

## What is Cyber Bullying?

*Cyber bullying or ebullying is bullying that takes place online or electronically through use of the internet, mobile phones or other technological devices.*

Cyberbullying, also known as electronic bullying, is defined as bullying through:

- email
- instant messaging
- a chat room or message board
- a website or gaming site
- digital messages or images
- mobile phone (texts, phone messages, phone calls, pictures & videos)
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**N.B. A one-time posting of something intended to embarrass someone, while unpleasant, *does not* qualify as bullying.**

Cyberbullying is *deliberate, repeated* and *hostile* behaviour that is intended to harm others and is usually not a one-off communication.

## Types of Cyberbullying

**Cyberbullying generally takes a psychological rather than physical form but is often part of a wider pattern of “traditional” bullying.**

*The different ways in which technology can be used to cyberbully include:*

- **Personal Intimidation:** e.g. sending threatening text (SMS) messages or emails, posting abusive comments on the victim's profile or other websites
- **Exclusion:** blocking an individual from a popular group or community such as a school or class group in sites such as Bebo, Facebook or MySpace.
- **Personal Humiliation:** posting images, videos, blogs or emails intended to embarrass or humiliate someone.
- **False Reporting:** making false reports to the service provider

## -Warning signs of Cyberbullying

*Just like bullying in the "offline" world, cyberbullying can have detrimental and devastating effects on those at the receiving end.*

*As well as the warning signs associated with all forms of bullying, look out for the following symptoms:*

- Sadness, upset or anger during or after internet or mobile phone use.
- Indications that your child is the target of traditional bullying at school.
- A sudden disinterest in computers.
- Quickly switching off computer screens when somebody enters the room.

In addition to the usual reasons why victims refrain from speaking about bullying, those being cyberbullied are often afraid to report incidents as they fear that adults will take away their mobile phone or computer

## Tips on the safer use of Social Networking Sites

- *Guard personal information* online - even private profiles are not 100% secure.
- *Think* before you publish - information and photographs online are there forever.
- *"Friends" aren't always friends* - be cautious when communicating online with people you don't know and trust in the real world.
- You aren't anonymous online - behaviour online can damage your real life reputation.

### ***Don't be cyberbullied - be cyberSMART!***

**S** Secret - always keep your name, address, mobile phone number and password private. Think of it like handing out the keys to your home!

**M** Meeting someone you have contacted in cyberspace could be dangerous. Only meet them with your parent's/guardian's permission and when they are present.

**A** Accepting emails or opening files from people you don't really know or trust can get you into trouble as they may contain viruses or nasty messages.

**R** Remember that someone online may be lying and may not be who they say they are. Stick to the public area in chat rooms and if you feel uncomfortable get out.

**T** Tell your parents or trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried.

## Tips on Handling Cyberbullying

- ***Don't reply*** to messages that harass or annoy you - even though you may really feel like it, this is exactly what the bully wants. If you respond with an ever nastier message, they will think they have got to you and upset you which is just what they are hoping for. *Don't let them mess with your head!*
- ***Tell someone*** you trust - be that a parent, teacher, friend, youth leader or school counsellor.
- ***Keep the message*** - and a record that outlines the details, dates and times of any form of bullying which you experience (in case there is an investigation).
- ***Block the sender*** - if you are getting messages that upset you, simply click the block button..
- ***Report problems*** - if you come across offensive content on a website or circulated by mobile phone, you should contact the owners of the service. Serious incidents that could be illegal should be reported to the Gardaí.