HANDS-ON Health

CYBERBULLYING

Why Cyberbullying is Different

Kids who are being cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, kids who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behavior.

Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach kids even when they are alone. It can happen any time of the day or night.

Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source.

Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts, and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

When teens were asked why they think others cyberbully, 81 percent said that cyberbullies think it's funny. Other teens believe that youth who cyberbully:[1]

- Don't think it's a big deal
- Don't think about the consequences
- Are encouraged by friends
- Think everybody cyberbullies
- Think they won't get caught

[1] **National Crime Prevention Council**

Effects of Cyberbullying

Cell phones and computers themselves are not to blame for cyberbullying. Social media sites can be used for positive activities, like connecting kids with friends and family, helping students with school, and for entertainment. But these tools can also be used to hurt other people. 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

Bullying *is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.* The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyberbullying *is bullying that takes place using electronic technology.* Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites. Examples of cyberbullying include:

- mean text messages or emails
- rumors and lies sent by email or posted on social networking sites
- people who pretend to be someone else to trick others
- posting embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

TRENDS AND STATISTICS

- Between 2001 and 2007, bullying has been on the rise and, in 2009, one in five high school students report that they were bullied on school property in the past year.[1]

- The risk of cyberbullying has also increased along with the growth of technology in the lives of adolescents. Cyberbullying ranges from repeatedly making fun of another person through email or text messaging to posting something online about them that they don't like.[2] Of these, adolescents are most commonly cyberbullied via text message.[3]

- In 2010, one in five adolescents said that they had been cyberbullied at some point in their lives, and about the same number admit to having been a cyberbully. One in ten adolescents had been both a cyberbully and a victim.[3]

- A higher percentage of students ages 12 through 18 who reported being cyberbullied anywhere during the 2008-09 school year feared that someone would attack or harm them at school or on the way to or from school (12.8 percent), compared to students who were not cyberbullied (3.7 percent).[3]

- A higher percentage of students ages 12 through 18 who reported being cyberbullied anywhere skipped school during the 2008-09 school year (4.0 percent), compared to students who were not cyberbullied (0.4 percent). [3]

- There is often crossover between being cyberbullied and being bullied in person – victims of cyberbullying were more likely to get into a physical fight at school or to be the victim of a crime than were students who were not cyberbullied.[4]

- Generally, boys are more at risk of being bullied physically while girls are more frequently the victims of Internet harassment and emotional bullying, such as social exclusion.[5]

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey - United States, 2009.
2 Hinduja, S. and Patchin, J.W. (2011). Overview on Cyberbullying. White House Conference on Bullying.
3 DeVoe, J.F., and Bauer, L. (2011). Student Victimization in U.S. Schools: Results From the 2009 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCES 2012-314). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
2 See Hinduja & Patchin (2011).
4 See U.S. Department of Education (2011).
5 Stop Bullying Now! What We Know About Bullying.

Preventing Cyberbullying
PARENTS

ESTABLISH RULES ABOUT TECHNOLOGY USE

Together with your child, develop rules about acceptable and safe behaviors for all electronic media. Make plans for what they should do if they become a victim of electronic aggression or know someone who is being victimized. The rules should focus on ways to maximize the benefits of technology and decrease its risks.

- Establish rules about appropriate use of computers, cell phones, and other technology. For example, be clear about what sites they can visit and what they are permitted to do when they're online. Show them how to be safe online.

- Help them be smart about what they post or say. Tell them not to share anything that could hurt or embarrass themselves or others. Once something is posted, it is out of their control whether someone else will forward it.

- Encourage kids to think about who they want to see the information and pictures they post online. Should complete strangers see it? Real friends only? Friends of friends? Think about how people who aren't friends could use it.

- Tell kids to keep their passwords safe and not share them with friends. Sharing passwords can compromise their control over their online identities and activities.

BE AWARE OF WHAT YOUR KIDS ARE DOING ONLINE

- Talk with your kids about cyberbullying and other online issues regularly.

- Know the sites your kids visit and their online activities. Ask where they're going, what they're doing, and who they're doing it with.

- Tell your kids that as a responsible parent you may review their online communications if you think there is reason for concern. Installing parental control filtering software or monitoring programs are one option for monitoring your child's online behavior, but do not rely solely on these tools.

- Have a sense of what they do online and in texts. Learn about the sites they like. Try out the devices they use.

- Ask for their passwords, but tell them you'll only use them in case of emergency.
- Encourage your kids to tell you immediately if they, or someone they know, are being cyberbullied. Explain that you will not take away their computers or cell phones if they confide in you about a problem they are having.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Stay informed about the new devices and websites your child is using. Technology changes rapidly, and many developers offer information to keep people aware of advances. Continually talk with your child about "where they are going" and explore the technology yourself. Technology is not going away, and forbidding young people to access electronic media may not be a good long-term solution. Together, parents and children can come up with ways to maximize the benefits of technology and decrease its risks.

