

Recognizing the Signs of Cyberbullying

“Cyberbullying is proving to be a lethal weapon. The trauma of cyberbullying is taking the lives of young children and teens every day. Cyberbullying follows a person twenty four hours seven days a week. There is no peace and they never feel safe. Technology continues to take harassment to new levels.

We must all learn to treat others with respect and love. It is astounding to me that when we are presenting our antibullying program that out of hundreds of kids only a handful knows what the ‘Golden Rule’ is. We are failing at teaching our children the basic rules of life. ‘Treat others as you would like to be treated.’ We can save lives if we teach our children to love and respect one another. It is imperative that PARENTS play an active role in our children’s online life.” Sharron Davis

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is bullying someone through anything electronic – cell phone, internet, social media sites. It also includes hacking into emails or social media pages, creating a false social media site, false emails or texting.

Sexting: Sexting is a term coined by the media that generally refers to sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photos or sexually suggestive messages through text message, email, or social media. Underage sexting is a FEDERAL OFFENSE. This falls under creation, distribution and possession of child pornography.

IS YOUR CHILD BEING CYBERBULLIED?

WARNING SIGNS THAT INDICATE YOUR CHILD IS EXPERIENCE CYBERBULLYING:

- Unexpectedly stops using their computer or cell phone
- Signs of emotional distress during or after using electronic media devices
- Avoidance of school or group settings
- Being protective or secretive of their digital life
- Becomes withdrawn from friends or family members
- Slipping grades
- Changes in mood, behavior, sleep, appetite, or appearance
- Cutting or other forms of self-harm

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING CYBERBULLIED:

- DO NOT JUDGE OR OFFER A QUICK FIX.
- Convey unconditional support. Demonstrate through words and actions that you want the cyberbullying to STOP.
- Contact the parent of the offender (if appropriate).
- Contact the Internet Service Provider, Cell Phone Service Network or Content Provider to investigate the issue (if appropriate).
- Contact the local police if physical threats are involved or if the harassment does not stop.
- Educate children about appropriate online behaviors.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO KEEP KIDS SAFE & INFORMED:

- Talk to your child about potential risks. Friend only those you know personally. The more information shared, the greater the risk the information could be used to bully your child.
- Set Google or Bing alerts for your child's name; you will then know immediately what is being said about him or her by others.
- Your kids should understand that technology is a privilege, not a right. If they don't use it ethically, there are consequences.
- Have access to your child's social networking sites and check them frequently. Make sure you have passwords to all sites. Be aware that many kids have more than one site, one they share with parents and others parents are not aware of.
- Your child should understand information posted on the internet is public & cannot be taken back. Never post anything you would not want a college recruiter or future employer to see.
- Keep computers in a central location. Check the history to see what sites your child is visiting.
- Never retaliate. Report abuse to a parent or trusted adult.
- Check out safeguards on other computers your child uses.
- There are many predators in cyberspace, so set clear-cut guidelines for your child's online behavior and expectations so they do not seek attention from Internet criminals.
- Say NO to Formspring (spring.me) and other applications that allow anonymous posting.
- Keep up to date on changes in terms and conditions of the websites and social media your kids use regularly, i.e., My Space, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Report attacks and the sites should shut down perpetrators' accounts if they know the individuals are being harassed.
- Monitor kids' content of text messaging and data services.
- Know the state laws related to cyberbullying. For more information, visit www.bullypolice.org.

BE PRO-ACTIVE CYBERBULLYING IS PREVENTABLE

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