Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying or E-Bullying?

This is when instant messages, emails, text messages or webpages are used to spread rumours, make threats or harass. It can include written messages, photographs, videos or voice messages.

The people who are bullying may choose to set up 'groups' in an online social network. These 'groups' may be used to jeer at or target someone in a cruel way. The people who are organising this may remain anonymous.

Sometimes, people who use the internet may not be aware of its potential dangers. Someone may make a light-hearted joke or post online and it could develop into a bullying situation if others add cruel remarks or comments.

People who use technology to bully may say things online or by text that they would never say face to face. They need to know that they are responsible for their words and actions in cyberspace as well as in the real world. If it comes down to it, the source of the abuse, the computer or phone being used, can be identified by the Gardaí.

This type of bullying is just as harmful and upsetting as face to face bullying. Check out How does bullying affect people.

Tips

Be careful online and remember that words have power.

Think about what you write or photos you add.

Ask yourself, could these words be picked up the wrong way or cause upset? Is this photo suitable for lots of people to see?

If you post something online and 'comments' or 'chat' becomes cruel, remove your posts so you are not part of a negative situation.

Help turn things around by pointing out if someone is being cruel. Apologise to the person if your own comments have led to harassment.

I've been getting mean emails from some girls in my class. Sometimes I get abusive text messages from numbers I don't recognise. What should I do?

Tell someone. Talk to a parent, teacher, friend or someone you can trust.

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Keep a log. While messages may be cruel, you will need to have some proof of what has been happening. This will be helpful if the guards or someone in authority need to help. If you don't want to keep seeing the messages you could put texts in 'saved messages'.

Forward emails onto the adult you have talked to.

If you are receiving abusive texts, give your phone to an adult to monitor for an evening or over a weekend.

Keep your details private and block people. Get a new phone sim and make your new number private.

If you are on a social network, change your 'privacy settings' so that your web pages are secure and only accessed by people you know. Check the privacy settings regularly as sometimes the network may change settings without notifying you.

Be careful about the passwords you use online. Keep this private. You could change your password every month or so to be extra safe.

If you know the user name of the person bullying, you can block them from your profile.

Start fresh by setting up a new email address, user name or profile. Ask someone for help if you're not sure how.

If you have been getting nasty IMs (instant messages), change your online status to 'hidden' so other internet users will not know you're online.

Don't reply to abusive emails or texts. Giving a response may make the situation worse.

Don't add people you don't know to your list of online friends. Be wary of strangers online.

If you're messaging a friend and something seems odd, it could be someone else who has hacked their details so just end the conversation.

Log off. You can choose to walk away by logging off or switching off. By doing this, you will feel in control of the situation.

Report it. If you are being bullied online, the service provider or network can give you information about what to do. Look for 'Help Centre' or 'Report Abuse'. There will be advice about what you can do and how to report to the network provider.

I'm worried that if I tell my parents they will stop me from going online. What should I do?

 Be prepared. It's likely that your parents will be concerned and will want to take precautions.

Depending on your age and what's been happening for you, taking a break from the mobile/PC may be the safest option for now.

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If you are older, explain to your parents why it is important that you can use your phone and go online.

Talk with your parents and explain that you don't want to be punished because of what is happening.

Suggest that you come to an agreement about being safe and what you should do when the bullying is happening (talk through 'What should I do' as above).

If your parents don't know much about the internet or social networks show them how it works.

Explain about 'Privacy Settings', 'Reporting Abuse' and 'Blocking' people from your profile.

Q. My friend is cyberbullying a girl in our class. What should I do?

A.

 Talk to your friend. Explain that what they are doing is wrong. Let them know that what they are doing is bullying (they may not realise this).

Explain how serious this is and the effects it could have on the person they are bullying.

Let them know that there could be serious consequences for everyone involved.

Point out that bullying over the internet is just as serious as face to face bullying.

Check out www.watchyourspace.ie for more info, a short video and lots of tips about cyberbullying.

(Taken from Barnardos.ie)