

LIVES

5 PERSPECTIVES

Make Your Social Feeds Friendlier

Many of us are clued into social media's delights (staying connected!) and dangers (doomscrolling!). Take control of what you take in with these fresh tactics.

BY SHARLENE BREakey



PROP STYLING BY STEPHANIE YEH

1

Act like an anthropologist.

I approach my feeds the way I approach research—as if social media were just one book in the library, not *the* book. I open it, get what I need, then leave without lingering. Taking breaks also helps. If I stay off Twitter for a week, I'm more attuned to nuances and tone when I return, and that actually makes it less welcoming. It feels like a room full of screaming people. The distance lets me regard it with more curiosity, like I'm an anthropologist.

JENNY ODELL TEACHES AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY AND IS THE AUTHOR OF *HOW TO DO NOTHING: RESISTING THE ATTENTION ECONOMY*.

2

Treat platforms like parties.

I think of social media as a party, where I make small talk with acquaintances and connect with close friends in a corner. Enjoy the crowd, but bond with your people. There's no limit to our number of likes, and it requires so little energy to let your friends know you see them. They're more likely to post if they feel appreciated when you cheer them publicly. I also send direct messages to go deeper. It takes a second to write a message of praise or support. These direct messages stick with us and leave us feeling closer to those who take the time to write them.

SHASTA NELSON IS THE AUTHOR OF *FRIENTIMACY: HOW TO DEEPEN FRIENDSHIPS FOR LIFELONG HEALTH AND HAPPINESS*.

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3

Curate your content.

When I'm using social media in a healthy way, it's because I've successfully limited what I see to content that falls into three buckets. Connection: It makes me feel closer to those who are far away. Discovery: It's beautiful, inspiring, or makes me feel good. Observation: It isn't soothing, but it enriches my life. On Instagram and Twitter, I try to follow thought-provoking conversations that broaden my understanding and empathy.

ANNA SALE IS THE AUTHOR OF *LET'S TALK ABOUT HARD THINGS*.

4

Remember the golden rule.

As a biracial mom who's had a different experience from my white friends, I realized I needed to do more on my Instagram. I started initiating conversations and sharing resources about race and parenting. I created @guidedbythegoldenrule to continue the dialogue. I just have a few rules for myself: I talk in a way I'd want to be talked to and offer what I'd want to receive, I consider whether what I share or say will one day make my kids proud, and I post only what I can back up 100 percent.

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5

Follow fewer accounts.

I'm trying to control what I consume and be more genuine about what I put out. I unfriended just about everyone, then built up my feed from scratch. I had a lot of explaining to do to confused friends, but that was OK! I also changed how I post. My work ranks our engagement on a board for all to see, so I always posted things that were guaranteed to get the most likes, such as selfies. Now that so few of us are in the studio, the board isn't operating, and that has freed me. I still need to feed the beast, but I've learned how much better it feels to post a random photo that's meaningful to me.

RENEE NELSON IS A MORNING NEWS ANCHOR AT FOX 10 IN PHOENIX.