

CYBER-BULLYING

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying by SMS through mobile phones. It can happen in school, or out of it, any hour of the day, from people you know, and sometimes people you don't know. It can leave you feeling unsafe and alone. If you are cyberbullied you must report the abuse as it can escalate out of control. It is taken extremely seriously in schools and the punishment for cyberbullying is severe.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM BEING CYBER-BULLYED?

Online bullying is usually anonymous or hard to trace. People being targeted might not know what's being said about them or where the meanness is coming from. If you are being cyber-bullied it might mean that any of the following could happen to you:

- Being sent threatening emails
- Being teased or made fun of online
- Having rumours spread about you online
- Having unpleasant comments, pictures or videos about you sent or posted on websites (e.g. MySpace, Facebook)
- Being sent unwanted messages
- Having someone use your screen name or password and pretending to be you to hurt someone else
- Being deliberately ignored or left out of things on the internet

HOW CAN IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Being bullied can lead to anxiety, lowered self-esteem, and may leave you feeling alone, sad, angry or scared. In these situations it can be hard to know whether what you are experiencing is actually a more serious mental health problem.

IF

- You are feeling sad, down or miserable, irritable or worried
- Your school work is starting to get affected
- Your relationships with family and friends are affected

..... SEEK HELP

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF CYBERBULLYING?

Tell someone. The first thing to do is tell an adult you trust. This is often easier said than done. People who are cyberbullied may feel embarrassed or reluctant to report a bully. Some may hesitate because they're not 100% sure who is doing the bullying. But bullying can escalate, so speak up as your school and parents can help.

Walk away. Walking away from a real-life bully works in the virtual world too. Ignoring bullies is the best way to take away their power. If you see something upsetting, try to step away from the computer or turn off your phone for a while. Find something to distract yourself from what's going on. Do something you love that doesn't give you time to think about what's happening. Taking a break allows you to keep things in perspective and focus on the good things in your life.

Don't respond. Responding when we're upset can make things worse. Taking a break gives the power back to you!

Keep the evidence. Keep copies of texts, emails, online conversations or voicemails as evidence can be useful in tracking the bully down. You don't have to keep looking at them — keep them in a separate folder or forward them to a parent or save them to a flash drive.

Report bullying to your service provider. Sites like Facebook and YouTube take it seriously when people use their sites to post cruel or mean stuff or set up fake accounts. If users report abuse, the site administrator may block the bully from using the site in future.

Block the bully. Most devices have settings that allow you to electronically block the bully or bullies from sending notes. If you don't know how to do this, ask a friend or adult who does.

Be safe online. Password protect your cell phone and your online sites, and change your passwords often. Be sure to share your passwords only with your parent or guardian.

Change your contact details. Get a new user name for the internet, a new email account, a new mobile phone number and only give them out to closest friends.

Think twice before posting messages or photos. Once up they can be difficult or impossible to delete.

REMEMBER ...

- If you are being cyberbullied, it's not your fault and it's OK to let someone know as they may be able to help you.
- Stand up and speak out. If you see or know about cyberbullying happening to friends, support them and report it.
- Don't forward messages or pictures that may be offensive or upsetting to someone.
- Treat others as you would like to be treated when communicating online

Resources

<http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/>