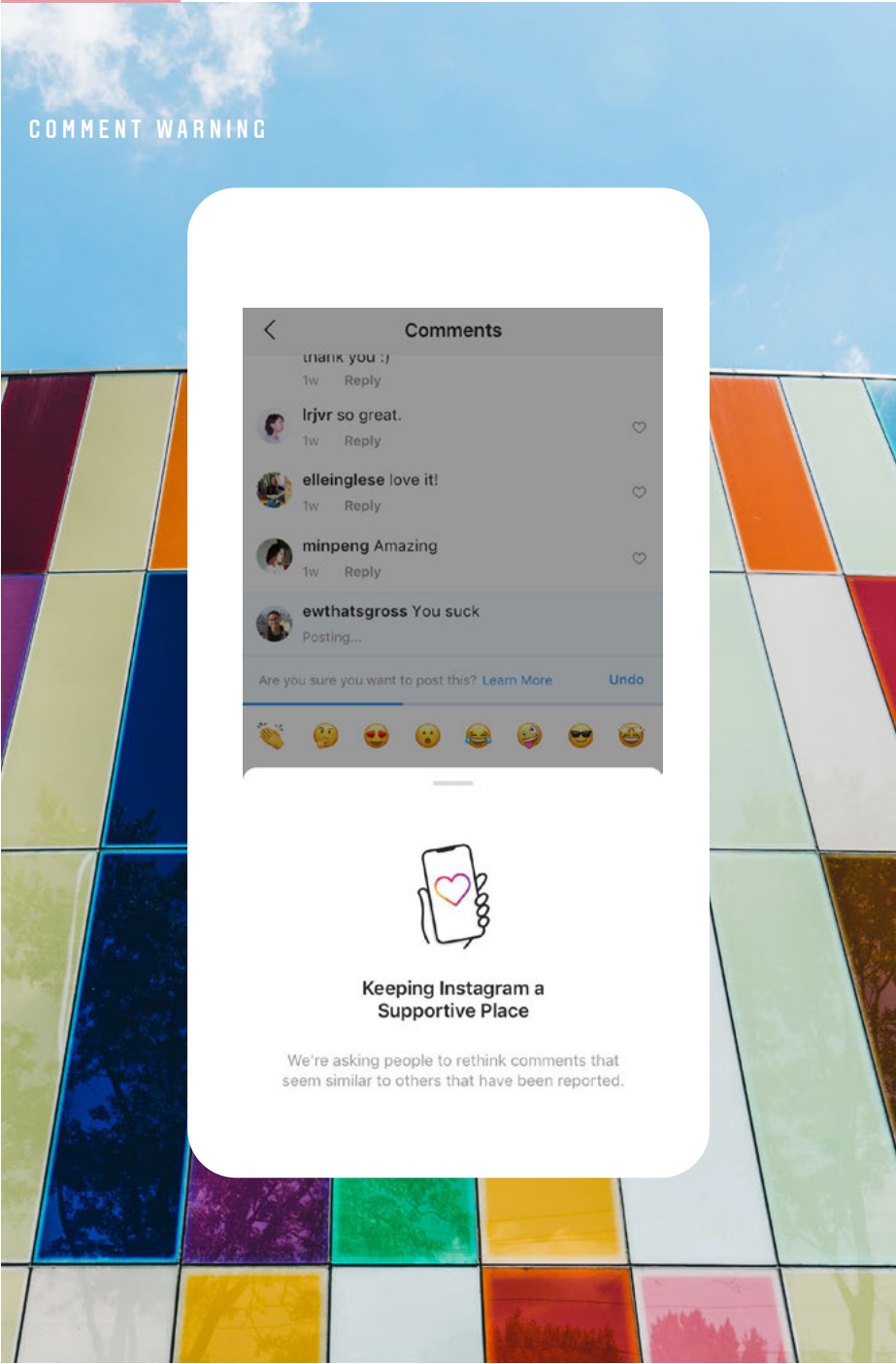
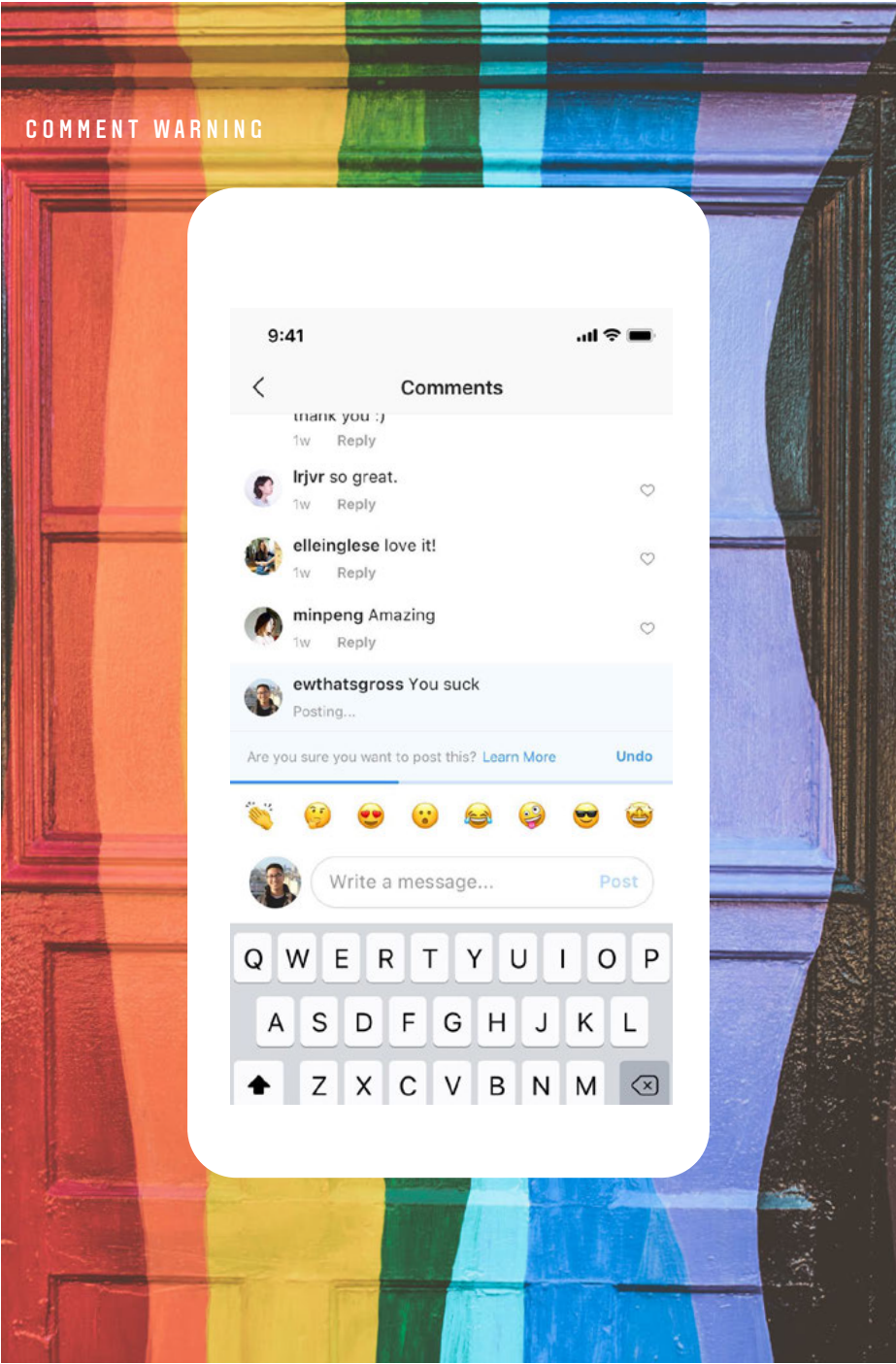
Manual Filter ☐

