

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the sending or posting of harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices such as:

- E-mail
- Instant Messaging (IM)
- Text messages or digital images sent on mobile phones
- Social networking sites, web pages, blogs, virtual worlds
- Chat rooms or discussion groups
- Interactive game sites

Cyberbullying can be conducted 24 hours a day, seven days a week making the victim a perpetual target. The harassment can be anonymous and a single message posted online or sent to a mobile phone can spread to a wide audience. Hurtful or embarrassing messages or images can remain online indefinitely to damage the child's social life and friendships, and possibly their reputation.

The term "cyberbullying" is used when the victim or bully is a child or teen. The term cyber harassment is used when the victim is an adult.

Cyberbullying Statistics

- Four in ten teens (43%) have experienced online harassment.
- Girls are twice as likely as boys to be victims and perpetrators, usually through email or social networking sites, where they typically engage in social sabotage.
- Cyberbullying is most prevalent among 15 and 16 year olds.
- Teens who share their identities and thoughts on social networking sites, such as MySpace and FaceBook, are more likely to be targets than are those who do not use social networking sites (39% have been cyberbullied in some way, compared with 22% of online teens who do not use social networks).

**National phone survey of 935 teenagers by Pew Internet and American Life, November 2006*

Here are some additional cyberbullying statistics from iSafe.

- 22% of students know someone who has been bullied online.
- 19% of students admit to saying something hurtful to others online.
- 12% of students have personally become upset by strangers online.
- 90% of middle school students have had their feelings hurt online.
- 75% have visited a web site bashing another student
- 40% have had their password(s) stolen and changed by a bully
- 15% of parents polled knew what cyberbullying was.

**Data based on 2005-06 iSafe survey of 13,000 students in grades 5 to 12.*

Common Cyberbullying Tactics

- Stealing someone's online name and using it to write nasty rumors, comment, or spread gossip.
- Altering someone's message or doctoring photographs to say something different or poke fun at a person.
- Secretly recording conversations using a cell phone, and then playing the recording back for the person being discussed.
- Posting damaging information on blogs or web sites.
- Creating or taking part in Internet polling.

* Source: ABC PrimeTime "What Parents Need to Know About Cyberbullying"

Why Do Kids Cyberbully?

New studies published in the book, "*Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard*" by Hinduja and Patchin, charts the following reasons why youth bully online:

- 22% motivated by revenge
- 18.7% said the victim deserved it
- 10.6 % said they did it for fun
- 3.9% hated the victim
- 3.5% pressured by peers
- 2.8% retaliated against a bully
- 2.5% venting anger
- 5.7% other reasons

According to the 2007 Executive Research Summary "*Teens and Cyberbullying*" produced by the National Crime Prevention Council, when teens were asked why they were cyberbullied, they responded

- They think it's funny (81%)
- They don't think it's a big deal
- They don't think about the consequences
- They are encouraged by friends
- They think everybody cyberbullies
- They think they won't get caught

Consequences of Cyberbullying

The effects of cyberbullying are not limited to hurt feelings. Research suggests that victims of cyberbullying respond much like traditional bullying victims in terms of negative emotions, such as feeling sad, anxious, and having lower self-esteem. When these negative emotions aren't dealt with properly, victims may resort to delinquency or suicide.

** Source: Aseltine, Gore, & Gordon, 2000; Cowie & Berdondini, 2002; Ybarra & Mitchell*

Researchers at Yale School of Medicine have found signs of an apparent connection between bullying, being bullied and suicide in children, according to a review of studies from 13 countries.

Almost all of the studies found connections between being bullied and suicidal thoughts among children. Five reported that bullying victims were two to nine times more likely to report suicidal thoughts than other children were.

Not just the victims were in danger: "The perpetrators who are the bullies also have an increased risk for suicidal behaviors."

**Science, Daily, July 19, 2008*

Dealing with Cyberbullying

Teach children to:

- **Stop** Don't respond to the bully. Victims often want to befriend the bully to solve the problem or even worse they want to retaliate. Responding to the cyberbully only escalates the problem, and in turn, the victim becomes part of the problem.
- **Block** Block the cyberbully or limit all communications to those you can trust. This is especially effective with bullying in chat rooms, instant messaging, and email. Most electronic communication programs allow users to block specific screen names or email addresses. Most cellular phone companies allow users to block phone numbers. With social networking sites it may be necessary to delete the child's current account and open a new one that limits access to trusted friends. In some cases, it may be necessary for the victim to stay off the computer for a short period of time to remove themselves as the target of the attack.
- **Tell** Tell a trusted adult. The messages posted by the cyberbully are often vulgar or embarrassing. Victims often keep the bullying a secret for this reason. Also, kids are afraid that the adult will overreact and remove the source of the problem - the computer or cell phone -- or react in an irrational manner. Encourage children to tell someone if they are harassed or threatened online or if someone they know is bullied. Reassure the child that you will not overreact if they discuss a cyberbullying experience with you.

**Source: WiredKids.org*

If your child is bullied online:

- Do not erase the evidence
- Contact your Internet provider, the social networking site, or cell phone company and file a complaint
- Contact the child's school if the bullying is school-related
- Contact local law enforcement if your child has been threatened or if a crime has been committed.
- Report cyberbullying to the CyberTipline (www.cybertipline.com).

If the cyberbully makes statements which place the victim in reasonable fear for his or her physical safety or if the cyberbully continues to threaten or harass the victim, despite warnings, notify law enforcement.

A cyberbully can be traced. Each time the Internet is accessed, an IP (Internet Protocol) address, a type of electronic fingerprint, is established. This IP address can be used by the authorities to trace all electronic communications between computers and/or mobile phones.

Postings in cyberspace are traceable, downloadable, printable, and sometimes punishable by law.

Additional Resources for Parents and Kids

To access the following sites, cut and paste the following address in your internet address bar
<http://www.makeadifferenceforkids.org/index.php?id=161>

Resources for Parents

[How to Stop or Remove CyberInfo](#)
[When your child is the cyberbully](#)

Resources for Kids

[Tips for Students](#)
[What Should Students Do?](#)
[Cyberbullying Quiz](#)
[Cyberbullying Word Search](#)
[Cyberbullying Word Scramble](#)
[Student's Guide to Cyberthreats](#)

Additional Resources for Educators

To access the following sites, cut and paste the following address in your internet address bar
<http://www.makeadifferenceforkids.org/index.php?id=160>

ReadWriteThink Lesson Plans

[A High-Interest Novel Helps Struggling Readers Confront Bullying in Schools](#)
[No More Bullying: Understanding the Problem, Building Bully-Free Environments](#)

Media Awareness Network Lesson Plans

[Understanding Cyberbullying](#)
[Cyber Bullying and the Law](#)
[Cyber Bullying and Civic Participation](#)
[Promoting Ethical Online Behaviour: Our Values and Ethics](#)

New York Times Learning Network

[Resources on Bullying and Cyberbullying](#)
[What should the punishment be for acts of cyberbullying?](#)
[No Place for Bullies](#)

ADL Curriculum Connections Lesson Plans

[Cyberbullying and Online Cruelty: Challenging Social Norms](#)
[Student Handouts and Supporting Materials](#)
[Dealing with the Social Pressures that Promote Online Cruelty](#)

Cyberbullying Research and Case Studies - Sameer Hinduja and Justin Patchin

[Cyberbullying scenarios to use with students](#)