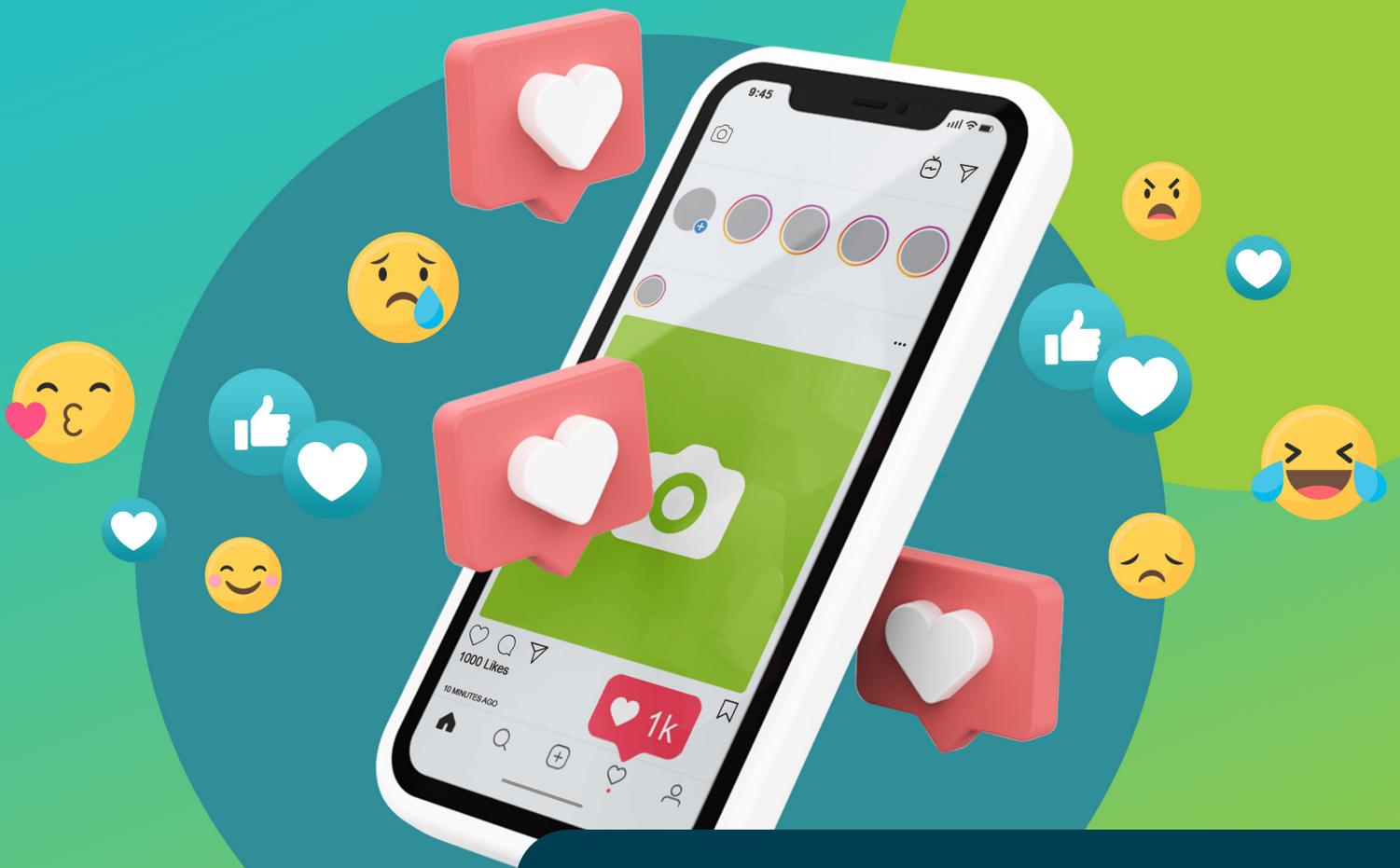


# Taking action on **social media** to **prevent suicide**



A Guide for **Social Media Users**



**AQPS**  
Association québécoise  
de prévention du suicide

## Statistics



In Quebec, **three people** take their own lives every day.



