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Cyber-bullying



School-aged children quickly learn to make friends, display preferences and establish their own social circles. This interaction used to take place in person, via notes or letters, or via the home telephone. Affordable technology has now provided our children with new methods of communicating, including online via various methods on the internet and also through personal cellphone text messages.

Unfortunately, those communication channels can also be used as a channel for harassment or bullying, bringing this childhood threat out from the school playground and into our homes.

Cyber-bullying can range from unwanted negative remarks to threats and disclosure of personal information and can include:

- repeatedly making fun of another person on internet websites;
- repeatedly picking on another person through emails, text messages or instant messages;
- using internet forums and postings messages online intended to harm, damage, humiliate or isolate another person that they don't like
- posting unflattering photos of someone on a website to embarrass them.

Tips for children:

- Just like in real life, there is a difference between what is right and what is wrong on the internet. If something doesn't feel right, tell someone that you trust.
- Never give out your real information on the internet (especially your name, school etc) or tell anyone your passwords.
- Create a free email address (like Gmail or Hotmail) and use that for internet websites. If someone uses it to harass you, it's easy to just delete that address.
- On sites like Facebook and MySpace, keep your profile private.
- Refuse to support cyberbullying. Don't pass on hurtful messages and tell your friends to stop. Treat people with respect, like you want to be treated.

Tips for parents:

- For younger children, keep the computer in a common area where you can watch them.
- Talk to your children about what they are doing online. Learn about the technology that they are using like instant messaging and social websites.
- Tell your children that bullying is not right and it's not their fault. Encourage them to tell you about anything that is bothering them and reassure them that they won't be in trouble with you.

More resources:

Cyber-bullying is a popular topic, with many groups, governments and schools providing information through various websites. Here are a few examples:

www.stopcyberbullying.org

www.cyberbullying.org

www.cyberbully411.org

<http://www.microsoft.com/protect/family/activities/social.msp>

Talk to your local Computer Troubleshooter about how you can protect your family online.

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**Contact your local Computer
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