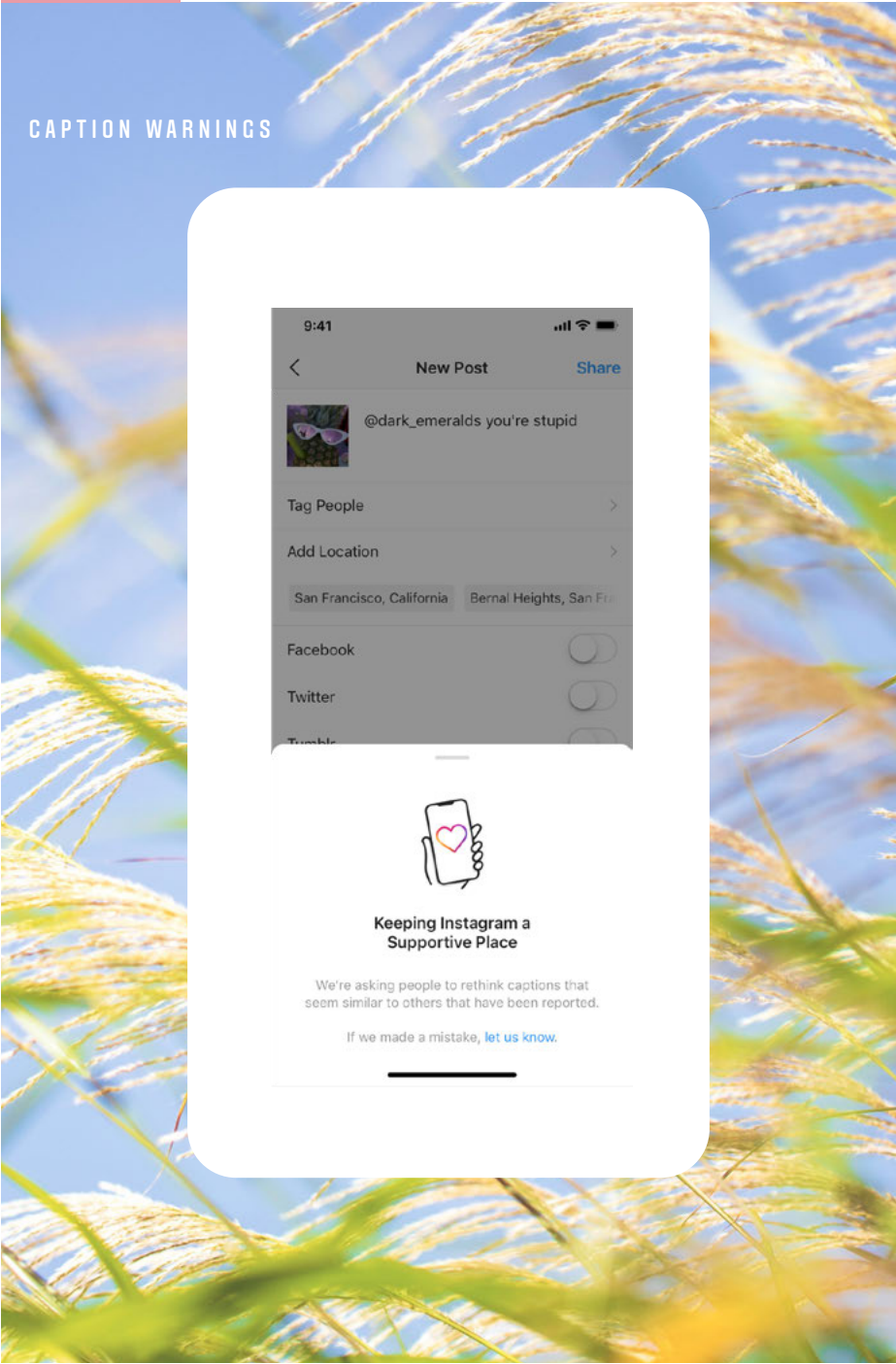
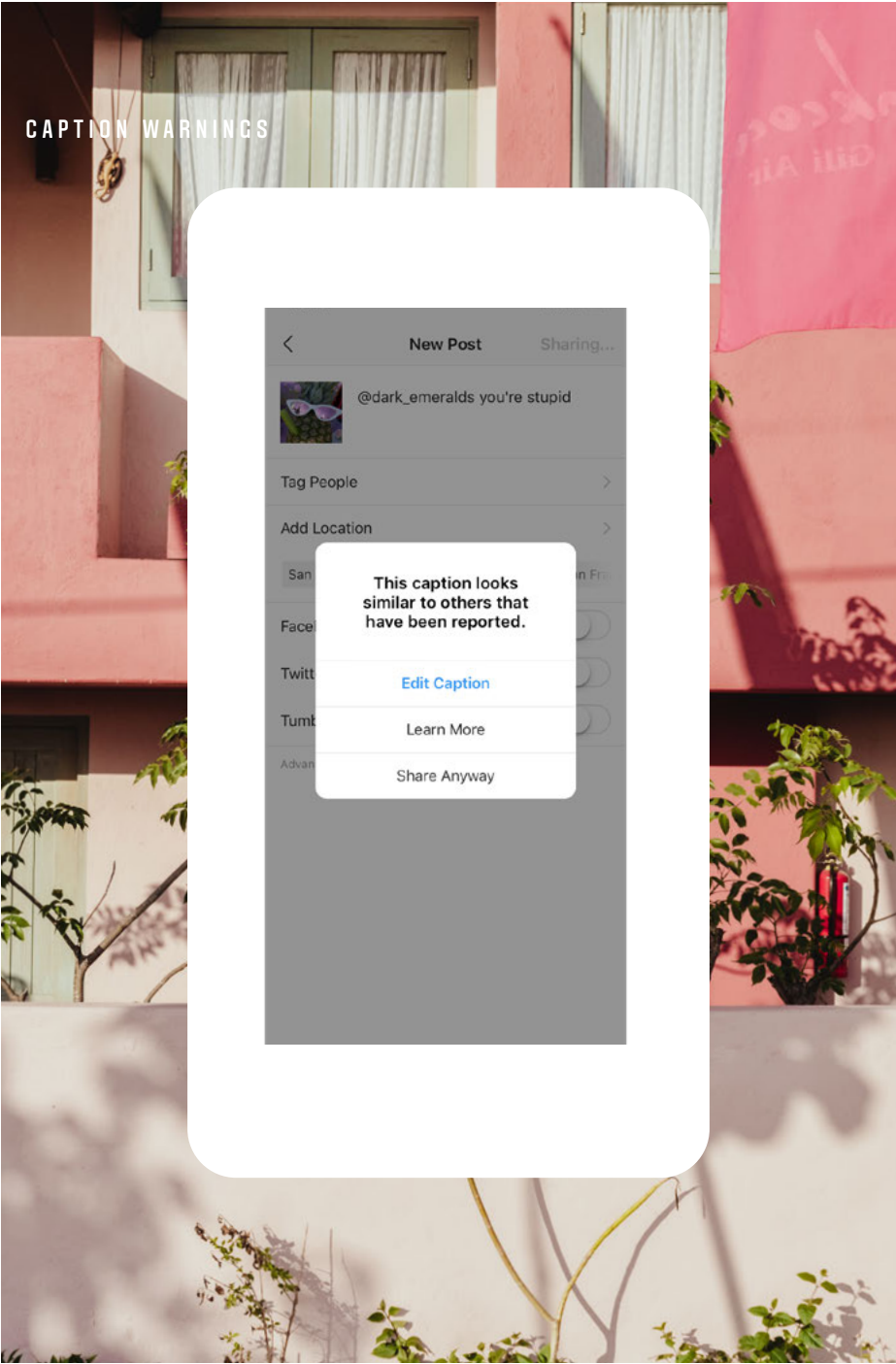
Hide comments that contain specific words or phrases from your posts, stories, reels and live videos.

