

Cyberbullying Indicators – Is My Child Involved?

Issues in the cyber world usually manifest in the physical world. This includes cyberbullying. You can influence the likelihood of cyberbullying happening to your child, and you must be part of the solution if your child is involved.

If your child begins to display negative attitudes or behaviours, you must never discount the involvement, whether wholly or partially, of technology.

Quite often personal problems or issues can be compounded by relatively minor online activity. This is why inappropriate online activity should be treated as potentially serious and should be dealt with by a responsible adult.

The key is to get the cyberbullying away from behind the screen and bring it out into the physical world so it can be dealt with.

Issues created online are best dealt with offline.

You will more likely get the chance to stop the problem before it spirals out of control when you become involved and take action early.

Cyberbullying generally never stops; it only gets worse—unless something is done to stop it. This can be as simple as a conversation.

Remember—technology use must never be placed above the health and well-being of your children. The use of technology can be suspended while you get things back on track.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

There are many varying definitions surrounding what cyberbullying is and is not.

As a guide, **cyberbullying is where a user or users utilise information communication technology to bully another.**

Cyber bullying can include the following:

- Information that includes typed words, photos, videos, or spoken messages
- Direct messages via phone calls, email, text, SMS, or postings
- Indirect activity that is sent to others or posted onto the Internet for others to see

- Exclusion
- Assuming other identities
- Use of threats, intimidation, and extortion

WHY CYBERBULLYING HAPPENS

The Internet has provided a unique communication forum that can encourage or allow children to become ‘that person’ even though they would never have been a victim or perpetrator of bullying in the physical world.

The nature of the Internet can compound the negative effects:

- **Private nature.** It feels private (even though it isn’t); there’s no-one directly observing or around.
- **Dehumanise** due to dealing with data. It doesn’t ‘feel’ like they are hurting others, as they can’t see the result or feel the discomfort of the other person.
- **Global exposure**
- **Inability to remove the hurtful material.** Items may be shared with other people. Nothing is truly erased.

INDICTORS

These behaviours may mean your child is involved in cyberbullying.

Emotional	Social/behavioural	Academic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becomes withdrawn or shy • Shows signs of depression • Is extremely moody or agitated • Is anxious or overly stressed out • Shows signs of aggressive behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suddenly stops using the computer • Changes eating or sleeping habits • No longer wants to participate in activities once enjoyed • Hurts self, attempts or threatens suicide • Suddenly changes friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn’t want to go to school • Wants to change schools • Gets into trouble at school • Skips school • Loses interest in school • Drops in grades

IS YOUR CHILD BULLYING?

It's important that you look for these signs:

- Stops using the computer or turns off the screen when some-one comes near
- Appears nervous or jumpy when using the computer or cell phone
- Is secretive about what they are doing on the computer
- Spends excessive amounts of time on the computer
- Becomes upset or angry when computer or cell phone privileges are limited or taken away

BULLIES NEED HELP TOO...especially if it's your child who is bullying.

If someone suggests to you that your child may be involved in cyberbullying, they are not calling you a bad parent. It is best to acknowledge that your child may be involved as this gives you the opportunity to address the issue.

Your child is better off when they are not involved in this type of activity, so be open to finding a solution to keep everyone safe. Bullies are harmed in this process too.

Many times children cyberbully not with deep seated evil intentions but through issues of their own.

Reasons children cyberbully;

- They are being bullied or cyberbullied themselves and want others to share their pain
- Fear that it could happen to them
- Have family problems or trauma in their physical world and find bullying online a convenient outlet
- Peer group pressure – They feel if they don't go with the group, they will be targeted.

**Any child can be a victim.
Any child can be a perpetrator.**

See fact sheet "Cyberbullying – How to Avoid and Respond" for more information.

