Cyberbullying

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She keeps on sending me SMSes telling me I am ugly and stupid. What must I do?

Stand up and speak out:

<insert callout here>

Interpretation: Cyber bullying is using technology like cell phones and the Internet, to deliberately and repeatedly bully someone. It can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere and can leave you feeling unsafe and alone. Cyber bullying affects many adolescents and teens on a daily basis.

##### **Cyber bullying can take many forms:**

It can be very damaging to adolescents and teens. It can lead to anxiety, depression, and even suicide. Also, once things are circulated on the Internet, they may never disappear, resurfacing at later times to renew the pain of cyber bullying.

Many cyber bullies think that bullying others online is funny. Cyberbullies may not realize the consequences for themselves of cyberbullying. The things teens post online now may reflect badly on them later when they apply for college or a job. Cyberbullies can lose their cell phone or online accounts for cyber bullying. Also, cyberbullies and their parents may face legal charges for cyberbullying, and if the cyberbullying was sexual in nature, the results can include being registered as a sex offender. Teens may think that if they use a fake name they won't get caught, but there are many ways to track someone who is cyberbullying.

**Despite the potential damage of cyberbullying, it is alarmingly common among adolescents and teens. According to Cyber bullying statistics from the i-SAFE foundation**:

It can include:

sending mean messages or threats to a person's email account or cell phone

spreading rumours online or through texts

posting hurtful or threatening messages on social networking sites or web pages

stealing a person's account information to break into their account and send damaging messages

pretending to be someone else online to hurt another person

taking unflattering pictures of a person and spreading them through cell phones or the Internet

excluding others online

inappropriate image tagging

circulating sexually suggestive pictures or messages about a person

inappropriate discussions.

Remember, treat others as you would like to be treated when socialising online

# How is it different to face-to-face bullying?

While cyberbullying is similar to face-to-face bullying, it also differs in the following ways:

* the bully can have a sense of being anonymous
* it can occur 24/7 and be difficult to escape
* it is invasive and you can be targeted while at home
* it can have a large audience - sent to groups or posted on a public forum which can be permanent.

# How do I deal with it?

Don’t retaliate or respond, no matter how tempting. Block the person doing the bullying and change your privacy settings. Report it - click the report abuse button. Collect the evidence - keep mobile phone messages and print emails or social networking conversations. Talk to someone you trust, like a family member or friend. Talking to your teachers or parents can make a difference. Your school may have policies in place to deal with bullying and cyberbullying.

# What do you do if your friend is being bullied online?

While it can be hard to know if your friends are being cyberbullied, if you see or know about cyberbullying happening to a friend:

* don’t forward messages or pictures
* though you may not have started it, you will become part of the cyberbullying cycle
* stand up and speak out - tell a trusted adult
* support your friend and report the bullying.

## **Parents and teens can do some things that help reduce the cyber bullying statistics:**

Talks to teens about cyber bullying - explaining that it is wrong and can have serious consequences. Make a rule that teens may not send mean or damaging messages, even if someone else started it, or suggestive pictures or messages or they will lose their cell phone and computer privileges for a time.

Encourage teens to tell an adult if cyber bullying is occurring. Tell them if they are the victims they will not be punished, and reassure them that being bullied is not their fault.

Teens should keep cyber bullying messages as proof that the cyber bullying is occurring. The teens' parents may want to talk to the parents of the cyberbully, to the bully's Internet or cell phone provider, and/or to the police about the messages, especially if they are threatening or sexual in nature.

Try blocking the person sending the messages. It may be necessary to get a new phone number or email address and to be more cautious about giving out the new number or address.

Teens should never tell their password to anyone except a parent, and should not write it down in a place where it could be found by others.

Teens should not share anything through text or instant messaging on their cell phone or the Internet that they would not want to be made public - remind teens that the person they are talking to in messages or online may not be who they think they are, and that things posted electronically may not be secure.

Encourage teens never to share personal information online or to meet someone they only know online.

Keep the computer in a shared space like the family room, and do not allow teens to have Internet access in their own rooms.

Encourage teens to have times when they turn off the technology, such as at family meals or after a certain time at night.

Parents may want to wait until high school to allow their teens to have their own email and cell phone accounts, and even then parents should still have access to the accounts.

If teens have been the victims or perpetrators of cyber bullying they may need to talk to a counsellor or therapist to overcome depression or other harmful effects of cyber bullying

# Cyber Bullying Statistics

Cyber bullying statistics refers to Internet bullying. Cyber bullying is a form of teen violence that can do lasting harm to young people. Bullying statistics show that cyber bullying is a serious problem among teens. By being more aware of cyber bullying, teens and adults can help to fight it.

* Over half of adolescents and teens have been bullied online, and about the same number have engaged in cyber bullying.
* More than 1 in 3 young people have experienced cyberthreats online.
* Over 25 percent of adolescents and teens have been bullied repeatedly through their cell phones or the Internet.
* Well over half of young people do not tell their parents when cyberbullying occurs.

## **The Harford County Examiner reported similarly concerning cyber bullying statistics:**

Around half of teens have been the victims of cyber bullying

Only 1 in 10 teens tells a parent if they have been a cyberbully victim

Fewer than 1 in 5 cyber bullying incidents are reported to law enforcement

1 in 10 adolescents or teens have had embarrassing or damaging pictures taken of themselves without their permission, often using cell phone cameras

About 1 in 5 teens have posted or sent sexually suggestive or nude pictures of themselves to others

Girls are somewhat more likely than boys to be involved in cyber bullying

## **The Cyberbullying Research Center also did a series of surveys that found these cyber bullying statistics:**

Over 80 percent of teens use a cell phone regularly, making it the most popular form of technology and a common medium for cyber bullying

About half of young people have experienced some form of cyber bullying, and 10 to 20 percent experience it regularly

Mean, hurtful comments and spreading rumours are the most common type of cyber bullying

Girls are at least as likely as boys to be cyberbullies or their victims

Boys are more likely to be threatened by cyberbullies than girls

Cyber bullying affects all races

Cyber bullying victims are more likely to have low self-esteem and to consider suicide

http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/teens/howdoIdealwith/cyberbullying.aspx