



Bullying – Helpful Tips to Prevent Cyberbullying

November 11, 2013 - It seems that anymore, we open a newspaper or watch the evening news and are confronted with a tragic story about bullying. Bullying can take many forms, such as hitting or punching (physical bullying); teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying); intimidation using gestures or social exclusion (nonverbal bullying or emotional bullying); unwanted sexual contact (sexual bullying); and sending insulting messages by e-mail or social media sites (cyberbullying). Parents should never think of bullying as just a matter of “kids being kids.” It is a serious problem and should be treated as such. Your child deserves to grow up and attend schools in a safe, comfortable environment.

The following are some tips for parents and teens to prevent cyberbullying*.

For Parents:

1. Establish that all rules for interacting with people in real life also apply for interacting online or through cell phones. Convey that cyberbullying inflicts harm and causes pain in the real world as well as in cyberspace.
2. Educate your children about appropriate Internet-based behaviors. Explain to them the problems that can be created when technology is misused (e.g., damaging their reputation, getting in trouble at school or with the police).
3. Model appropriate technology usage. Don't harass or joke about others while online, especially around your children. Don't text while driving. Your kids are watching and learning.
4. Look for warning signs that something abnormal is going on with respect to their technology usage. If your child becomes withdrawn or their Internet use becomes obsessive, they could either be a victim or a perpetrator of cyberbullying.
5. Teach and reinforce positive morals and values about how others should be treated with respect and dignity.

For Teens

1. Educate Yourself - To prevent cyberbullying from occurring you must understand exactly what it is. Research what constitutes cyberbullying, as well as how and where it is most likely to occur. Talk to your friends about what they are seeing and experiencing.
2. Keep Photos “PG” - Before posting or sending that sexy image of yourself, consider if it's something you would want your parents, grandparents, and the rest of the world to see. Bullies can use this picture as ammunition to make life miserable for you.
3. Pause Before You Post – Do not post anything that may compromise your reputation. People will judge you based on how you appear to them online. They will also give or deny you opportunities (jobs, scholarships, internships) based on this.
4. Raise Awareness – Start a movement, create a club, build a campaign, or host an event to bring awareness to cyberbullying. While you may understand what it is, it's not until others are aware of it too that we can truly prevent it from occurring.

5. Don't Be A Cyberbully Yourself – Treat others how you would want to be treated. By being a jerk to others online, you are reinforcing the idea that the behavior is acceptable.

It is always a good practice to monitor what your child is doing. Emphasize that you are not spying on them; you simply want to ensure their safety and are trying to protect them from harm. A majority of parents will ask where their child is going and when they will be home when they go to a friend's house or out for the evening. They will check to make sure their child is where they say they are by confirming with other parents and friends. But parents don't generally think about asking those questions in the electronic world. There could be more damaging effects while the child is in the safety of their own home while on the internet, social media, texting, etc. Police Officers hear parents comment 'I wish I would have known or heard about it sooner.' Parents should review their child's activity with them from time to time and get involved in what their kids are doing.

If you are a student and are being bullied, report it. The School Resource Officer is there to help. Take a stand and put a stop to cyberbullying before it begins. Don't let one of our students be the next statistic in the newspaper.

*This information was made available by the Cyberbullying Research Center.