



UNDERSTANDING RISK -

Changemaker strategies for being
powerful and safe

Toolkit for Young Changemakers



ASHOKA

Everyone A Changemaker™

EVERYONE A CHANGEMAKER

Ashoka is building an Everyone a Changemaker World.

Ashoka builds and cultivates a community of change leaders who see that the world now requires everyone to be a changemaker. Together, we collaborate to transform institutions and cultures worldwide so they support changemaking for the good of all.

What is a changemaker?

A changemaker is someone who imagines a better reality, takes action, and collaborates with others to bring that new reality into being for the good of others

Who can be a changemaker?

A changemaker can be anyone - it is an identity that is limitless. Changemakers can be of any age, background, gender, race, profession, religion, geography, and identity.

What is Ashoka doing?

Ashoka is leading a global movement so that we can live in a world where everyone has their power, has the skills to solve problems, and contributes to positive change.

Learn about our
Everyone a
Changemaker
Movement



An Introduction

Young changemakers are powerful, showing the ability to give in a world with exponentially accelerating rates of change and interconnection. As a young changemaker, you may have already passed through the first critical experience of “your dream, your team, your changed world” to do just that.

We recognize that young people may be at different stages in their journey as changemakers, and as such may have varying levels of savviness around the kinds of risk inherently involved in changing the world for the better. Regardless of what stage you are at, we believe that you should be empowered to understand and mitigate risk.

As you continue on in your changemaking journey, you will encounter a variety of situations that bring varying levels of positive growth opportunities as well as risk. It is important to understand both. Some risk-taking is beneficial and is a natural and critical part of growing up. Increasingly in many cultures around the world, societal norms that overstate fears are undermining young people’s ability to experience beneficial risk-taking. So how do we balance autonomy and safety?

To Ashoka, empowering changemakers like you involves supporting your ability to understand and navigate risks. The journey of safeguarding involves not only you (and your teams), but more broadly, an ecosystem of changemaker peers, adult allies (parents, guardians, extended families) and beyond.

Learn more
about what
Ashoka does
regarding
safeguarding



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Managing and Assessing Risk in your Changemaking Journey

This toolkit aims to help young changemakers like you (as well as your extended peer groups) be more savvy with risks you will face throughout your changemaking journey. This savviness is a powerful asset in shifting to a world where there is greater autonomy and greater safety.

As a non-exhaustive go-to resource, we will cover three main areas **1) digital privacy 2) wellbeing and 3) engaging with adults**. It will help you answer questions that include: How do you assess levels of risk you and your team members as part of your social change initiative? What are some best practices for handling data? What are some actionable tips for self care? What are some strategies for engaging with parents and school administrators?

Shaped by discussions with Ashoka Young Changemakers and Ashoka staff across our network, this toolkit is a synthesis of tips and insights on how we can build a Everyone a Changemaker World safely. These include systems to address concerns, establishing norms and the importance of informed consent. We are continuing to learn and evolve this thinking so we welcome your feedback and suggestions for improving this resource!

Defining 'Risk'

Risk can be understood as *the effect of uncertainty on one's objectives, with a potential for either loss or gain.*

'Positive' risk can be new opportunities and experiences that help one gain new skills, abilities or confidence. 'Negative' risk can be anything that has the potential to pose harm to you, your team, project or wider community. These risks could be small, such as making a silly mistake. They could also be much more significant, involving physical harm or legal consequences. It is therefore important to balance 'positive' and 'negative' risks.

An Example

A young changemaker has an idea – they plan to launch an event that brings together young people from across their city to showcase their changemaking ideas. Firstly, they build a strong team and set clear expectations regarding the deliverables for each team member.

The team reaches out to potential mentors online – from their own networks and word of mouth – inviting them to participate in the event. The team also sends an individual team member to talk to other organizations about potential sponsorships – all of the discussions and negotiations are recorded in email or meeting minutes.

In the lead up to the event, the team becomes very stressed due to the workload from the event. Arguments ensue as one team member has been unresponsive. The team leader dismisses this member. After promoting the event and receiving registrations, they store the data of the participants in a shared Google drive folder.

During the actual event, the team takes photos of the participants and uploads them to social media.

Questions to Think About

In terms of risk for this event, what do you think went well and what could be improved?

- What do you notice about how the team handled **data and data privacy**?
- What were some positive aspects of how the team dealt with **wellbeing** and mental health amongst the team? What could have been improved?
- How did the event organizers **engage with adults**? What do you think worked well? What would you do differently?



