

## Cyberbullying

Most teenagers spend a lot of time on a cell phone or instant messenger chatting with friends and uploading photos, videos, and music to websites. They may have online friends whom they've never met in person, with whom they play games and exchange messages. Teens' lives exist in a variety of places such as school hallways, part-time jobs, and friends' houses. Now many teens also have lives on the Internet. And bullying has followed teens online.



Online bullying, called cyberbullying, happens when teens use the Internet, cell phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. Cyberbullying is a problem that affects almost half of all American teens. Whether you've been a victim of cyberbullying, know someone who has been cyberbullied, or have even cyberbullied yourself, there are steps you and your friends can take to stop cyberbullying and stay cyber-safe.

### How Are Teens Cyberbullied?

Being a victim of cyberbullying can be a common and painful experience. Some youth who cyberbully:

- Pretend they are other people online to trick others
- Spread lies and rumors about victims
- Trick people into revealing personal information
- Send or forward mean text messages
- Post pictures of victims without their consent

When teens were asked why they think others cyberbully, 81 percent said that cyberbullies think it's funny. Other teens believe that youth who cyberbully:

- Don't think it's a big deal
- Don't think about the consequences
- Are encouraged by friends
- Think everybody cyberbullies
- Think they won't get caught

### How Do Victims React?

Contrary to what cyberbullies may believe, cyberbullying is a big deal, and can cause a variety of reactions in teens. Some teens have reacted in positive ways to try to prevent cyberbullying by:

- Blocking communication with the cyberbully
- Deleting messages without reading them
- Talking to a friend about the bullying
- Reporting the problem to an Internet service provider or website moderator

Many youth experience a variety of emotions when they are cyberbullied. Youth who are cyberbullied report feeling angry, hurt, embarrassed, or scared. These emotions can cause victims to react in ways such as:

- Seeking revenge on the bully
- Avoiding friends and activities

- Cyberbullying back. Some teens feel threatened because they may not know who is cyberbullying them. Although cyberbullies may think they are anonymous, they can be found. If you are cyberbullied or harassed and need help, save all communication with the cyberbully and talk to a parent, teacher, law enforcement officer, or other adult you trust.

### **How Can I Prevent Cyberbullying?**

Teens have figured out ways to prevent cyberbullying. Follow in the footsteps of other quick-thinking teens and:

- Refuse to pass along cyberbullying messages
- Tell friends to stop cyberbullying
- Block communication with cyberbullies
- Report cyberbullying to a trusted adult

You can also help prevent cyberbullying by:

- Speaking with other students, as well as teachers and school administrators, to develop rules against cyberbullying
- Raising awareness of the cyberbullying problem in your community by holding an assembly and creating fliers to give to younger kids or parents
- Don't forget that even though you can't see a cyberbully or the bully's victim, cyberbullying causes real problems. If you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online. Delete cyberbullying. Don't write it. Don't forward it.

### **What Else Can I Do To Stay Cyber-safe?**

Remember that the Internet is accessed by millions of people all over the world, not just your friends and family. While many Internet users are friendly, some may want to hurt you. Below are some ways to stay cyber-safe:

- Never post or share your personal information online (this includes your full name, address, telephone number, school name, parents' names, credit card number, or Social Security number) or your friends' personal information.
- Never share your Internet passwords with anyone, except your parents.
- Never meet anyone face-to-face whom you only know online.
- Talk to your parents about what you do online.



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