

Cyber Bullying

Facts about Cyber bullying:

More than one third of Canadians know of a kid who has been bullied on-line in the last year and 20% knew of a teacher who had been cyber bullied. (Canadian Teachers Federation, 2008)

About one third (32%) of all teenagers who use the Internet have been targets of a range of annoying and potentially menacing on-line activities, such as receiving threatening messages; having their private emails or text messages forwarded without consent; having an embarrassing picture posted without permission; or having rumors about them spread on-line. (Cyber bullying and on-line Teens (2007).

Girls are more likely than boys to experience cyber bullying - 38% of on-line girls report being bullied, compared with 26% of on-line boys (The Pew Report,Cyber bullying and on-line Teens (2007))

Nearly one in five Canadian students surveyed reported having been bullied on-line in the past three months. (University of Toronto Study, 2008)

What is cyber bullying?

Cyber bullying is defined as the use of technology to support deliberate, hostile and hurtful behavior towards an individual or group of individuals.

Just like other forms of bullying, cyber bullying is about power and control.

Those who bully others are trying to establish dominance over people they perceive to be weaker than them and can occur whether or not

the perpetrator knows the victim.

While technology can be used as a positive communication tool it can also be used to hurt others.

There are several ways that people bully others on-line.

They do it by:

- Sending e-mails or instant messages containing insults or threats directly to a person.
- Spreading hateful comments about a person through e-mail, instant messaging or postings on websites and blogs.
- Stealing passwords and sending out threatening e-mails or instant messages using an assumed identity
- Building websites, often with password protection, to target specific people.
- Taking pictures of people in school locker rooms with cell phone cameras so cyber bullies can post them on the net.

Cyber bullying and the law

Young people should be aware that some forms of on-line bullying are considered criminal acts.

Under the Criminal Code of Canada, it is a crime to communicate repeatedly with some one if your communication causes them to fear for their own safety or the safety of others.

It's also a crime to publish a "defamatory

libel"- writing something that is designed to insult a person or likely to injure a person's reputation by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule.

A cyber bully may also be violating the Canadian Human Rights Act, if he or she spreads hate or discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or disability

What Parents can do

Take your child's complaint seriously

Watch your child for signs that they may be troubled, upset or scared.

Don't belittle their feelings or the threats they receive.

To protect your kids from cyber bullies, stop the harassment before it becomes a bigger problem.

If an adult is harassing your child you must take this very seriously and report the person to the police.

Communicate and draw up a plan

Many cases of cyber bullying have occurred without the parents knowing.

It is only when the damage is already too much that parents learn their child was being victimized.

Encourage your kids to come to you if anybody says or does something on-line that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.

Stay calm and keep the lines of

communication and trust open.

If you "freak out" your kids won't turn to you for help when they need it.

Be open minded and loving, letting your child know he or she can rely on you for support and protection.

Work out a plan with your child on what they should do if they ever becomes the target of a cyber bully. Include a simple 'no-response' rule in your plan by telling your child to avoid replying to a hurtful message and instead, reporting it to you, a trusted school teacher or school staff.

If your child is prepared, they will be better at handling the situation should it occur to them.

Learn the walk and talk

You can't protect your kid from cyber bullies if you know nothing about the technology that made cyber bullying possible in the first place.

Learn everything you can about the Internet, the lingo and what your kids are doing on-line.

Talk to them about the places they go on-line and the activities that they are involved in.

Be aware of what your kids are posting on web sites, including their own personal home pages.

Set limits without encroaching on your child's privacy, try to keep the computer in another area of the house where you can monitor any activity that may constitute bullying.

You'll be more likely to stop cyber bullying early if you know what's going on.

Parents can purchase software to install on home computers to filter web content for youth.

However this is not as effective as parents' supervision or involvement in their children's on-line activities.

What schools can do

Integrate curriculum-based anti-bullying programs into classrooms.

Educate teachers, students and parents about the seriousness of cyber bullying.

Change the school or board's bullying policy to include harassment perpetrated with mobile and Internet technology.

There should be serious consequences for anyone who doesn't follow the guidelines.

What kids can do

Guard contact information. Don't give people you don't know your cell phone number, instant messaging name or e-mail address.

If you are being harassed on-line tell an adult you trust immediately - a teacher, parent, older sibling or family member.

If you are being harassed, leave the area or stop the activity (i.e. chat room, news group, on-line gaming area, instant messaging, etc.).

If you are being bullied through e-mail or instant messaging, block the sender's messages.

Never reply to harassing messages.

Save any harassing messages and forward them to your Internet Service Provider

If the bullying includes physical threats, tell the police as well.

Take a stand against cyber bullying with your peers.

Speak out whenever you see someone being mean to another person on-line.

Most kids respond better to criticism from their peers than to disapproval from adults.

You can report the bully to the school and to the bully's service provider.