



Youth Communication & Engagement Playbook

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This Playbook is for anyone who creates content online that speaks to young people.

It has been designed to be easy-to-use, and to help you post in a way that encourages **connection** and **conversation** with young people, because after all, that is what it is all about.

This Playbook has been informed by research undertaken by **The Lab** in association with VicHealth youth-based organisation partners.

Guiding Principles	3
Our Audience	4
Developing Content	7
Content Tips	10
Tone of Voice	11
Content Approach	13
General Tips	16
Social Tips	18
Content Platforms	22
Content Checklists	30
Content Guidelines	32
Appendices	33
Physical Health	34
Food + Nutrition	38
Mental Health	42
Social + Community	46
Alcohol + Drugs	50
Gender Equality	54

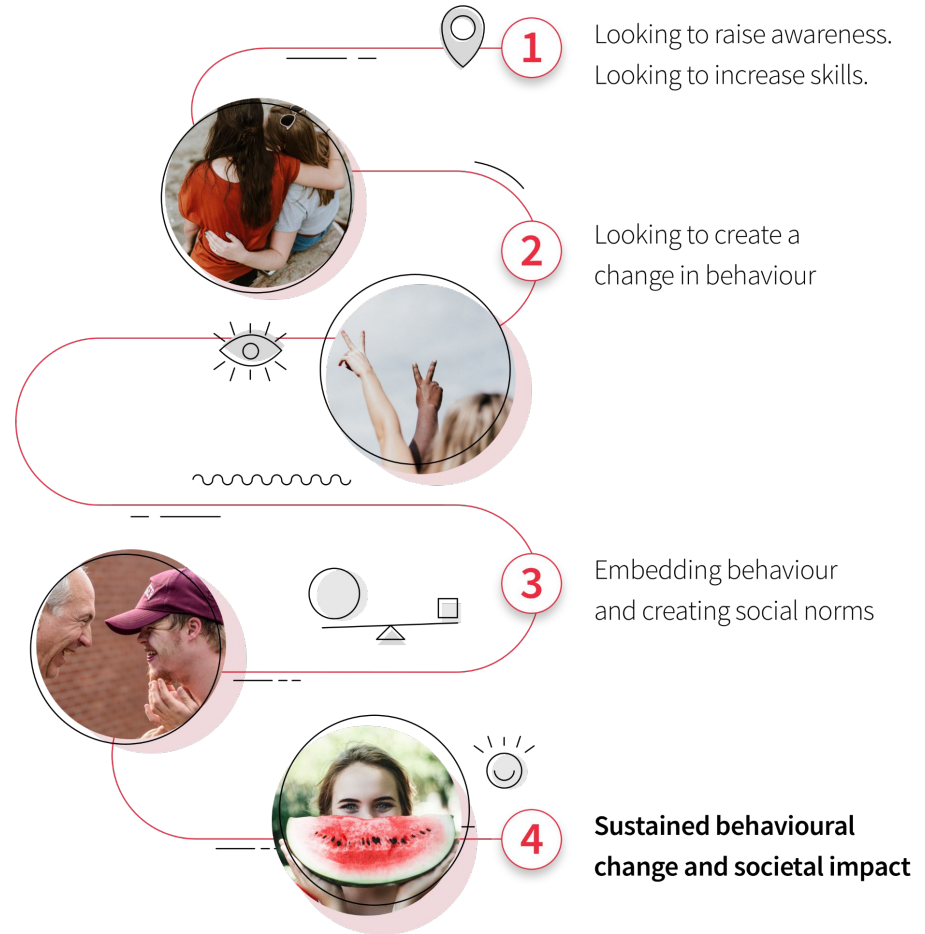
Guiding Principles

Research undertaken by The Lab included an immersion and exploration with a sample of young people, which led to the following guidelines:

1. Curating is valuable for young people in a world of information
2. Credibility is key
3. Nuance and personalisation matters
4. Inclusive content is important
5. Health and wellbeing are intrinsically linked
6. Being relevant and timely is key
7. Sharing success stories and case studies is helpful
8. Go beyond the surface and get into the details
9. Aspire to make young people feel empowered, safe and in control

Our Audience

When creating content, launching a campaign or a program of work it's important to consider the end goal.



Our Audience

What young people have told us about themselves and the world they are in

The context for young people today:

- Rapid advancements in technology have given rise to a new world of digital tools and information
- There is more information available to them than ever before
- There can be clouding of credible information
- Young people respond well to engaging, visual and interactive delivery of content
- They like to see and hear from people they can relate to
- They appreciate simple and to the point communication
- They want the conversation to keep going - helping connect them to further information or resources

Our Audience

It's important to think about your audience when creating any content, and engaging with them in an appropriate and consistent way.