According to data from Institut national de santé publique du Québec, **over 3,600 hospitalizations are related to attempted suicide** each year, which is equivalent to **more than 10 hospitalizations per day**.



The suicide rate is **three times higher among men** than women.

Given the prominence of social media, some people use it to address their suicidal thoughts, whether it's to seek help or talk about their distress. **All forms of seeking help are valid and should be taken equally seriously.** What should you do if you encounter this in your work on social media?

Association québécoise de prévention du suicide (AQPS) has written this guide to help you better identify and, above all, better help people in distress you encounter online. We think we can reduce suicide rates by creating a strong human safety net both in and out of digital spaces.

# Social Responsibility

Why should you help if you encounter someone expressing distress on social media?

It's common to think "Others must have seen it too," "Someone else will deal with it," "They're just trying to get attention or manipulate people," "If she talks about it, she won't go through with it," etc.

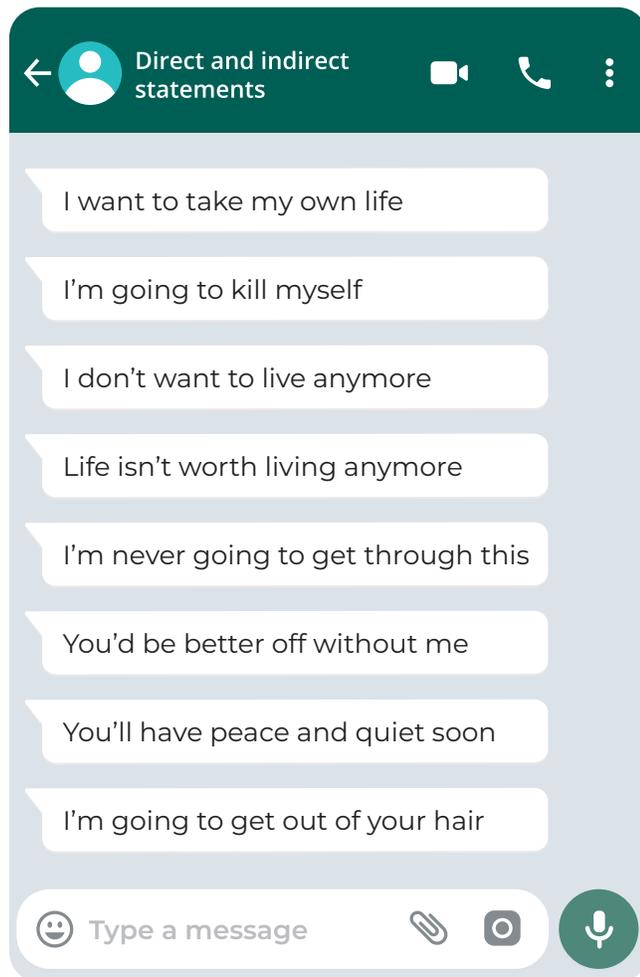
However, it's important to take the situation seriously no matter how the person expresses their pain or asks for help. Suicide is a multifaceted problem, and preventing it is both an individual and a collective responsibility. Quebec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms states that "Every human being whose life is in peril has a right to assistance."

It's important to provide assistance, but also to be aware of your own safety and limits. We therefore urge you to **always refer to a specialized counsellor who can take charge of the situation.**