Comment and caption warnings

We automatically identify when a comment or a caption in a post is found to be hurtful and offensive, and we notify the person making the comment or posting the caption before it is posted. This gives them a chance to pause and undo their comment or caption, and we also use the opportunity to show them what is and isn't allowed on Instagram. The intervention prevents the recipient from potentially receiving a harmful interaction.



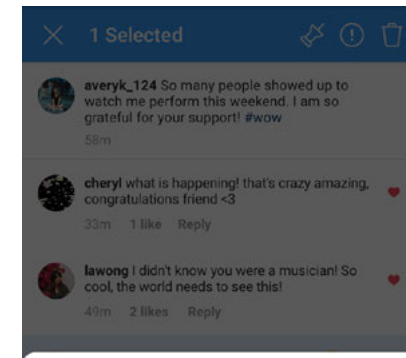




Pinning positive comments

In addition to removing negative comments, we want to give people an easy way to amplify and encourage positive interactions. Pinned Comments gives your child a way to set the tone for their account and engage with their community by pinning a select number of comments to the top of their comments thread.

SWIPE LEFT ON THE COMMENT → TAP THE THUMB TACK ICON



Pin Your Favorite Comments

Pin up to 3 comments to show them at the top of your post and highlight positivity. When you pin a comment, we'll notify the person who wrote it.

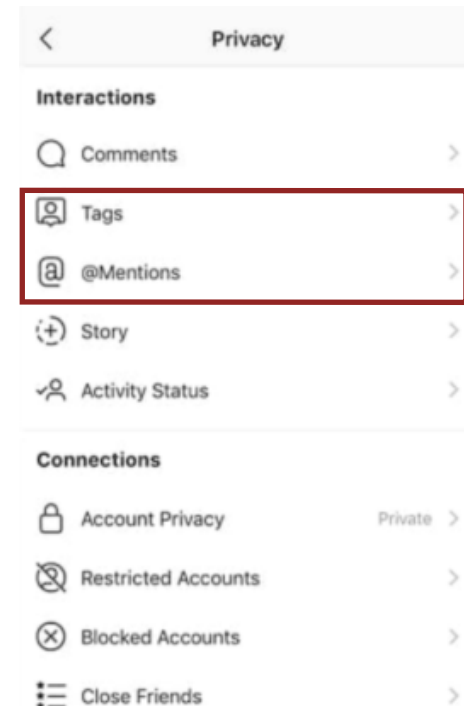
[Pin Comment](#)