Under 18 Years

Being exposed to new ideas

Still idealistic

Reliant on a close bubble of information sources

Over 18 Years

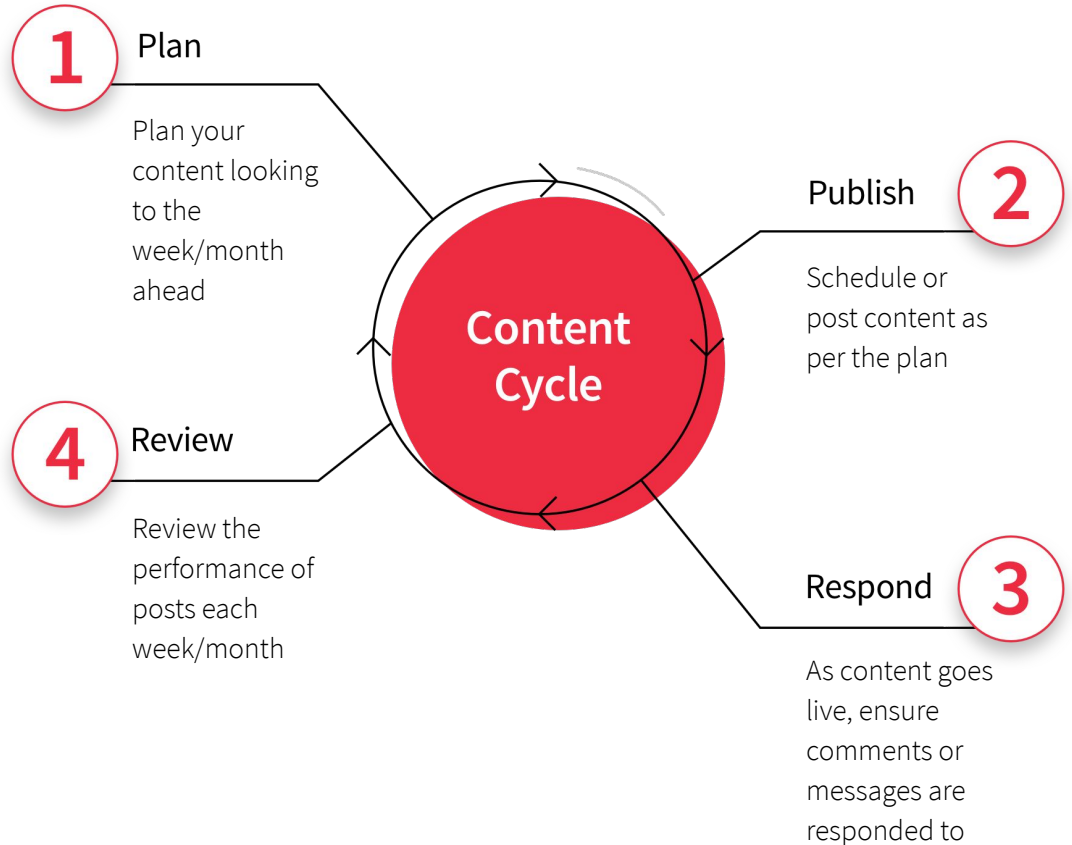
Independent adults dealing with a broader range of complex issues

Higher levels of pragmatism

Seeking knowledge from wider sources

Developing content

1. Plan
2. Publish
3. Respond
4. Review



What we know

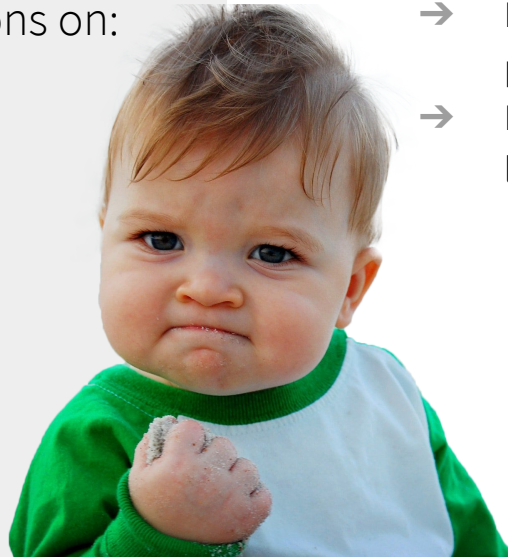
What we are basing our recommendations on:



- **Video is powerful** - more than 500 million hours of YouTube video are consumed everyday, and 69% of people prefer to watch a video for an explanation of a product or service
- Tik Tok is used by 1.1 million Australians, and is the fastest growing social media platform in the world
- 500+ million people use Instagram Stories everyday
- Instagram is dominated by 18-34 years olds globally