Everyone A Changemaker™

HOW THIS TOOLKIT IS ORGANIZED

1. Basic Principles of Risk Management

2. Working with Data, Digital Privacy & Tools

- a. Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities
- b. Navigating Digital Tools: Best Practices
- c. What are some Best Practices for Handling Data?
- d. What are some Non-negotiables for Handling Data?
- e. Examples and Case Studies

3. Wellbeing for Changemakers

- a. Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities
- b. Tips for Self Care
- c. Social Media and Wellbeing
- d. Examples and Case Studies

4. Engaging with Adults

- a. Parents and Guardians
- b. Engaging with School Administrators
- c. Safety
- d. Reporting Incidents
- e. Examples and Case Studies

5. Resources

- a. Safety Checklist
- b. Ashoka's Strategy for Safeguarding





ASHOKA

Everyone A Changemaker™

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF RISK MANAGEMENT

Informed consent – be sure to always ask for explicit consent from your team, beneficiaries, events attendees etc.

Always be prepared – always plan ahead and assess potential risks when conducting your changemaking activities.

There is no one-size fits all solution - depending on the stage of your venture, there may be different best practices. Be sure to ask for extra guidance if you need more specific resources!

You have allies - remember that you are not alone. Building and leveraging a strong, diversified network is key to reducing risk. This network could include parents/guardians, teachers, peers and more.

Risk can be beneficial - risk does not always have to lead to negative consequences. It can also bring about new, positive opportunities. It is therefore important to use your best judgement.



Working with Data, Digital Privacy & Tools

Throughout your changemaking journey, you will, in many cases, handle sensitive information and personal data about your team members or beneficiaries of your initiative. It is important that this data is handled appropriately and that there is a level of privacy protection involving their identity/ personal information.

Why does it matter?

Protecting data and personal information is critical for both wellbeing and physical safety. Data exposure may lead to negative repercussions. Depending on where you are, you may be legally bound to protect data (do research what is necessary for your region). For example, find out more about the GDPR [here](#).

“**Personal Data**” means any information relating to, indirectly or directly, a particular, identified, or identifiable, natural person, device, or household.

Examples: someone's full name, home address, photos, email address and more

Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities

- **Young People's Consent:** It is important that each young person understands what it means to be involved in your venture or event and consent to their participation including the handling of any personal data they may share. If they are underage, this means the consent of their parents.
 - A young person may withdraw their consent at any time (including withdrawing from an ongoing program; revoking media, data, and other consents; or asking to stop in-person meetings).
 - Participants have the right to access their data and to ensure that it is respected. This means that they have the right to revoke access at any time.

Data privacy is also important for adults (e.g. your mentors, partner organizations)!



One Size Does Not Fit All

Remember that these recommendations are dependent on what stage your venture is at. If your venture is small - e.g. only you and one or two team members, tagging your personal Instagram account on your organization's page may be fine, but risk increases as your venture grows.

When holding a small-scale event, it may be appropriate to store data on a simple spreadsheet shared between a team. However, for example, risks increase if the event is large-scale and involves data from multiple countries.

What are some Non-negotiables for Handling Data?

Security


Take appropriate measures to protect your team and beneficiaries' personal data from improper access, use or disclosure and to maintain the confidentiality of such Personal Data. This could look like setting up strong passwords and strong security measures for your organizational accounts.

How your Team should Access and Disclose Data

Make sure that personal data is only accessible to team members who need to access this data regularly to perform their duties. Personal data should only be disclosed to other team members on an as-needed basis.

Disclosing Data to Third Parties (e.g., Partners)

Get informed consent before disclosing personal data/media of any young person on your team, be it for media coverage, event or for a program with a partner organization.



Navigating Digital Tools: Best Practices

Zoom – when hosting online events or meetings through zoom, make sure to check your security settings e.g., setting a password or creating a ‘waiting room’ so that attendees need approval to join the online event.

WhatsApp, Slack, Discord – although these platforms boost connectivity and make it easier to collaborate, make sure to consider the necessity given that creating group chats and discussion forums will allow contact information and personal details to be shared and accessed, possibly between adults and minors.

Email – when sending out emails, be mindful of your mailing list. For emails to large numbers of people, it is advisable to have everyone under ‘bcc’ so that others cannot easily access the email addresses on your mailing list.



What are some Best Practices for Handling Data?

Social Media

Make sure that personal data of you/your team members is not easily accessible to the public. For example, it is best that personal Instagram handles are not ‘tagged’ in posts.