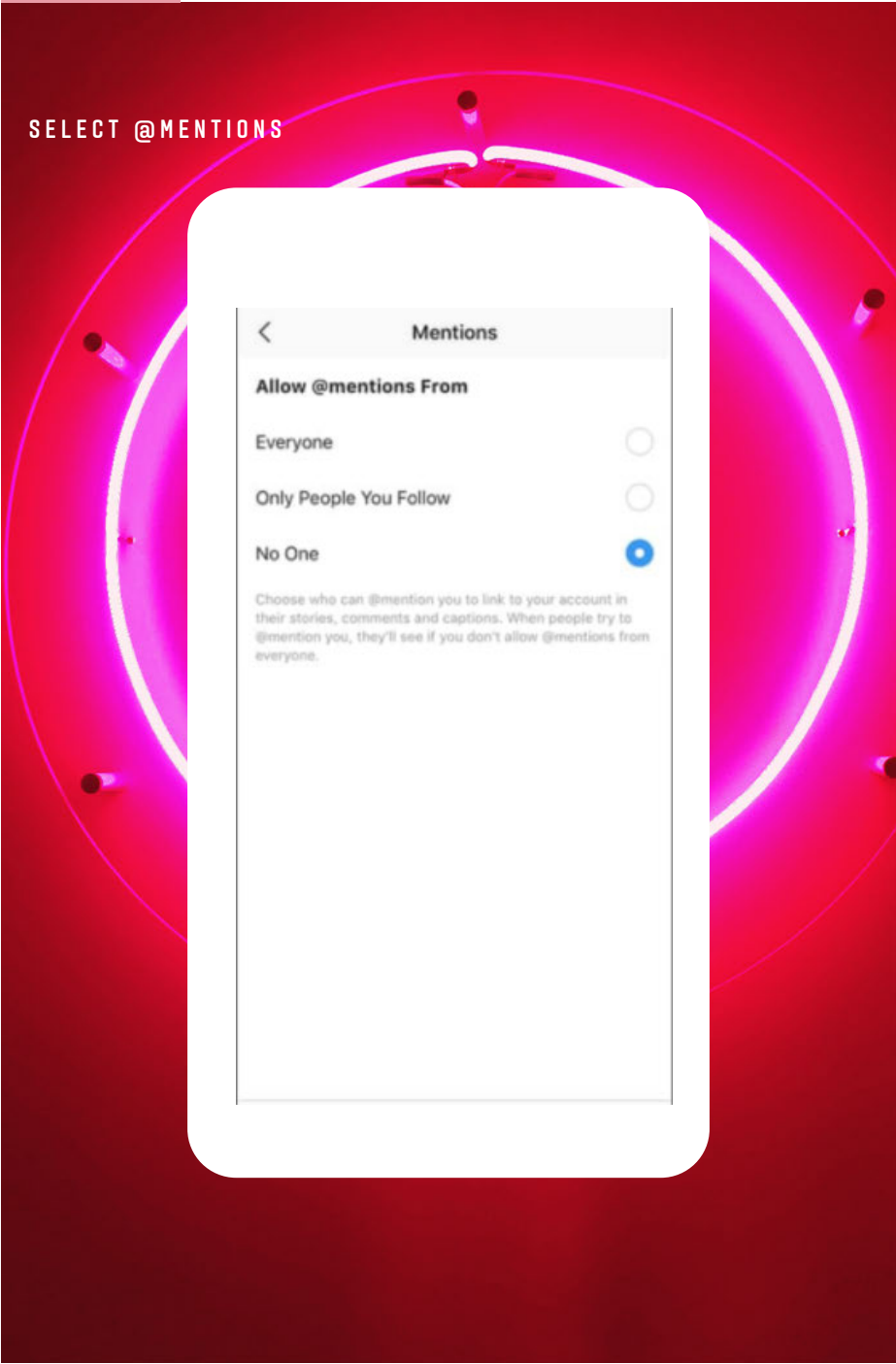
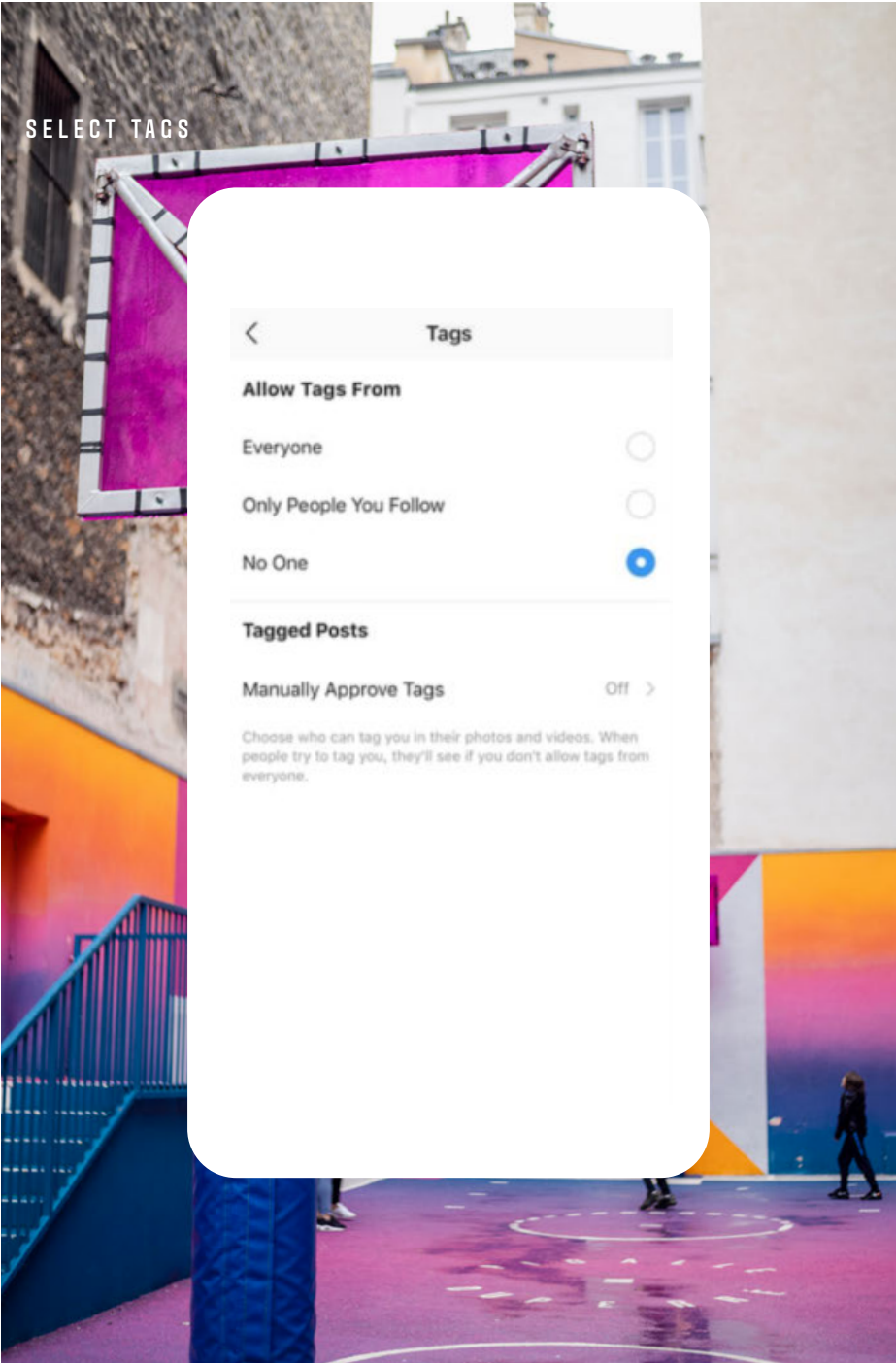


Control tags and mentions

We've created new controls that allow people to manage who can tag or mention them on Instagram. Your teen can choose whether they want everyone, only people they follow or no one to be able to tag or mention them in a comment, caption or Story.

