A Parent's Guide to Instagram

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Introductory note

Our youth today belong to the first generation of digital natives, who have grown up surrounded by technological devices, platforms and norms that we as parents may not fully understand. This can be daunting and a cause for worry for us, especially when it comes to online social interactions of our children.

This reliance on social media to stay connected with their peers, consumption of digital content for entertainment and education, as well as expressing their opinions and personality, should not be viewed negatively. In fact, being increasingly connected through digitalisation is beneficial as we use it to seek out new opportunities and thrive in a post-COVID world.

What is important for us as parents is to be aware of the online risks that come with using social media, such as online bullying, screen time addiction, sexual grooming and mental health issues. To mitigate these risks, it is useful for parents to update their digital literacy skills and get a better understanding of how social media platforms and their security features work. This will help us to better engage our youths to Be Safe, Be Smart and Be Kind in their online digital habits.

Through this guide, the Media Literacy Council hopes that parents will have a better appreciation of the safeguards that are in place for youths to thrive on Instagram.

You can also find out more about how to engage your child or loved ones on digital literacy issues from our library of articles, tips and resources at our Media Literacy Council webpage.

Mr Lock Wai Han

Chairman
Media Literacy Council

ABOUT THE MEDIA LITERACY COUNCIL

The Media Literacy Council (MLC) is a group of members from the people, private, and public sectors. The MLC spearheads public education on media literacy and cyber wellness and advises the government on appropriate policy responses to the evolving world of media, technology, and consumer participation.

In today's digital and social media landscape, the Council seeks to address problems such as cyber safety and security, discernment of online falsehoods, cyber bullying and uncivil online behaviour. Its role is to cultivate digital users' critical-thinking skills and refine their understanding of the issues in the online world so as to empower them to be safe, smart, and kind online.

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What is Instagram

Instagram is a photo, video, and message sharing app with a community of people that use it to connect to each other through their passions and interests. Instagram is especially popular among young people who use it to capture special moments, connect to one another, and carry conversations in a fun way - using photos, videos, filters, comments, captions, emoji, and hashtags. Instagram runs on Apple iOS, Android devices, and the web. The minimum age to have an Instagram account is 13.

Whether it's through Stories, Reels, Feed, Live, IGTV or Direct our mission is to bring people closer to the people and things they love. For people to express themselves freely, it's essential to make Instagram a safe and supportive place.

COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE CONNECT TO EACH OTHER

CAPTURE SPECIAL MOMENTS

BRING PEOPLE CLOSER

FOR PEOPLE TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES FREELY

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE PLACE

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Manage Privacy

There are a number of tools you can share with your child that will give them more control over their digital identity and footprint. One of the first things you want to talk about is whether their account is going to be public or private. We recommend that your child make their account private. Understanding that they have control over who sees and interacts with the things they post online, will empower them to be themselves on Instagram, while remaining safe online.

Talk to your child about the importance of managing their digital footprint, which is a record of all traces of their online activity.

One great way to broach the subject is to look each other up online: search both your names in a search engine and see what information appears, they might be surprised by how much is already out there!

You can do the following activities to help them better manage their online privacy:

1) Compare social media settings. Show them how you have set up your own privacy settings and compare it with theirs.

2) Go through the policy of a social networking site they use together and agree with them on what should be shared and with whom.

3) Check both your devices to disable things like location services, Bluetooth sharing and sharing of contacts and photos.

You can learn more about protecting your child's privacy here.
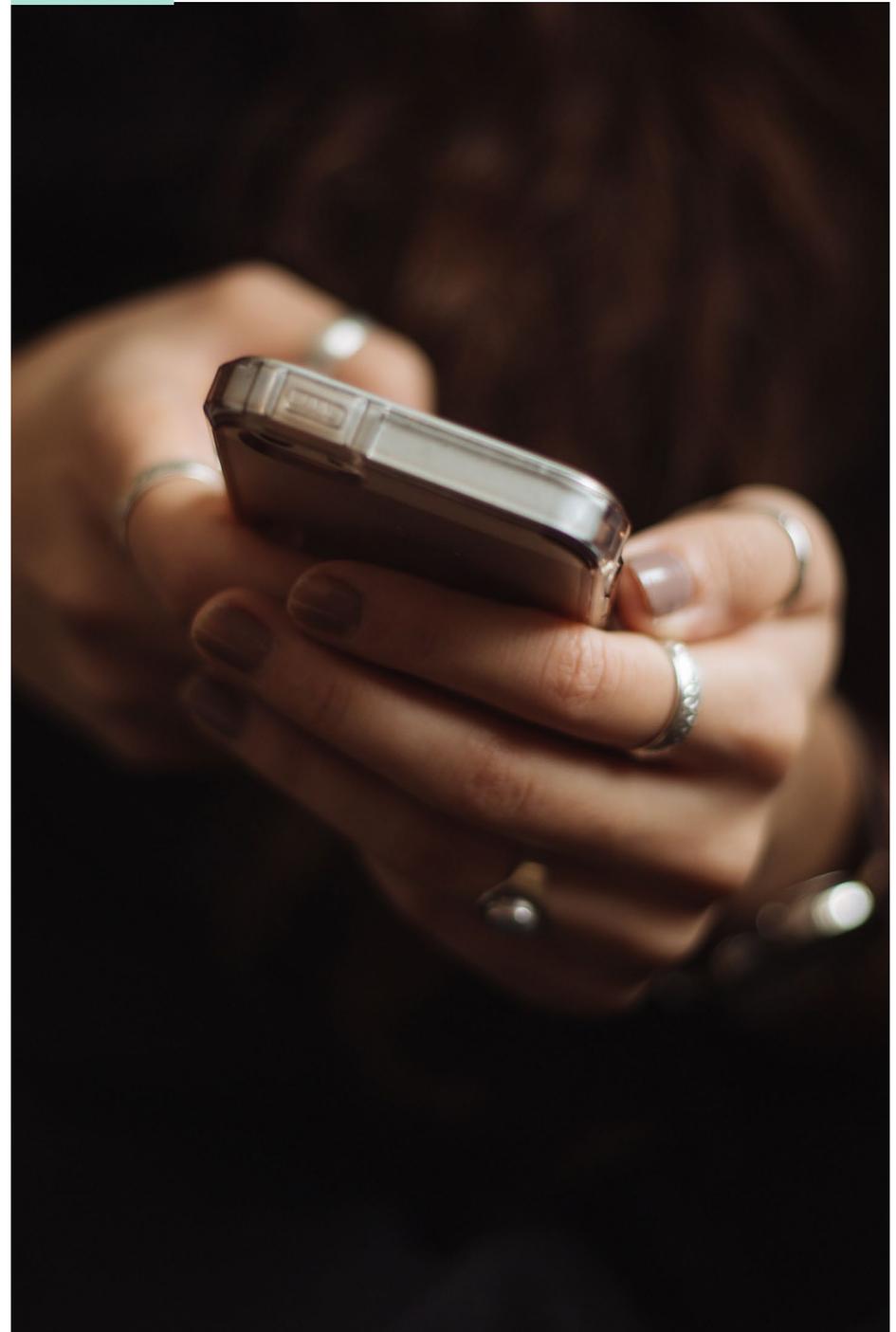
Account Privacy

🔒 Account privacy

If your child's account is private, they approve the people who follow them, and can remove followers at any time. Private accounts mean your child's content can't be seen by anyone they haven't approved. Additionally, they can remove followers, choose who can comment, and turn off the "Show Activity Status" so that their friends can't see when they are online. We recommend that your child make their account private.

If your child's account is public, anyone can see the content they post on Stories, Feed, or Live, and follow them without needing approval. If your child already has a public account, they can switch to private at any time.
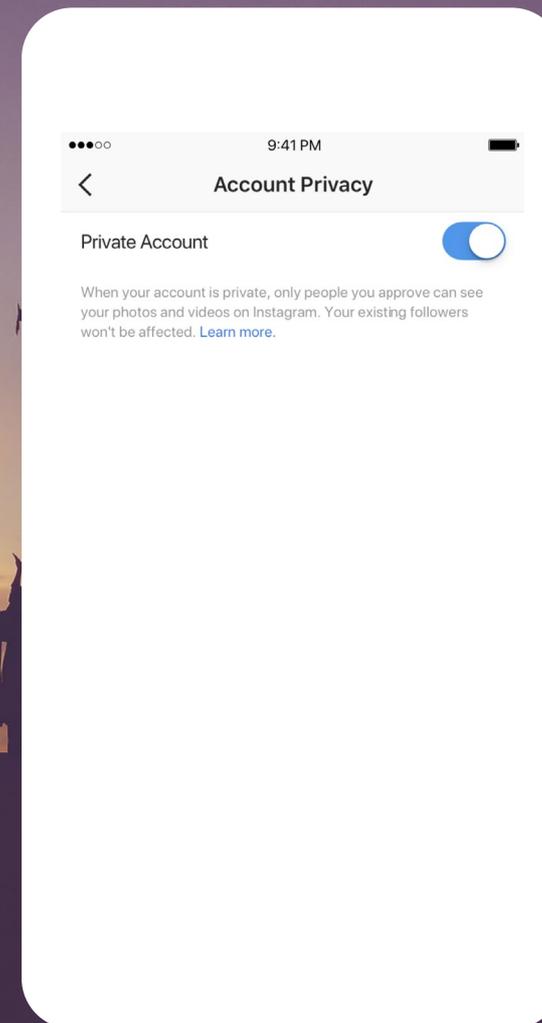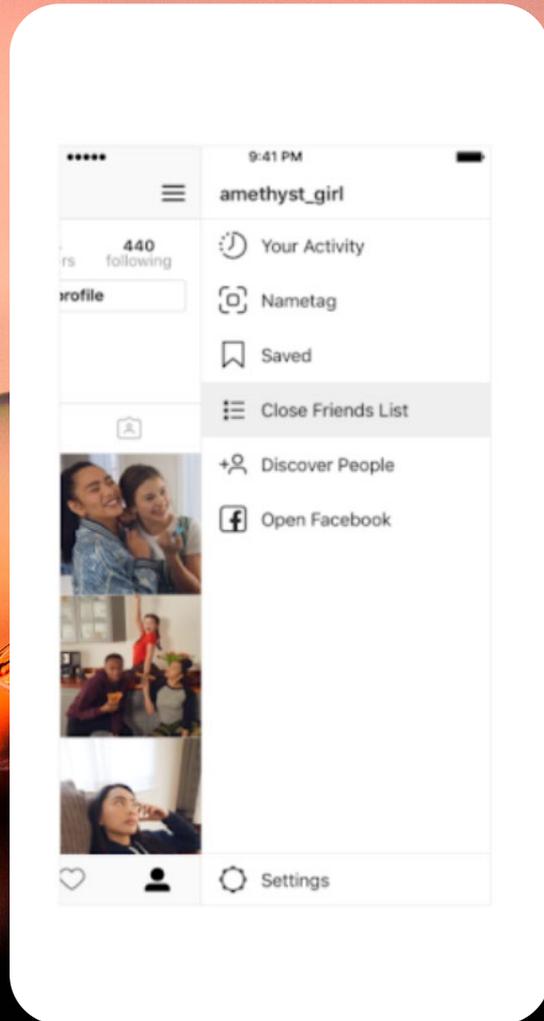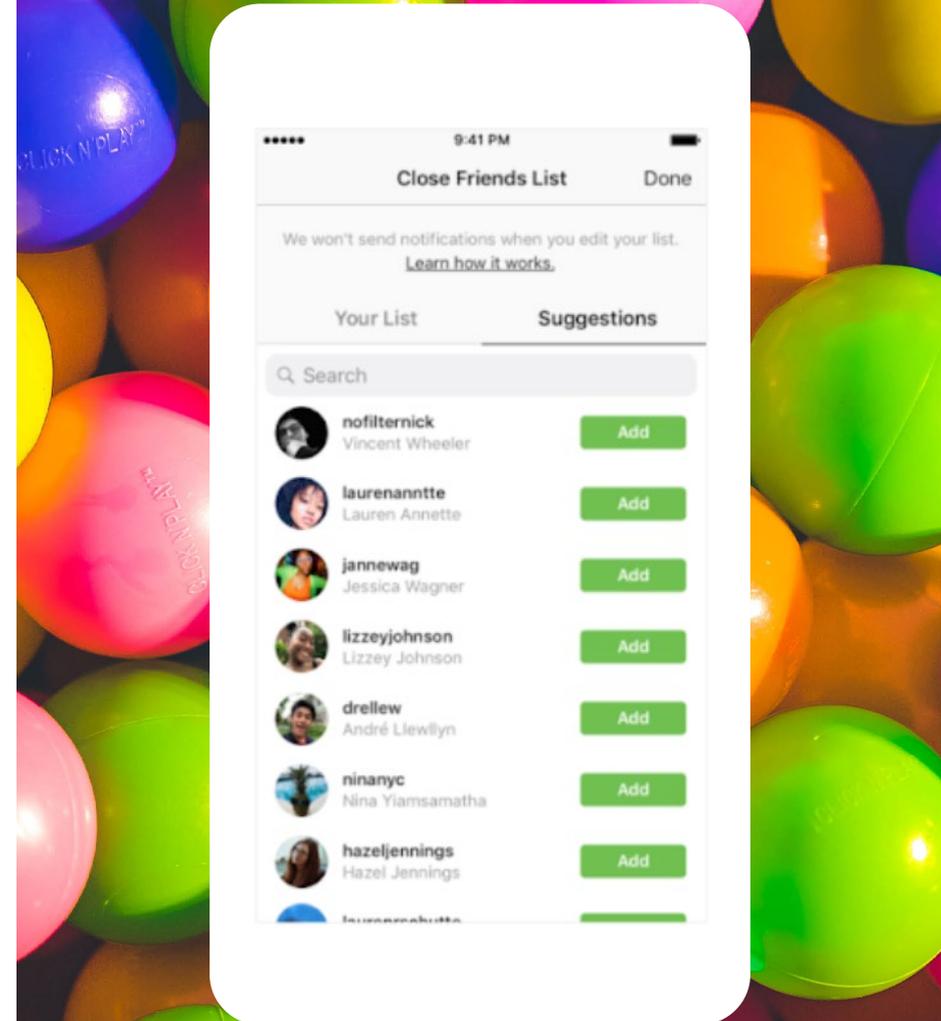
Share stories with close friends

Your child can create a Close Friends list and share their story with only the people on that list. They can add and remove people from it, at any time, and people won't be notified when they're added or removed from their list.
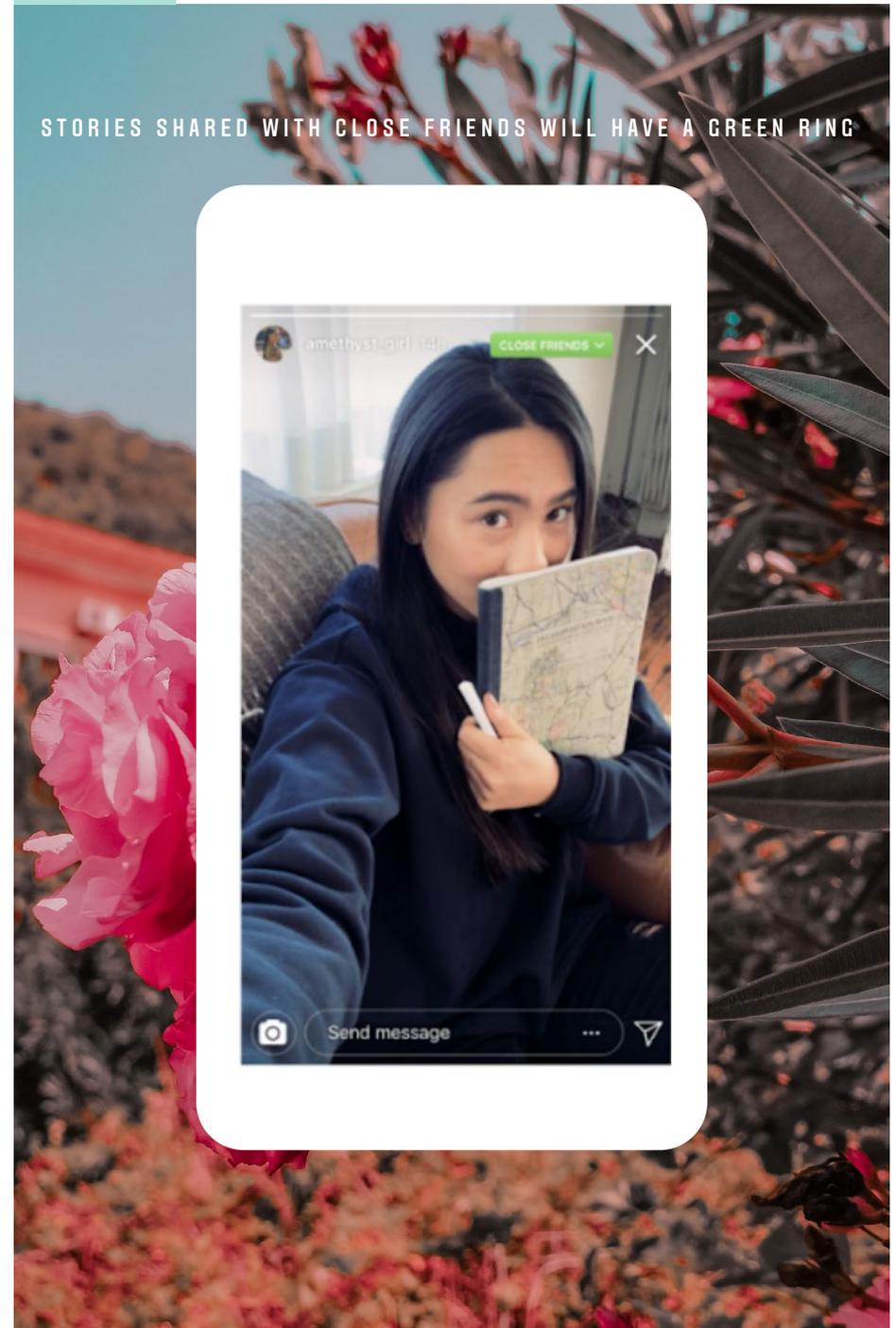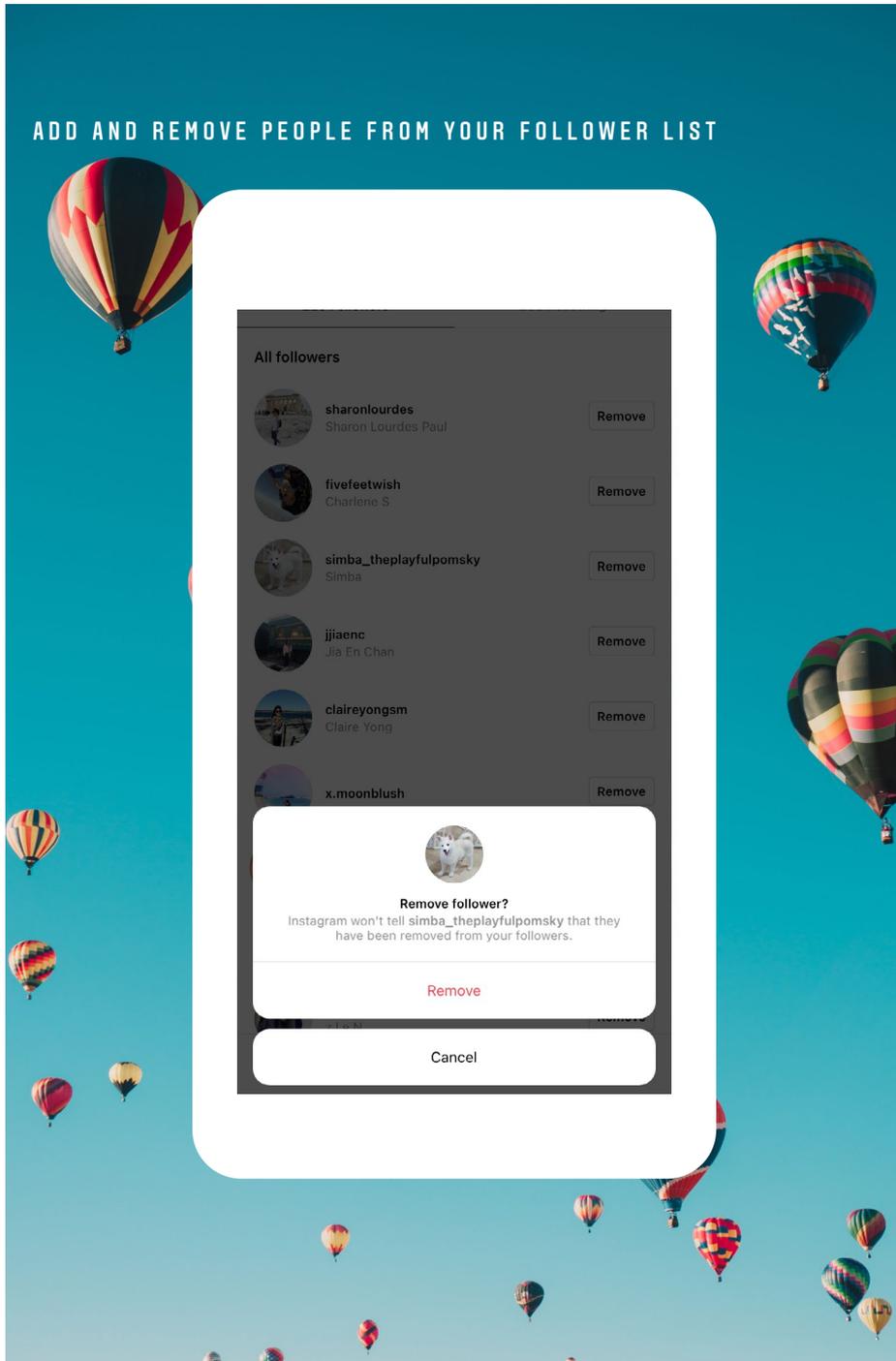
SETTINGS → CLOSE FRIENDS LIST


