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
  o Posting comments or rumors about someone online that are mean, hurtful, or embarrassing
  o Threatening someone online
  o Posting mean or hurtful videos or pictures
  o 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
  o In some cases the differences below may make cyberbullying more devastating than traditional forms of bullying.¹
  o 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
  o 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?

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 Schools:

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

How can STUDENTS prevent cyberbullying?

- 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

REFERENCES