What we know

What we are basing our recommendations on:



- People spend on average 1.7 seconds on a piece of content on their mobile device; and 2.5 seconds on desktop
- The “no-edit” trend linked to Tik Tok means we are seeing a move away from overly edited content to more natural, in the moment content
- Facebook Groups can be powerful at uniting like minded people surrounding an issue or interest
- Meme culture is about a way of interpreting the world that is light-hearted and digestible for young people

Content Tips



Tone of Voice

The recommended tone to adopt when creating messaging for young people on social media is to create a voice that is a bit more casual than your usual brand voice (on your website or traditional communications)

Suggested attributes:

- Playful and light-hearted
- Unfussy
- Positive, upbeat
- Authentic and honest
- Welcoming + inclusive
- Progressive + modern

Tone of Voice

An example of tone of voice:

This post is an example of falling into the habit of a more corporate tone, leading with “we” rather than you:



“Positive news alert: We are thrilled to announce we have received a \$300,000 grant from the Federal Government to fund eight camps and a series of ongoing active recreation programming for young Aboriginal people.”

A rewrite:



“Positive news alert: Are you a young Aboriginal person? Do you love camping? Well get excited, because you can now access a new program where...”

Example: Avoid using the phrase “young people”
– change copy from



“What barriers to employment do young people experience?”



to
“What is hard about finding work at the moment?”

Content Approach



Under 18

- Introduce new ideas
- Introduce trusted sources
- Use case studies and real life examples to illuminate advice given
- Use experts to build trust and for credibility
- Lead with encouragement and support

Content Approach



Over 18

- Explore and unpack more complex ideas
- Compare various offerings and services available
- Use case studies and real life examples to illuminate advice at a deeper and more nuanced level
- Use experts to build trust and for credibility
- Warn against fads and misinformation

AVOID!



- The **why without the how** - inspire action, go into detail and be helpful
- **Homogenising** - remember to acknowledge which sub-group you are talking about/to
- **Talking down** to young people; being condescending
- **One directional communication** - like the old “print” mentality. Turn the microphone outwards to the audience
- **Overly designed graphics** - keep graphics clean and fuss-free, and add detail in the captions

General Tips

The key things to think about when creating any form of content are:

- Who am I speaking to here?
- What do they care about?
- What is the key message or action we want to get across?

- ★ Provide links to content that people can refer for later use, eg downloadable PDFs with tips and advice or practical strategies
- ★ Focus on the conditions and times in a young person's life that might bring about challenges such as work insecurity, relationships, family, school, identity, puberty and other seasonal or cultural triggers
- ★ Celebrate success stories and invite sharing - but with support and moderation

General Tips

The key things to think about when creating any form of content are:

- Who am I speaking to here?
- What do they care about?
- What is the key message or action we want to get across?

- ★ Lead with visuals - less words, more impact
- ★ **Blog posts/Website posts**
Succinct intro, valuable points and then conclusion. Listicles make content more digestible, Break up with images; use infographics to illustrate ideas
- ★ **EDMs** Don't spam subscribers with too much frequency. Be visually led and have one key message/action
- ★ **Print** Visually led, include social handles, less is more for copy. Use boxes and graphics to break up information

Social Tips

The following examples are designed to create engagement and conversation, by offering information in an easy to digest way.



Example Posts

These are examples are designed to create engagement and conversation, by offering information in an easy to digest way.

50%

Of Victorians have started meal planning during the Coronavirus pandemic.



Let's support our kids to stay healthy and active by participating in **#WalkToSchool** Day today!



“The **pain** you feel today, will be the **strength** you feel tomorrow.”



Did you know?

If drank daily, toddler milk formulas include up to **60 teaspoons** of extra sugar p/month than regular milk.