SETTINGS → PRIVACY



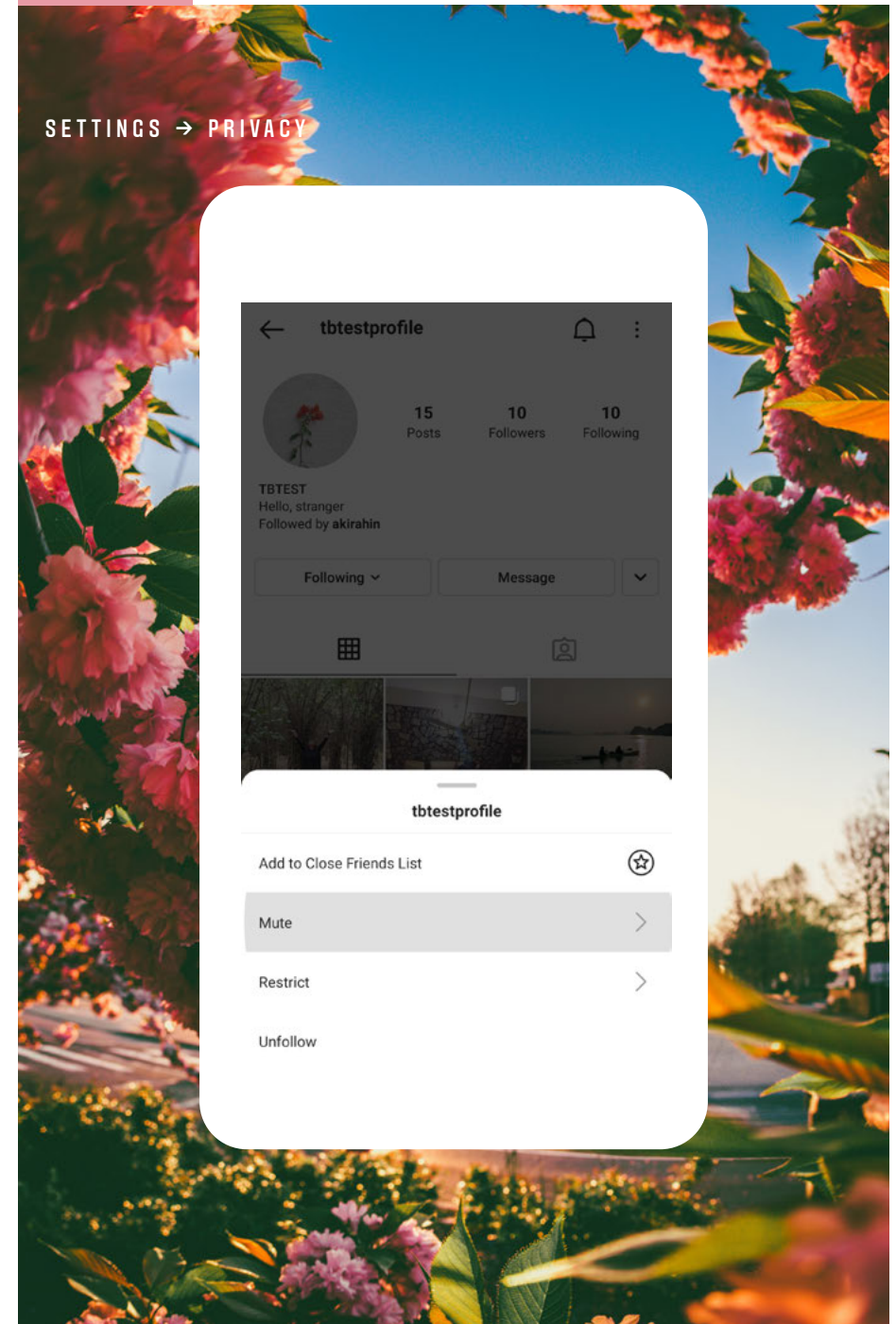




Mute an account

There may be accounts that your teen isn't interested in interacting with, but is hesitant to unfollow. Muting will stop posts or Stories from those accounts from showing up in your teen's feed.

The other person will not know they've been muted, and your teen can unmute at any time.

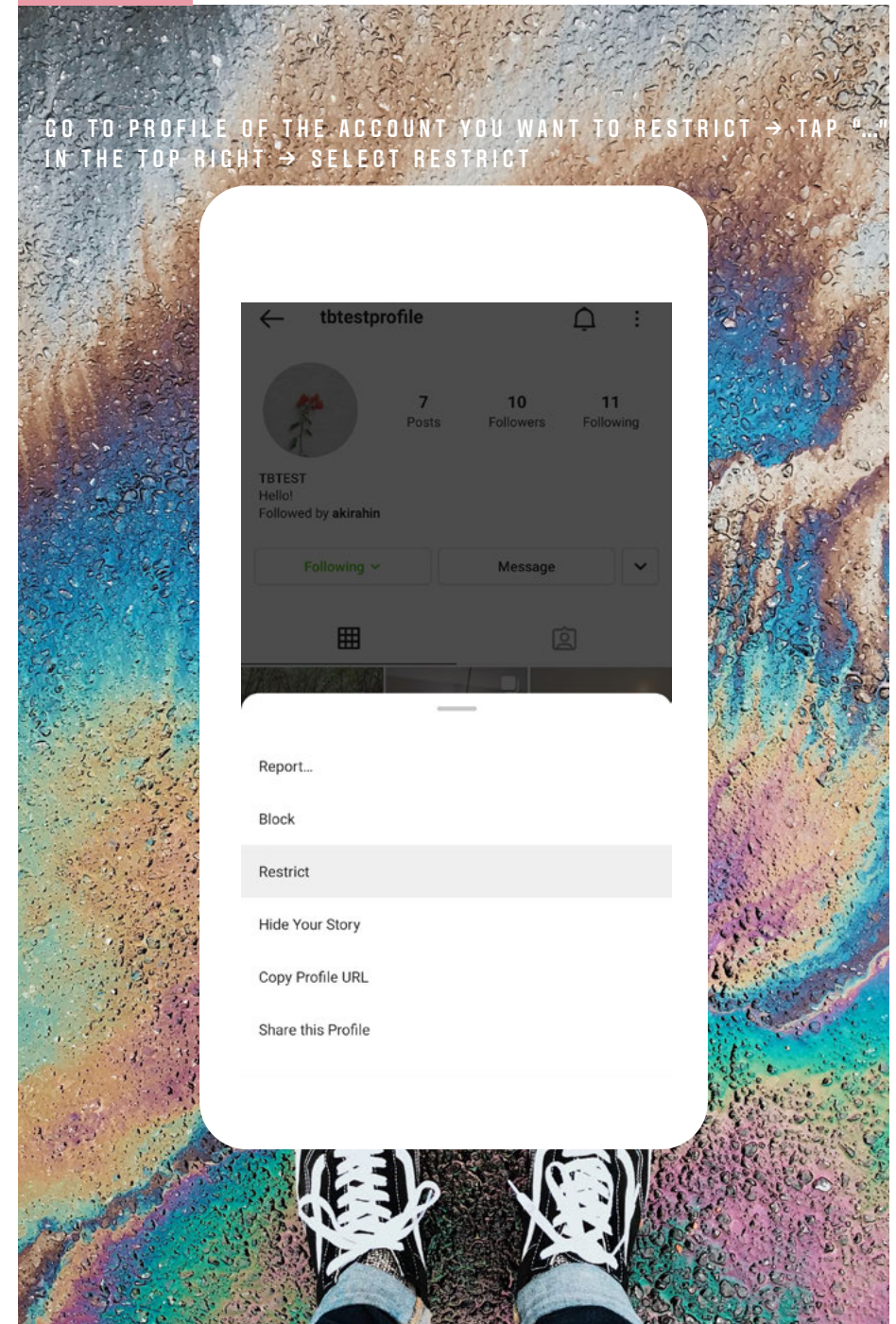


Restrict

Restrict mode allows your teen to protect their account and keep an eye on someone who may be bullying them without making that person aware.

Once they Restrict someone, comments from that person will only be visible to that person. Restricted people aren't able to see when you're active on Instagram or when you've read their direct messages.

