

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS



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Cyberbullying Prevention & Intervention Tips for Families

Bullies and mean girls have been around forever, but technology has given them a whole new platform for their actions. Both real world and online name-calling can have serious emotional consequences for our kids and teens.

Research shows that 6% of students (grades 6-12) experienced cyberbullying. Another study shows that 16% of high school students (grades 9-12) were electronically bullied in the past year.

Cyberbullying happens when kids bully each other through electronic technology with cell phones, computers, and tablets, and communication tools like social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites. Cyberbullying includes mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

Kids who are cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Whether done in person or through technology, the effects of bullying are similar. Kids who are cyberbullied are more likely to:

- Use alcohol and drugs
- Skip school
- Experience in-person bullying
- Be unwilling to attend school
- Receive poor grades
- Have lower self-esteem
- Have more health problems

Prevention

Bring the Topic “Out in the Open.” Initiate discussions about your child/teen’s online experiences. Establish a consistent, helpful presence when monitoring technology use that discourages the perception that adults

are violating his/her privacy.

Educate Youth about Responsible Online Behavior. Discuss with your child/teen the dangers of sharing personal information with others online and continually reinforce the importance of this guideline.

Discuss Response Strategies. Instruct your child/teen to immediately notify trusted adults and/or the appropriate authorities when he/she encounter cyberbullying or hate-related behaviors online.

Provide Structure. Restrict time your child/teen spends online and provide guidance for structuring online time.

Set an Example. Model safe use of the Internet, avoiding potentially dangerous situations, including online romance and gambling.

Encourage Personal Responsibility. Stress personal responsibility, knowledge and education in your child/teen how to create respectful online communities.

Intervention

Cyberbullying includes a wide range of online behaviors that vary in severity. Your response needs to take into account the nature of the cyberbullying and its impact on your child/teen. The following guidelines will help you respond, if you learn your child/teen has experienced cyberbullying.

Don’t Reply to Cyberbullying. Do not reply to the cyberbullying and instruct your child/teen not to reply.

Identify the Evidence. Identify the evidence that exists (online conversations, text messages or images, emails, etc.), and do not destroy it.

Block Future Cyberbullying Attempts.

If the cyberbullying is coming through cell phone text messaging or e-mail, determine if there are features that enable you to block future contact from the perpetrator.

Try to Identify the Perpetrator. Determine if your child/teen knows the perpetrator or if you can identify the person from available evidence.

Contact the Parents/Guardians of the Perpetrator. When the identity of the person who is committing the cyberbullying is known, consider the feasibility of contacting his or her parents or guardians.

Contact Your Service Providers. Determine if the behavior violates Internet or cell phone service providers’ “Terms & Conditions” of usage and, if so, file a complaint.

Consider If Criminal Behavior Has Occurred. Contact law enforcement and press charges if you believe the cyberbullying includes any threat of violence, repeated obscene or harassing language, violations of hate crimes statutes and/or inappropriate sexual content.

Get Legal Advice. In serious cases, seek out the advice of an attorney who can make recommendations and assist you in taking appropriate steps to respond.

Notify Your Child’s/Teen’s School. Inform school administrators of the problem; they may be able to help you respond, can determine if the cyberbullying is occurring via school computers, and can take note of any manifestations of bullying at school where your child/teen is the target.

Sources: US Department of Health & Human Services, 2008-2009 School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey; Anti-Defamation League

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