SETTINGS → CLOSE FRIENDS LIST

ADD AND REMOVE PEOPLE FROM YOUR FOLLOWER LIST

All followers

sharonlourdes Sharon Lourdes Paul		Remove
fivefeetwish Charlene S		Remove
simba_theplayfulpomsky Simba		Remove
jjiaenc Jia En Chan		Remove
claireyongsm Claire Yong		Remove
x.moonblush		Remove

Remove follower?

Instagram won't tell **simba_theplayfulpomsky** that they have been removed from your followers.

Remove

Cancel

STORIES SHARED WITH CLOSE FRIENDS WILL HAVE A GREEN RING

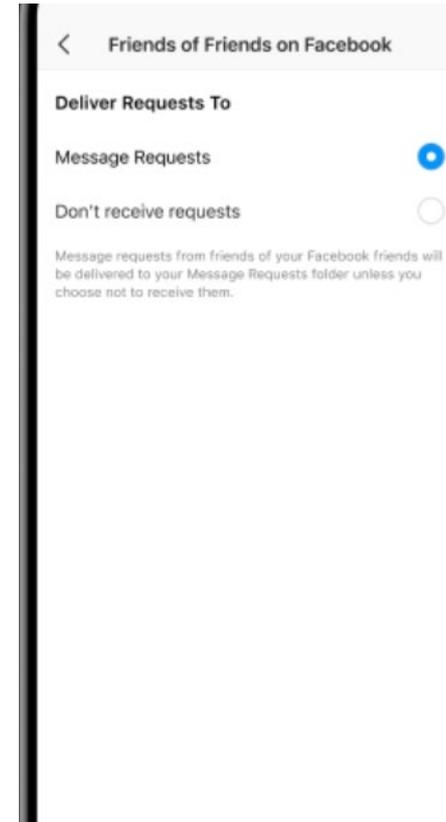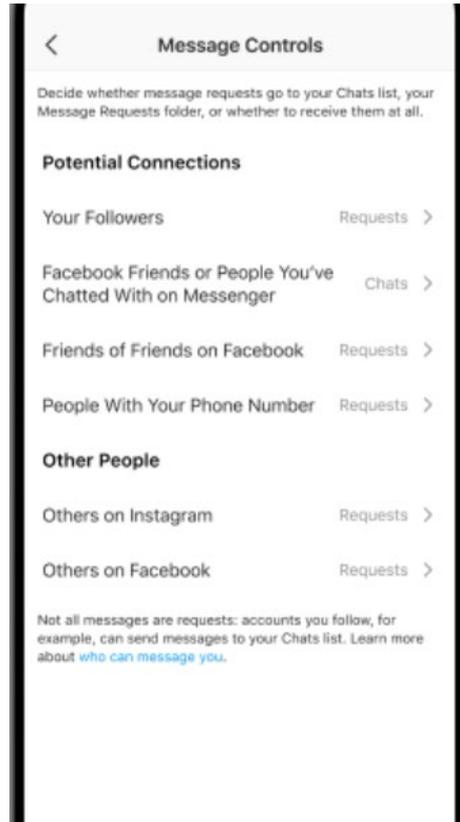amethyst.girl   CLOSE FRIENDS ✓   ✕

Send message   ...

Message Controls

Your child can also choose who can message them on Instagram and who can add them to groups on Instagram Direct. They can also decide whether message requests go to their Chats list, Message Requests folder, or whether they receive them at all.

DM REACHABILITY CONTROLS
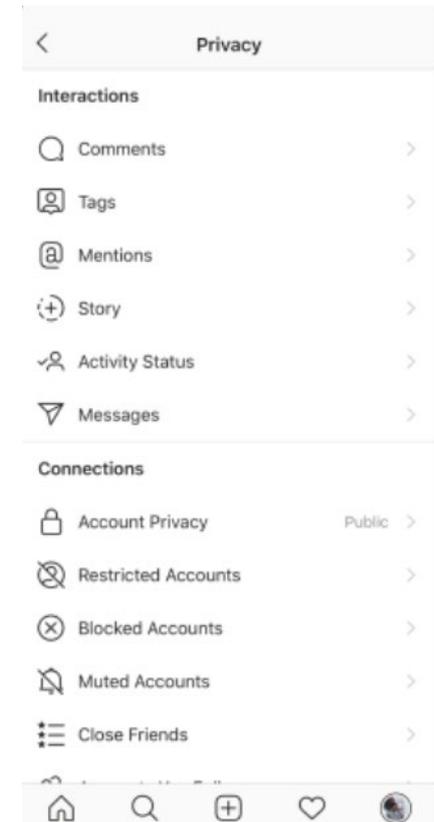
DM REACHABILITY CONTROLS

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Manage Interactions

There is no place for bullying of any kind on Instagram. It's against our policies to create an account, post photos, or make comments for the purpose of bullying or harassing someone else. Let your child know that if they spot an account, photo, video, comment, message or Story that is intended to bully or harass someone, they can report it within the app by tapping "..." on the top right corner of the post or profile, by swiping left on the comment, or by tapping and holding the message, and tapping "Report".

Reporting is totally anonymous; we never share your child's information with the person reported.

Social media's ease of interaction is one of its greatest points. However, this increase in interaction can also include negative comments, opinions or advances that may lead to online harms such as cyberbullying. Ask your child if they have ever come across or been involved in such behaviour, and how did they feel when they experienced it.

Encourage them to better manage these interactions by:

1) Posting positively and sharing content that is useful and helpful to others.

2) Standing up to negativity by reporting and blocking content that is likely to be harmful to others such as hate speech, false information and violent, dangerous or self-harming content.

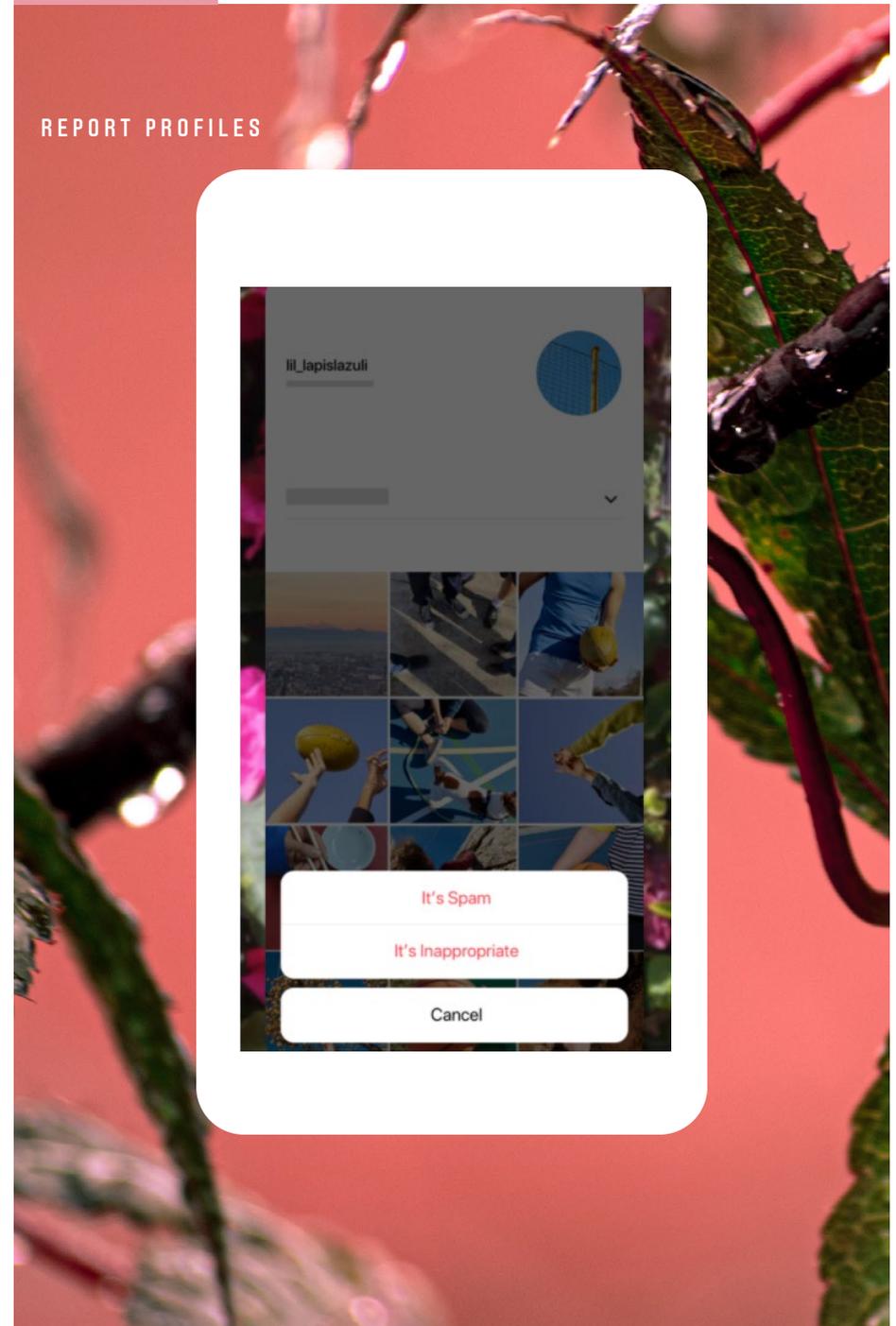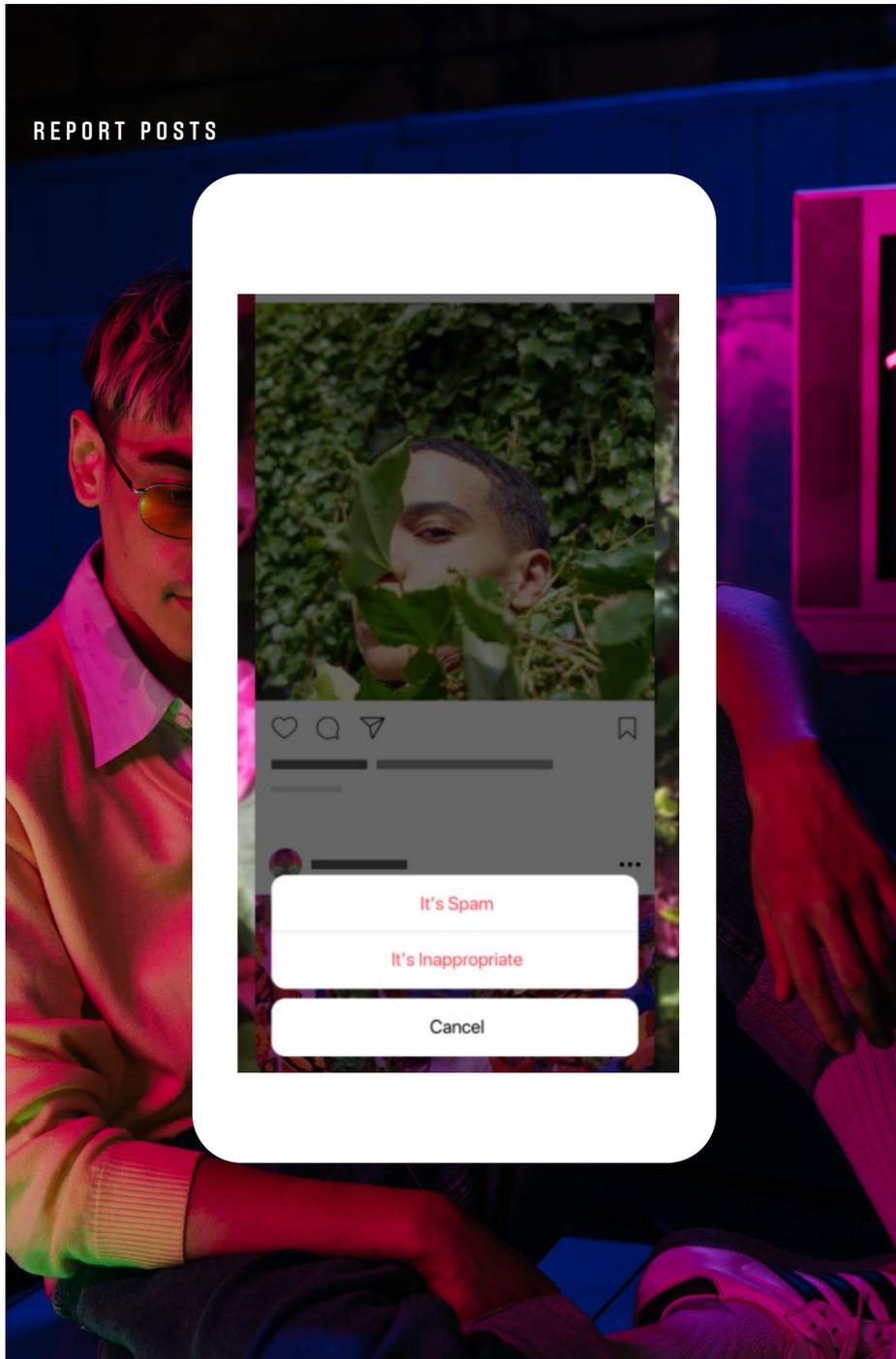3) Exercising empathy by thinking how they would like to be treated by others.

Check out our Media Literacy Council resource on how to better manage interactions here.
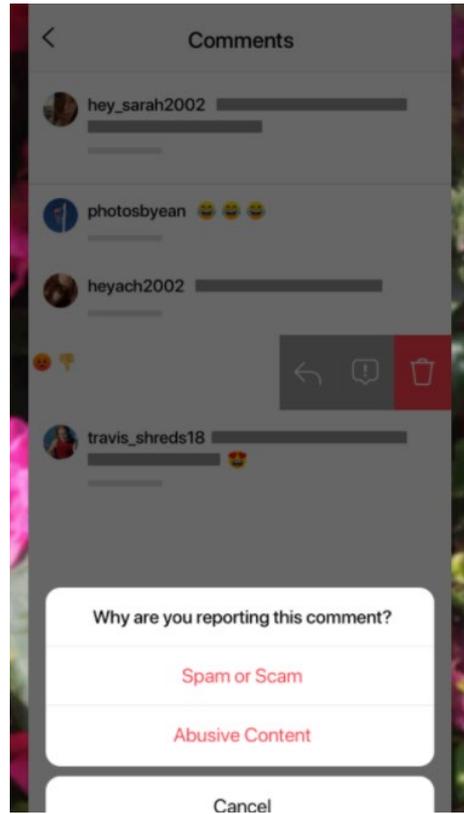
Report

Anyone can report content on Instagram, from profiles/accounts, to posts, comments, DMs, Lives, Stories, IGTV, and Reels.

