

Cyberbullying: What is it? What can you do?

Bullying is nothing new. What is new is *cyberbullying* -- when bullies lurk in the shadows of the Internet to threaten, harass and stalk their victims, who are often children and teenagers. These bullies are especially intimidating because they can't be seen. They hide in the anonymity of email, instant messaging, chatrooms, online gaming sites and social networking pages (blogs) to hurt others and even destroy reputations. Sometimes, it is a harmless prank that gets out of hand; other times it is malicious and dangerous from the start. A few examples of cyberbullying



- Circulating very personal, harmful or even untrue information about another.
- Posting or circulating inappropriate images of another person, including digitally altered or created images, or pictures taken without the person's knowledge (i.e., using a camera phone.)
- Threatening physical harm or public embarrassment.

Good Advice for Your Children

Don't respond. Cyberbullies don't deserve your attention - and if you refuse to participate they might decide to move on.

Don't keep it to yourself. Cyberbullies can be dangerous if they are not stopped. That's why it's important to share this information - right away - with a parent, a teacher, or another trusted adult.

Tell the bully to "stop." This is where you ignore the "don't respond" rule, but just once. With the help of an adult, contact the cyberbully once and tell him or her to stop bothering you. If IM or chat is being used, block the person.

Save every contact. It's important to save each contact from a cyberbully - *everything*. This is evidence that you are being harassed.

Still being harassed? Take your case to the authorities. If ignoring the cyberbully doesn't stop the harassment, start complaining. If you've been contacted by e-mail, notify the cyberbully's ISP. If you're harassed in a chat room, ask the organization that runs the server to take action.

If you receive a threat, alert the police. If a cyberbully threatens you with harm, it's time to involve law enforcement authorities.



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New York State Police
New York State Attorney General's Office
1-877-474-KIDS (474-5437)
www.nysicac.org
nysicac@troopers.state.ny.us

NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services
Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse
1-800-FIND-KID (346-3543)
www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us
missingchildren@dcjs.state.ny.us