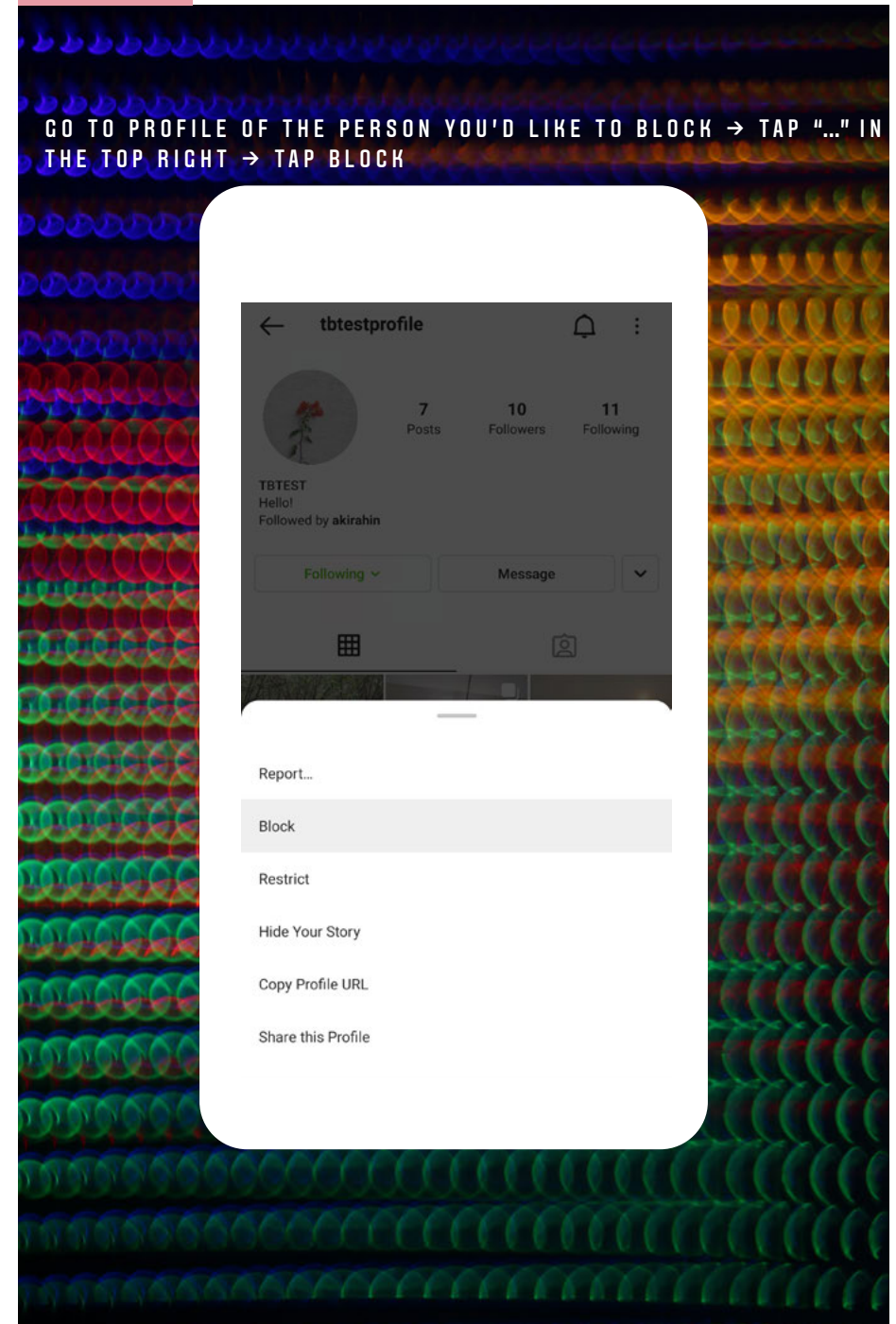
Your teen can remove someone from Restrict at any time.



Block accounts

Your teen can block any account they don't want to interact with. This will block that account from seeing and commenting on their posts, Stories, Reels, and Live broadcasts.

When your teen blocks an account, that person is not notified. Your teen can unblock an account at any time.





"It's easy to let screen time rules slide once kids are older and have their own devices, but remember that they still need to strike a balance between online and offline time. Make sure your kids don't need to compete with a screen for your attention. Besides setting a good example, this shows them that you care and are interested, which makes them more likely to open up. Just as important: designating media-free spaces, like bedrooms and the dinner table. Establishing (and enforcing) these limits from a young age teaches kids to be healthy media consumers."

**– Dave Anderson, PhD, Clinical Psychologist,
VP of School & Community Programs, Child Mind Institute**

When it comes to spending time on Instagram, it's important to have open conversations with your teen and come to an agreement about what is an appropriate amount of time on the platform each day or each week.

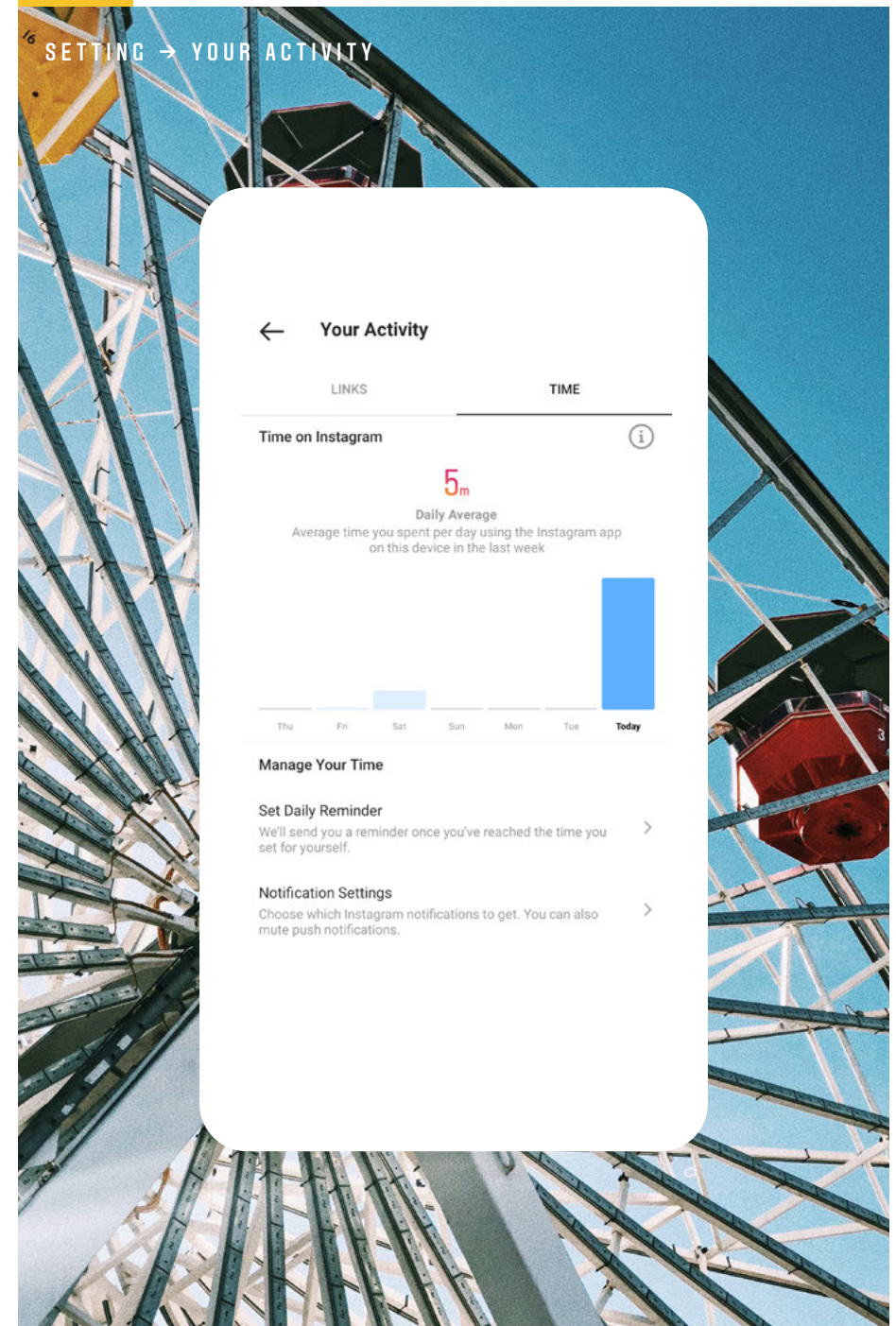
Taking regular breaks can also be important, especially during stressful times. There are a number of tools to help you and your family understand and take control of the time your child is spending on the app. You can work together to decide what the right balance is for your family.



View your activity

The Activity Dashboard shows your teen how much time they've spent on Instagram for the past day and week, as well as their average time on the app.

Your teen can tap and hold the blue bars to see how much time they've spent on Instagram on a certain day.

