



CYBERBULLYING

What it is

Gone are the days when a child's home was a refuge from playground or neighborhood bullies. The Internet is the new playground, and there are no off-hours. Tech-savvy students are turning to cyberspace to harass their peers using a new method of bullying—cyberbullying, which is willful and repeated harm (i.e. harassing, humiliating, or threatening text or images) inflicted through the Internet, interactive technologies or mobile phones. There is no escape from those who are being cyberbullied—kids can be bullied anytime, anywhere.

Get the Discussion Started

Information you can glean from your child's online use will help to ensure a safer online environment for your child. See Enough Is Enough's "Rules N' ToolsSM" Internet Safety Guidelines at: www.enough.org for further information.

Ask your child:

1. Are your profiles set to private?
2. Would it be easy for someone to track you down?
3. How many online "friends" do you have?
4. What kind of information do you consider safe? Unsafe?
5. Have you posted anything that you wouldn't want your school assembly to see?
6. What messages do your pictures and postings portray?
7. Have you been contacted by a stranger?
8. Have your friends ever put themselves at risk? If so, what did you do about it?
9. Have you ever said/posted anything online you wish you could take back?
10. Has anyone ever hurt your feelings by anything they posted about you online?

Forty three percent of teens aged 13 to 17 report that they have experienced some sort of cyberbullying in the past year!

Cyberbullying Tactics

Gossip: Posting or sending cruel gossip to damage a person's reputation and relationships with friends, family and acquaintances

Exclusion: Deliberately excluding someone from an online group

Impersonation: Breaking into someone's email or other online account and sending messages that will cause embarrassment or damage to the person's reputation and affect his/her relationship with others

Harassment: Repeatedly posting or sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages

Cyber stalking: Posting or sending unwanted or intimidating messages, which may include threats.

Flaming: Online *fights* where scornful and offensive messages are posted on websites, forums, or blogs

Outing and Trickery: Tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, which is then shared online

Cyber-threats: Remarks on the Internet threatening or implying violent behavior, displaying suicidal tendencies

What can parents do?

Do not erase or delete messages from cyberbullies. Your children do not have to read the messages they receive from bullies, but they (or you) do need to keep messages as evidence. To report cyberbullying, it is important to save as much info as you can. The more you save, the easier it will be to track down the people that are bothering your child. (Save the email, email address, date and time received, copies of all relevant emails, screenshots, etc.). And parents should use software to block bullies if they encounter them through chat or IM and use privacy settings on social networking pages.

Tell your children they do not have to accept any online activity that is meant to intimidate, threaten, tease or harm them or anyone else. Giving bullies attention is exactly what they want, so ignore them as much as possible.

Encourage your children to talk to you if anybody says or does something online that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Stay calm and keep open lines of communication with your children. Make sure you or your children tell their school if the bullying is school related or involves another student. If you or your children are threatened with harm, contact your local police.

Watch out for warnings signs, such as reluctance to use the computer, a change in your child's behavior and mood, or reluctance to go to school.

Tell your children to guard their contact information. Children should assume that people *will* use the information on their profile to cause them harm. Tell your children that they should not put anything online that they wouldn't want their worst enemy to find out about. Remind your children that the people they befriend online have open access to **all** of their posted content and information and they can forward or use any of that information against them.

Remind your children that those who bully want to make their victims feel as if there is something wrong with them, but victims should know that there is *nothing* wrong with them; it is the bullies who have the real problem.

Cyberbullying victims experience the same negative effects as those bullied "offline" (low self-esteem, depression, anger, school failure and avoidance, and in some cases, school violence or suicide) but often to a much larger degree¹ since messages can be made public online for an unlimited audience to view.

For More Resources about Cyberbullying go to:

www.stopcyberbullying.org
www.cyberbullying.us
www.ryanpatrickhalligan.org

www.cyberbullyhelp.com
<http://new.csriu.org/>