Social Tips

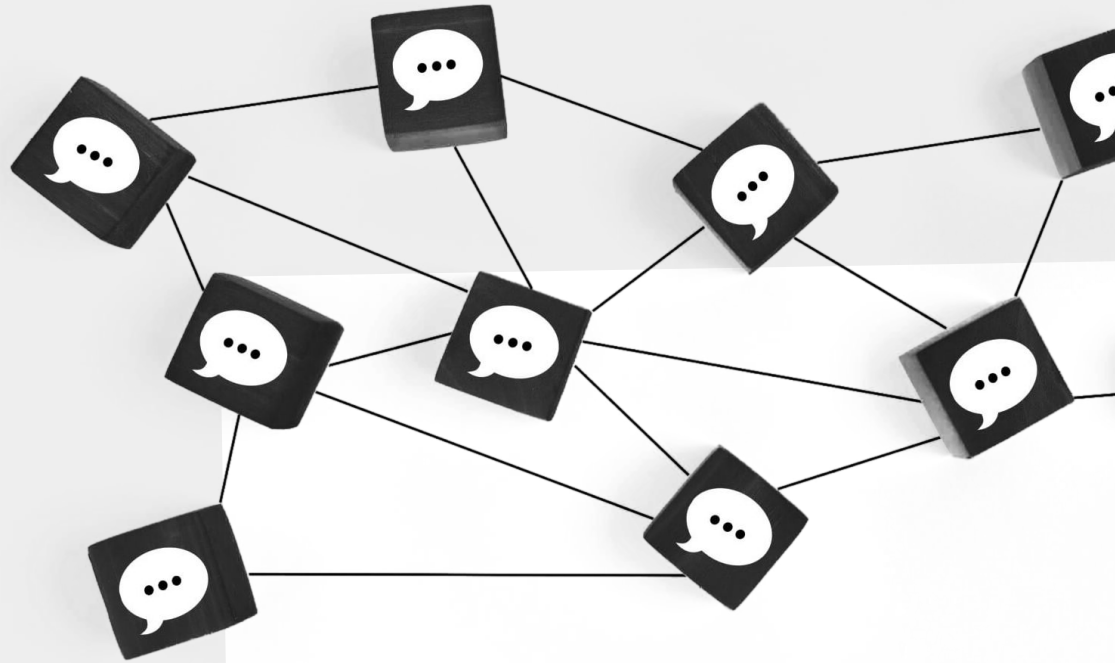
- ★ Avoid relying on too much **stock imagery** - and when you do, use a source like Unsplash or Pexels, or better yet, **commission young people** to take images for the organisation. Type in “Australia” with your searches to get more authentic options
- ★ Consider how language, imagery and design elements are incorporated into organisational style guides
- ★ Use “social days” as prompters for content that is being talked about online, putting your organisation's spin on it
- ★ Utilise **user-generated content** - content created by the young people in your organisation



Social Tips

- ★ Utilise **zeitgeist trends** as way of getting cut through - see Future Super example
- ★ Reply to comments! This is **very important**
- ★ Put the “you” in your captions/copy as much as possible





Content Platforms

Facebook



Getting the most out of Facebook

- Remember you are likely speaking to 18+ young people on this platform, who are spending a lot of time there
- Use Facebook for posts that link to external sources - good for curation of trusted sources/news
- Tip: Invite people who like your posts to like your Page
- Public or private Facebook Groups can be a powerful tool for building a community online
- Facebook Events are also a good way to connect with your followers and provide valuable information through Q+As, lives or real life events

Instagram



Getting the most out of Instagram

- Posts with videos on Instagram get more engagement than those with images
- Images with a single dominant hue tend to get better engagement
- Images with more negative space (less “busy” looking) also tend to get better engagement
- Posts with a location tag get more engagement
- Post evergreen content to the feed, which can be more curated and representative of your brand
- Consider using a scheduling app such as Later to utilise the feature that allows you to arrange the feed in advance

Instagram



Hashtags

To increase reach and engagement, it's recommended to use at least 10 hashtags for feed posts. (You can use up to 30.)

A fresh set of hashtags should be trialed for each post, and the sweet spot for hashtags is between about 10,000 and 5 million posts - no more. They also need to be what the audience is searching for; what is trending. The more localised, the better.

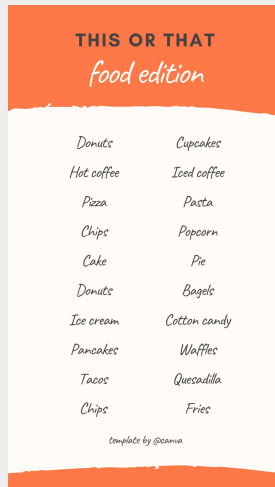
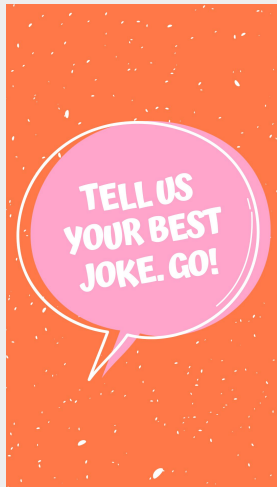
Example hashtags

#melbournelockdown #mentalhealth
#mentalhealthtips #recipeideas
#healthycooking #mentalhealthquotes
#studytips #lesmillstribes #nutritiontips
#nutritionmatters #studentlife
#melbournelife #studyingtips

Best time to post

The best time to post to your account is generally after 6pm.

