



CYBERBULLYING: BULLYING IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD



What is Cyberbullying?

- Cyberbullying is **purposeful** and **repeated** aggressive behavior inflicted through the use of **digital or electronic devices**.^{1,3}
- It can be acted out through many different modalities (cell phone, texting, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, online gaming, and streaming sites).¹
- Cyberbullying behaviors may include:²
 - Posting comments or rumors about someone online that are mean, hurtful, or embarrassing
 - Threatening someone online
 - Posting mean or hurtful videos or pictures
 - Catfishing
- Approximately 34% of middle and high school students report being cyberbullied in their lifetime.¹
- Effects of cyberbullying tend to parallel those of traditional bullying
 - In some cases the differences below may make cyberbullying more devastating than traditional forms of bullying.¹
 - Many cyberbully victims and perpetrators are also victims and perpetrators of traditional bullying

How is Cyberbullying Different from Other Forms of Bullying?

- **Anonymity:** a perpetrator can hide behind a screen by creating fake emails, profiles, or usernames, thus keeping their identity a secret from their victim.³
 - Although most victims of cyberbullying know who the perpetrator is
- Hurtful posts or comments can **go viral**, or spread to reach large masses of people throughout the school, neighborhood, or even world—the pool of potential targets, aggressors, and bystanders is infinite.¹
- **It is easier to be aggressive with technology:** bullying and abuse can be done from a far away distance, and the aggressor doesn't have to see the immediate response.³
- **Persistence and Permanence:** digital devices offer the ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24/7, and information on the internet is public and permanent. People who are cyberbullied may have trouble avoiding abuse, and finding relief.²
- Cyberbullying is **harder to recognize** and parents and teachers may miss the signs a child is being bullied.^{1,2}

What are Some Signs a Child **May** be Involved in Cyberbullying?²

A child who is involved in cyberbullying may:

- Have drastic increases or decreases in device use
- Exhibit an emotional response (anger, distress, laughter) to what is happening on their device
- Hide their screen or device frequently
- Avoid talking about what they are doing on their device
- Have social media accounts that are shut down or new ones appear
- Start to avoid social situations, become withdrawn, depressed, or lose interest in social activities

Cyberbullying Prevention For Parents And Schools¹

For Parents:

- Be supportive of your child's wants and needs
- Put rules in place to protect your child
- Stay involved in your child's online world
- Ensure your child feels safe and comfortable talking to you
- Educate your child on appropriate online behaviors

For Schools:

- Schools are required to have policies and guidelines that prohibit bullying and include provisions for responding to these acts
- Educate the school community about responsible use of their devices
- Create creative response strategies for handling cases of cyberbullying
- Create a positive school climate that promotes safe and respectful students

REFERENCES

[1] Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. W. (2018). *Cyberbullying: Identification, Prevention, and Response*. Cyberbullying Research Center. <https://cyberbullying.org/Cyberbullying-Identification-Prevention-Response-2018.pdf>

[2] What is Cyberbullying (2019, May). <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it>

[3] Hutson, E. (2016). Cyberbullying in adolescence: A concept analysis. *Advances in Neuroscience*, 39, 60-70. <https://doi.org/10.1097/ANS.000000000000104>

How can **STUDENTS** prevent cyberbullying?¹



- **Speak to a trusted adult if you experience or witness any acts of cyberbullying**
- **Use appropriate online behaviors! Be respectful.**
- **Think before posting, texting, or sharing! Consider that your actions have consequences.**
- **Don't be a bystander, be an upstander!**
 - **By doing nothing, bystanders encourage the behavior. Actively stand up for the target, or tell a trusted adult who can help with the situation**