Cyberbullying - Introduction

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to bully a person or group with the intent to hurt them socially, psychologically or even physically. Right now, there are many young people and adults feeling the effects of being cyberbullied. Any type of bullying is unacceptable and there are steps can be taken.

Characteristics of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can occur in many ways, including:

- Abusive texts and emails
- Hurtful messages, images or videos
- Imitating others online
- Stalking others online
- Sharing others personal information online
- Excluding others online
- Humiliating others online
- Nasty online gossip and chat.

Why is cyberbullying a serious problem?

According to Dr Lars Madsen, clinical advisor to The MindShift Foundation, cyberbullying is related to low self-worth, suicidal ideation, anger, frustration and a variety of other emotional and psychological problems. It mostly occurs when three components intersect: teens (mostly), technology and trouble. This perfect storm of elements can manifest harassment, humiliation and hate that may follow a person everywhere.

According to Dr Madsen, "Cyberbullying has become a serious problem for young people in particular, and can cause long-term damage to victims and bullies. It is important to stop cyberbullying and get help for the people involved, but it can be hard to know how. Parents and other concerned adults can work together with young people to prevent or stop cyberbullying.

"Cyberbullying can be worse than other types of bullying," continues Dr Madsen, "because the bully may be anonymous or meaner than they would be in person, and the bullying can come at any time and in any place. Cyberbullying is related to short and long term-problems for the victims and the bullies such as depression, anxiety, poor school attendance and performance, and feeling fear and mistrust toward others. It is important to get help for the victims and the perpetrators."

Self-Worth – Cyberbullying

What can you and your family do when cyberbullying occurs?

- Remind your children to talk to someone trustworthy straight away like a parent, sibling, uncle/aunt, teacher or friend, or for them to contact Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800.
- Don't retaliate or respond—it might be used against you.
- Block the bully and update your privacy settings.
- Stop any auto-feeds and turn off notifications.
- Report the abuse to the service you're using and get others too as well.
- Collect the evidence. Keep mobile phone messages, take screen shots and print emails or social networking conversations.
- Contact the police if you feel it's gone too far or includes threats of violence.
- Keep your child's school updated if the cyberbully is someone from school.
- Do something you enjoy to relax and keep calm. Catch-up with friends, listen to good music, watch a good show or have some quality family time together.
- Remember, you didn't ask for this. Nobody deserves to be bullied and you will get through this.

Where to get help

Always remember you are not alone. Your doctor or registered health professionals are there to help you.

Our online resource page also has a full list of organisations where you can get further information. http://mindshift.org.au/suggested-links/.

Things to remember

Smartphones and computers are not to blame for cyberbullying. Social media sites can be used for positive activities like connecting with friends and family, helping students with school and for entertainment, but these tools can also be used to hurt people. Whether done in person or through technology, the effects of any kind of bullying all produce the same devastating results.

In summary

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as mobile/smartphones, computers and tablets, as well as communication tools inclusive of social media websites, text messages, online chat, etc.

Examples of cyberbullying include demeaning, humiliating and embarrassing text messages or emails, rumours posted on social networking sites, pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles. If you're a victim of cyberbullying, report it immediately as bullying of any kind is unacceptable.

Updates and Further information

For the latest updates and further information please visit www.mindshift.org.au.

Our Mission

It is our mission to ensure that every person has access to the resources available to build healthy self-worth, to have a positive sense of self and to find meaning in life.

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