
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Cyberbullying



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Today's students are overwhelmingly digitally connected through cell phones and social media. One consequence is cyberbullying, a modern trend that can be a distraction for students or, at its worst, cause real harm.

What is cyberbullying?

According to Common Sense Media, "Cyberbullying is the use of digital-communication tools (such as internet and cell phones) to make another person feel angry, sad, or scared, usually again and again.

Examples of cyberbullying include sending hurtful texts or instant messages, posting embarrassing photos or video on social media, and spreading mean rumors online or with cell phones.

If you're trying to figure out whether your kid is being cyberbullied, think about whether the offender is being hurtful intentionally and repeatedly. If the answer is no, the offender might simply need to learn better online behavior. If the answer is yes, take it seriously."

www.common sense media.org/cyberbullying/what-is-cyberbullying

It is helpful for children to understand the difference between teasing and bullying. If the behavior is hurtful but not continual, it is likely not bullying.

Almost all students have been cyberbullied or participated in cyberbullying. Consider these statistics by DoSomething.org:

- Nearly 43% of kids have been bullied online – 25% more than once.
- 70% of students report seeing frequent bullying online.
- Over 80% of teens use a cell phone regularly, making it the most common medium for cyberbullying.
- 68% of teens agree that cyberbullying is a serious problem.
- 81% of young people think bullying online is easier to get away with than bullying in person.
- 90% of teens who have seen social-media bullying say they have ignored it. 84% have seen others tell cyberbullies to stop.
- Only one in 10 victims will inform a parent or adult of their abuse.
- Girls are about twice as likely as boys to be victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying.
- Bullying victims are two to nine times more likely to consider committing suicide.
- About 75% of students admit they have visited a website bashing another student.

www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-cyber-bullying

(Over)

Why do children bully others online?

The reasons behind cyberbullying are similar to reasons behind face-to-face bullying, but the appeal may be greater due to the anonymity of cyberbullying. Bullies are often popular kids seeking to stay popular or kids on the social fringe who want to increase their popularity and fit in better with their peers.

Students also bully online because of a reduced fear of getting caught, ignorance of consequences, lower empathy with victims they can't see, and social pressure from peers who encourage mean online behavior. <http://bit.ly/2gWnCDf>

Teach your children appropriate online behavior

The first step parents should take to reduce the chance of cyberbullying is to teach appropriate online behavior. Common Sense Media outlines basic guidelines for responsible internet use:

- Respect others and be courteous.
- Don't lie, steal or cheat. Downloading others' work is easy, but it is dishonest.
- Be an "upstander" by standing up for others who are targets of cyberbullying.
- Report misbehavior.
- Follow family rules about which sites to avoid or when to stop texting.

<http://bit.ly/2g3zXUH>

What to do if your child is the victim

Cyberbullying can be as hurtful as face-to-face bullying, but it can be hard to detect. Children who are harassed online may be too embarrassed or ashamed to tell their parents. When discovering cyberbullying, parents should offer the following guidance:

- Sign off the computer. Ignore the bully and leave the online interaction.
- Don't respond or retaliate. Cyberbullies, like traditional bullies, want a reaction. The best response is no response.
- Block the bully. Social sites let you block friends and followers. Ignore mean online comments by avoiding them.
- Save and print bullying messages. If the bullying does not stop, it is important to have evidence to show a responsible adult.
- Talk to a friend. Talking to friends who care about your feelings and sharing with a sympathetic ear can be reassuring and provide a helpful counterbalance to mean online comments.
- Tell a trusted adult who has the skills, desire and authority to help. Telling an adult about cyberbullying isn't tattling. It is learning to stand up for yourself.

<http://bit.ly/2gZHWnS>

What to do if your child is the bully

Parents should also watch for signs of bullying behavior in their children. Bullying affects both the victim and the perpetrator. Stopping bullying behavior will reduce the potential for long-term harm to the bully as well as the victim. Kids who bully are more likely to abuse alcohol, get into fights, drop out of school, have criminal convictions and be abusive toward spouses and kids. <http://bit.ly/2gJLzjN>