



National Safe Schools Week

25 May - 1 June 2007

Cyber Bullying

What is Cyber – bullying?

Using mobile phones, websites, blogs and chat rooms to bully others is sadly a common event.

Cyber-bullying includes:

- Insulting and ridiculing people in chat rooms (known as “flaming”)
- Posting malicious or private information about someone in blogs (online diaries)
- Posing as someone else in a chat room
- Putting photos of people on the web accompanied by negative or derogatory comments
- Using the web, chat rooms or mobile phones to spread malicious rumours or information.
- Sending cruel or threatening messages
- Tricking someone into sharing private or sensitive information and then sharing it online.

Online cruelty can be even more hurtful than other forms of bullying because the young person will often be alone when it occurs and may feel isolated and unable to speak about it.

A recent survey of girls found:

39% have been “flamed” or intensely insulted on line.

57% experienced on line denigration

41% had had someone masquerade as them online.

42% had been cyber-bullied by a student at their school.

Why does it occur?

It seems that people have a sense of invisibility online. Some feel this gives them the right to be insulting and cruel. For others, the absence of social feedback leaves them without guilt or a sense of responsibility for their actions.

There is a common belief among young people that “what happens online, stays online.” This means that people engaging in cyber-bullying feel that they can get away with it.

Young people are often reluctant to tell parents or teachers if they are cyber-bullied, often because they fear their computer or mobile phone use will be restricted. Many young people also believe adults are not able to stop cyber-bullying.



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What to do if cyber-bullying occurs

Firstly protect your number- only give it to friends and don't leave your mobile where others can access your number. Block your number when calling people you don't know well or people you don't trust.

Know that anything you put on a computer or text message could become public knowledge.

If you do get a nasty message don't respond. People who bully like to upset people and being bullied is upsetting.

Keep the message or print out the chat page as a record of what has happened.

You can get help. Schools are serious about stopping cyber-bullying. The law is also on your side. In many cases people engaging in cyber-bullying can be charged with defamation, invasion of privacy or inflicting emotional distress.

Malicious calls can be traced.

Mobile phone companies can also help you by preventing some numbers getting through to your phone or giving you a new number.

Useful information

Kids helpline 1800 55 18009

For phone security:

www.mindyourmobile.com

www.cybersmartkids.com.au

Phone your mobile provider:

"3" 133320

AAPT: 138886

Optus: 1300 300 937

Orange: 133488

Telstra: 125111

Virgin: 1300 555 100

Vodafone: 1300 650 410



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Preventing Cyber-bullying in Schools

You won't know if you have a cyber-bullying problem if you don't ask or survey students. The chances are it will be happening.

Effective anti-bullying programs emphasize respectful and friendly relationships between people. Discuss with students what this means in online interactions.

Ask students to contribute to the development of a cyber-bullying policy.

Make clear statements about preventing cyber-bullying. Ensure students know that it is a criminal offence and that messages, phone calls and chat rooms can be traced. This is even true if they do not reveal their name or use a false name.

Develop an area on your school website where students can anonymously post information about cyber-bullying.

Advise parents to locate computers in public areas of their homes.

If malicious information has been posted on a website, ask the site's host to remove it. You can find this information either by going to most sites home pages or by going to www.whois.net and typing in the domain name.