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*Unlocking
Solutions
To Everyday
Problems*



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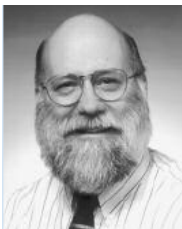
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EAP COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Many parents have expressed their concern about cyber bullying done by children with access to e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, cell phones, or other forms of technology. As parents, we need to keep up with the technology and keep our children safe.

The internet is an amazing place to learn, but it also is very dangerous to those who are naive and vulnerable.



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What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber bullying can be defined as the use of information and communications technologies such as e-mail, cell phone text messages and pager messages, instant messaging, internet chat rooms, and social networking websites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.

Cyber bullying is a fast growing trend that experts believe is more harmful than typical schoolyard bullying. Cyber bullying follows the victims wherever they go. As a result, it is hard to hide from cyber bullying because it reaches into every corner of a child's life. It has become a 24 hour a day ordeal for some youth. Victims can be reached anytime and anyplace. For many children, home is no longer a refuge from the bullies. Children can escape threats and abuse in the classroom, only to find text messages and e-mails from the same tormentors when they arrive home.

Recent surveys have shown that one-third of teenagers have had mean, threatening, or embarrassing things said about them online. Ten percent of teenagers were threatened online with physical harm. Sixteen percent of teenagers who were victims told no one about it. No type of bullying is harmless. In some cases, it can constitute criminal behavior. In extreme incidents, cyber bullying has led teenagers to commit suicide. Most victims, however, suffer shame, embarrassment, anger, depression, and withdrawal.

Parents often tell their children to turn off their cell phones or to stay off the computer. What many parents don't understand is that the internet and cell phones act as a social lifeline for teenagers to their peer group. Victims of cyber bullying often don't tell their parents because they think their parents will only make the problem worse or that they might even confiscate their mobile phone or take away their internet access removing that social lifeline. While bullying is something that is often "under the radar" of parents or teachers, cyber bullying is even more so. Teenagers are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown by adults and away from their supervision. They organize their social lives through these mediums. Their friendships are made and broken over these mediums.

What can Parents do about Cyber Bullying?



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www.slhduluth.com/hospital/other-services/eap



So what can we do about cyber bullying? The challenge is in raising awareness to such a level that people – victims and witnesses – will feel comfortable enough to speak up. *Education and awareness is the key.* Parents need to understand the problem, and understand the technology. In order to ensure that your child does not engage in cyber bullying activities, you should communicate a clear set of expectations regarding acceptable and unacceptable behavior on the internet to your child. Explain that unacceptable behavior includes:

- Revealing his or her password or the passwords of others.
- Sending e-mail messages, instant messages or text messages to others disguising himself or herself as another person.
- Spreading rumors or false information about others.
- Sending rude, harassing or threatening e-mail messages, instant messages or text messages
- Creating websites that ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate others.
- Posting on websites or disseminating embarrassing or inappropriate pictures or images of others.

Parents need to be aware of the dangers that the internet can pose for their children. Parental supervision is a key factor. Guidelines for computer use is a good place for parents to start, as well as monitoring internet use and activities.

Warning Signs of Cyber Bullying

There are a lot of signals that may indicate your child is experiencing cyber bullying. It is important as parents to closely monitor their use of technology (computers and cell phones) and note any behavior that seems out of the ordinary. For example, if your child typically enjoys using the computer but suddenly no longer wishes to do so, there may be a problem. Similarly, if your child seems completely consumed with interacting over the internet all hours of the day and night, you may need to investigate. Use common sense and age appropriate consequences when you discover your child engaging in improper behaviors online.

A child may be a victim of cyber bullying if he or she...

- Unexpectedly stops using the computer.
- Appears nervous or jumpy when an instant

text message or e-mail appears.

- Appears uneasy about going to school or outside in general.
- Appears to be angry, depressed, or frustrated after using the computer.
- Avoids discussions about what they are doing on the computer.
- Becomes abnormally withdrawn from usual friends and family members.

A child may be cyber bullying others if he or she...

- Quickly switches screens or closes programs when you walk by.
- Uses the computer at all hours of the night.
- Gets unusually upset if he/she cannot use the computer.
- Laughs excessively while using the computer.
- Avoids discussions about what they are doing on the computer.
- Uses multiple online accounts, or using an account that is not their own.

Internet Safety and Cell Phone Tips

- Never post any personally identifiable information. Use the privacy settings in your social networking site.
- Always use a disposable free e-mail address (like Gmail or Hotmail) for your communications.
- Remember that being online does not make you anonymous.
- Keep your passwords secret.
- Treat others with respect, and expect the same of them.
- If you don't want something to go around the world, don't post it!
- Protect you number. Dial 1831 before you call to set your number to private.
- Protect your phone's Bluetooth connection. Set Bluetooth to 'hidden'.
- Switch your cell phone off at night.

The internet has opened up an entire new realm of possibilities for children. Today's communications technology is a powerful tool that gives children great power. With great power comes great responsibility.

Source: www.cyberbullying.info