Instagram



Stories

Stories are great for fleeting moments, behind the scenes, off-the-cuff content. They can be a glimpse into your unofficial brand and a great place to engage (often engaging more than Feed posts)

Story Tips

- ★ Story stickers can increase viewership of Stories
- ★ Instagram users like humorous posts in Stories
- ★ Utilise the Music sticker to add a layer of playfulness and interest to your Stories
- ★ Utilise trends such as “This or That” to create Stories designed to be interacted with

Instagram



IGTV and Reels

Reels are a great way to improve engagement, as they are favoured in the algorithm. Reels can be used for educational content, or to add a bit of fun and lightheartedness to the mix.



Instagram



Instagram Story Covers for your highlights are a great way to invite people to explore your archived Stories Story Highlights, and also introduce stronger visual branding.



Example categories shown here for The Y:

Entertain, Relax, Learn , Wellbeing, Funny, The Y



Getting the most out of Tik Tok

- ★ TikTok is a great platform to support young people to create and manage an account for the organisation
- ★ TikTok is also a great platform to experiment with influencer marketing - getting youth accounts to collaborate with you on content
- ★ Challenges, deep dives into complex topics such as mental health, expert information and fun/humours content are all really popular on TikTok

Content Checklist

Remember!

1. Curating is a valuable for young people in a world of information
2. Credibility is key
3. Nuance and personalisation matters
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5. Health and wellbeing are intrinsically linked
6. Being relevant and timely is key
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Content Checklist

AVOID!

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- Talking down to young people; being condescending
- One directional communication - like the old “print” mentally. Turn the microphone outwards to the audience
- Overly designed graphics - keep graphics clean and fuss-free, and add detail in the captions

Content Guidelines

Download the **Quick Reference Guide** or **Content Checklist** for your organisation by clicking the buttons below:

[Download Quick Reference Guide](#)

[Download Content Checklist](#)

Quick Reference Guide

Creating content for young people? Check out these Do's and Don'ts developed by The Y and Vic Health.

Remember!

1 **Curating** is a valuable for young people to find relevant information

Homogenising
- remember to acknowledge which sub-group you are talking about

Talking down to young people: being condescending

One directional communication
- like the old "print" mentality. Turn the microphone outwards to the audience.

Overly designed graphics - keep graphics clean and fuss-free, and add detail in the captions

Avoid!

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Content Checklist

Before you post content designed to engage with young people, take a look at this handy checklist.

- Is it **credible**?
- Is it **inclusive**?
- Is it **relevant and timely**?
- Is it **empowering**?
- Does it **inspire action**?
- Is it **targeted** to the right audience?
- Does it spark a **conversation**?
- Is it **simple** and fuss-free?

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Appendices



Physical Health



Context

Exercise is a **crowded space** for young people, as there is lots of content competing for attention out there, including from businesses and brands.

Young people understand the impact and benefits of physical health, especially on their mental health, however will often **struggle with motivation**.

Content that is **easy to digest** and **inspires engagement** will be the most successful and captivating in this space.



Content Tips

Young people are looking for content in this space that:

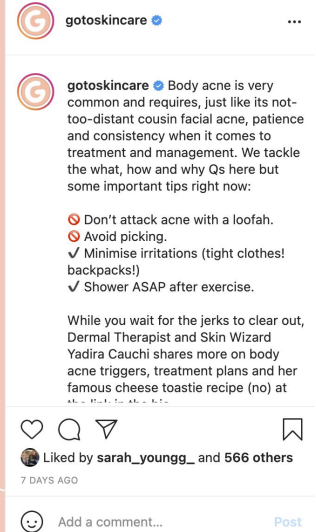
- Helps them to support and maintain good health and wellbeing, which they see as intrinsically linked
- Helps them sort through the information that is out there
- Is practical, relevant and credible
- Is presented in a visually appealing way
- Is fun and casual, not preachy and overly serious
- Inspires motivation!
- Show inclusivity with the images you choose – a range of different people and backgrounds
- Use humour that is relatable to struggle of motivation!
- Ask questions in a way that inspire conversation amongst the audience
- Use Stories (polls, questions etc) to enhance and stimulate conversation
- Hit key periods such as the New Year and other social days for curation of content
- Celebrate success stories and invite sharing

Example

This post from Australian brand Go-To Skincare is advertising their range of beauty products for teen skin, but what we can learn from this post is that a complex, personalised topic is about to be broken down using a multiple image post. The tone is inclusive, credible and light.

Your Go-To guide to treating body acne

Let's talk triggers and
treatments for chest,
back and butt acne.





Food + Nutrition

Context

The food and nutrition space is also a crowded space online, with a huge range of competing information from influencers, businesses and brands.

Young people are looking for **guidance, clarity and education** in this space, so they can apply this to their lives with confidence.

Curation, credibility and simplicity are key in this area.



