



WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying is bullying through email, instant messaging, chat room exchanges, website posts, or digital messages / images sent to a cellular phone. Cyberbullying, like traditional bullying, involves an imbalance of power, aggression, and a negative action that is often repeated.

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

Cyberbullying has some rather unique characteristics that are different from traditional bullying.

Anonymity

As bad as the "bully" on the playground may be, he/she can be readily identified and potentially avoided. On the other hand, the child who cyberbullies may remain anonymous. The victim is left wondering who the cyber "bully" is, which can cause a great deal of stress.

Accessibility

Most children who use traditional ways of bullying terrorize their victim at school, on the bus, or walking to or from school. Although bullying can happen elsewhere in the community, there is usually a standard period of time during which these children have access to their victims. Children who cyberbully can wreak havoc any time of the day or night.

Punitive Fears

Victims of cyberbullying often do not report it because of (1) fear of retribution from their tormentors and (2) fear that their computer or phone privileges will be taken away. Often, adults' responses to cyberbullying are to remove the technology from a victim - which in their eyes can be seen as punishment.

Bystanders

Most traditional bullying episodes occur in the presence of other people who assume the role of bystanders or witnesses. The phenomenon of being a bystander in the cyber world is different in that they may receive and forward emails, view web pages, forward images sent to cell phones, etc. The number of bystanders in the cyber world can reach into the millions.

Disinhibition

The anonymity afforded by the internet can lead children to engage in behaviors that they might not do face-to-face. Ironically, it is their very anonymity that allows some individuals to bully at all.



COMMON FORMS OF CYBERBULLYING

1. **Harassment:** repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and/or insulting messages
2. **Denigration:** distributing information about another that is derogatory and untrue through posting it on a webpage, sending it to others through email or instant messaging, or posting/sending digitally altered photos of someone
3. **Flaming:** online "fighting" using electronic messages with angry, vulgar language
4. **Impersonation:** breaking into an email or social networking account and using that person's online identity to send or post vicious or embarrassing material to/about others
5. **Outing and Trickery:** sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information, or tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information and forwarding it to others
6. **Cyberstalking:** repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or intimidation, or engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for his/her safety (This may be illegal depending on the content of the message.)