REPORT POSTS

It's Spam

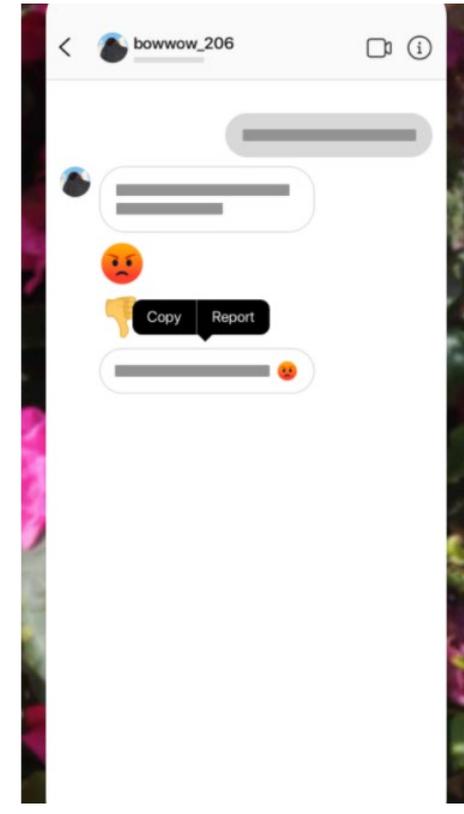It's Inappropriate

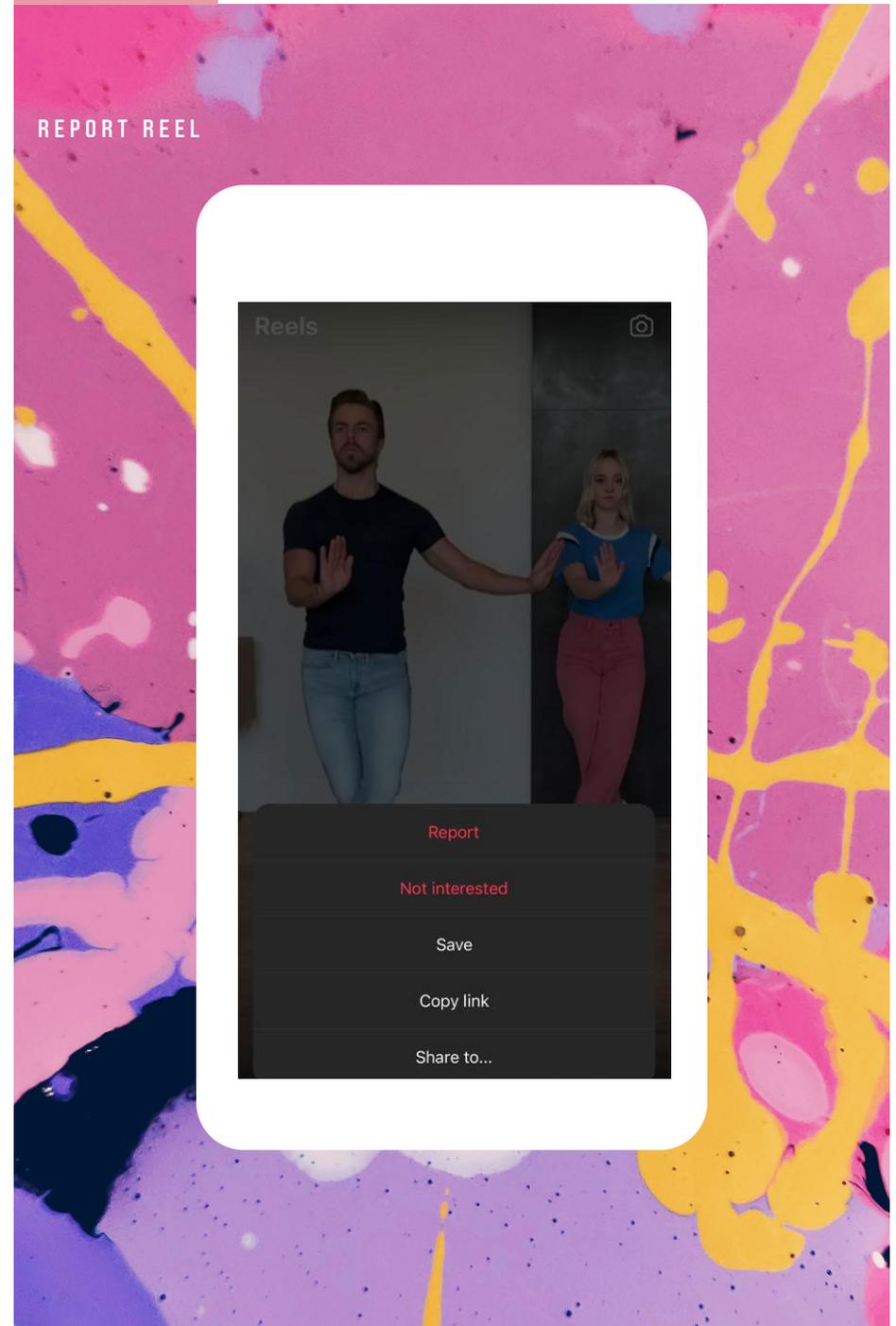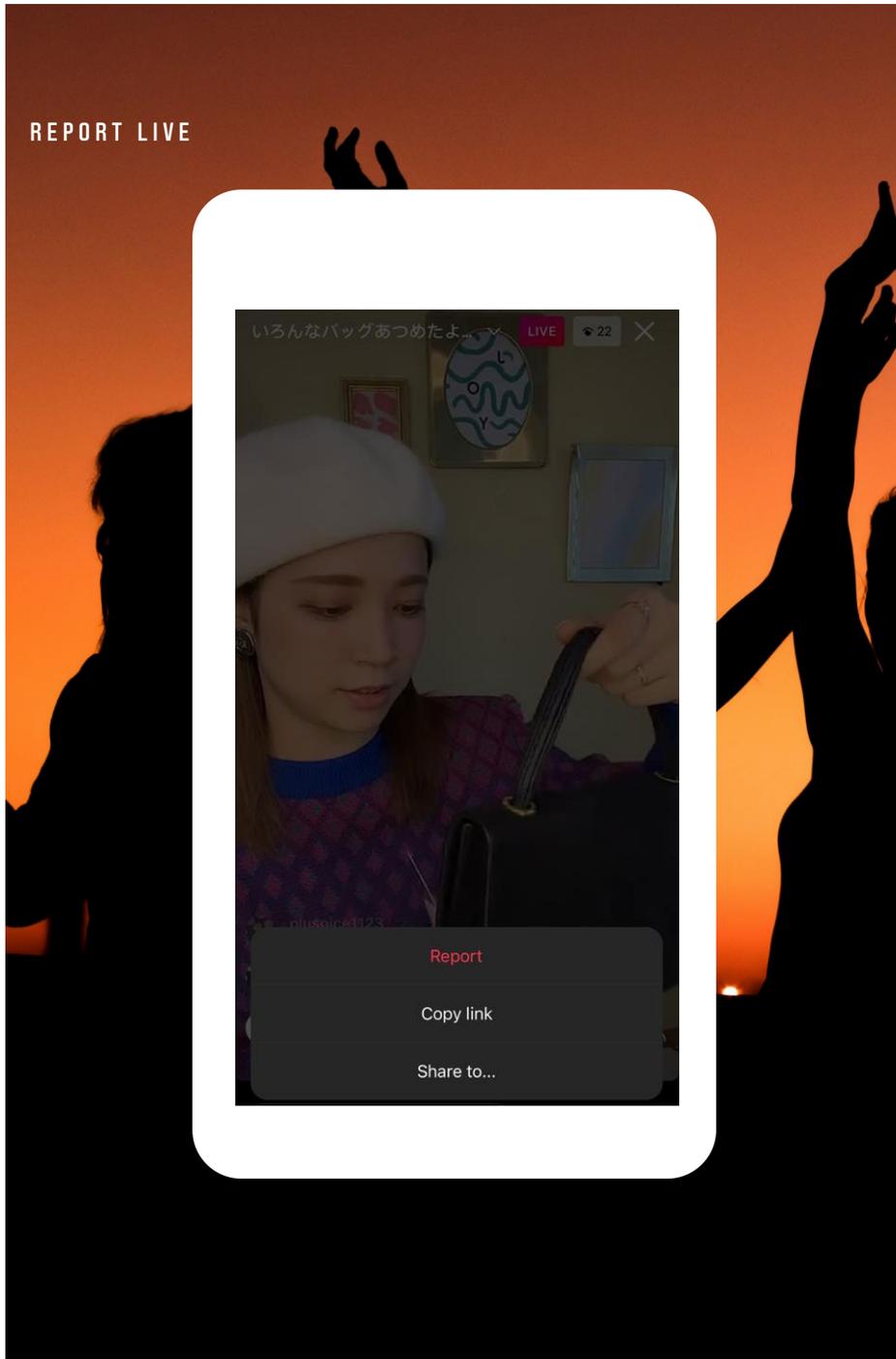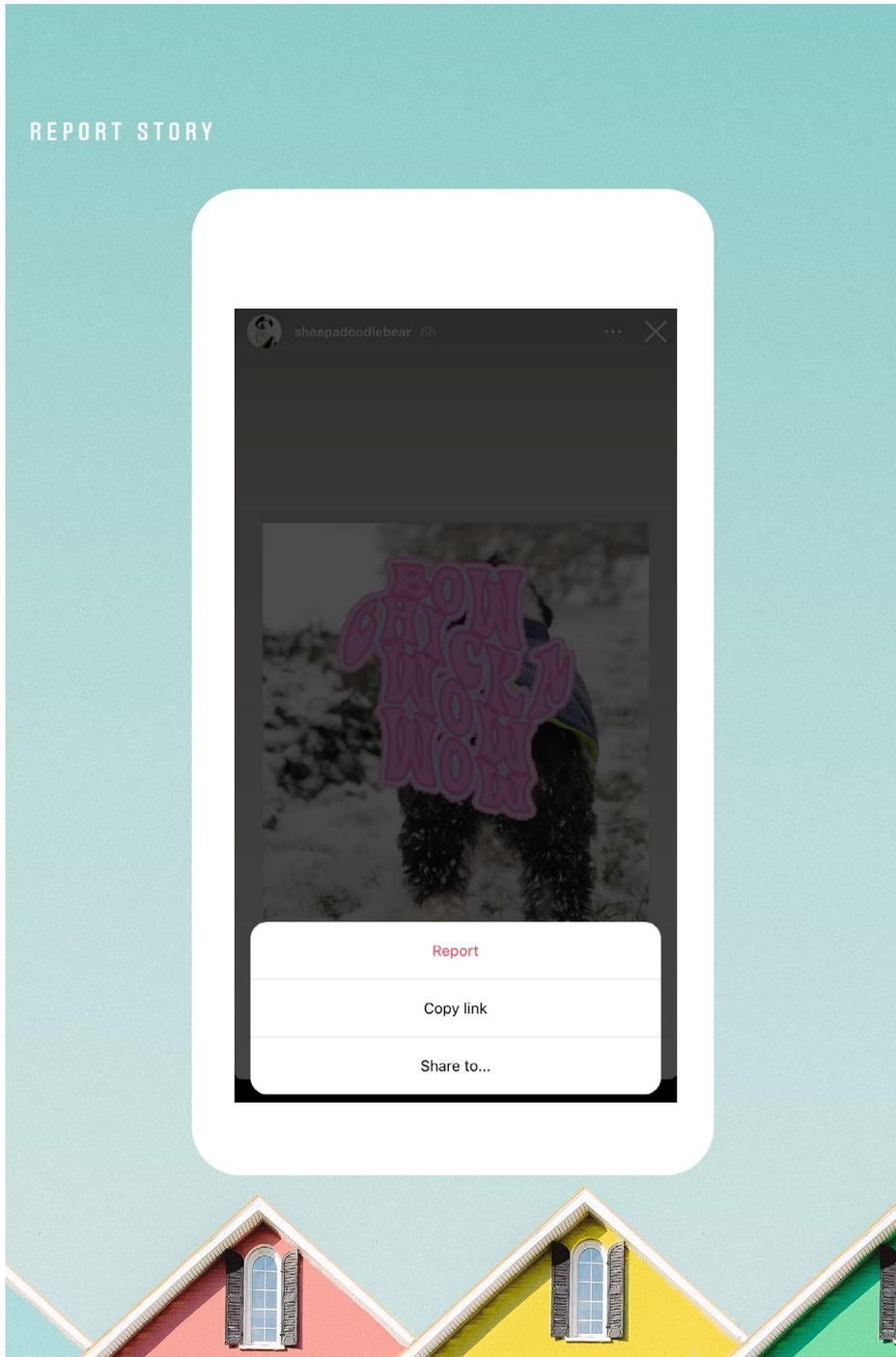Cancel

REPORT PROFILES

lil_lapislazuli

It's Spam

It's Inappropriate

Cancel

REPORT COMMENTS

REPORT DMS

REPORT LIVE

REPORT REEL

REPORT STORY

Support Requests

Our community now has access to Support Requests - a place where you and your child can follow updates to the reports filed and any violations by your child's account. This is aimed at increasing transparency into our processes by ensuring that everyone has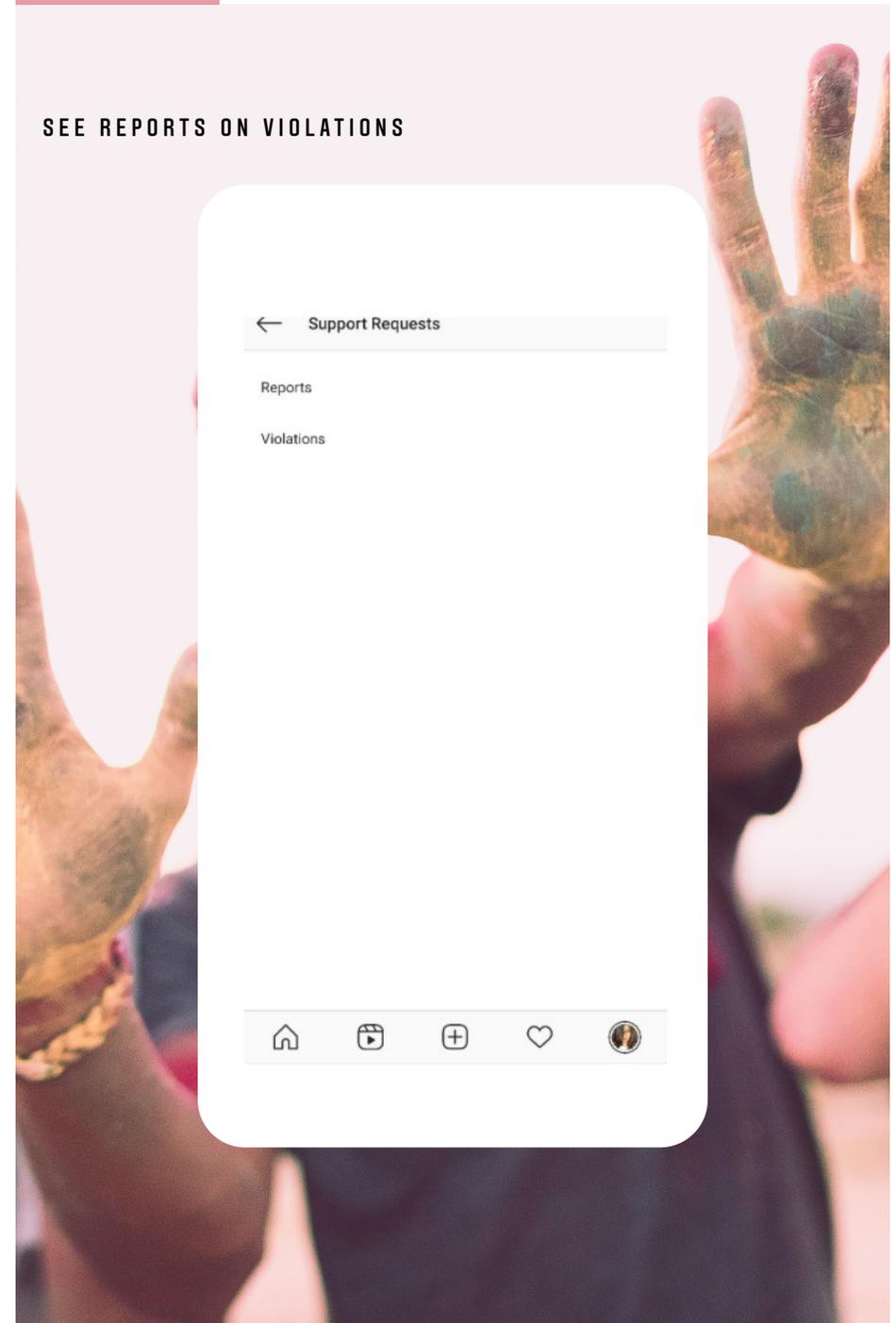 access to viewing their reports and violations. This also provides people a dedicated place to appeal decisions they disagree with in an effort to ensure that our processes are fair.

HELP → SUPPORT REQUESTS

Help

Report a Problem

Help Center

Support Requests

Privacy and Security Help

SEE REPORTS ON VIOLATIONS

Support Requests

Reports

Violations

ALL YOUR REPORTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

← Reports

🎥 You anonymously reported avinas_h_bhatte_r's video
for suicide or self-injury. 5d
Reviewed >

🎥 You anonymously reported desi__world__'s video for
suicide or self-injury. 5d
Reviewed >

🖼 You anonymously reported theplacardguy's photo for
hate speech or symbols. 1w
Reviewed >

👤 You anonymously reported sakshi_cute28 for nudity or
sexual activity. 2w
Reviewed >

👤 You anonymously reported madalenabarbosa__ for
spam. 3w
Reviewed >

🎥 You anonymously reported hindustanibhau's video.
July 24
Reviewed >

👤 You anonymously reported pierre_pierreetgilles for
impersonation. June 29
Reviewed >

👤 You anonymously reported tanurao786 for nudity or
sexual activity. June 25
Reviewed >

🖼 You anonymously reported kavitha.kk's photo for
suicide or self-injury. June 22
In Review >

ALL YOUR VIOLATIONS

← Violations

You Don't Have Any Violations

Read our Community Guidelines to learn what we allow on
Instagram and how you can help us report and remove what
we don't.