Content Tips

Young people are looking for content in this space that:

- Demonstrate inclusivity with the foods and cultures you present -draw from a range of different contexts, traditions and backgrounds
- Use humour to acknowledge the daily struggle of good health choices. Let young people feel they don't have to be perfect!
- Acknowledge the complexities in this area; break them down
- Provide links to content that people can save for later use, eg recipes
- Hit key periods such as seasonal changes, New Year and cultural celebrations
- Celebrate success stories and invite sharing - especially with food, this is a such a great topic to share!
- Ask people to tell you about "a time when"..
- Ask people what's on the menu for this weekend
- Ask people to share their food/nutrition wins, tips or hacks
- Use stories to let people choose between "this and that" for food - a great way to get engagement

Example

This post from a young Australian influencer in the food space is **casual** and **relatable**, and gives practical advice for how to create a nutritional drink, with clear instructions.



Mental Health



Context

The mental health space is less crowded, but is still characterised by a range of information and competing ideas and approaches.

Mental health is still being de-stigmatised and the need for **open, honest, credible information and conversations** is vital.

Young people recognise the importance of looking after themselves and their mental health, and yet might not always have access to the right information and guidance.



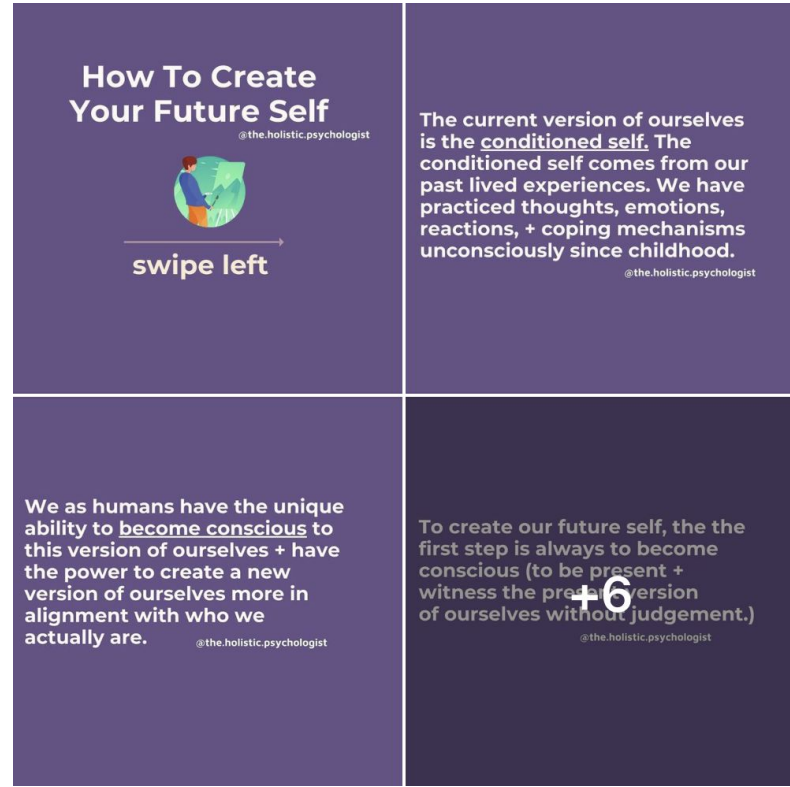
Content Tips

Young people are looking for content in this space that offers:

- Tips and techniques to help them relax and unwind/manage stress
- Support networks for like minded people who have experience in a certain topic or area
- Information and professional advice on how to manage specific situations
- Success stories from young people who have overcome/are managing mental health struggles
- Demonstrate inclusivity with the types of disorders, issues and topics presented
- Utilise credible sources and experts to build trust
- Have clear guidelines for discussions and monitor comments to ensure a safe and respectful online environment

Example

US based The Holistic Psychologist creates posts that **break down simple concepts into bite sized explanations** - aimed at adults - in the area of mental health.