Instead, you could use their first name/ or their organization's account. In addition, your/your team member's personal email address or home address should not be available on your organization website/ social media pages.

Having distinctions between one's venture/organization and personal accounts can help avoid the negative risks associated with online visibility. It can also help you and your team members maintain a healthy personal life.

Public Relations: Engaging with the Media

The media plays an important role in helping disseminate information about your venture and helps us advance a world where everyone is a changemaker. However, it is always important to be careful when engaging with the media as it is often difficult to get things edited once it is published. You should ask to review any articles, posts or other materials before they are published (there may be instances where this is not possible).

How can you best deal with the media? Questions to ask yourself:

- Am I certain I have permission to provide this piece of information/ content (e.g. images) from the appropriate people (e.g. team members, beneficiaries)?
- Am I speaking for certain people e.g., team members and are they aware of it? And am I representing their thoughts/ideas/contributions accurately?
- How am I portraying my organization/venture in this interview? Am I maintaining the dignity of my team members and beneficiaries?
- How could others perceive what I say (e.g. schools, parents, employers). Could there be potential risks down the line? Will I regret certain things I share?
- What do you know about the media organization/outlet? When and where will the story will be distributed? Be sure to clarify with the interviewer

Tips: It may be helpful to have advisors or allies that have more experience with the media to help guide you through the process.

Note: Many of the principles above also apply to speaking engagements, however, be sure to use your best judgement on deciding whether or not an engagement/opportunity is worthwhile or potentially risky.

Example 1

A **changemaker** runs a venture that facilitates blood donations. He started his organization using his personal email address. However, over time, he has learnt to make sure that his personal information is not easily accessible to the public.

His organization is one of the first data-compliant organization in the region and data privacy of donors is extremely important to him and his organization.

At the same time, having a digital presence is also important to reach potential blood donors; he would post pictures of donors (with consent) to make others more motivated to donate.

Data Privacy

It is important that you and your team protect the data of your beneficiaries, partners, other team members and program participants!

Example 2

A **changemaker's** initiative focuses on building libraries in underfunded orphanages. She emphasizes the importance of keeping a digital footprint. For example, meeting minutes and email conversations should be recorded. At first, she would go up to potential partner organizations and pitch face to face. Now, she makes sure to bring a team member or conduct the meeting online.

Bringing a team member to a meeting is a great way to train them and is a good safeguarding mechanism where there are three people in the room.

Wellbeing for Changemakers

Your wellbeing reflects the quality of your life's experience at every moment. When you experience wellbeing, it means you are functioning well as a result of the appropriate combination of your physical, mental, emotional, relational, spiritual, and social health factors.

With an ever-changing world, there is often a dizzying amount of information and bad news that one has to process. This constant change means that young changemakers like yourself – tackling big problems from climate change to mental health – can often feel overwhelmed, stressed or anxious. This is okay!

Boundary-setting/ Communication as a Team Leader

As a changemaker, it is important to set boundaries – both for yourself and for your team. You also have a special role in helping others increase their changemaking ability, centered around values of respect and mutual understanding.

Even though you and your team may be good friends, It is also important to set good standards for your team as a space for mutual and professional learning. You should make sure there is a mechanism for team members to raise issues or concerns.

Here are some questions to think about:

- What is your team/organization's culture? Does your team have a way to voice out their frustrations/ complaints?
- What sort of boundaries do you set in your organization? How do you manage disagreements and team conflicts?

Remember, you can always reach out to allies and your network for support and help.

Tips for Self Care

Young people like yourself may face certain stressors such as expectations and pressure from community/family, experiences of trauma or aggression related to one's identity, financial need (personal and/or related to the venture), harrassment as a result of increased visibility, academic stress etc.

Do take some time out of your day or week to assess how you are doing!

Check-in With Yourself and Others

- It is important for changemakers to often take a pause and assess how they and their team members are doing mentally, emotionally, relationally, and socially. You can have recurrent spaces for you and your team to “check-in” on how you all are doing and feeling. This is not about solving other people’s wellbeing problems but about noticing where people are, what their needs are, and whether adjustments need to be made or professional help could be helpful.
- Creating spaces for honest and vulnerable conversations, help build conditions for greater group psychological safety and conditions to cultivate trust.
- A big part of your wellbeing, depends on the *quality* of the relationships you have with yourself, your team members and anyone who you interact with. *Quality* means that you feel you have trustworthy, reliable, respectful, honest relationships, where you feel you can be your full self.