See Community Guidelines

Manage Comments

Your child is in control of who can comment on their photos and videos. In the "Comment Controls" section of the app settings, they can choose to allow comments from everyone, people they follow and those people's followers, just the people they follow, or just their followers. Your child can also remove comments entirely from their posts.
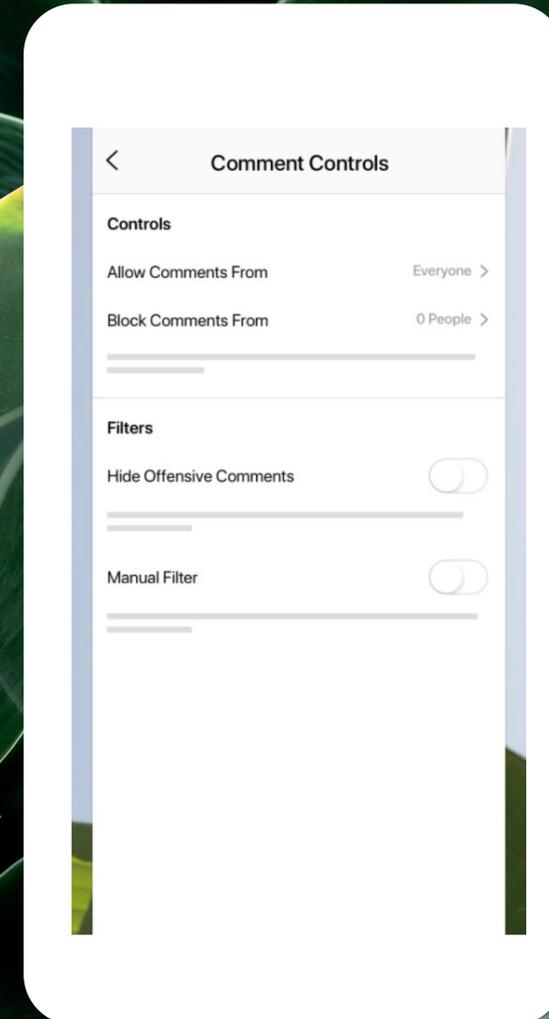
Filter out Comments

We have controls that help you manage the content you see and determine when comments are offensive or intended to bully or harass. We've built filters that automatically remove offensive words and phrases and bullying comments. Your child can also create their own list of words or emojis they don't want to have appear in the comments section when they post by going to "Filters" in the Comment Controls section.
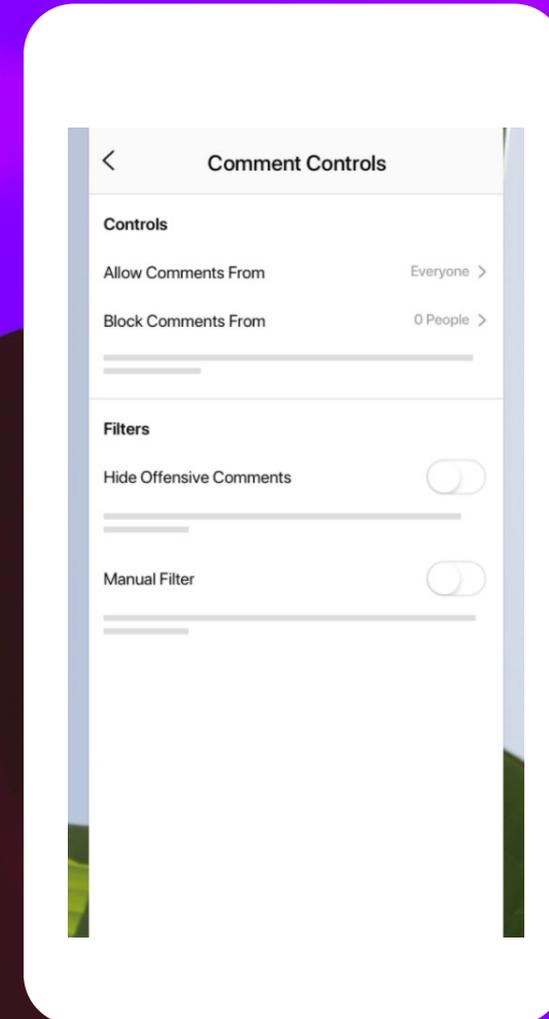
COMMENT WARNINGS

Comment and caption warnings

We automatically identify when a comment or a caption in a post is found to be hurtful and offensive, and we notify the person making the comment or posting the caption before it is posted. This gives them a chance to pause and undo their comment or caption, and we also use the opportunity to show them what is and isn't allowed on Instagram. The intervention prevents the recipient from potentially receiving a harmful interaction.

COMMENT WARNINGS

CAPTION WARNINGS

CAPTION WARNINGS

CAPTION WARNINGS
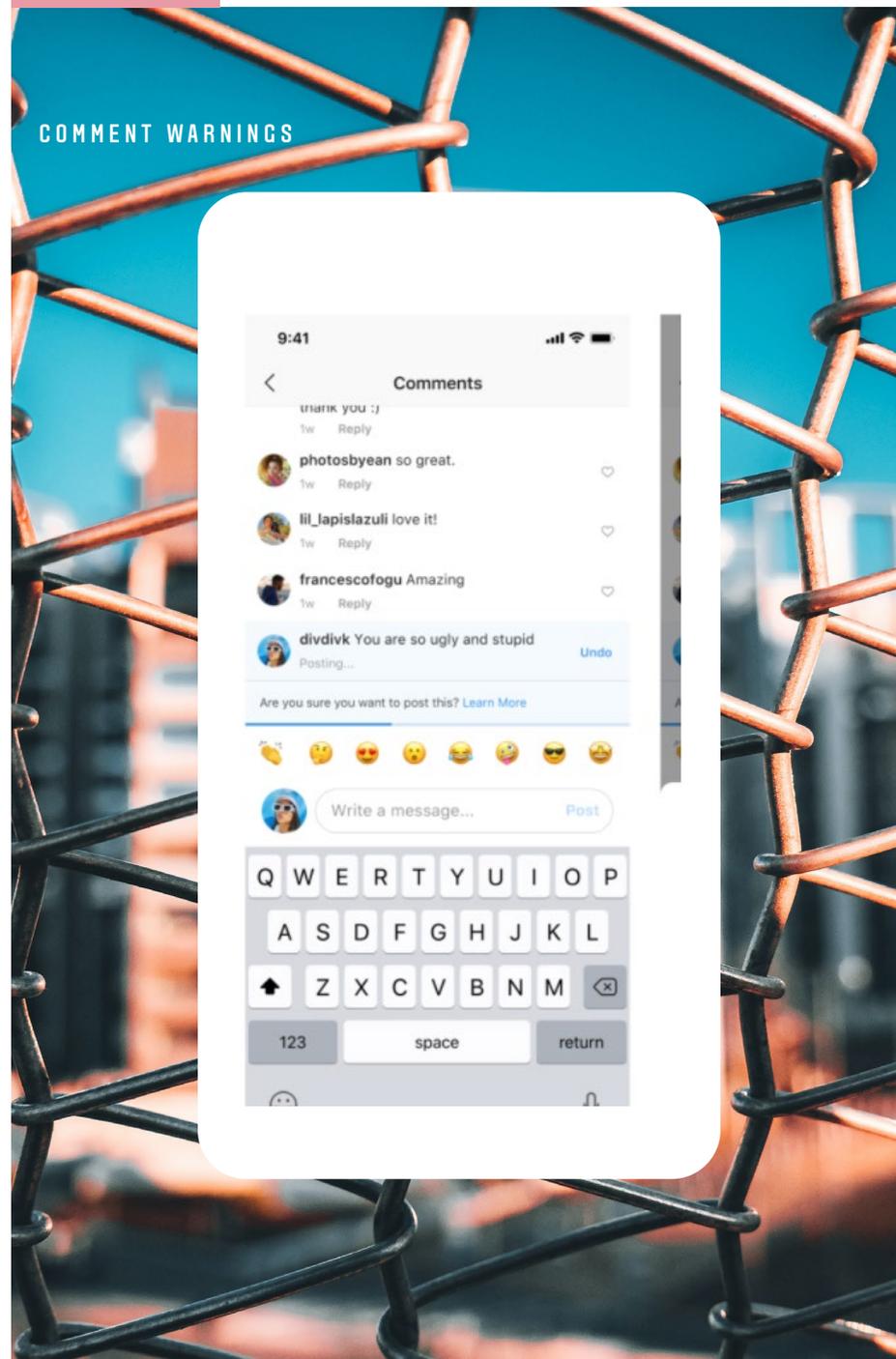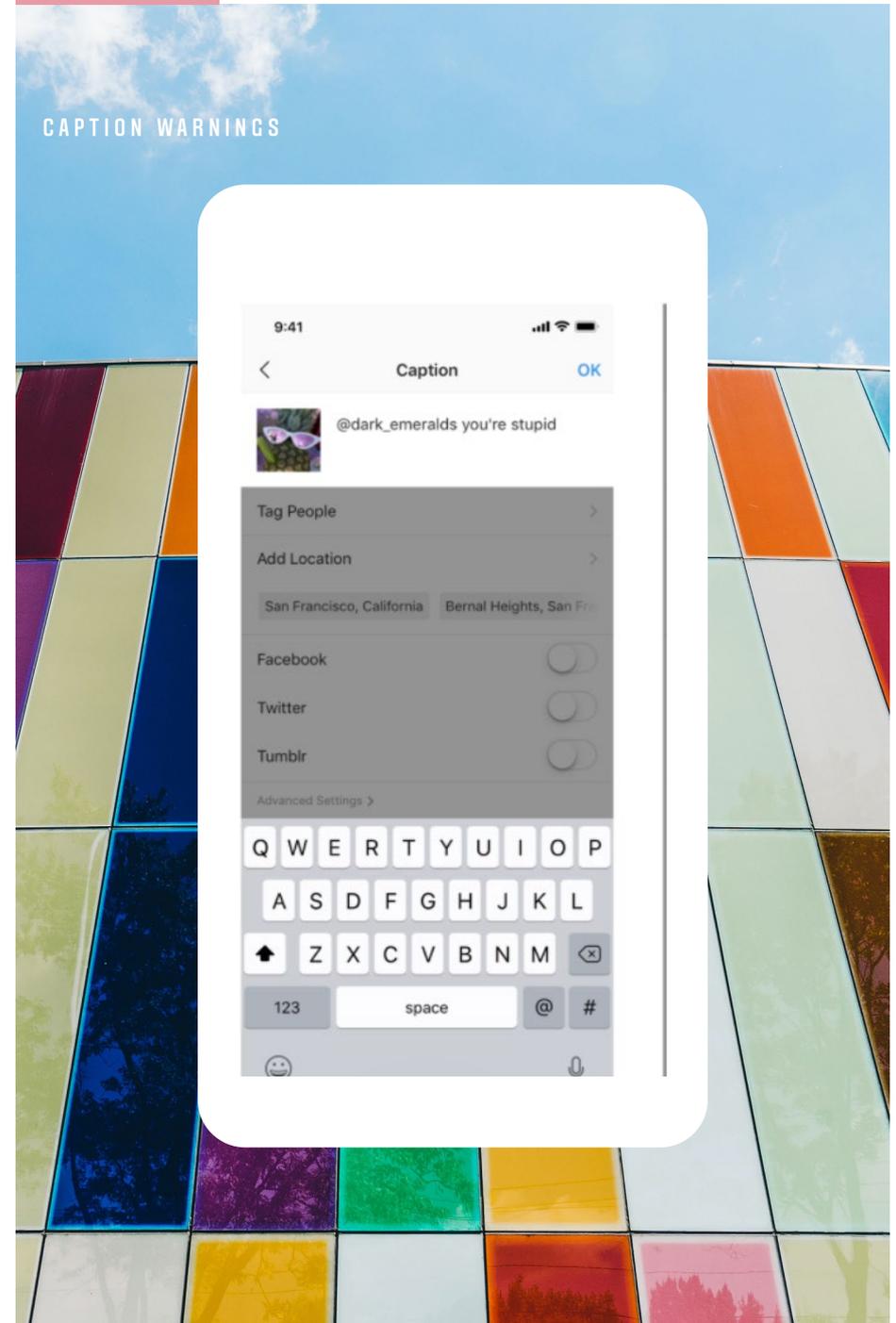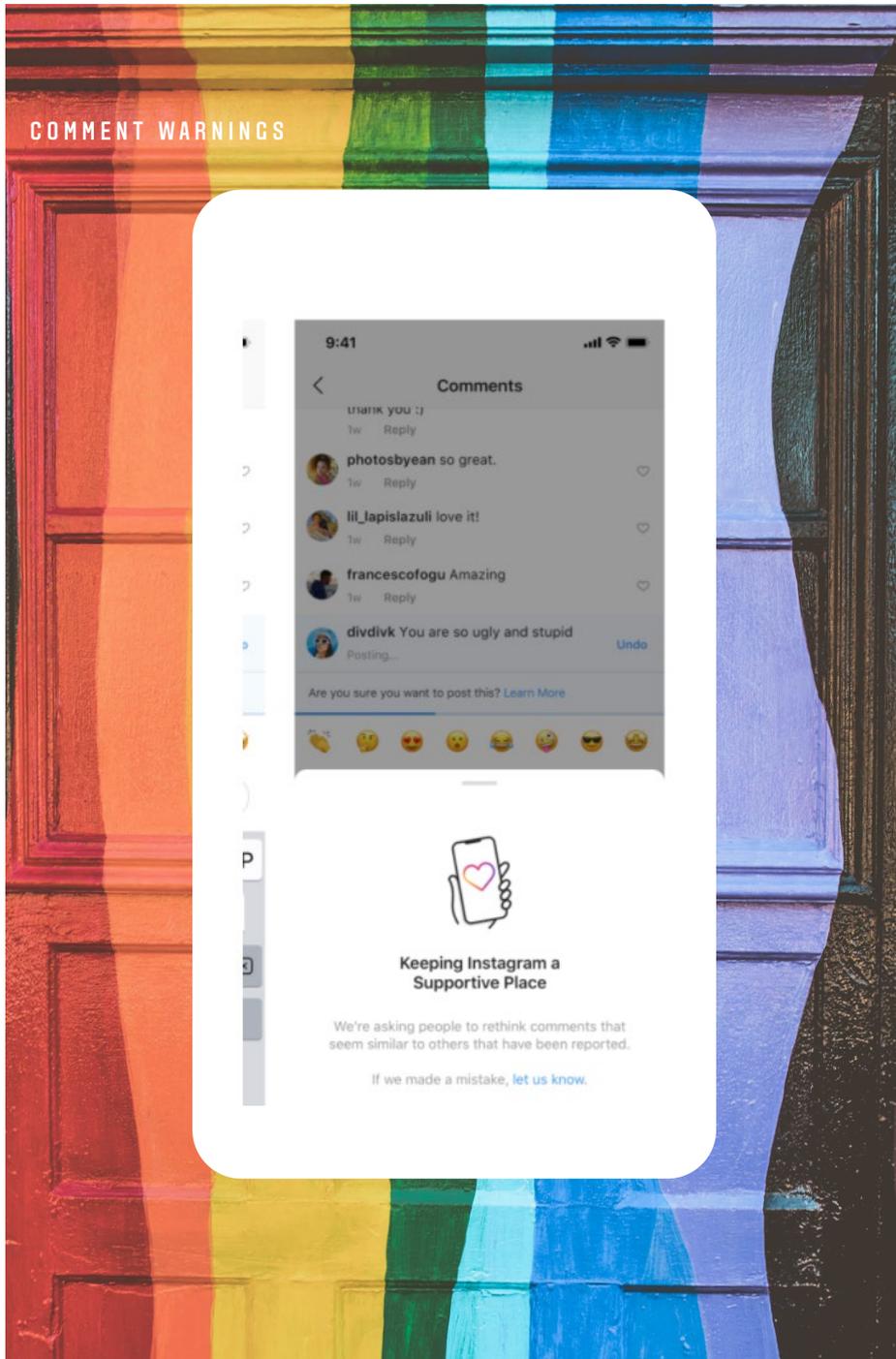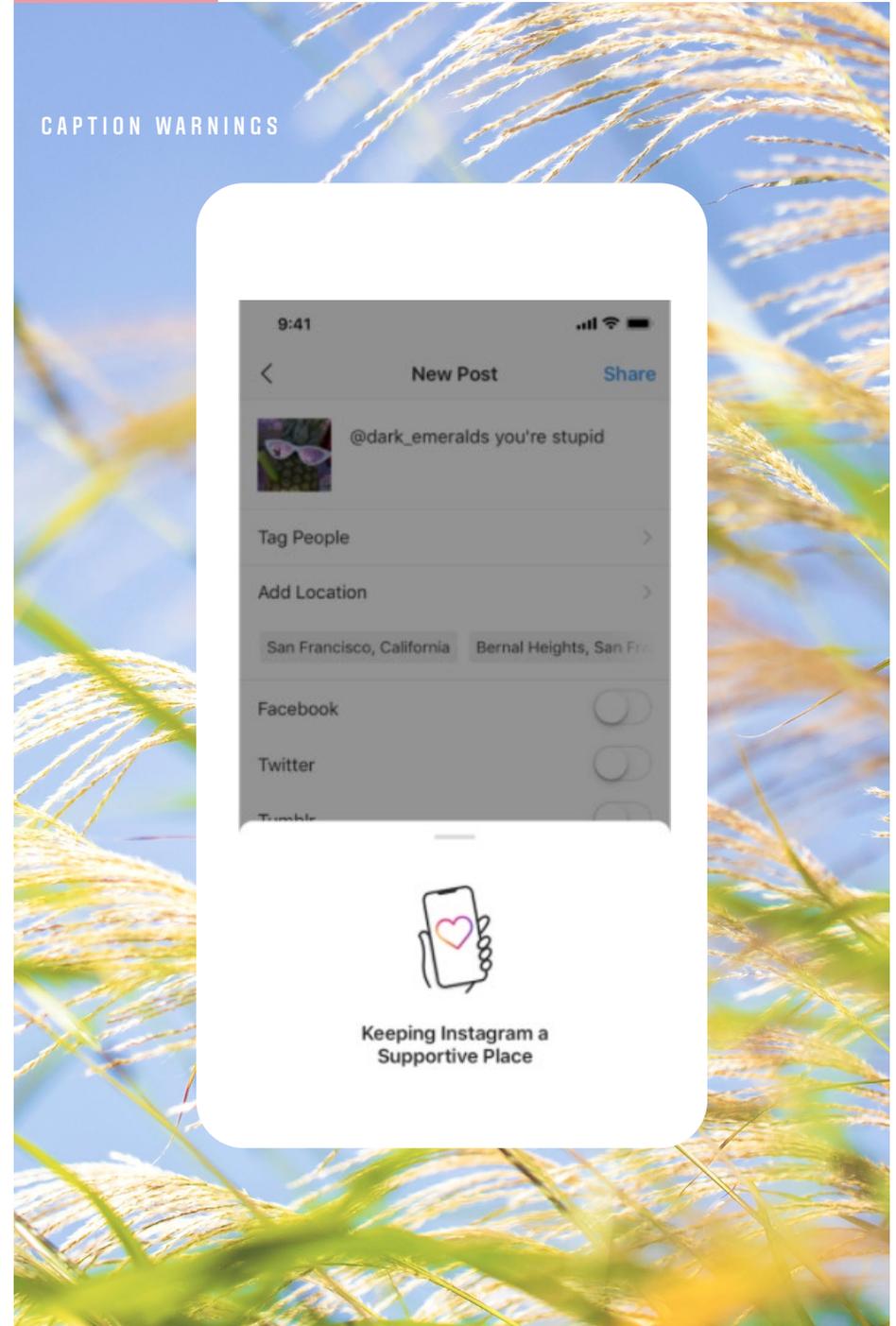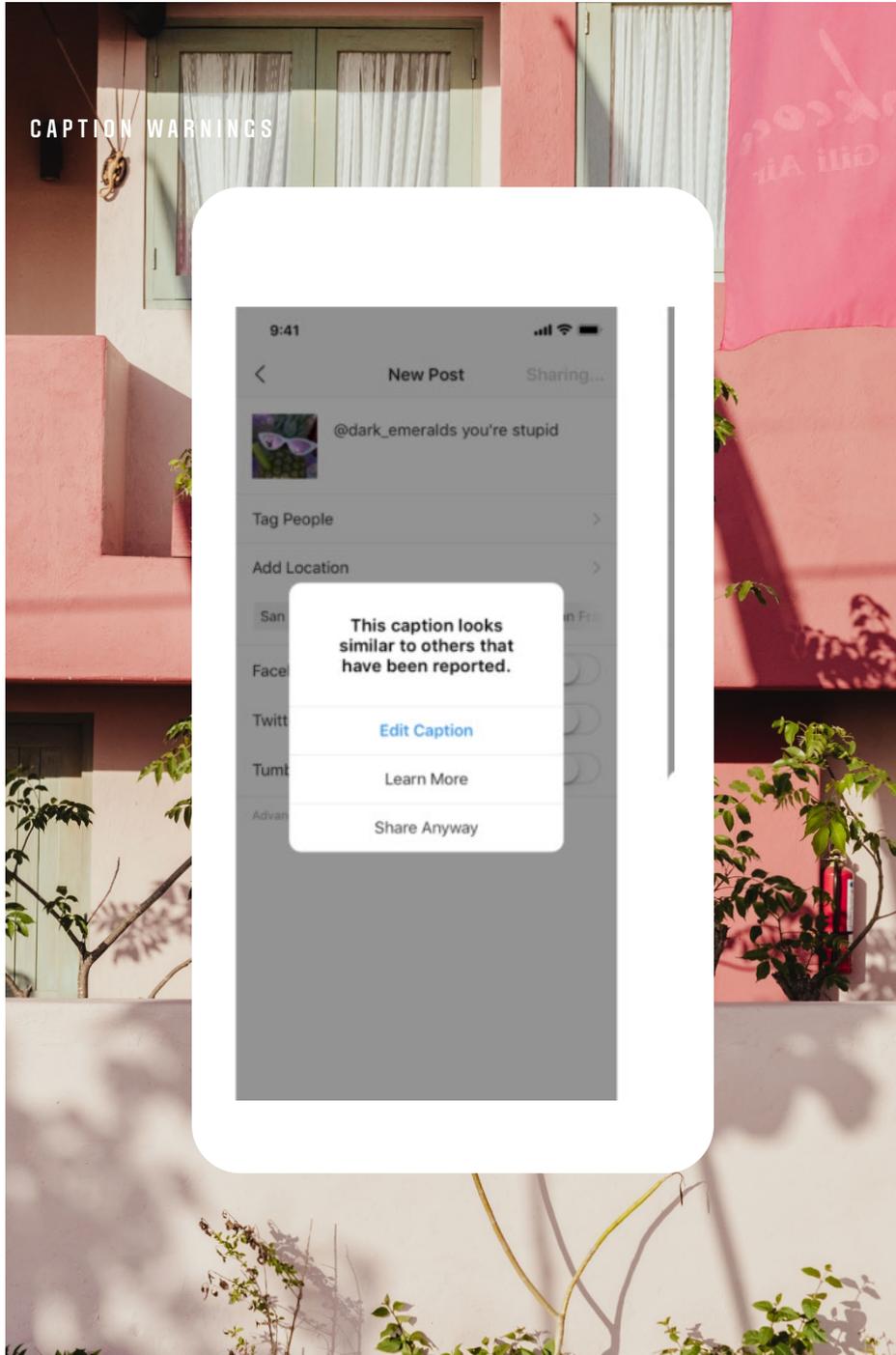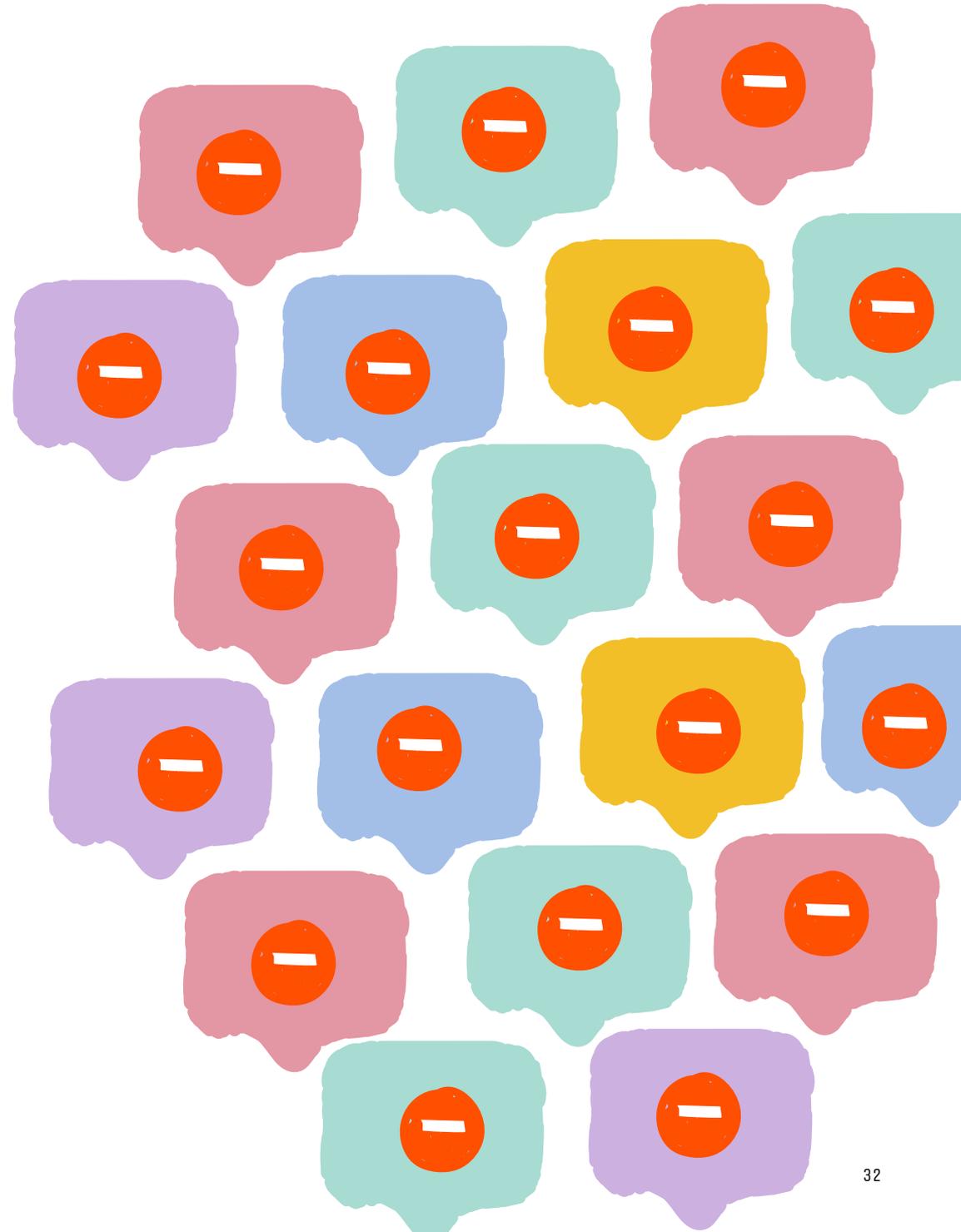
Bulk comment management

