

The digital commons : A guide to a kinder internet

Introduction : Behind the screen

The internet is often regarded, quite wrongly, as a tempest a space where people's feelings can easily be hurt just through words and where issues get blown out of proportions very fast. But if we only think about the screen as the mirror, we'll have to take the initiative ourselves to reflect more beautiful images of a kinder world.

We don't really want to dwell on the negative side of the web alone, in this guide; rather we want to open up a window to those wonderful stories of kindness which really make us believe that a better internet is possible and, actually, that we are already building it together.

The power of kindness:

Promoting respect and care online

The pause before you post: Whenever you are about to send an email or make a comment, you can do a small kindness test: Do I want to say this exactly the way to a friend in real life? If not, it must be a rewrite.

Share genuine love: Algorithms encourage us to take sides. On the contrary, humans require a bit of cheerleading. Do your small part to break the trend by, for instance, commenting nicely and perhaps even sharing with colleagues whose efforts you can appreciate, regardless of the popularity of their work.

Refuse to feed the flame: When you notice mean comments or dramatic discussions appearing in a comment section, your strongest counteract is to stay silent. Don't press the Like button, do not reply nor share it - deny the flame the fuel that allows it to grow.

Building an unshakable you:

Getting strong from the inside up

Your worth is nothing but a number: Keep in mind, social media only shows the highlight moments from peoples lives. Your real worth is not going to be a number which is counted from likes, views, comments and followers. You were precious well before you opened your account and you will still be precious far long after your last log-off.

Find your offline power: Set one day a week apart where you can put your phone in the draw and

completely ignore it. A true confident person knows that his or her thoughts, creativity, laughter and inner peace do not need to be validated by a Wi-Fi signal.

Curate your space: Feed is like your digital bedroom; you are free to clean up there as well if it gets too messy. Block mute, or unfollow any account that you can barely stand even if you have a contact connection with that person because all that person did is keep making you feel bad, nervous, or insecure.

Lifting each other up:

How to genuinely help your friends on the internet

Be the supportive friend: When you witness someone being bullied or mocked on social media, don't keep scrolling. Instead, reach out privately. A message as small as, "Hey, I see you, I don't think those are your words", could totally shift a person's mood for the better.

Create sanctuaries: Set up little private chat rooms where no one is perfect or polished, where it is perfectly fine to be vulnerable. In these chats, you can openly share your real challenges without the stress of public feeds.

Practical ways to improve your life:

The everyday changes you can start right now

Introduce some friction: Switch off notifications of the apps that constantly draw your focus like tiny traps. This small move will make it slightly more trouble to access the addictive apps that deplete your vitality.

Pick the right word: In an age where it is common to mock or be sarcastic, it is an almost magical act of kindness to be sincere and really kind to others.

A safer internet isn't built by big tech companies. It is built, step by step, by choices made every day by people who refuse to let technology make them cold.