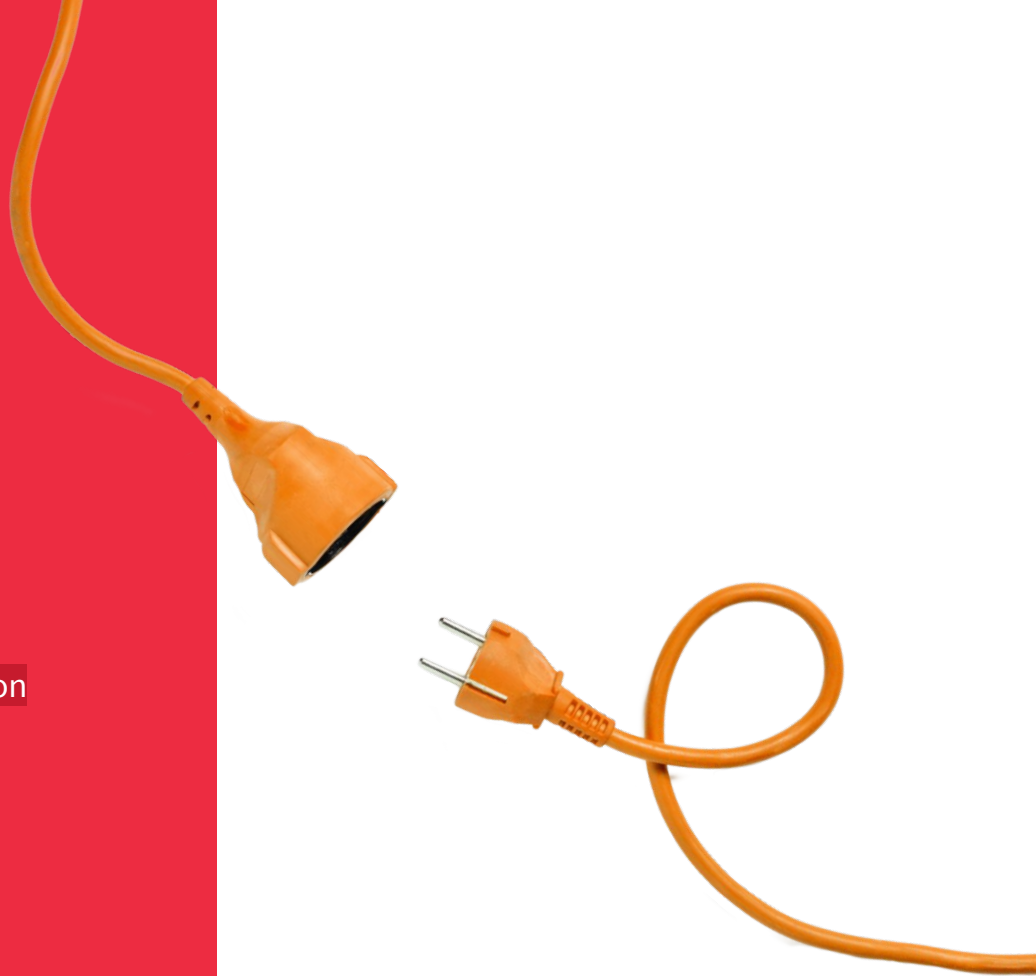


**Social +
Community**

Context

Social + community as a topic applies to all spaces online, and is about how and where engagement happens.

The ultimate aim of providing content that informs, inspires, educates or entertains is **to inspire connection** – ideally between the young people in the audience. When communities build around content, it can be incredibly powerful and impactful.



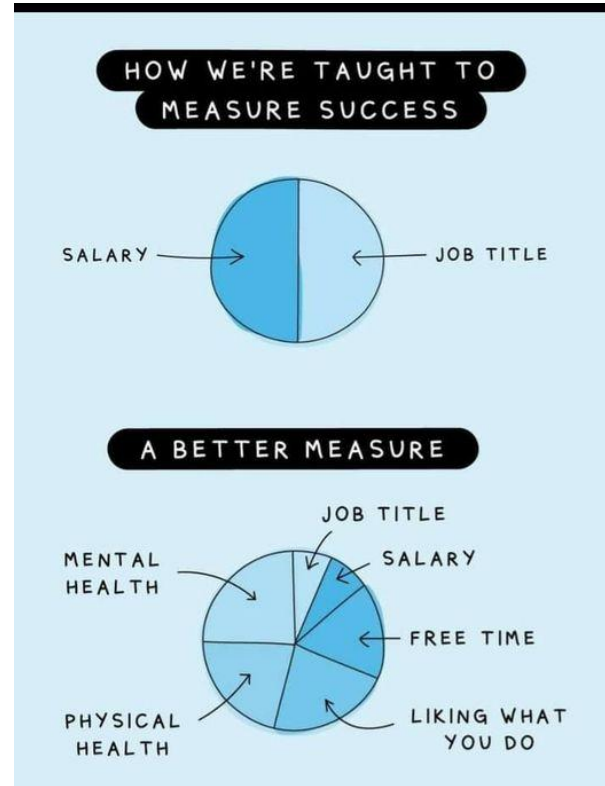
Content Tips

Young people are looking for social + community spaces that:

- Foster connection, especially between the young people themselves
- Enhance their experiences of life through connection to like minded people
- Create spaces that allow like minded young people to connect and form bonds
- Are safe, secure and free from bullying and harassment, or vilification or any kind
- Facebook Groups are a powerful tool that can be utilised to unite like minded individuals over certain topics, themes, and experiences
- Where platforms allow interactions - encourage them by making use of features such as questions, polls, Q+As, lives and reactions. This opens up dialogue, rather than posting static, one-way information
- Think about ways that offline (real life experiences) can be extended or replicated online - for example a group chat using a messenger service for a real-life community group

Example

A post like this is a great conversation starter that crosses over into mental health, which young people have told us tends to permeate most topics.