TALK WITH OTHER PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Talk to other parents and caregivers about how they have discussed technology use with their children. Ask about the rules they have developed and how they stay informed about their child's technology use.

UNDERSTAND SCHOOL RULES

Some schools have developed policies on uses of technology that may affect the child's online behavior in and out of the classroom. Ask the school if they have developed a policy.

KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

Research tells us that children really do look to parents and caregivers for advice and help on tough decisions. Sometimes spending 15 minutes a day talking can reassure kids that they can talk to their parents if they have a problem. Start conversations about daily life and feelings with questions like these:

- What was one good thing that happened today? Any bad things?
- What is lunch time like at your

school? Who do you sit with? What do you talk about?
- What is it like to ride the school bus?
- What are you good at? What would do you like best about yourself?

Talking about bullying directly is an important step in understanding how the issue might be affecting kids. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but it is important to encourage kids to answer them honestly. Assure kids that they are not alone in addressing any problems that arise. Start conversations about bullying with questions like these:

- What does "bullying" mean to you?
- Describe what kids who bully are like. Why do you think people bully?
- Who are the adults you trust most when it comes to things like bullying?
- Have you ever felt scared to go to school because you were afraid of bullying? What ways have you tried to change it?
- What do you think parents can do to help stop bullying?
- Have you or your friends left other kids out on purpose? Do you think that was bullying? Why or why not?
- What do you usually do when you see bullying going on?
- Do you ever see kids at your school being bullied by other kids? How does it make you feel?
- Have you ever tried to help someone who is being bullied? What happened? What would you do if it happens again?

REPORT CYBERBULLYING

When cyberbullying happens, it is important to document and report the behavior so it can be addressed.

STEPS TO TAKE IMMEDIATELY

- Don't respond to and don't forward cyberbullying messages.
- Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying has occurred. Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages. Use this evidence to report cyberbullying to web and cell phone service providers.
- Block the person who is cyberbullying.

REPORT CYBERBULLYING TO SCHOOLS

Cyberbullying can create a disruptive environment at school and is often related to in-person bullying. The school can use the information to help inform prevention and response strategies. In many states, schools are required to address cyberbullying in their anti-bullying policy. Some state laws also cover off-campus behavior that creates a hostile school environment.

SCHOOLS

CREATE A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

In general, schools can establish a culture of inclusion and respect that welcomes all students.

▪ Reward students when they show thoughtfulness and respect for peers, adults, and the school.

▪ Make sure students interact safely. Monitor bullying "hot spots" in and around the building. Students may be at higher risk of bullying in settings where there is little or no adult monitoring or supervision, such as bathrooms, playgrounds, and the cafeteria.

▪ Enlist the help of all school staff. All staff can keep an eye out for bullying. They also help set the tone at school. Teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, office staff, librarians, school nurses, and others see and influence students every day. Messages reach kids best when they come from many different adults who talk about and show respect and inclusion. Train school staff to prevent bullying.

▪ Set a tone of respect in the classroom. This means managing student behavior in the classroom well.

MANAGE CLASSROOMS TO PREVENT BULLYING

Teachers can consider the following ways to promote the respect, positive relations, and order that helps prevent bullying in the classroom:

CREATE GROUND RULES.

▪ Develop rules with students so they set their own climate of respect and responsibility.

▪ Use positive terms, like what to do, rather than what not to do.

▪ Support school-wide rules.

▪ Reinforce the rules.

▪ Be a role model and follow the rules yourself. Show students respect and encourage them to be successful.

▪ Make expectations clear. Keep your requests simple, direct, and specific.

▪ Reward good behavior. Try to affirm good behavior four to five times for every one criticism of bad behavior.

▪ Use one-on-one feedback, and do not publicly reprimand.

How to Talk About Bullying

Parents, school staff, and other caring adults have a role to play in preventing all types of bullying. They can:

Help kids understand bullying. Talk about what bullying is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell kids bullying is unacceptable. Make sure kids know how to get help.

Keep the lines of communication open. Check in with kids often. Listen to them. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns.

Encourage kids to do what they love. Special activities, interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help kids make friends, and protect them from bullying behavior.

Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.

Help Kids Understand Bullying

Kids who know what bullying is can better identify it. They can talk about bullying if it happens to them or others. Kids need to know ways to safely stand up to bullying and how to get help.

Encourage kids to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem directly. Encourage the child to report bullying if it happens.

Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully. Give tips, like using humor and saying "stop" directly and confidently. Talk about what to do if those actions don't work, like walking away

Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.

Urge them to help kids who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.