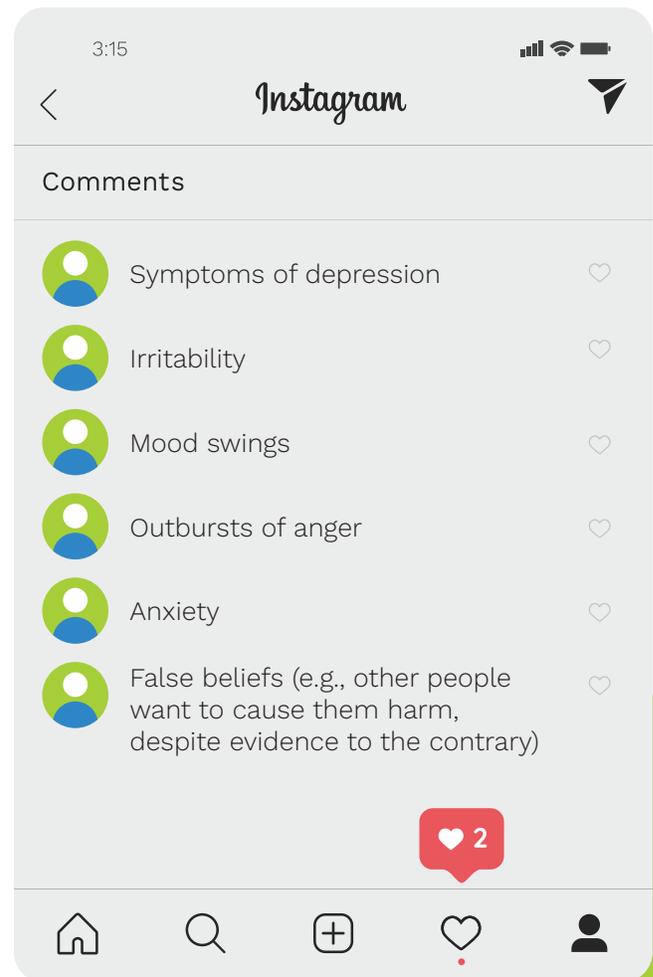
# Identifying Distress

People with suicidal thoughts usually show warning signs that they're at risk of committing suicide, although the signs are sometimes hard to identify. Here are some examples:

