



What is cyberbullying?

"Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging (IM), defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online personal polling Web sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others." –Bill Belsey

How is cyberbullying different from other forms of bullying?

Cyberbullying, like other forms of bullying, is about human relationships, power and control. Those who bully others are trying to establish power and control over others that they perceive to be "weaker" than them. Those who bully want to make victims feel that there is something wrong with them, but victims should know that there is NOTHING wrong with THEM. It is THE BULLIES who have the real problems.

Cyberbullying is different from other forms of bullying in a number of ways. While bullying is something that is often under the radar screen of adults, cyberbullying is even more so as today's youth, a group that I call the "Always on Generation, feel it most often and most intensely". This generation is increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown by adult and away from their supervision.

Cyberbullying is also different in that it is a particularly cowardly form of bullying. Cyberbullies can more easily hide behind the anonymity that the Internet can provide.

Cyberbullies can communicate their hurtful messages to a very wide audience with remarkable speed.

Cyberbullying does not provide any tangible feedback about the consequences of using information technologies to cyberbully others. Cyberbullies do not have to own their actions, as it is usually very difficult to identify cyberbullies, so they do not fear being punished for their actions.

Cyberbullying is often outside of the legal reach of schools and school boards as this behaviour often happens outside of school on home computers or via mobile phones.

Victims of bullying are often fearful of telling others about being bullied because they fear that the bullying may actually become worse if they tell. Victims of cyberbullying are often also afraid to report to adults about being cyberbullied, as they also fear that adults will over-react and take away their mobile phone, computer and/or Internet access. This is something that is increasingly unthinkable for the "Always On" generation as not being online means not being able to socialize or communicate with their peers, and this fear of exclusion is paramount in the lives of most adolescents and teens.

In most cases, cyberbullies know their victims, but their victims may not know their cyberbullies, the aggressors may or may not bully their victims through physical, verbal, emotional or psychological means that are more easily identified.



With the advent of mobile, wireless Internet access, communications have become more ubiquitous. As a result, Cyberbullying can happen any time and any place and for many children, home is no longer a refuge from negative peer pressure such as bullying.

Some Facts

- 50% of Canadian kids say that they are online most of the time
- Only 16% say they talk to their parents about what they do online
- 25% of young Canadian Internet users say that someone has sent them messages that have said hateful things about others (Source: Young Canadians in a Wired World –Mnet Survey, 2001)
- A 2002 British survey found that one in four youth, aged 11 to 19 has been threatened via their computers or cell phones, including death threats. [NCH -National Children's Home \(UK\)](#)

Cyberbullying and the law

Some forms of cyberbullying are considered criminal acts. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, it is a crime to communicate repeatedly with someone if your communication causes them to fear for their own safety or the safety of others.

It is also a crime to publish a "defamatory libel", writing something that is designed to insult a person or likely to hurt a person's reputation by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule.

A cyberbully may also be violating the Canadian Human Rights Act, if he or she spreads hate or discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or disability.

What can be done about cyberbullying?

Awareness and education are the keys to the prevention of cyberbullying!

Spend some time on the www.cyberbullying.ca Web site learning what you can do about cyberbullying. It is often a very hurtful, difficult and time-consuming challenge to deal with the effects of cyberbullying after it has occurred. It can take a lot of time and effort to get Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Mobile Telecommunications Service Providers (the phone companies who sell you your cell phone and pagers) to respond and deal with your complaints about being cyberbullied.

An ounce of prevention...

Never give out or share personal information numbers (PIN), etc. Personal information includes your name, the names of friends or family, your address, phone number, school name (or team name if you play sports). Personal info also includes pictures of yourself and your e-mail address. Ask permission before sharing any information with a website, a "chat buddy" and even when registering a product purchased for your computer (like a game). Passwords are secret. Never tell anyone your password except your parents or guardian.

Don't believe everything you read Just because someone online tells you that they are 15 doesn't mean they are telling the truth. Even adults can't tell when a male pretends to be a female or a 50 year old pretends to be a 15 year old.

Use Netiquette Be polite to others online just as you would offline. If someone treats you rudely or meanly - do not respond. Online bullies are just like offline ones - they WANT you to answer (don't give them the satisfaction).



Never send a message to others when you are angry Wait until you have had time to calm down and think. Do your best to make sure that your messages are calmly and factually written. You will usually regret sending a "Flame" (angry) to someone else. Once you've sent a message, it is VERY hard to undo the damage that such "flames" can do.

Never open a message from someone you don't know If in doubt about it, ask your parents, guardian or another adult.

If it doesn't look or "feel right", it probably isn't Trust your instincts. While surfing the Internet, if you find something that you don't like, makes you feel uncomfortable or scares you, turn off the computer and tell an adult.

You don't have to be "Always on", Turn off, disconnect, unplug Give yourself a break. Don't stay online or connected too long. Spend time with your family and friends off line. Try a little less virtual reality and a lot more actual reality!

Sign on the dotted line

Create a contract with your parents or guardians. Ask your parents to read the information for them on this Web site, so they will be informed about cyberbullying and Internet safety issues.

Schools and school boards should contact Bullying.org Canada and have them present information sessions for students and parents about cyberbullying and refer them to the www.cyberbullying.ca for more information.

Schools and school boards should update their computer and Internet Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) to include harassment done with mobile and wireless Internet information technologies. There should be clear and serious consequences for anyone who doesn't follow the AUP that should be signed by both students and parents. The updated AUP should specifically prohibit the use of ICTs for cyberbullying.

If you are the victim of a cyberbully, what can you and your parents do?

Do not keep this to yourself! You are NOT alone! Tell an adult you know and trust! It is very hard to solve such problems on your own.

Inform your Internet or mobile phone service provider

Inform your local police

Don't reply to messages from cyberbullies!!! Even though you may really want to, this is exactly what cyberbullies want. They want to know that they've got you worried and upset. They are trying to mess with your mind and control you, to put fear into you. Don't give them that pleasure.

Do not erase or delete messages from cyberbullies You don't have to read it, but keep it, it is your evidence. Unfortunately you may get similar messages again, perhaps from other accounts. The police and your ISP, and/or your telephone company can use these messages to help you. You might notice certain words or phrases that are also used by people you know. These messages may reveal certain clues as to who is doing this to you, but don't try and solve this on your own. Tell an adult you know and trust. GET HELP!



Protect yourself

Never arrange to meet with someone you have met online unless your parents go with you. If you are meeting them make sure it is in a public place.

You may need to delete your current e-mail accounts, cell phone/pager accounts and set up new ones. If you have persistent cyberbullying problems, it is recommend that you do this as soon as possible, unless you are working with the police and your Telecommunications Provider to keep the account (s) active to try and catch the cyberbully.