

## Cyberbullying: Information and Tips for Parents



Cyberbullying is using any electronic means to threaten, exclude, stalk, embarrass someone or to ruin their reputation. A unique aspect of cyber bullying is that the one(s) bullying may *feel anonymous*, thus may say things more hurtful than they might say "in person". In addition, the hurtful comments can be spread rapidly to many others, and do very serious harm.

As with all bullying, *prevention and intervention* are important!

### *Examples of Cyberbullying*

**Exclusion:** one person tells several others not to respond to the text messages of another - or to block her from their Instant Messages.

**Attacking:** in an online game, a higher-level player purposely attacks a "newbie", preventing the newbie from playing the game.

**Outing:** A student tells private information to a friend online. The friend forwards the information to other people.

**Dissing:** Starting or spreading rumors about someone online to play a prank or spread secrets.

- saying untrue or mean things about other people online.
- setting up online rating systems regarding someone's looks or popularity.
- breaking into someone's online account to get their password.
- hacking into another student's Facebook account and updates her status with a rude, inappropriate comment.

### *Prevention Strategies*

Prevention involves preventing your child from being bullied and from bullying others.

- Keep the computer in a general family area—not in his or her room—so that you can interact more naturally about the messages your child reads and sends.
- Set rules about the use of all electronic devices, including computers, iPads, and phones. Consider password-protection to limit use.
- Tell your child *never* to give out personal information without your permission when using email, visiting social networking sites, instant messaging, entering contests, or filling out any other online form. Remind your child that it is not safe to tell anyone online he or she is alone.

- Tell your child not to respond to messages that are disrespectful or threatening or that make him or her feel uncomfortable. Remind him or her to never click on links that are contained in an email from people he or she doesn't know. Such links could lead to websites that are inappropriate for children.
- Talk about cyber bullying and include rules regarding your expectations for your child's respectful behavior
  - Teach your children to treat their friends with kindness and respect, just as they would like to be treated—whether on the playground, in the neighborhood, or online.
  - Remind your child to stop and think before pressing "send". The more they think before pressing the "send" key, the less likely they will be to disseminate a photo or message that will get them in trouble and ruin their reputation.
  - Let your child know disrespectful behavior on any electronic device will result in a temporary loss of the use of electronic devices.
  - Encourage your children to come to you if they encounter material or messages that make them feel uncomfortable or threatened.
- Monitor your child's cell phone use: Who are they texting? Who is texting them?
  - Read your child's messages on a regular basis.

### ***Intervention***

- Thank your child for telling you. Listen to his or her feelings. It can be upsetting to see a derogatory message about oneself or one's friend(s).
- If the cyberbullying was directed at your child, remind him or her that another person's derogatory messages do not make them true. Teach your child not to be "tricked into thinking" that being bullied means there is something wrong with him/her.
- Save the message or print a copy to keep a record. After printing, delete it.
- If the message contains a serious threat to someone's well-being, call the police. Most police departments have a cybercrimes division.
- Talk to your wireless provider about how to block messages or change the number.
- If the message is about another person, remind your child that it is important that he/she does not send it to anyone else or to talk about with other kids.
- If the message is about another child, your child should not tell that person. You can contact the parent of that child.