## Direct and indirect statements

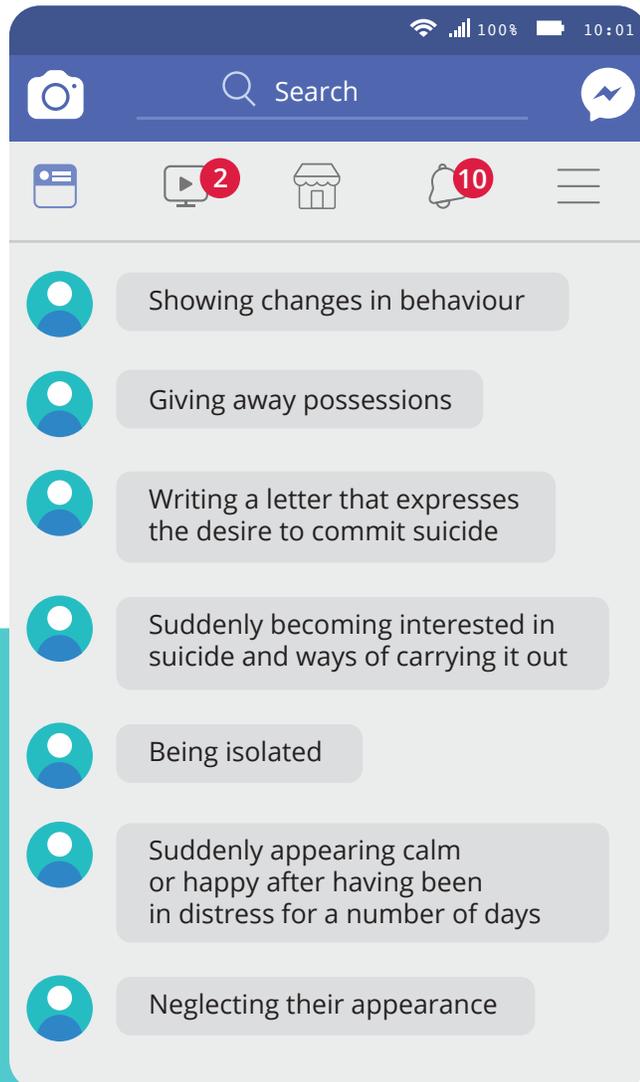


## Emotional signs

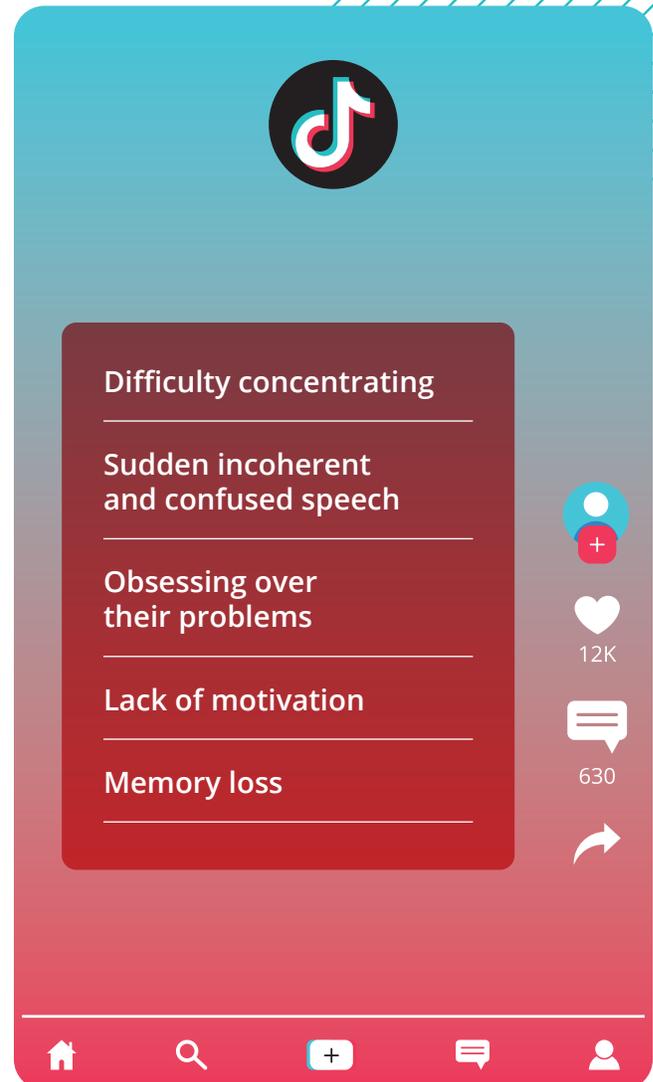


# Identifying Distress

## Behavioural signs



## Cognitive signs



# Identifying Distress Online

How can you identify distress through a screen? You may notice:



## Melancholy or disillusionment with society

- *You can't trust anyone in this world anymore.*
- *There's no way out. As soon as you want to pick yourself up, someone's there to bring you down.*

## Desperation in the person's words

- *I've tried everything and nothing works. I don't see how it can get better.*
- *I feel like nothing is possible anymore.*



## Feelings of loneliness

- *Even though I have 525 friends on Facebook, I feel lonely every single day.*
- *I haven't seen anyone for weeks.*

## Comments tinged with anger or aggression

- *You bunch of morons. Never mind, I'll solve my own problems.*
- *Everyone's so stupid. This is a bunch of crap. I'm on my own in this battle.*



## Direct or indirect comments

- *I'm fed up (...) tired of (...).*
- *Tonight it'll be too late. You won't hear from me anymore.*
- *I can't take it anymore. It has to stop.*

You might run into other hurdles online:

- The person may leave the platform at any time.
- You may see the message some time after it's posted.
- The anonymity that the web provides may have greatly reduced the distressed person's inhibition.

**Even if that makes you feel powerless, it's still important to take action.**

# Responding to Distress Online

If you notice someone posting distressing content on social media, here are some tips to guide you as you reach out to them:

## Let the person know you're there for them

Try to chat with them to learn more about what they're posting, either under their post or comment, or by sending them a private message. You can say:



Hi Maude. I read some of your posts and got the impression that you were upset. I was worried about you. Is everything okay?

