

## **Harmful Posts Exercise: Discussion Leader Version**

**Instructions:** This exercise includes four scenarios of harmful social media behavior. Read through each scenario, and write in the space provided **the risk level of the post, why it is at this risk level and an action plan** to help deescalate the situation. Take time to think about what may escalate or deescalate this situation and how your action plan might change.

**Scenario 1:** You notice a video of a fight on Facebook where multiple people attacked one person. People in the video are laughing and cheering as the other person is getting hurt. You also realize that the video has over 150 likes, has been shared 90 times, and the names of the people fighting have been tagged by other users in the comments section.

**Risk Level: High:** The people fighting have been tagged in the video, including the victim, so now everyone knows who is getting beat up and who is committing violence. This makes it more likely that retaliation will occur. Since a large amount of people have seen the video, the victim may feel publicly humiliated, shamed, and embarrassed, making it more likely they will be vulnerable to more violence or thoughts of revenge.

**What could happen that would make this escalate or deescalate?** An example of escalation would be comments shaming the victim, where as a de-escalation would be if the video was taken down.

**What can you do?** Flag the video. It is a violation of Facebook’s terms of service and should get taken down. If you know any of the people in the video, reach out to them and try and make sure no one is planning to retaliate. Remind them to walk in the other person’s shoes (Note: only do this if you feel safe to do so). Try and reach out to the victim and calm him/her down and let them know that you support him/her. Take a screen shot of the video and tell someone you trust that can intervene.

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**Scenario 2:** You heard from your friends that two people you know are fighting a lot lately, which surprises you because you thought they were best friends. Later that day, you notice that one of them has posted a status that says, “Going out with my true friends this weekend! The ones that aren’t fake, unlike some people I know...” You notice that no one is explicitly named, but because you know about your friend’s drama, you have a good idea of who she is talking about.

**Risk Level: Low:** No one has been threatened or even named. While it is obvious to people who know these two friends are fighting who this post is about, it is not outright shaming anyone by name. Therefore, people that don’t know the drama still do not know about it. This post is mean and hurtful, but no one is in immediate danger to retaliate or harm themselves or others.

**What could happen that would make this escalate?** An example of escalation would be arguing comments back and forth on the post.

**What can you do?** Use empathy to get both friends to walk in the other’s shoes. Send a picture of them when they were friends to remind them what they are sacrificing by fighting. Offer support to both parties and try to get them to understand that posting a status like this hurts the other person’s feelings.

**Scenario 3:** You are surfing Twitter and you notice that one of your friends tweeted, “I feel so depressed and down. I don’t know what to do. Sometimes I feel like killing myself”. You also noticed some pictures of your friend drinking by himself.

**Risk Level: Medium:** The fact that he is drinking by himself may show he is having a hard time dealing with his feelings of depression or sadness. Everyone feels down from time-to-time, but stating a want to commit suicide should always be a red flag. Since the friend has not stated anything specific in how or when he wants to commit suicide, this risk is not yet high, but should be monitored.

**What could happen that would make this escalate or deescalate?** An example of an escalation would be a farewell letter posted online, de-escalation would be him not posting depressed/sad posts in a while.

**What can you do?** You should support him. Give him a call/message him and tell him that he means a lot to you and that you are always there to listen if he needs to talk. Let him know you are worried about him. If you do not know him that well, find someone who does. Talk to a school counselor so that they can reach out. You can also send him a link to a website for help or a link to a funny video to try and cheer him up.

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**Scenario 4:** You see a photo on Instagram of your friend holding a handgun in his home. In fact, his Instagram has a lot of photos of him and his friends playing and posing with guns.

**Risk Level: Medium:** Having a gun could be illegal depending on where you live. Having pictures with guns outside of normal gun activities (i.e. gun range, hunting, trap shooting) may be threatening. Having access to a gun and other weapons may increase the chances that violence may occur, either on accident or on purpose. In addition, police monitor social media frequently.

**What could happen that would make this escalate or deescalate?** An example of escalation would be noticing that he is using Facebook to threaten classmates or talking about how he has a gun and is going to be in front of the school in a few minutes. De-escalation of posts with weapons is often difficult because the weapon poses real world consequences, even if unintentional. However gun use can be low risk if in a safe context such as a shooting range; however this can still pose a threat of violence as people are human and make mistakes such as Dick Cheney shooting his hunting partner in the face or the 9 year old who shot and killed a firearm instructor with an Uzi.

**What can you do?** Remind your friend that law enforcement and future employers monitor social media. This could lead to serious consequences such as arrest, loss of job, or rejection of applications. Tell your friend that they should take those photos off of Instagram and other social media sites. Tell a trusted adult or anti-violence organization about the weapons your friend has in order to protect them from any danger.