

CYBER BULLYING

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**“My pain might
be the reason for
someones laugh.**

**But my laugh
must never be
the reason for
someones pain.”**

Charlie Chaplin

What is cyber bullying?

Cyber bullying is bullying over:

- mobile phone text messages or phone calls
- email
- instant messaging like MSN, Yahoo messenger and AIM
- internet forums or blogs
- social networking websites and online communities like MySpace, Twitter, Facebook and Habbo Hotel

Cyber bullying is common, with research showing that in Australia 6% of children over 11 have been a victim at some time. The majority do not tell anyone about it.

Cyber bullying is just as serious as schoolyard bullying, and can result in depression, shame, embarrassment and even suicide. Victims can be cyber bullied anytime and any place, unlike schoolyard bullying where children can find refuge at home.

Over the internet, bullies can remain anonymous or pretend to be someone they are not. This can often result in the bully being less inhibited by normal social constraints. They cannot see the look of pain and humiliation on the victim's face, and being relatively anonymous, they are less likely to have to deal with the consequences of their actions. Less courage and energy is needed to cyber bully than to bully someone in person, and size, strength and age are not barriers. If others on the site do not respond, the child may interpret this as a sign that everyone agrees with the bully.

Forms of cyber bullying

- sending harassing or threatening messages
- pretending to be someone you are not
- pretending to be a 'friend' to gain trust and sensitive information from the victim
- pretending to be the victim to defame and embarrass them
- publishing hurtful and humiliating rumours and photos or posting personal information on the internet
- flooding someone's inbox with emails
- signing someone's email address up to mailing lists and porn site

Signs of cyber bullying

- The child's internet behaviour has changed dramatically (spending much more or less time on the computer).
- Your child does not want you to see what they are doing on the internet – turning off screen or minimising windows when you enter the room
- Dramatic changes in mood, self esteem, beliefs and behaviour

What your child can do to avoid cyber bullying

- Ask for help, understanding and support from family and friends. Many internet forums and social networking sites are moderated (i.e. monitored) – report the bully if possible. Keep evidence of the harassment, do not delete the messages.
- Block the cyber bully from contacting you further. Making them unable to continue contacting you. Remove them from your contact list.
- Change your email or chat/ social networking account if the bully keeps finding ways to bypass this. Try to set up new social media connections that only include friends or positive influences.
- Try not to obsessively check email, chat, or websites.
- Do not react to the cyber bully. This only encourages them to continue. If they are not getting any response, they will lose their power over you.
- Keep your personal details secret. Never give details like mobile numbers, email addresses or passwords out on the internet, as you never know who you are really speaking to.
- Be very careful about what you say or post on the internet. Don't say or post anything that could embarrass you or be used against you. Behave as you would in public, as the internet is public, and





everything you say and do is logged. IP and computer IDs are traceable. If you confide in a 'friend', they can redistribute the conversation among others. You never know who you are really speaking to.

- Treat others how you would like to be treated. Don't give others reasons to target you.

What you can do to help your child

- Talk to your child about where they go online, and who they talk to. If they are being cyber bullied, explain to them that it is not their fault. Ask them about offline relationships – many children who are being cyber bullied are also bullied at school. Give them your support so they feel that they can confide in you.
- Place the computer in a high traffic area of the house. Do not allow them to have private computers in their bedrooms.
- Do not confiscate their mobile phones and internet access. This will make them less likely to speak to you about their problems, as they will be afraid you will take away an important social outlet for them. Kids will often find ways around this anyway and will do it behind your back. However, do encourage them to engage less with social media and not react to bullying messages.
- Educate yourself and your child about the internet and how they are communicating. Learn where the 'block' or 'ignore' feature is and encourage your child to use it. Read the privacy policies and put your child's account on the highest privacy settings. The less information given out on the internet, the better.
- Encourage your child to participate in activities offline. Make sure they don't spend all day on the internet. This leads to boredom – causing them to harass others to create a reaction, provoking negativity. Set an internet time limit, and get them involved in sport or other community activities. These help create a support base, higher self esteem and demonstrate that there is more to life than online friendships. Online friendships can be beneficial if they act as an extension to current real life social activities, but should never replace them.
- Encourage online activities with friends, relatives, or safe people.
- Google your child. Keep an eye on anything being posted about your child by typing their name into google like this: "John Smith". Also search their email address, mobile number and home address (keep quotation marks around them). If you find information that you do not want to be posted, ask Google or the site displaying it to disable it.

Where do I go for help?

The WayAhead Directory

is an online resource providing a comprehensive list of mental health related services in NSW.

www.WayAhead.org.au

Phone Lines

WayAhead Mental Health Information Line

1300 794 991

Kids Help Line

1800 55 1800

Crime Stoppers

1800 333 000

Lifeline

13 11 14

Useful Websites

Stop Cyber Bullying

stopcyberbullying.org

Bullying. No Way!

bullyingnoway.gov.au

Youth Beyond Blue

youthbeyondblue.com

ThinkUKnow (information for you and your parents)

www.thinkuknow.org.au

AFP High Tech Crime Operations

afp.gov.au/what-we-do/crime-types/cybercrime

Australian Federal Police Crime Prevention

www.afp.gov.au

Raising Children Network

raisingchildren.net.au/articles/cyberbullying_teenagers.html



Translating & Interpreting Service
(TIS) 131 450

Please call the Mental Health Information Line through the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). Free to Australian citizens or permanent residents.

Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed.

This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW.

The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

Last reviewed by Jamie Saltoon 2017

**“ I found people who
understood exactly what I
was going through ”**