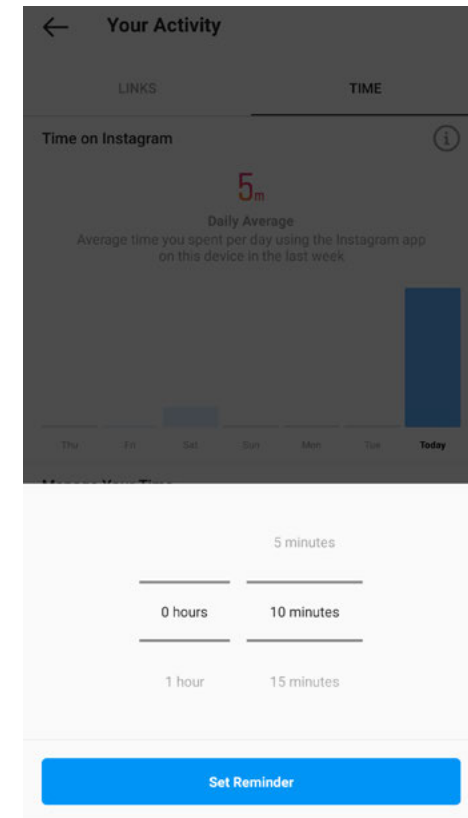


Set a daily reminder

Your teen can use the daily reminder to set a limit on how much time they want to spend on Instagram.

Talk with your teen about how they feel while using the app. Is there a point when they don't get as much out of it? Setting the daily reminder together can be a good way to talk to your teen about how they are using Instagram throughout the day.

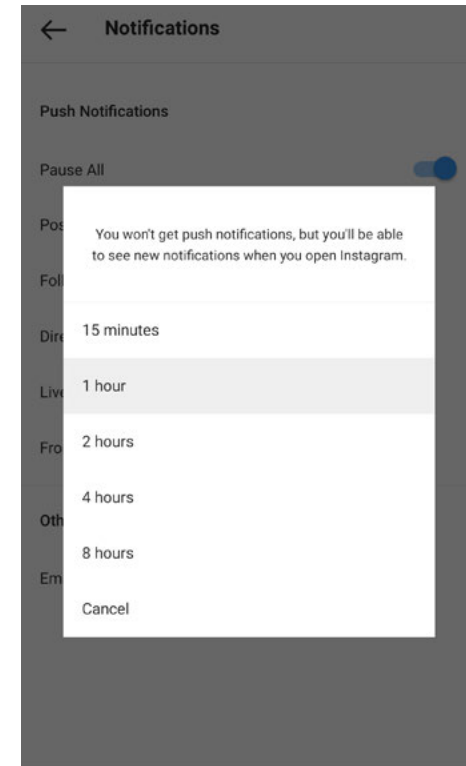
SET A DAILY REMINDER



Mute push notifications

Your child can use the “Mute Push Notifications” feature to silence Instagram notifications for a period of time. When the preset time is up, notifications will return to their normal settings without having to reset them.

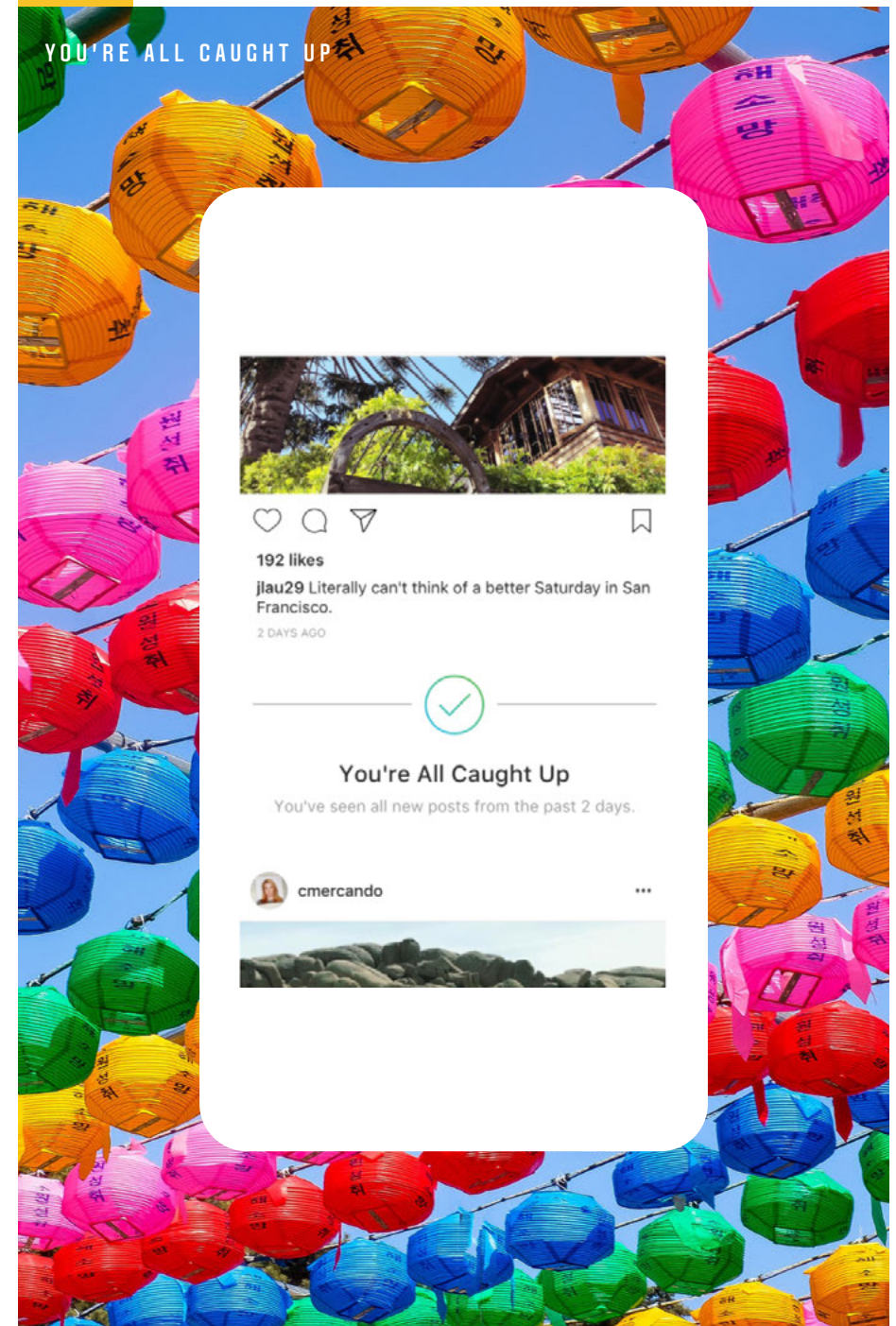
MUTE PUSH NOTIFICATIONS



👋 You're all caught up

Young people can feel pressure to see and interact with all their friends' posts. When they scroll through every post on their feed from the past two days, they will see a message that says "You're All Caught Up".

This way, they'll know that they're up to date on everything their friends and communities are up to.





It's important to think about the security of your teen's Instagram account. We encourage you to create strong passwords that are not easy to guess, and recommend that you never share your password with anyone. ConnectSafely has password advice at ConnectSafely.org/Passwords.

