

Cyberbullying

Teenagers

Cyberbullying occurs when the internet, email or mobile phones are used to deliberately and repeatedly engage in hostile behaviour to harm someone. Cyberbullying occurs most commonly among older children and teens.

Cyberbullying can have negative academic, social and psychological outcomes, so providing support for children and young people who are involved in cyberbullying is critical.

For many teens, their online life is an important part of their social identity. Many teens fear that parents might disconnect them from the internet and therefore their supportive friends as a 'solution' to cyberbullying. This prevents some teens from reporting cyberbullying issues. Some teens are also concerned that parents will make cyberbullying issues worse.

To help teens deal with cyberbullying:

- Talk to your teen about cyberbullying before it happens. Work out strategies to address cyberbullying that you are both comfortable with, so your child knows what to expect if they do report concerns to you or another trusted adult. Reassure them that you will be there to support them and won't disconnect them from their online world.
- Encourage your teen to tell you or another trusted adult if they receive or hear of negative messages, or are excluded by others. Help them stay connected to trusted friends and family both online and offline. This is an important protective measure against the potentially negative outcomes of bullying.
- Advise your teen not to respond to any negative messages but to save the messages and details of the senders. You may want to save the messages for your teen so that they don't keep reading them and potentially feel worse.
- You can help your teen report any concerns to the administrator of the service used, including the mobile phone provider (if SMS is involved), website administrator (if social networking or chat services are involved), or internet service provider.
- Understand your school's policy about cyberbullying—do they have a policy and what is the likely outcome of a complaint about cyberbullying if another student is involved.
- Encourage your teen to support their friends and report concerns about friends who may be involved in cyberbullying.
- Advise your child never to share their password with friends—friendships may be shortlived at this age and former friends can mis-use passwords to cyberbully.
- If your child has been involved in cyberbullying and seems distressed or shows changes in behaviour or mood it may be advisable to seek professional support, including through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx. The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. Your child's schools may also be able to provide support and guidance.
- If there is a threat to your child's safety the police can help. In life threatening and time critical situation call Triple Zero (000).



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More information

The Cybersmart program provides a range of cybersafety materials for parents and their children. For more information, resources, advice and tips, visit the Cybersmart website at www.cybersmart.gov.au. Encourage your children and teens to take a look around the website. If you have young children, you may like to explore it together to help them understand how to protect themselves against online risks and make the most of their experiences online.