Tips for Self Care

Sourced from:

<https://counseling.studentaffairs.miami.edu/resources/self-help-resources/index.html>

- **Stay focused on the present.**
- **Exercise.** Being physically active can help exert nervous energy you accumulate from stress and anxiety. It also releases endorphins which can increase positive feelings and help you feel good about yourself. Try to take time out to enjoy your favorite sport or go outside and enjoy some fresh air. It will keep you healthy and happy, and increase circulation to the brain for your next study session or important meeting.
- **Write it down.** During high pressure situations, you may experience fears and worries that wouldn't usually bother you. Writing your thoughts and concerns down on paper can help you see which issues you can address, and which ones aren't worth worrying about. Try numbering each concern from most serious to least, and consider letting go of the least important ones, at least until you have overcome the more serious challenges facing you at that time.
- **Approach.** Avoiding what is stressful can often feel like the best method for gaining control over your anxiety at the moment; however, by avoiding anxiety provoking situations, you are actually just exacerbating the worry attached to it. Try approaching the concern by focusing on what it is about the issue that is causing you the most worry. By approaching rather than avoiding fear, you are able to become present and gain clarity about how to proceed.
- Some other de-stressing activities include deep breathing, hanging out with your friends or just taking a day off to yourself .

Note: You are not alone. Being a changemaker can be overwhelming. Remember that you do not have to carry this burden alone. Be sure to seek out an adult ally or mental health professional if stress or anxiety becomes too overwhelming.

Social Media and Wellbeing



Although social media can be a very useful tool in scaling your venture, it may also pose negative effects on your wellbeing.

Dealing with 'Trolls'/ Negative People

Sometimes, your personal profiles or organizational pages may face negative responses from strangers. In the face of these situations, it is important to remain calm. You can choose to ignore them, but if the negativity or harassment gets worse, you can 'block' them or report them to whatever platform you are using.

Taking a Break from Social Media

Sometimes social media can be overwhelming. If you feel the need, you might want to take a break from social media. You can delete the app on your phone or 'deactivate' your account temporarily until you are ready to return.

Engaging with Adults

So far, we have focused this toolkit on you and your team members. But this journey also involves adults like parents, legal guardians, extended family members, teachers, leaders of youth programs or religious groups and more.

To the degree that the adults in your lives are themselves changemakers, your changemaking journey is dramatically enabled. However, there may be cases where the adults in your life may be less supportive of your changemaking journey.

One important aspect of engaging with adults is asking the right questions and setting boundaries. It is important to communicate when you are overextended or stressed in order to establish norms of behavior.

One changemaker finds that, at times, it is hard to communicate with adults as there is an intergenerational gap. However, she believes that young people should not fight fire with fire. Instead, they should be empathetic in helping adults understand what you need.

Question: How might your experience be different across cultures? Reflecting on your own culture and upbringing, is it easy to communicate with adults about your changemaking journey?

Note: Young people across Ashoka's network are facing a wide range of negatives risk. If you are a participant in Ashoka programming and feel the resources and questions in this toolkit do not address your reality please reach out to your Ashoka program liaison and we will work with you to identify additional resources to support you.

Parents and Guardians

At Ashoka we believe that parents and guardians play a critical role in the growth of early changemakers – be it through providing moral support or validation, tangible advice on how to get started or simply space to develop and experiment for yourself. But what happens when your parents or guardians don't support your changemaking journey? Or perhaps you have an over-eager parent that steps in too much, flooding you with questions about your venture?

Here are a few questions to think about to help adults be allies to you and your team:

- How can you best explain the importance of changemaking and what it means to you?
- How can you best help your adult allies to understand your changemaking journey (be it parents, aunts, etc.)?

Engaging with School Administrators

Schools can be a great enabling environment for your changemaking journey. Depending on your school, you may be able to use classrooms as spaces to meet and use school communication channels to advertise your venture. Teachers may also help act as advisors. However, school administrators may, at times, create barriers for your venture. Nonetheless, it is important that young changemakers like yourselves build positive relationships with schools.

Here are a few questions to think about when engaging with school administrators

- What are some ways to involve school administrators and teachers in your venture e.g., as advisors, supervisors, allies?
- What sort of permission/approval (if any) do you need to get from your school to run activities or promote your venture?

Safety

Throughout your changemaking journey, you may encounter a variety of adults, be it as potential partners, mentors or beneficiaries.