We know it can feel overwhelming to manage a rush of comments, so we've introduced features to delete comments in bulk, as well as block or restrict multiple accounts that post negative comments. To enable this feature on iOS, tap on a comment and then the dotted icon in the top right corner. Select Manage Comments and choose up to 25 comments to delete at once. Tap More Options to block or restrict accounts in bulk. On Android, press and hold on a comment, tap the dotted icon, and choose which comments or accounts to Block or Restrict.
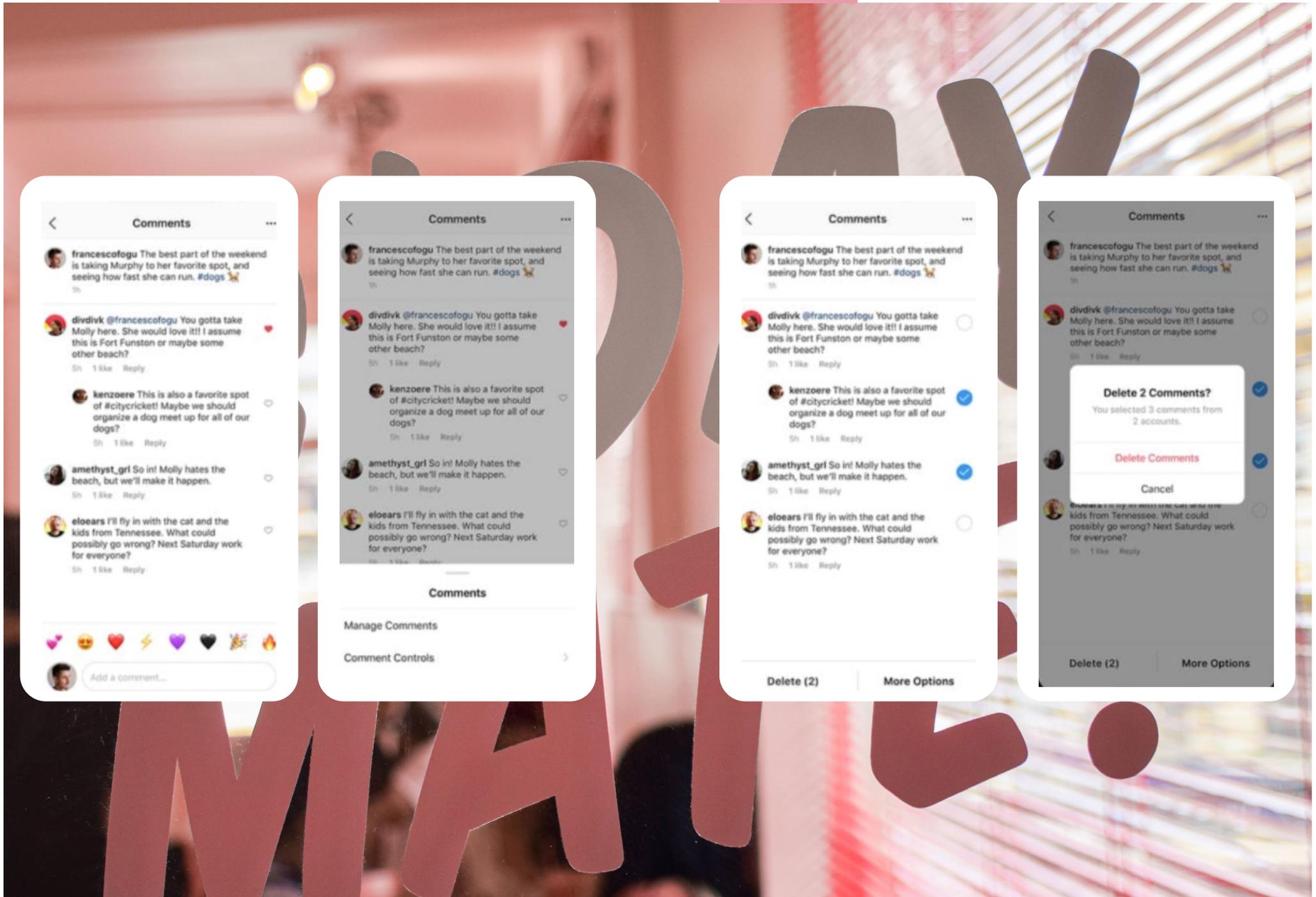
Block comments

Your child can block accounts that they don't want to interact with. Comments will no longer appear from a blocked account. Your child can also turn off comments from all posts or individual posts.

Blocked Commentors

dark_emeralds		Unblock
lil_lapislazuli		Unblock
bowwow_206		Block

hey_sarah2002

Delete

Archive

Turn Off Commenting

Edit

Copy Link

Share to...

Share

Cancel
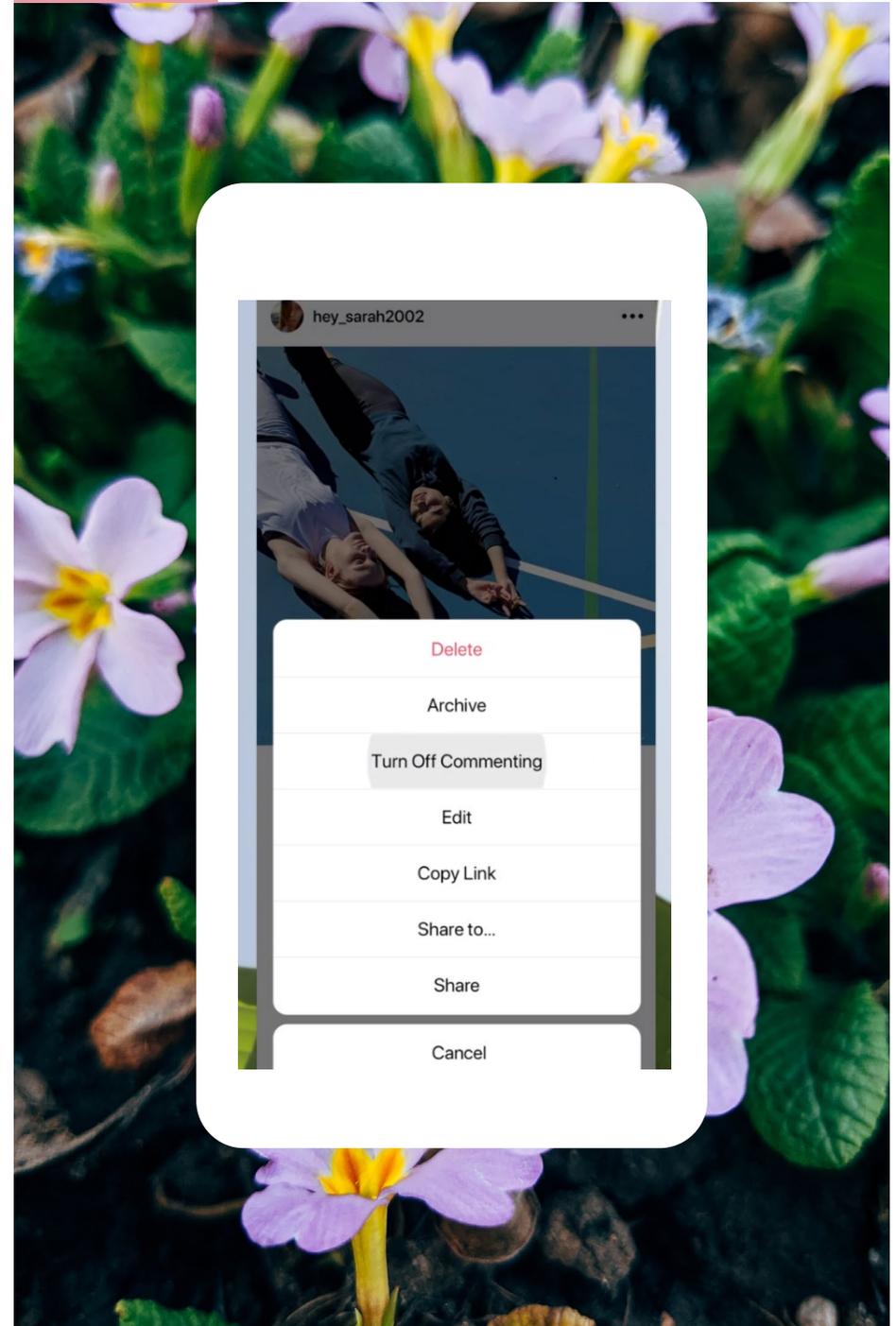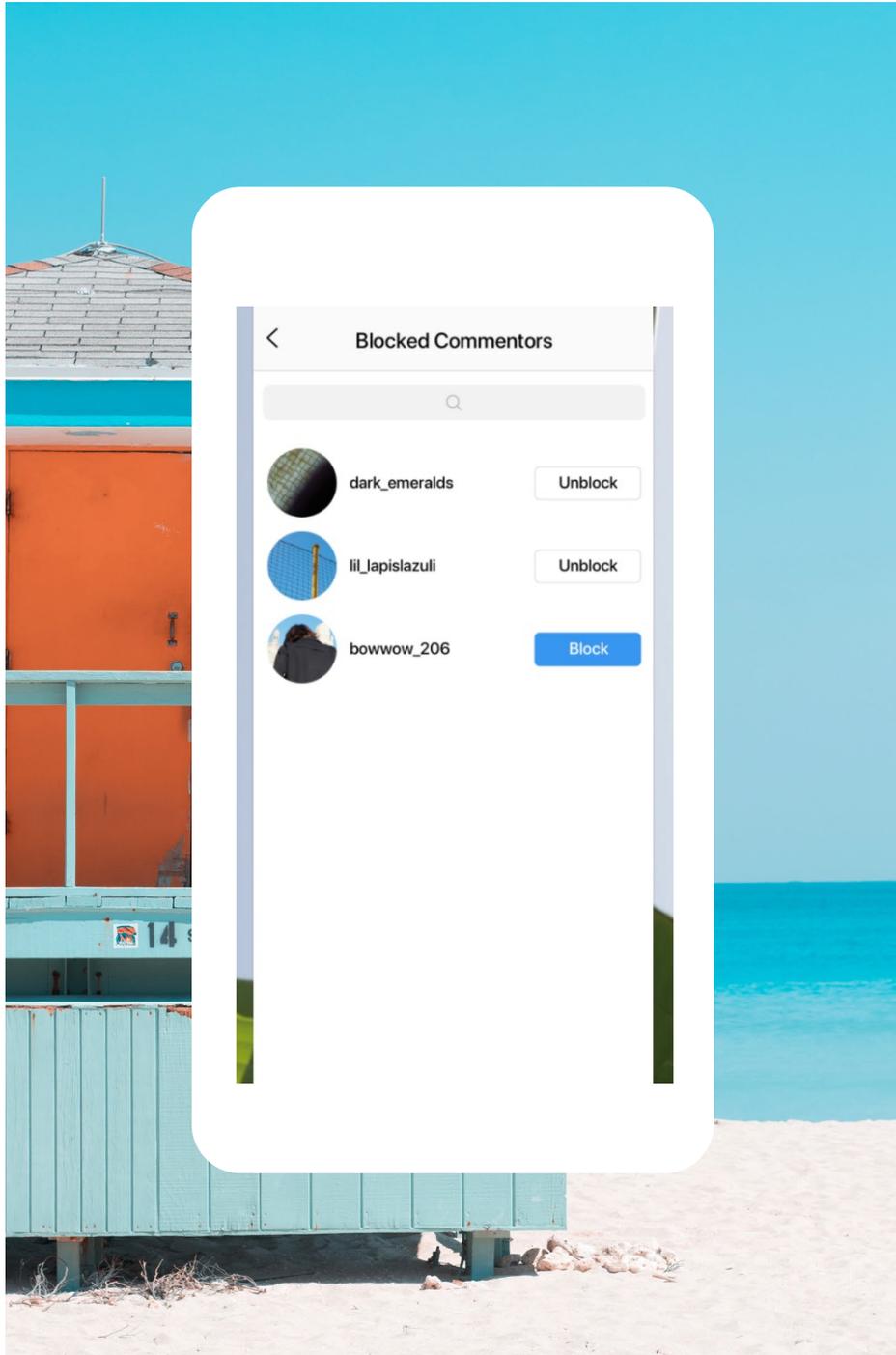
Pinning positive comments