Alcohol + Drugs

Context

Alcohol + drugs can be a stigmatised and awkward conversation for young people. Myths abound – like that taking drugs and consuming alcohol is rife amongst young people.

Young people are **seeking support and advice** from trusted sources, without judgement, and with honesty and openness.

Did you know?

(It actually *isn't* - in 2019, only 14.6% of young adults 18-24 consumed more than 11 standard drinks on one occasion at least monthly, and the percentage of the same age group who used any illicit substance recently dropped from 37% in 2001 to 31% in 2019.)

Content Tips

Young people are looking for social + community spaces that offer:

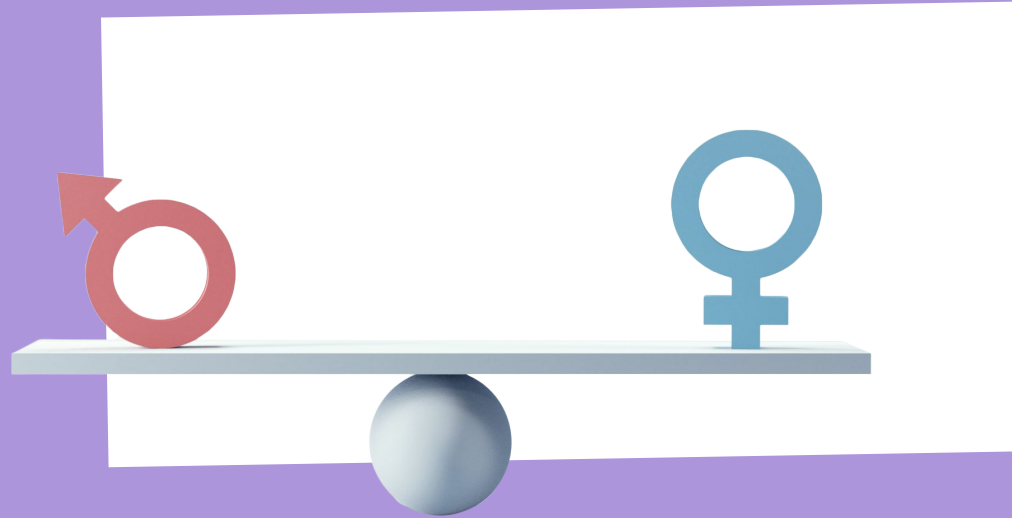
- Guidance on safety when taking alcohol + drugs
- Education on alcohol + drugs and their effects on physical and mental health
- Tips and practical advice for looking out for each other and themselves
- Facebook Groups work well in this space, where young people might be looking for long-term, ongoing support from like minded peers
- Credibility and trust is very important in this space, so relying on and collaborating with experts would be well received
- Sharing positive case studies and success stories is powerful and inspiring
- Cater to the needs of older young people in this space - they will be looking for more nuanced, higher level information

Example

The post identifies an issue and then adds steps for how to manage it - meaning it's the the why, and then also the how, empowering young people to make positive changes.

<p>How stress & anxiety impact alcohol use & Ways to manage it</p> 	<p>Identify the cause of stress & anxiety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Anxiety and Stressful Life Experiences● Emotions and stress levels● Emotional regulation● Alcohol & stress
<p>1. Talk to a counsellor or coach</p> 	<p>2. Find other ways to self-soothe</p> <p>+4</p> 

Gender Equality



Context

Gender equality is a newer area for discussion and content, and is a really important space to demonstrate inclusivity, empathy and openness in conversation and tone.

Young people are looking for up-to-date information in this space that they can dip in and out of as required.



Content Tips

Young people are looking for content that:

- Provides trustworthy resources and advice
- Educates and helps to break down stigma, myths or harmful characteristics of gender + sexuality
- Supports them in managing challenges and expectations in this space
- Showcase inclusivity through image choice, celebrating the scope and variety of gender and sexuality experiences
- Facebook Groups also work well in this space, where young people will benefit from spending time online with like minded peers who identify as they do
- Credibility and trust is also very important in this space, where relying on and collaborating with experts would be well received
- Sharing positive case studies is a great way for other young people to be able to identify role models and address the “you can’t be what you can’t see” issue online
- Catering to the needs of older young people in this space - they will be looking for more nuanced, higher level information

Example

Educational charity The Female Lead has great content that uses humour + pop culture, with a simple graphical treatment often repurposing Tweets that capture the essence of a debate or conversation, such as this example.