Instagram has created multiple features that help you manage your security and help ensure that your Instagram account stays safe and in your hands.

Two factor authentication

Two-Factor Authentication is an additional security layer that helps secure an account from unauthorized password usage. When logging into an Instagram account from a new device or browser, you are required to input your password as well as a secure code that is sent through an authenticator app or via text message.



TWO FACTOR AUTHENTICATION



Add Extra Security To Your Account

Two-factor authentication protects your account by requiring an additional code when you log in on a device we don't recognize.

[Learn More](#)



Emails from Instagram

Ensure that your child does not miss important emails from Instagram regarding your their account. If you are unsure whether a communication is legitimately from Instagram, this is a great place to start.

Please note that Instagram will never contact your child through DMs.

SETTINGS → SECURITY → EMAILS FROM INSTAGRAM

Security

Other

This is a list of emails Instagram has sent you about security and login in the last 14 days. You can use it to verify which emails are real and which are fake. [Learn more.](#)

Login activity

Instagram will send push and in-app notifications when your teen logs into their account from a new device. Tapping on the notification will show the new device information and city-level location of the new device. This will help your teen keep their account secure.

SETTINGS → SECURITY → LOGIN ACTIVITY

← Login Activity

Where You're Logged In

 Delhi, India
Active now • This Pixel 3 ...



Parents can help kids build a safe and reasonable relationship with social media before they're out on their own. Start by taking social media seriously and don't underestimate the role social media plays in the lives of teenagers. Teens today never knew a world where social media didn't exist, and for them the things that happen online — slights, break-ups, likes, or negative comments — are very real. When you talk about social media make sure you're really listening and be careful not to dismiss or minimize your teen's experiences.

When you talk to your child about social media, encourage them to explore it in a more critical way. A great way to start is to try asking what they think has been cropped or edited out of their friends' "perfect" pictures and why. That can lead to larger questions. Do you think your friends are really the people they appear to be online? Are you? What's the purpose of posting a photo? What is it about getting "likes" that feels good?"

**– Dave Anderson, PhD, Clinical Psychologist,
VP of School & Community Programs, Child Mind Institute**

Supporting your teen



Compiled by clinicians at the Child Mind Institute, these tips are designed to help parents support their teens in having a safe, positive and balanced online experience.

FOCUS ON BALANCE

Make sure that kids are getting plenty of offline time with friends and that they're engaged in activities that build identity and confidence, like arts, volunteering and sports.

MODEL MINDFUL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Notice how different activities and accounts make you feel and share what you notice with your child. You can also model good boundaries by putting your phone away at specific times, like during work or mealtimes.

OBSERVE BUT DON'T SPY

Following your teen on social media can be a great way to stay connected and look out for signs of trouble. But poking around in their account (or even poring over every like and comment) can make kids think you don't trust them — and that you're not trustworthy, either.

SHARE TOOLS TO DEAL WITH CYBERBULLYING

Discuss approaches to cyberbullying before it even comes up. Make sure your teen knows how to react to a bully, who they can talk to, and strategies for dealing with big emotions.

SET BOUNDARIES

Encourage your teen to avoid social media for an hour before bed. Make sure they have an alarm clock that isn't their phone.

A young man with dark hair, wearing a red and black plaid shirt, blue jeans, and white sneakers, is sitting on a row of red school lockers. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background shows a blue and white tiled wall and a white ceiling with a grid pattern.

Conversation Starters

It's important to have open conversations with your teen about social media, but you may not know where to start. Here are several conversation starters, pulled together by the clinicians at the Child Mind Institute:

1. What are your favorite accounts to follow on Instagram? What do you like about them?
2. How do you decide what to post?
3. Have you ever felt uncomfortable with something you saw or an experience you had on social media? What did you do?
4. How much time do you usually like to spend on Instagram? How do you know when it's time for a break? What are some of the ways you like to relax when being on social media gets stressful?
5. Sometimes when I've been scrolling on social media for a while, I notice that it starts to feel stressful instead of meaningful. Does that ever happen to you?
6. I've been hearing stories about kids posting mean things about each other on social media. How do you and your friends handle it when something like that happens?
7. I saw people were [mad, hurt, upset] when [X celebrity] posted about [X topic]. What did you think about their post?

“My advice is: Don’t start a conversation with me by saying social media bad for me. Instead, ask me why I use it and how it inspires me.”

Nancey, 19

“I want parents to know that it’s possible to learn through Instagram. It’s not just what we look at on our phones when we’re bored!”

Riya, 16



08 /

Glossary of Instagram terms

BLOCK

Block is a tool your child can use if someone is bothering them on Instagram. When your child blocks someone, the other person isn't notified, but they'll no longer be able to interact with your child in any way.

COMMENT

A comment is a reaction to the content someone posts on Instagram. Comments appear below posts on your child's feed, and can use words or emojis.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

We want to foster a positive, diverse community. Everyone who uses Instagram must adhere to our Community Guidelines which are designed to create a safe and open environment for everyone. This includes things like no nudity or hate speech. Not following these guidelines may result in deleted content, disabled accounts or other restrictions.

DIRECT OR DM

Instagram Direct is where young people can message each other individually or in groups. They can also share photos and videos with just the people they're messaging.

EXPLORE

Explore is where young people will see photos and videos from accounts and hashtags they might be interested in. Explore is different for everyone - the content changes depending on accounts and hashtags your child follows.

FEED

Feed is where young people can see posts from the accounts they follow. Young people generally see feed posts as being more celebratory or special. Feed posts can be photos or videos.

IGTV

IGTV is a place to share video content up to one hour in length. Your child can find videos from their favourite creators, and make their own longer content.

LIVE AND VIDEO CHAT

Your child can go live to share with their followers in real time. When live, they can invite friends to join them, co-host a live session, or leave comments and send hearts. They can also video chat in Direct with up to four people.

POST

A post refers to the media your child is putting on their Feed or on Stories. This can be photos or videos.

PROFILE

Your child's Instagram profile is where their friends and followers will find their posts, and can access their stories. It also includes a short bio. If your child's profile is private, only their main profile picture and bio is visible.

REELS

Reels allows people to record and edit short videos up to 30 seconds in the Instagram Camera. You can add effects and music to your reel or use your own original audio.

REPORT

Reporting is a way your child can let Instagram know that something they have seen is inappropriate. Your child can report anything on Instagram that they believe violates our community guidelines.

RESTRICT

Restrict is a tool that allows your child to protect their account from unwanted interactions without making the restricted person aware. Once they restrict someone, comments from that person will only be visible to that person. Restricted people aren't able to see when your child is active on Instagram or when your child has read their direct messages.

STORIES

Stories disappear from the app after 24 hours, unless your child has enabled archiving, which makes their expired stories available only to them. Your child can subsequently share these in their Stories Highlights. Anyone who can view your child's stories can screenshot them. Stories available only to them. Your child can subsequently share these in their Stories Highlights. Anyone who can view your child's stories can screenshot them.



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Resources

For more tools and resources to help you navigate healthy social media habits with your child, visit the following helpful resources:

parents.instagram.com

safety.instagram.com

help.instagram.com

connectsafely.org/instagram

childmindinstitute.org