In addition to removing negative comments, we want to give people an easy way to amplify and encourage positive interactions. Pinned Comments gives your child a way to set the tone for their account and engage with their community by pinning a select number of comments to the top of their comments thread.
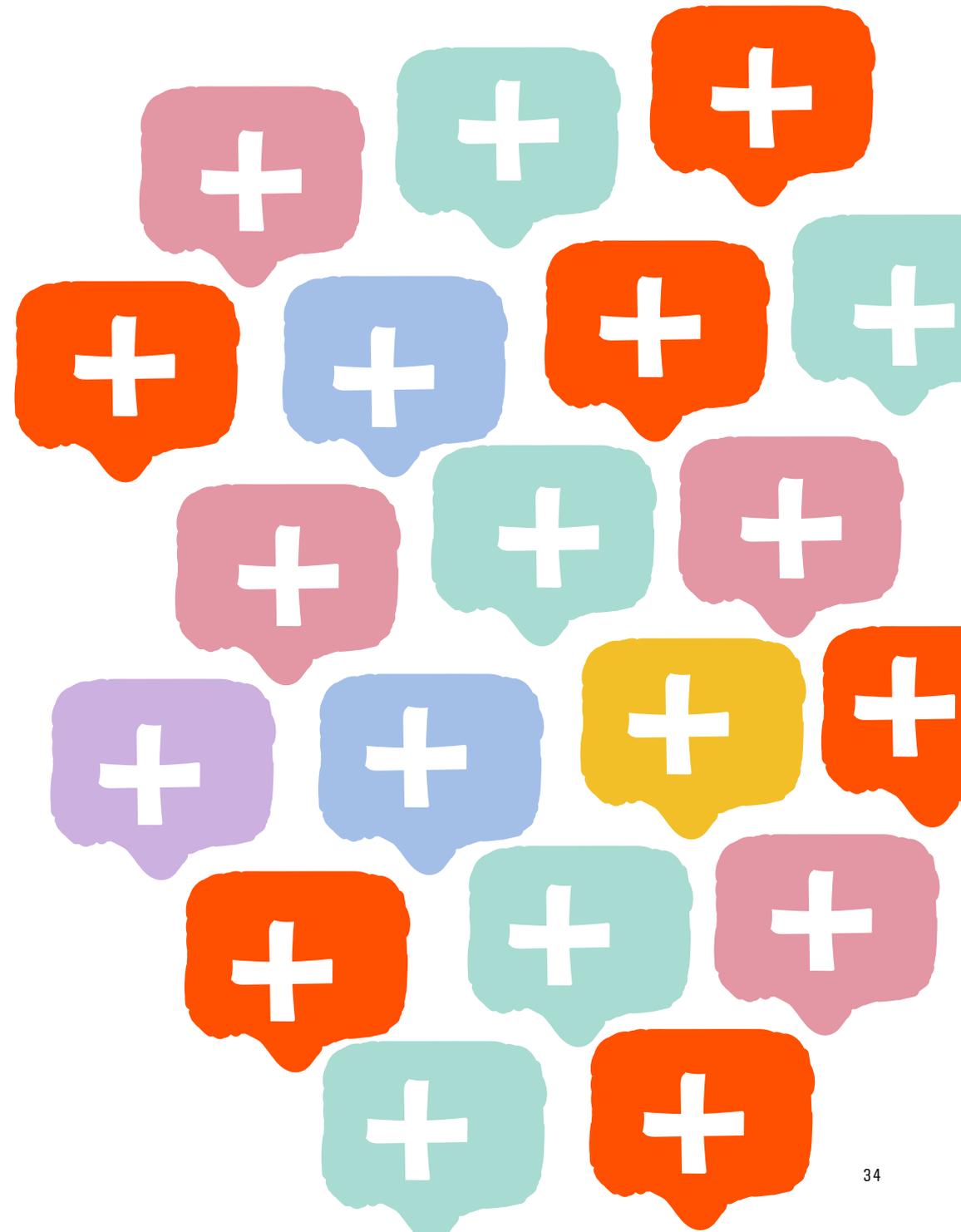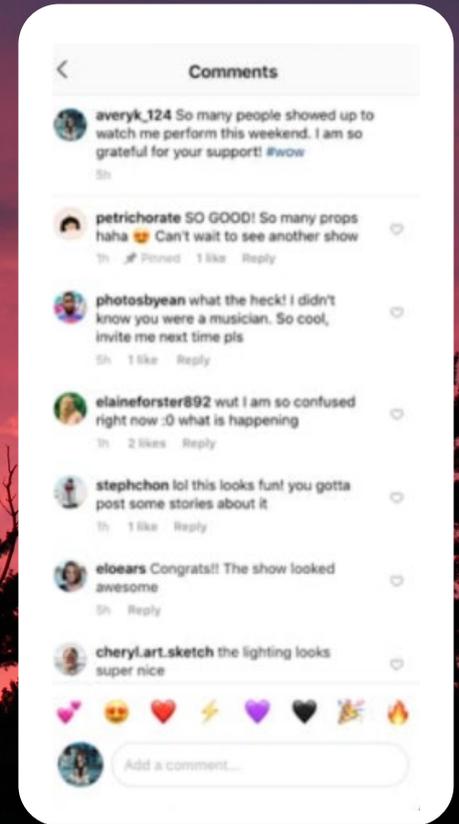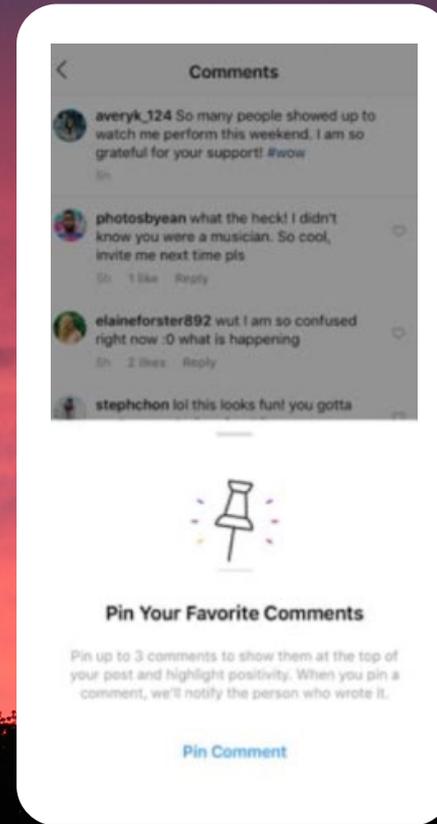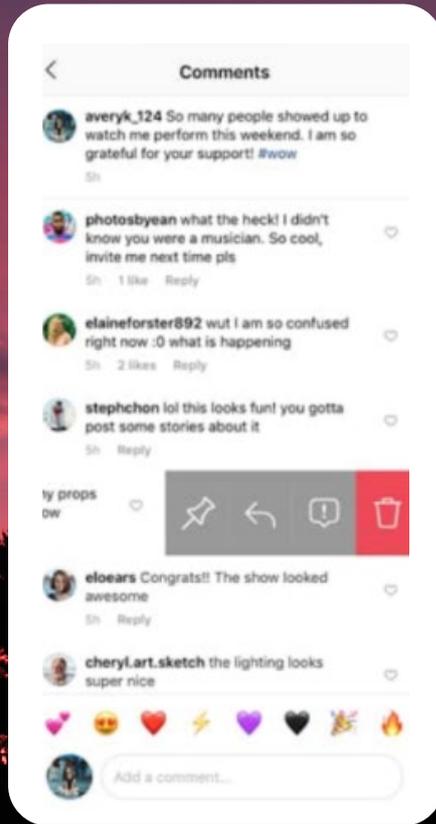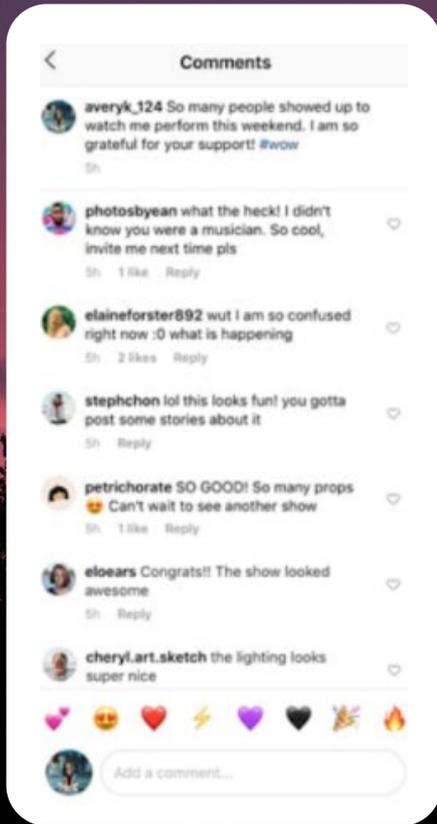
Control tags and mentions

We've created new controls that allow people to manage who can tag or mention them on Instagram. Your child can choose whether they want everyone, only people they follow or no one to be able to tag or mention them in a comment, caption or Story.

SETTINGS -→ PRIVACY

SELECT TAGS

Tags

Allow Tags From

Everyone ○

Only People You Follow ○

No One ⦿

Tagged Posts

Manually Approve Tags Off >

Choose who can tag you in their photos and videos. When people try to tag you, they'll see if you don't allow tags from everyone.

SELECT @MENTIONS

Mentions

Allow @mentions From

Everyone ○

Only People You Follow ○

No One ⦿

Choose who can @mention you to link to your account in their stories, comments and captions. When people try to @mention you, they'll see if you don't allow @mentions from everyone.

Mute an account

There may be accounts that your child isn't interested in interacting with but is hesitant to unfollow. Muting will keep posts or Stories from those accounts from showing up in your child's feed. The other person will not know they've been muted, and your child can unmute at any time.

SETTINGS -→ PRIVACY

Instagram

sheepadoodlebear

Mute sheepadoodlebear?

You can unmute them from their profile. Instagram won't let them know that you've muted them.

Mute Posts

Mute Posts and Story

Cancel

286 likes

sheepadoodlebear I believe the phrase you're looking for is "bow chicka wow wowww… more

View all 22 comments
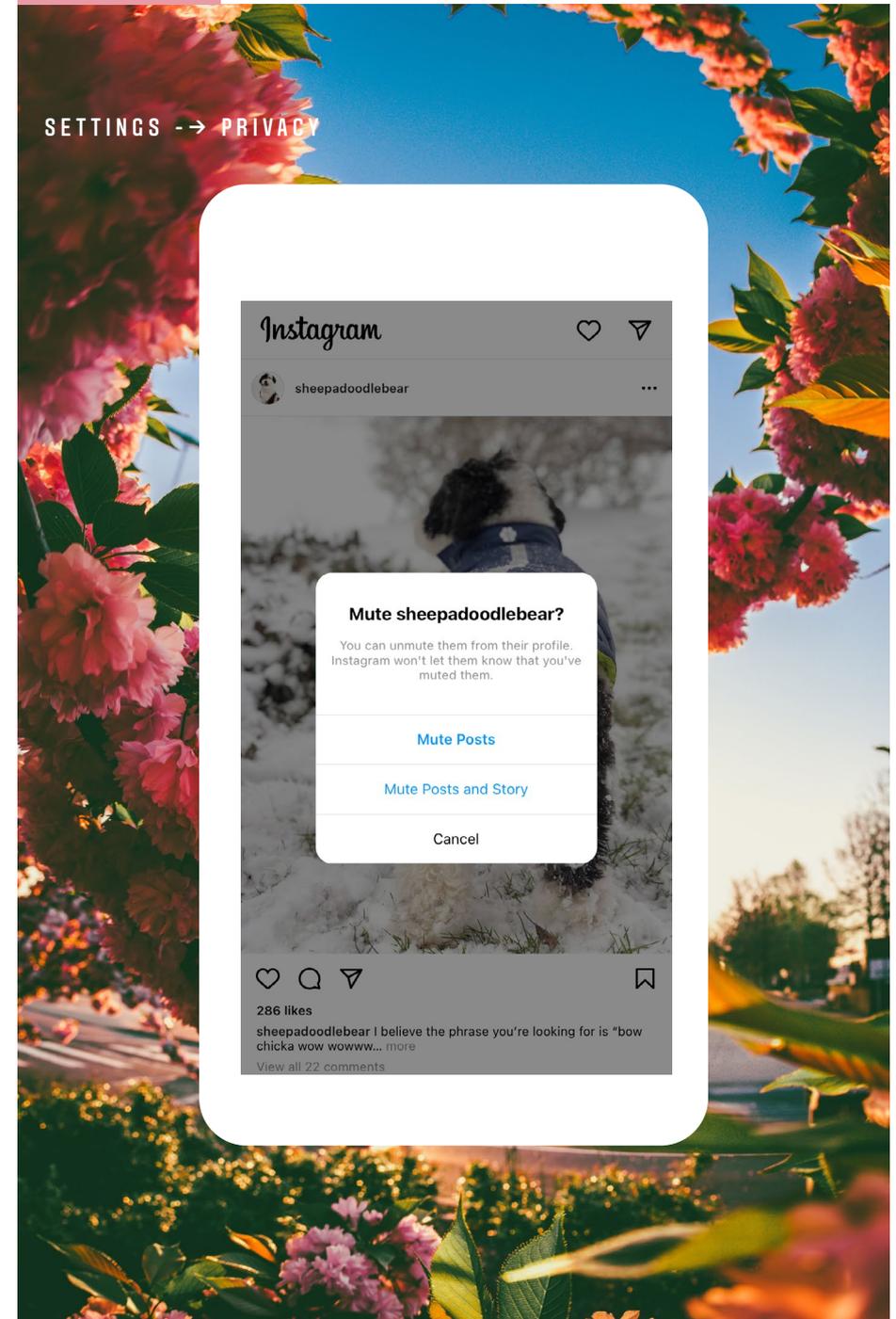
🚫 Restrict

Sometimes young people aren't comfortable blocking or unfollowing someone because they feel it could lead to uncomfortable or escalated situations. To help, we developed Restrict mode, which allows your child to protect their account from unwanted interactions without making the bully aware. Once they Restrict someone, comments from that person will only be visible to that person. Restricted people aren't able to see when you're active on Instagram or when you've read their direct messages. Your child can remove restrictions at any time.

RESTRICT SCREEENSHOT
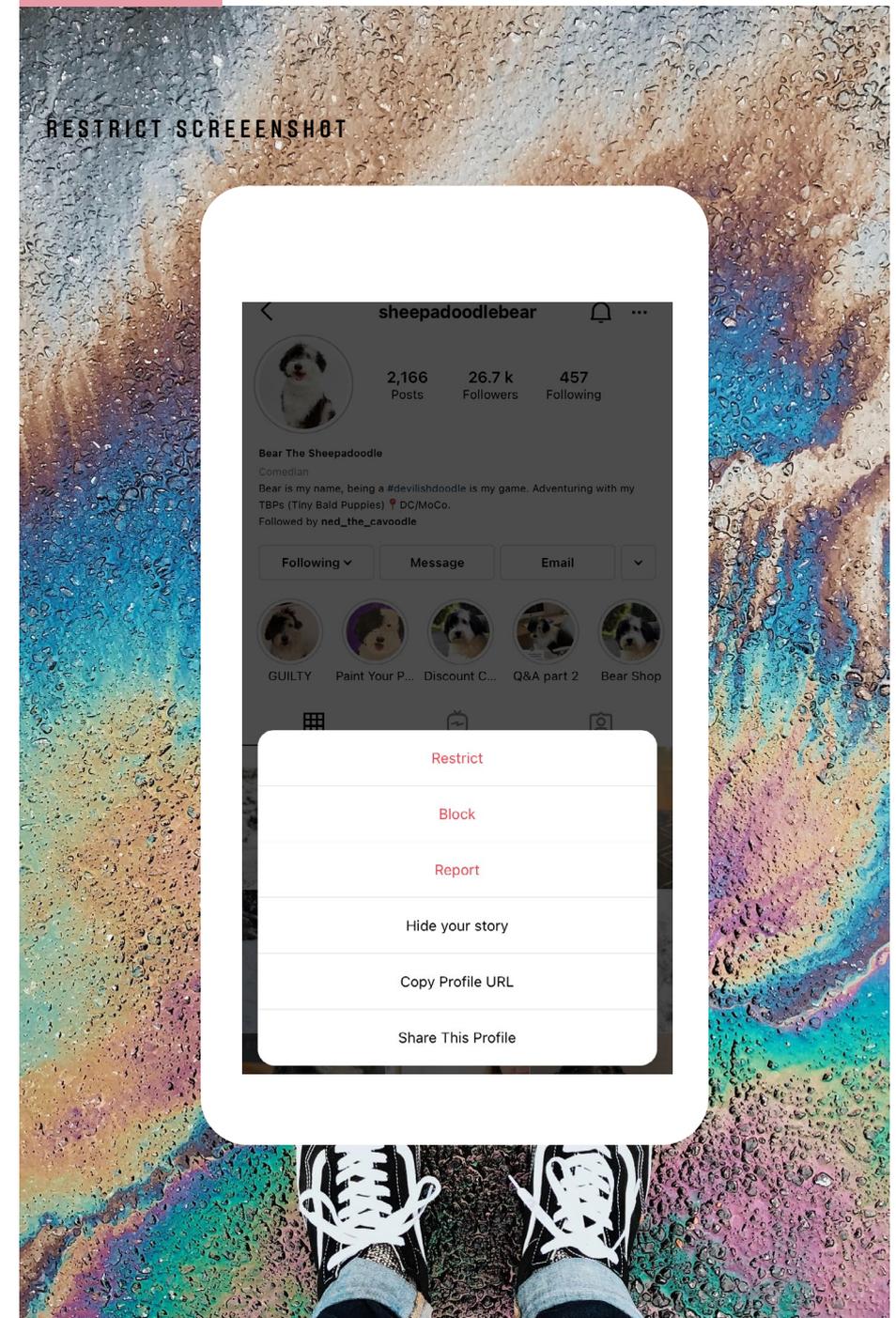
Block unwanted interactions

Your child can block accounts they don't want to interact with. This will block people from seeing and commenting on their posts, Stories, Reels, and Live broadcasts. When your child blocks an account, that person is not notified. Your child can unblock an account at any time.

