

Tips Regarding Cyberbullying for Students

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It's a typical day after school and you decide to play on the internet for awhile. Once you log onto Facebook, you see that you have numerous notifications about people from your school posting on your wall. You get excited because you like it when "friends" post on your wall.

However, when you begin reading the posts, your mood soon changes. A girl from your school has posted several nasty comments on your wall. Not only has she posted on your wall but her friends have as well! The first comment you read says that, "Everyone hates you! I wish you would drop off a cliff somewhere!" Another comment says that, "You are a fat, smelly, ugly loser. No one wants to be friends with you!"

The insults continue, one followed by another. Your heart and thoughts are racing. You are angry and hurt because you didn't do anything to deserve this! Questions run through your mind: Why me? Why are they doing this? Why does this have to happen? What should I do? What did I do to deserve this?

This is an example of cyberbullying. If something like this sent by email, instant message, text message, or social networking site has happened to you, you have been cyberbullied!

STEPS TO PREVENT CYBERBULLYING

In order to prevent being cyberbullied, follow these general tips:

- Be a good "Internet Citizen" - Respect the rights and feelings of others in cyberspace by being polite and displaying good manners online.
 - **Don't attack others online –try not to say anything that could be considered insulting or is controversial.**
 - **Don't forward other people's e-mails without their permission or share their personal information.**
 - **Don't forward emails or messages that are mean or that spread rumors.**
- Think before you send – whatever you send can be made public very quickly and could stay online forever.
 - Don't post or send information that others could use against you.
 - Don't send out messages when you're angry.
- Keep your personal information to yourself
 - Do not type your name, address, or phone number online.
 - Do not share passwords with friends - EVER.
 - Only give your cell number or personal website address to trusted friends.

- Keep photos off the internet
 - Post photos rarely – Only post head shots of yourself. This lessens the chance of photos being changed.
 - Do not send a picture of yourself to anyone.
- Practice good internet safety
 - Change passwords frequently.
 - Only respond to emails or instant messages from people you know (or from addresses you know).
 - If something inappropriate appears, turn off the screen and tell an adult.
- Friends don't hide who they are
 - Only “friend” people you actually know. Do not “friend” individuals simply to have more “friends” than others.
 - **Be wary of the people you meet online because many people hide their true identities by lying about their age, gender, and intentions.**

CYBERBULLIES HAVE ATTACKED!

If you are being cyberbullied, you should take the following actions:

- Ignore - repeated or persistent unknown messages and requests for chats.
 - Don't open emails or messages from someone you know is gossiping or saying mean things about others.
- Block - Learn how to block or report someone who is behaving badly or who is bullying.
- Save the evidence – learn how to keep records of offending messages and pictures.
 - Show the messages to an adult you trust, like a parent or a teacher.
- Keep asking - If the first adult you tell doesn't help, you should keep telling until someone does.
- Don't meet - Never arrange to meet someone who is bullying you online.
- Don't retaliate or reply!

THEY WON'T STOP!

If the cyberbully is still bothering you even after you have tried the previous things, you should do the following:

- Report the cyberbully to administrators at your school.
- Report the cyberbully to the local police.

For more information on cyberbullying and internet safety, log on the following websites:

- www.cyberbullying.us
- www.stopcyberbullying.org
- <http://www.isafe.org/>
- <http://www.athinline.org/>