Although a vast majority of adults will be enablers of your changemaking journey, there may be cases where adults pose certain negative risks ranging from inappropriate behavior to harassment or abuse.

Some Tips to Consider

- When your team, mentees or beneficiaries engage with adults, make sure that there is a third-party present (e.g., parent, mentor, peer) at all times and that meetings are conducted in public places if possible
- Make sure that all communications with adults have a digital record (e.g., making sure to communicate using email or remembering to take notes during meetings). This makes sure that there is context and evidence if something goes wrong. Online profiles may not always be accurate.
- When bringing adults to your venture (e.g., advisors or mentors), make sure to do a thorough check of their background. This could be checking out their social media profiles, performing a simple Google search or asking around in your community. In some countries, performing formal background checks are accessible and inexpensive.
- Last but not least, you should make sure that if something does go wrong, there is a 'reporting mechanism' where your team or mentees could go to for help and guidance. This could be a special email address or point person.

Reporting Incidents

Where do you go to ask for help? Find a trusted ally or guardian.

For incidents related to our Ashoka network, please use this [link](#).

Example 1

A **changemaker** runs an organization that provides mentorship to young women. Mentors in her organization are all above the age of 18 and are all women. They are all people that the changemaker knows personally. Even so, she also makes sure to have an application process where she collects background information. She also conducts an interview and invites them to mentorship sessions to see how comfortable they are with the mentees.

It is important to have an application process to vet volunteers and team members. This helps make sure that the values of your organization are upheld.

Question: How might risk be different across gender identities?

Example 2

A **changemaker** finds it is difficult to reach out to people older than him to recruit people to donate blood. He was able to do so with the support of mentors at Ashoka who helped build his network. His organization involves both youth under 18 and youth over 18 (22-35). Young people under 18 manage request handling, and they can become voluntary donors.

Intergenerational work can be powerful and impactful. However, it is important to set clear boundaries and mechanisms to ensure safety for you, your team and young beneficiaries of your work.

Safety Checklist

There is always a third-party present when an adult outside of my organization meets with a beneficiary, team member or mentee, etc.	
My organization keeps a digital record (e.g., email, copies of messages) between adults and team members, beneficiaries, etc.	
We ensure that all adults we interact with are vetted or someone that we know and trust.	
My venture has a reporting mechanism or a person who is in charge of safeguarding.	

Matrix: Useful Tool to Assess Risk

A helpful matrix for you to fill in as you assess the activities and programs that your venture may run. How might this activity involve risks (e.g., to do with engaging with adults, data privacy and wellbeing)?

Remember, the goal is to not make this project risk-free but rather, to be able to assess your risks wisely for the success of the project. Fill in the key activities in the first column and assess whether they may be risks in different categories.

Key Activities	Engaging with Adults	Data Privacy	Wellbeing	Level of Risk	How might you reduce the risk?
e.g., promoting the event on social media	Are young program participants in contact with adults regularly, once in while or hardly ever?	Are you collecting, sharing, posting images, stories and/or contact information of young people?	Is there a peer community or safe space for your participants where they could express concerns?		

Ashoka and Our Approach to Engaging Young People

Engaging a wide variety of young people through our work, we have two objectives:

- Enable young people to individually and as communities be powerful in a safe environment and
- Promote through our partners a culture that enables young people to be powerful contributors to positive change, countering forces that increasingly disempower young people.

How We Create a Safe and Empowering Environment for Young People

At Ashoka, we have put together safeguarding policies and systems as well as this toolkit to ensure an environment in which young people can learn, grow, and be changemakers.

Recruitment, Background Checks, and Training

Ashoka has a rigorous selection process for all team members, including an assessment of character. Additionally, all Ashoka team members undergo a background check and participate in training before interacting with young people like yourself.

Informed Consent of Young People and Their Guardians

Before a young person can participate in an Ashoka program, we obtain their informed consent and that of a guardian (if the young person is under the legal adult age in their location of residence) to ensure alignment of expectations. Young people or their guardians can withdraw their consent at any time.

Reporting Mechanisms

Ashoka maintains a designated Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@ashoka.org). We encourage all young people participating in Ashoka programs to alert the team to any inappropriate or concerning behavior that they experience or witness while engaging with Ashoka or our partners.

Data Privacy: Media, Partners and Network Members

We do not share young people's contact information with network members or external partners without consent from the young person and a guardian. This is the same case for any interactions with members of the media. We also expect each Ashoka office to comply with applicable youth data protection laws and regulations.



ASHOKA

Everyone A Changemaker™