RESTRICT SCREEENSHOT
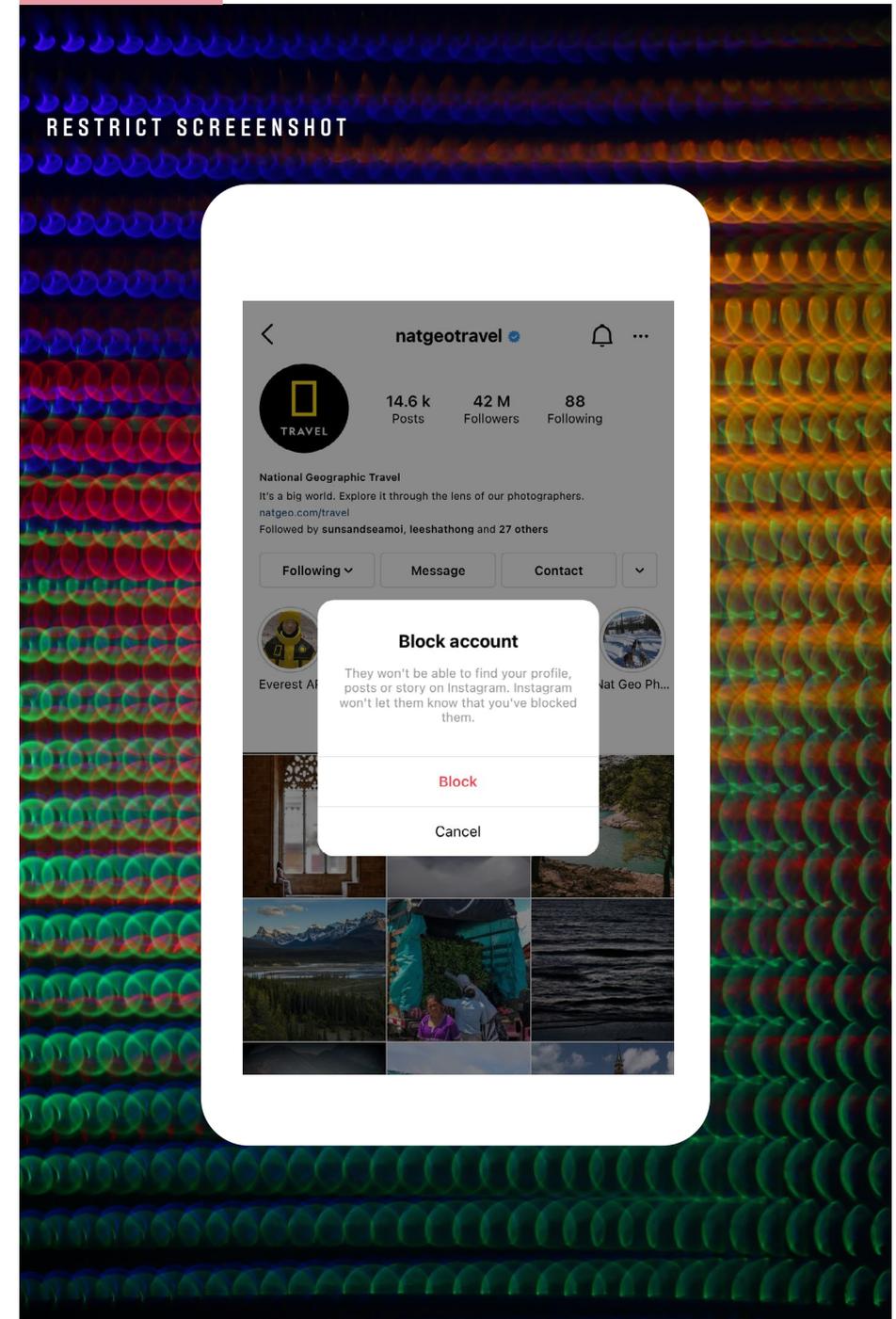
05 /

Manage Time

When it comes to spending time on Instagram, it's important to have open conversations with your child and come to an agreement about what is an appropriate amount of time on the platform each day or each week.

Taking regular breaks can also be important, especially during stressful times. There are a number of tools to help you and your family understand and take control of the time your child is spending on the app. You can work together to decide what the right balance is for your family.

There are no hard and fast rules for young people on how much time they should spend online as it varies from person to person. However, the amount of time spent online can have an impact on their school and social life. If these areas are being affected, try using these tips to help your child manage their screen time usage better:

1) Make them aware of how much time is spent on their phone. Not only might the numbers shock them into cutting down their time online, it will also help them set daily limits for themselves.

2) Encourage them to engage in activities that do not rely on digital devices such as active sports, playing a musical instrument or reading a book.

3) Have a specific time of the day when the entire family puts down their devices, such as during meal times or for an hour before sleep.
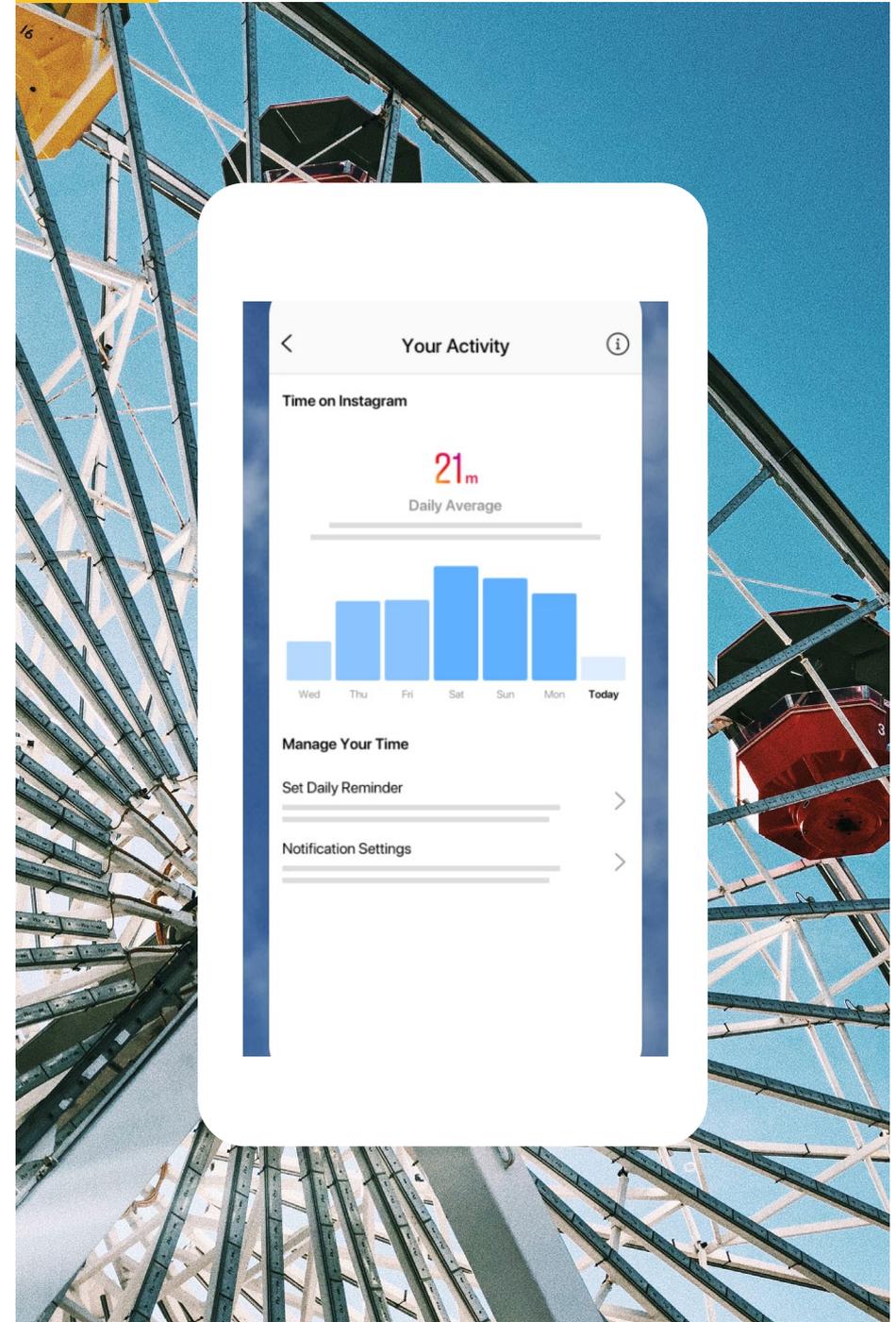
For more tips on how to manage your child's screen time, head here.

View your activity

The Activity Dashboard shows your child how much time they've spent on Instagram for the past day and week, as well as their average time on the app. Your child can tap and hold the blue bars to see how much time they've spent on Instagram on a certain day.

Set a daily reminder

Your child can use the daily reminder to set a limit on how much time they want to spend on Instagram. Talk with your child about how they feel while using the app. Is there a point when they don't get as much out of it? Setting the daily reminder together can be a good way to talk to your child about how they are using Instagram throughout the day.
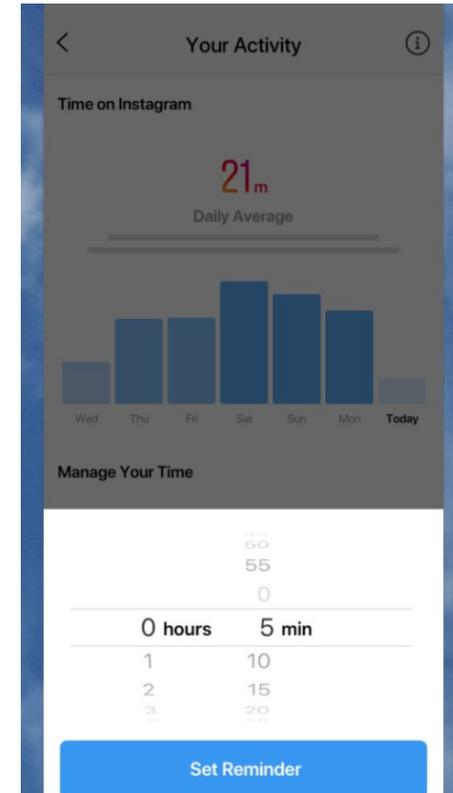
Mute push notifications

Your child can use the "Mute Push Notifications" feature to silence Instagram notifications for a period of time. When the preset time is up, notifications will return to their normal settings without having to reset them.
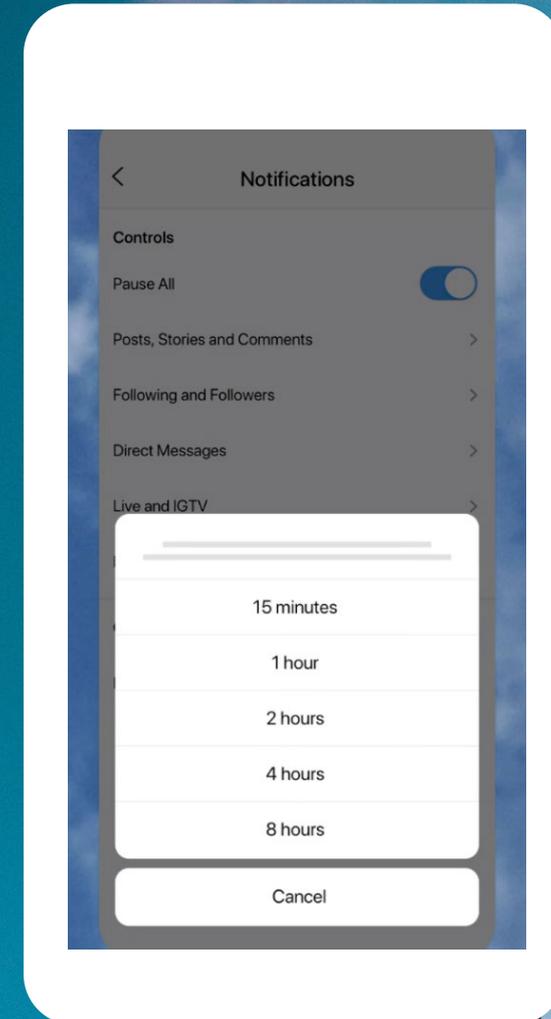
✋ You're all caught up

Young people can feel pressure to see and interact with all their friends' posts. When they scroll through every post on their feed from the past two days, they will see a message that says "You're All Caught Up".

This way, they'll know that they're up to date on everything their friends and communities are up to.

06 /

Manage Security
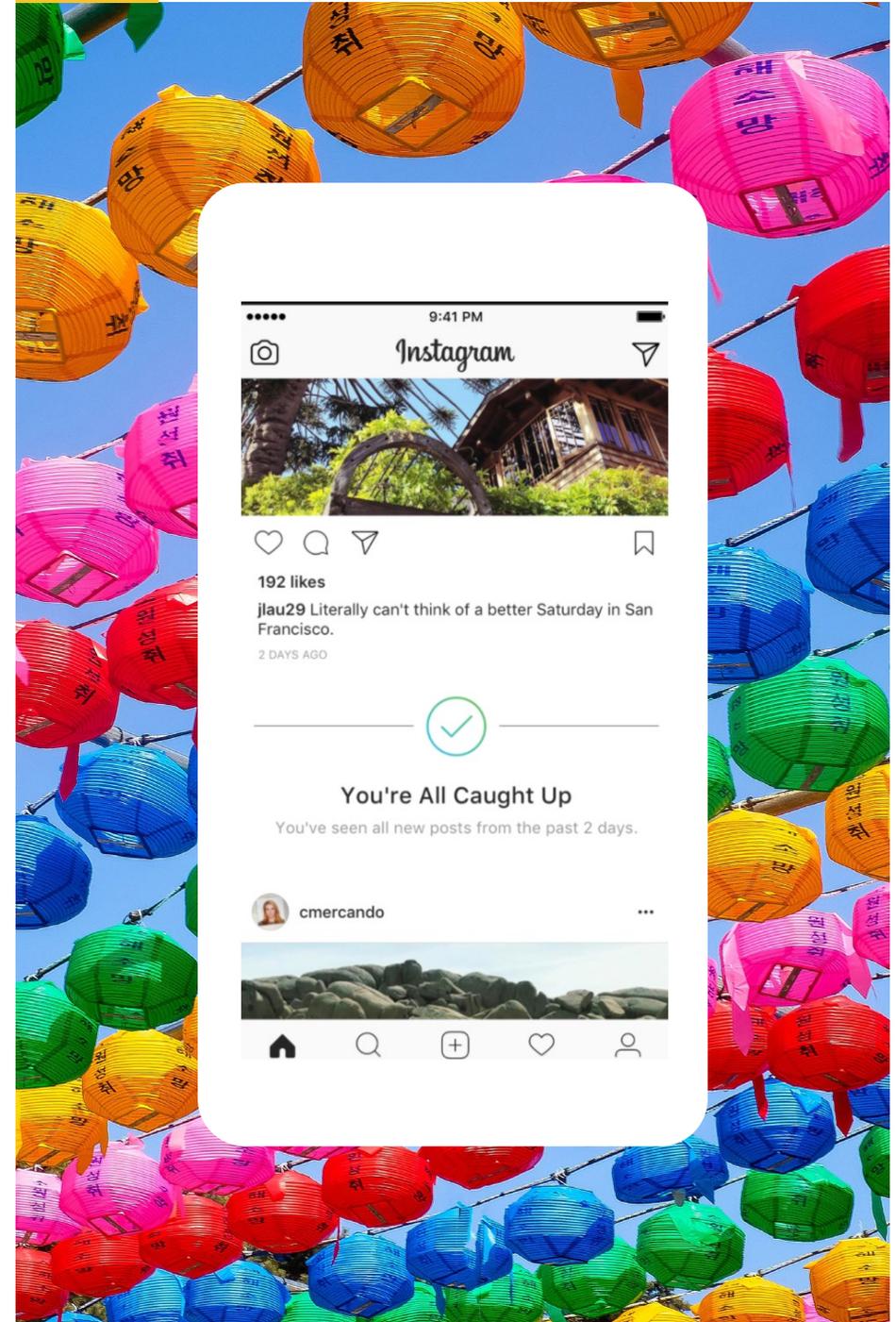
We want to make sure Instagram is a safe and supportive place for your child. That's why we've created a number of security tools that not only empower them to express themselves and explore with confidence, but also helps protect their account and personal data. These tools include two-factor authentication, verification through emails and recovery codes and you and your child have full access to edit these settings at any time.

Hackers and scammers are always on the lookout for ways to steal personal information. Have a conversation with your child on how such information can be used for criminal activity such as identity theft, impersonation and scams. After that, you can share with them these tips on how to secure their social media accounts:

1) Teach them to create a strong unique password (at least 12 characters) that comprises of a phrase with uppercase, lowercase, numbers and symbols. For example, "1ceCream3isTheBest!"

2) Remind them to use a different password for each of their online accounts and to change them regularly.

3) Encourage them to enable two-factor authentication (2FA) where possible.

Learn more tips on protecting personal information here.

Two factor authentication

Keep your child's account secure and your log-in private, especially across multiple devices. Two-Factor Authentication is an additional security layer that helps secure an account from unauthorized password usage, and can be enabled from within Settings. Logging into an Instagram account will then require a password as well as a secure code that is sent through an authenticator app or via text message.
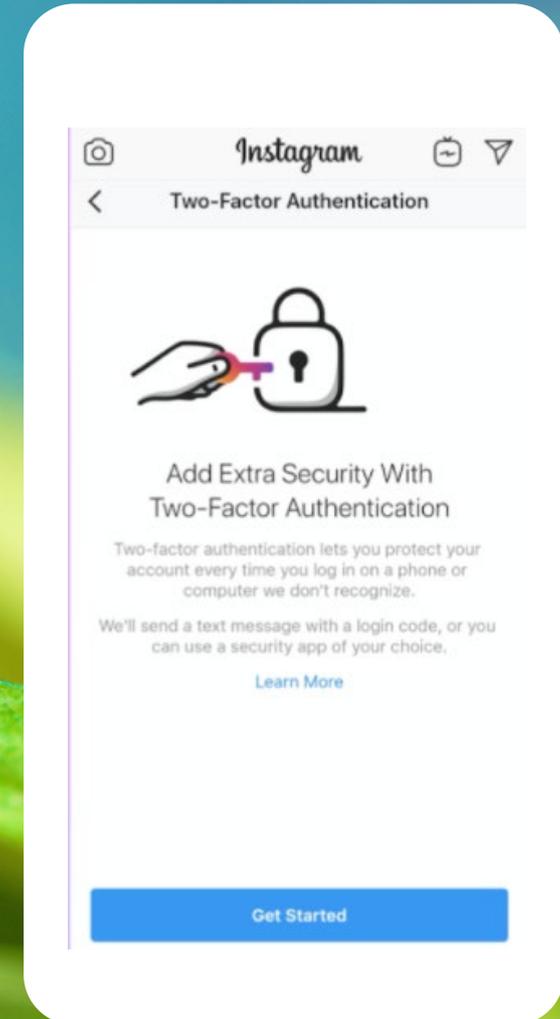
🔒 Two-factor authentication

Keep your account secure and your login private, especially across multiple devices.

Emails from Instagram

Verify your child's account security and ensure that you or your child does not miss important legitimate emails from Instagram regarding your child's account. Also note that Instagram will never contact your child through DMs or any other channel, other than the ones approved on their app settings.