## When the situation is clear (e.g., I want to die now).

### Publicly



I'm worried about you. I'll send you a private message. I urge you to talk to a suicide prevention counsellor:

Phone: 1-866-277-3553

Text: 1-855-957 5353

Chat, information and tools: [suicide.ca](https://suicide.ca)

These support resources are available 24/7 in English and French across Quebec.

### Privately



Hi Maude. I'm worried about you. There's specialized help available. You don't need to know exactly what to say or how to say it. Just talking about your pain can be a great relief. If you're thinking about suicide, don't stay alone. You can contact a suicide prevention counsellor at any time. It's never too early or too late. Here are some resources available across Quebec 24/7. They are professional, bilingual, confidential, and free:

Phone: 1-866-277-3553

Text: 1-855-957 5353

Chat, information and tools: [suicide.ca](https://suicide.ca)

I care about you.

# Responding to Distress Online

## Listen with openness and without judgment

The person may feel much better after sharing their situation with you. Listen to what they have to say and try to understand their situation. Although you're not a suicide prevention professional, you can make a difference. Remember to stay within your limits.

## Try to observe the positive things

Help the person identify the positive things in their life. You can help them regain hope by encouraging them to identify the positive aspects of their situation. You can say:



Maude, I think your wanting to go back to school is a great idea. You've told me before, you wanted to become a nurse.



Maude, I see how important your children are to you. I see all the effort you're making to get through this breakup.



Maude, I feel like going skiing in the mountains is something that makes you feel good. It's really cool to see that you're keeping it up.

## Encourage the person to ask for help

You can let the person know that you're concerned about them and want to offer ways to get help. Provide the phone number for the suicide prevention hotline (1-866-277-3553) and refer the person to [suicide.ca](https://suicide.ca) if they prefer to chat, or 1-855-957-5353 to text a suicide prevention counsellor. These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They're free, bilingual (English and French), confidential, and available across Quebec.

## Report alarming content

Whether or not you know the person, it's a good idea to report disturbing posts to the platform involved. For example, Facebook's suicide prevention tools allow you to report disturbing posts directly. If you use this method to report content, the person who made the post will receive resources to get help.

## Contact emergency services as needed

If you think the person is in immediate danger, call 911, even if you don't know where the person lives. Try to stay connected with the person until emergency services can contact them.

## Follow up with the person

Ask the person if they want to stay in touch with you. If they agree to let you follow up with them, you can check on how they're doing. Remind the person that they're not alone and that there are people they can talk to.

## Find support for yourself

Helping someone through a crisis can be quite a challenge. It's important to get support. You can always call the suicide prevention hotline at 1-866-277-3553, send a text to 1-855-957-5353, or chat with a suicide prevention counsellor at [suicide.ca](https://suicide.ca) if you feel the need to talk or get support, either preventively, during the crisis, or afterwards.

# Important things to remember

- When someone is thinking about suicide, focus on 24/7 help resources as well as an organization that provides services in the area where the person is located, such as a suicide prevention centre or crisis centre. Other options are the provincial suicide prevention hotline (1-866-277-3553), text line (1-855-957-5353), and website at [suicide.ca](https://suicide.ca) (tools, information, and chat), which cover all of Quebec and are available in English and French 24/7.
- Raise awareness throughout the year. Use theme days or weeks to talk about your commitment to mental health. Post help resources and join the various movements (Suicide Prevention Week, Mental Health Week, World Suicide Prevention Day, etc.).
- Remember that support is also available to you at 1-866-277-3553 (hotline), 1-855-957-5353 (text), and [suicide.ca](https://suicide.ca).

## Sources

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[Reconnaître les signes | Aider | Association québécoise de prévention du suicide \(aqps.info\)](#)

[How to intervene if someone needs help in a crisis – jeunessejecoute.ca](#)





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The English version of this  
document has been made  
possible thanks to the  
collaboration of

**CHSSN**  
Community Health  
And Social Services Network  
Réseau communautaire de santé  
et de services sociaux