✉️ Emails from Instagram

Verify your account security and don't miss important and legitimate emails from Instagram regarding your account.
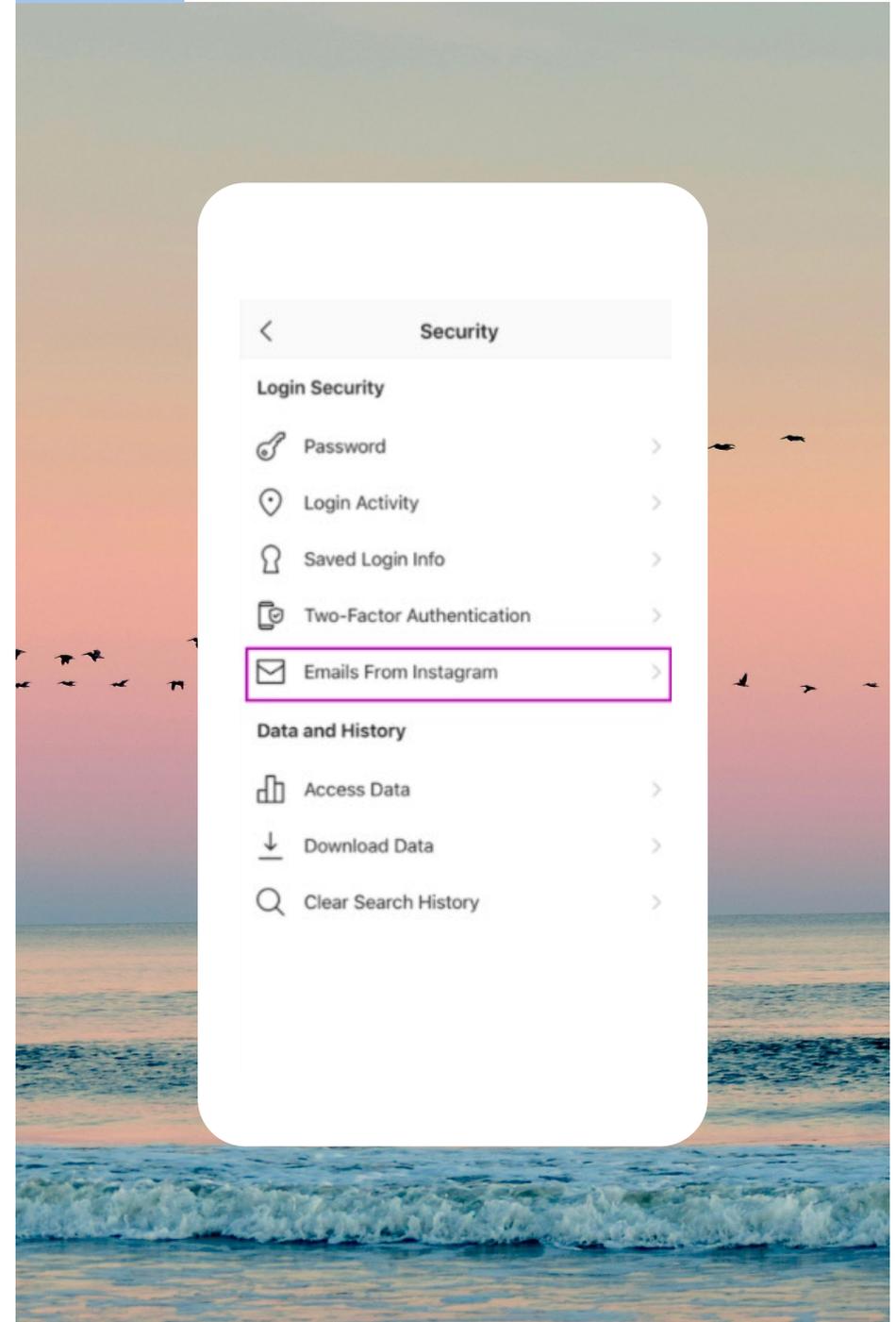
Login activity

You can only be logged into a single Instagram account at a time, but your device can store login information for multiple Instagram accounts. You can add or remove login information from your Instagram app settings.
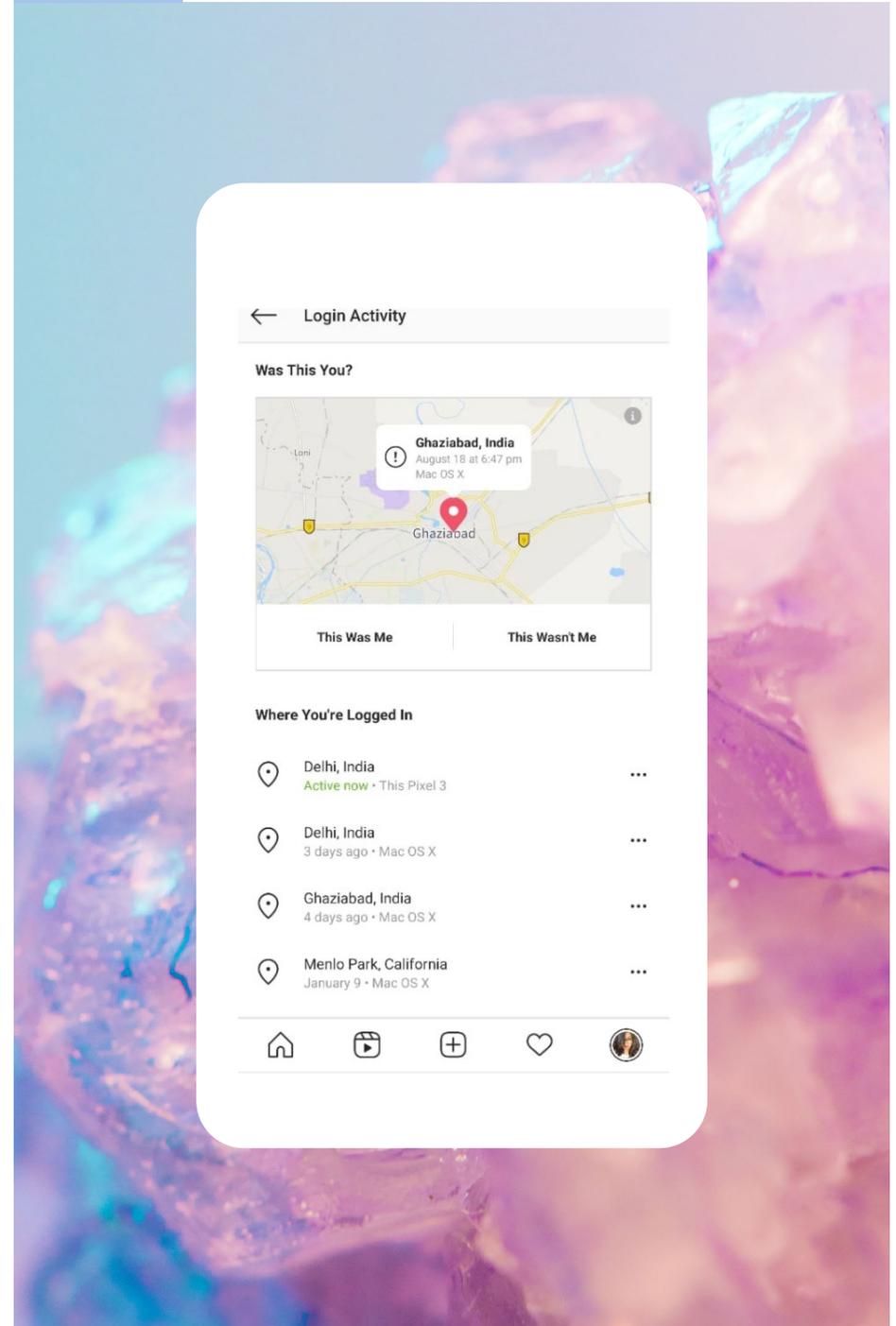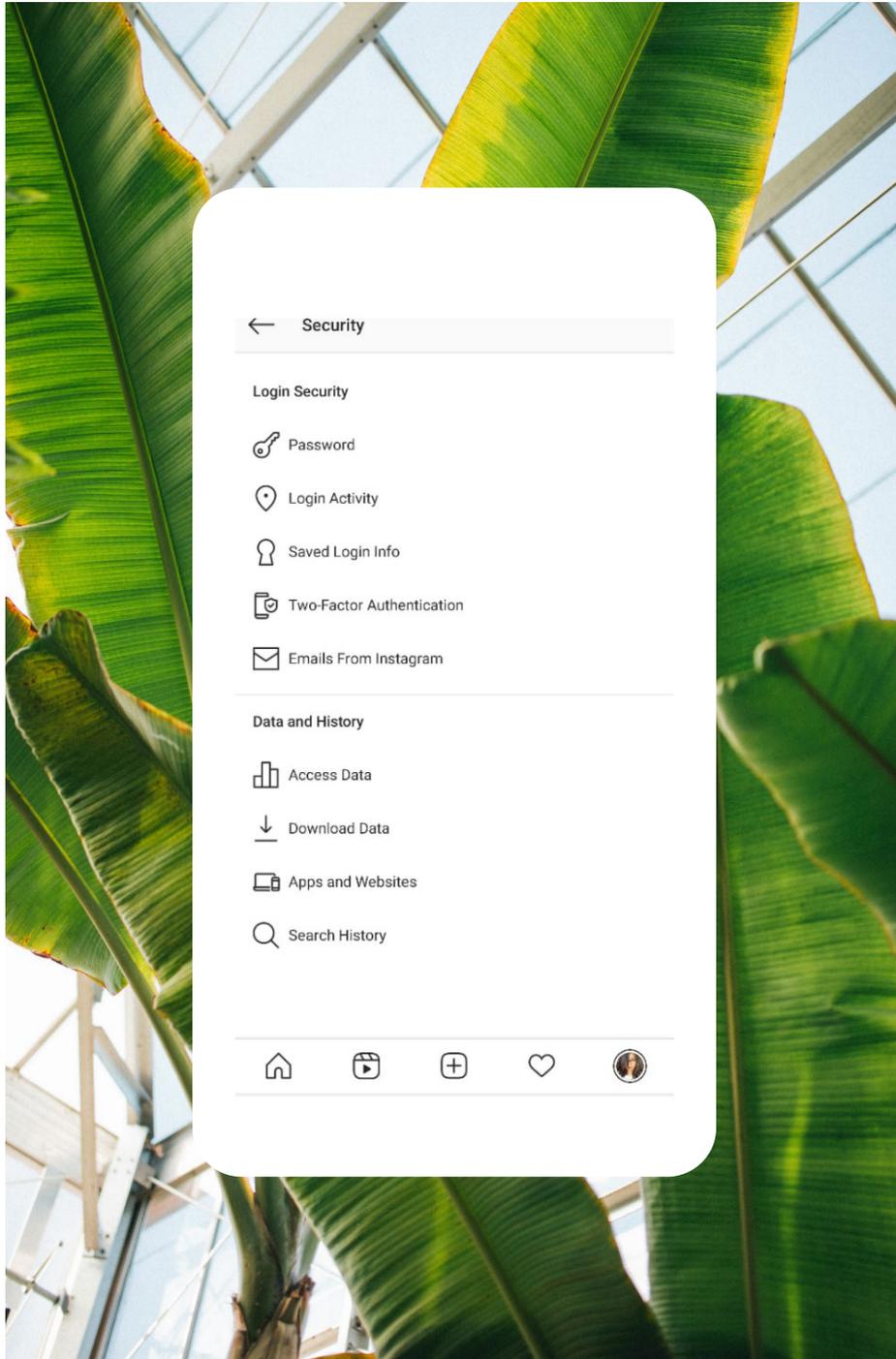
🔒 Manage Security

Once Two-Factor Authentication is set up, you will have access to Recovery Codes, which enables you to log in if you are not able to receive your Two-Factor Authentication code via an authenticator app or via text message.
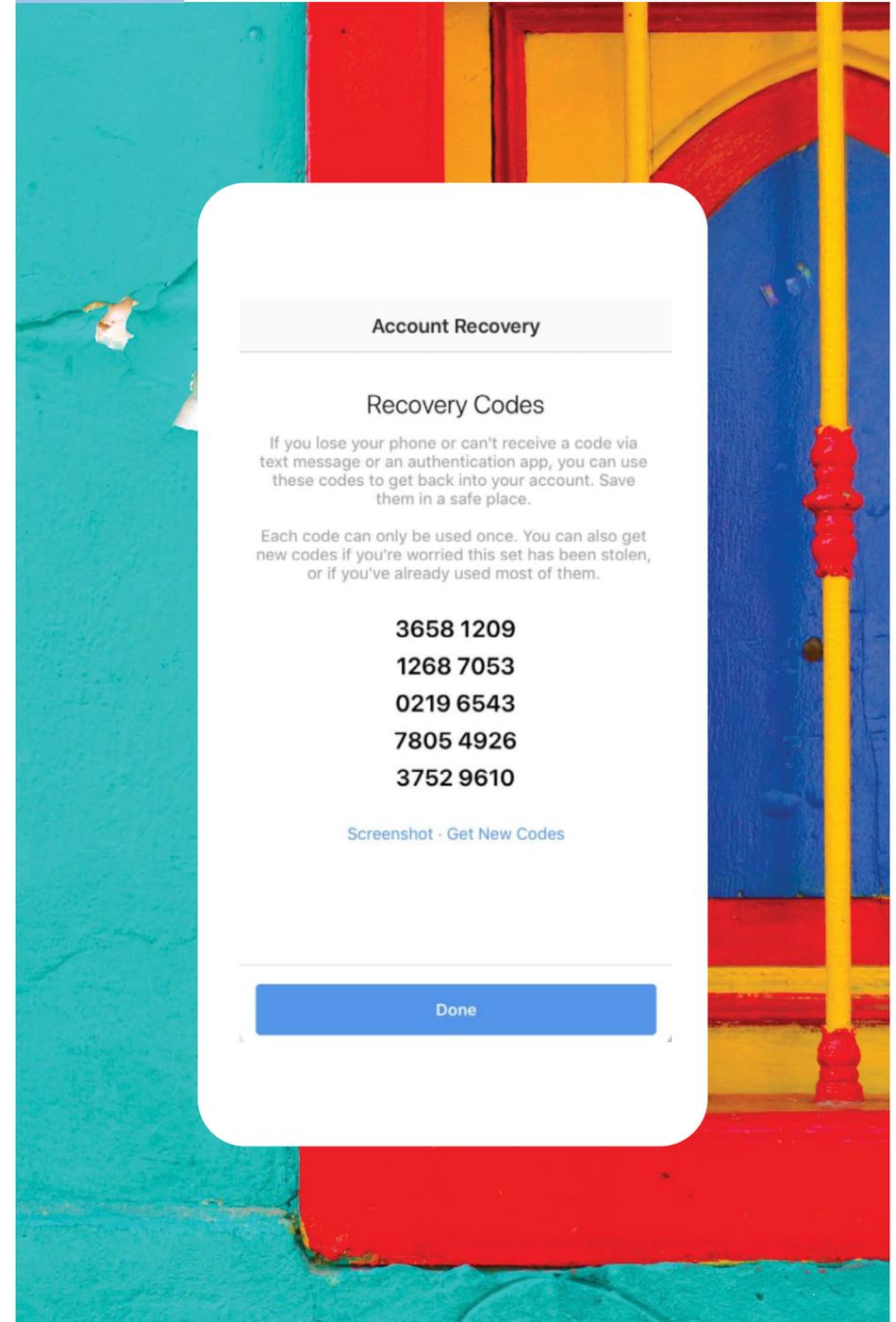
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Support for other people

It may never happen, but it's important for young people to know how to act if they are concerned for someone else's emotional well-being on Instagram. You may have already had discussions about mental health with your child. If not, try broaching the topic of skills for helping others with kindness and without judgement. Instagram provides a number of tools for reporting concerning behaviour, which are explained on the following pages.

Support for Other People

01   IN AN EMERGENCY, CONTACT AUTHORITIES.

If someone is in immediate physical danger, please contact 999 or local law emergency services for help.

02   KNOW THE SIGNS TO WATCH FOR IN OTHERS

The Media Literacy council suggests looking out for things like:

- Drastic changes in personality, such as becoming socially withdrawn, angry or anxious
- Sharp decline in academic performance
- Being unusually upset after using their phone or going online
- Stops using phone or computer altogether, or uses it a lot more than normal
- Abrupt loss of confidence
- Unexplained reluctance or refusal to go to school
- Suddenly deleting their social media accounts
- Has trouble sleeping and/or shows less interest in eating

These signs are starting points to address possible issues with your child, and we suggest reaching out to them when you come across such behaviour, as well as using the Instagram reporting tool.

03   REACHING OUT

Helping someone can be as simple as sending a quick DM or text. Just letting them know that they aren't alone and that you care about them is a kind thing to do. Try a casual check-in like, "I've noticed you posting a lot of sad memes lately. Are you OK?"

Asking questions like, "Have you talked to anyone else about this?" can be a way to see if they have support in the other parts of their life. You can also contact the following organisations should you need further help:

- TOUCH CyberWellness
  Tel: 1800 377 2252
  Email: cyberwellness@touch.org.sg

- Fei Yue Community Services
  Tel: +65 6563 1106
  Online contact form: www.fycs.org/contact-us

04   REPORTING

We encourage young people who are worried that someone may be thinking about hurting themselves to let us know so we can help connect them to information and resources. There are teams all over the world working 24 hours a day, seven days a week to review these reports. The poster will not know who made the report, but they will get help the next time they open the app.

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Glossary of Instagram terms

BLOCK

Block is a tool your child can use if someone is bothering them on Instagram. When your child blocks someone, the other person isn't notified, but they'll no longer be able to interact with your child in any way.

COMMENT

A comment is a reaction to the content someone posts on Instagram. Comments appear below posts on your child's feed, and can use words or emojis.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

We want to foster a positive, diverse community. Everyone who uses Instagram must adhere to our Community Guidelines which are designed to create a safe and open environment for everyone. This includes things like no nudity or hate speech. Not following these guidelines may result in deleted content, disabled accounts or other restrictions.

DIRECT OR DM

Instagram Direct is where young people can message each other individually or in groups. They can also share photos and videos with just the people they're messaging.

EXPLORE

Explore is where young people will see photos and videos from accounts and hashtags they might be interested in. Explore is different for everyone - the content changes depending on accounts and hashtags your child follows.

FEED

Feed is where young people can see posts from the accounts they follow. Young people generally see feed posts as being more celebratory or special. Feed posts can be photos or videos.

IGTV

IGTV is a place to share video content up to one hour in length. Your child can find videos from their favourite creators, and make their own longer content.

LIVE AND VIDEO CHAT

Your child can go live to share with their followers in real time. When live, they can invite friends to join them, co-host a live session, or leave comments and send hearts. They can also video chat in Direct with up to four people.

POST

A post refers to the media your child is putting on their Feed or on Stories. This can be photos or videos

PROFILE

Your child's Instagram profile is where their friends and followers will find their posts, and can access their stories. It also includes a short bio. If your child's profile is private, only their main profile picture and bio is visible.

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REELS

Reels allows people to record and edit short videos up to 30 seconds in the Instagram Camera. You can add effects and music to your reel or use your own original audio.

REPORT

Reporting is a way your child can let Instagram know that something they have seen is inappropriate. Your child can report anything on Instagram that they believe violates our community guidelines.

RESTRICT

Restrict is a tool that allows your child to protect their account from unwanted interactions without making the restricted person aware. Once they restrict someone, comments from that person will only be visible to that person. Restricted people aren't able to see when your child is active on Instagram or when your child has read their direct messages.

STORIES

Stories disappear from the app after 24 hours, unless your child has enabled archiving, which makes their expired stories available only to them. Your child can subsequently share these in their Stories Highlights. Anyone who can view your child's stories can screenshot them.

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Resources

For more tools and resources to help you navigate healthy social media habits with your child, visit www.parents.instagram.com and www.betterinternet.sg.