

**PREVENTING STUDENT
BULLYING, MEAN TEASING,
INTIMIDATION, AND
HARASSMENT:
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO**

Presented By:
Marcia McEvoy, Ph.D.
Licensed Psychologist

(616) 453-1998
mmcevoy@tds.net

NORMAL PEER CONFLICT

- Two or more students who have a disagreement, conflict, or misunderstanding.
- The students involved are of fairly equal rank and social status, and are fairly equally matched in strength and power.
- One or both of the students may be strong-willed, impulsive, hotheaded, lack anger management skills, or lack problem solving/conflict resolution skills.
- Both students are upset and demonstrate negative emotions.
- If the disagreement escalates to mean behavior (name-calling, pushing, shunning, spreading a rumor, talking behind the person's back), the mean behavior may or may not be repeated in the future.
- It may or may not have been intentional that the conflict escalated to verbal, social, or physical aggression.

BULLYING

- Bullying is a form of aggression that is intentional, repeated, and involves an imbalance of power between the students involved. Bullying can take the form of a look, gesture, word, or action. The bully always has more power than his or her target (e.g., more popular, more friends, better verbal skills, more physically attractive, more money or nice clothes, more athletic, bigger, taller, stronger, etc.)
- During bully-target aggression, there is usually a difference in affect displayed by the bully and the target. The bully may show little or no emotion. The target is usually upset, and often displays anger, sadness, fear, or frustration.

WHEN SHOULD PARENTS INTERVENE?

- If aggressive behavior occurs in front of the parent, the parent should stop the behavior (see handout with direct intervention steps). Parental intervention should occur whether the behavior is an escalation of normal peer conflict, or is a repeated bullying pattern. If a parent sees mean behavior and does nothing, it sends a powerful message that mean behavior is okay.
- If the parent does not see the behavior directly, try to determine if this is normal peer conflict that escalated to aggressive behavior, or is part of a bullying pattern. If it seems to be normal peer conflict, talk to your child and/or role-play with him or her about what he or she can say or do to respond assertively, yet appropriately, to the conflict (to resolve the problem without hurting the relationship with the other child). If it seems clear that the behavior is part of an ongoing bullying pattern, you will need to either help your child confront the situation assertively, or prepare your child to seek help from school personnel. If your child will do neither, the parent will need to inform school officials of the pattern. The following information is important for school personnel to know:
1) **Who** did it; **What** happened; **When** the pattern started (how long it has been going on and how often it is occurring); **Where** it is happening; and **Witnesses** (other students who saw or heard directly what occurred).

STUDENTS WHO BULLY

- Strong need for power and to be in control
- Average or good self-esteem, average grades and academic skill, average to above average in popularity
- Little anxiety or insecurity
- Good at talking their way out of situations; verbally manipulative
- Generally oppositional and defiant toward adults, and may even be intimidating to adults
- Show little empathy for the feelings of others
- Show little or no remorse for the bullying

TARGETS WHO RESPOND PASSIVELY

- Often more anxious and insecure than other students
- Cautious, sensitive, quiet
- Cry or withdraw when attacked
- Low self-esteem
- Often lonely at school, and may prefer adult company
- Difficulty being assertive with peers
- Do not tease or bully others, and have a negative attitude towards aggression
- May be physically weaker than peers or have fewer interpersonal skills

TARGETS WHO RESPOND IN A PROVOCATIVE WAY

- May be anxious and insecure
- May have a hot temper
- May attempt to fight back or respond aggressively, but are ineffective
- Often hyperactive and impulsive and act in ways that irritate others
- May be clumsy, immature, or have annoying habits
- Their behavior may irritate other students, not just those who choose to bully
- May be disliked by adults as well as peers
- May try to bully students with less power

Direct Intervention For Parents When They See Mean Behavior

Pull the child acting mean aside privately. Use a calm voice. Don't argue. Don't lecture. Stick to the points below.

- I saw you _____. (Repeat to him/her what you saw and heard exactly.)
- I would never let someone treat you that way if I saw it, and it's not okay to do what you just did to _____ (other child).
- We don't do that here.
- This needs to stop.

If it seems appropriate given the situation, say the following:

- You need to figure out a way to make this right. Any ideas? (Brainstorm with the child).

If the child refuses, review with him or her your expectations for behavior, then physically disengage from the child. Send the child on his or her way or physically move away from the child, but stay close enough to monitor behavior if things don't improve. If the behavior occurs again, set a consequence. Restriction of informal time with friends is one of the most effective deterrents to aggressive behavior.

If the child offers to apologize, review the 3 step process for genuine apologies. 1) State what you did without blame or excuses: "I shoved you and called you a name." 2) Acknowledge that your behavior was hurtful: "I hurt your arm and embarrassed you." 3) Say what you will do to make it right, but only say it if you mean it: "I won't ever do that to you again. I am really sorry."

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR CHILD IS A TARGET?

- Complains of frequent stomachaches or headaches and wants to stay home from school
- Has trouble sleeping at night
- Shows an unexplained drop in grades, and/or teachers have reported significant lapses in concentration and focus
- Shows an increase in depressed, irritable, or anxious behavior
- Shows signs of appetite disturbance (eating more or less than usual)
- Loses interest in activities that used to be pleasurable, and seems to be isolating himself or herself more frequently
- Complains often about how "mean" his or her friends are or says he/she has no real friends
- Increased tearfulness or anger over seemingly small matters
- Comes home with torn clothing, has unexplained bruises or cuts, or is missing possessions or money with no explanations for what has happened

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR CHILD COULD BE BULLYING OTHERS?

- Is mean to siblings or neighborhood children
- Is rude, disrespectful, or sarcastic with kids on the phone, in the car, at your house, or on-line
- Talks about hurting others or getting even with people who upset him or her
- Shows minimal empathy for others when they are sad or hurting
- School officials express concern about your child's behavior toward peers
- Other parents have been upset by some of the things your child has done
- Has unexplained belongings or money in his or her possession

Ask yourself the following questions about your child:

1. Does your child need to be in charge all the time and hate it when he or she is not?
2. Does a day hardly go by when your child doesn't criticize somebody?
3. Does your child get mad at others when they don't do as he or she says?
4. Does your child make social "rules" within his or her friendship group, or rules during play that he or she expects others to follow and makes threats when they don't?
5. Are other children afraid of how he or she is going to react?
6. Has your child made insulting remarks to people for things he or she knows they can't do anything about?
7. Does your child feel people should work to win his or her approval?
8. Does your child think it's okay to say mean things to kids, or to push, shove, or hit them?
9. Does your child decide who's in and who's out of his or her group?

DO'S AND DON'TS IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

What Not To Do:

- Do not tell your child that he or she should "ignore it" in the hope that the bullying will stop.
- Do not minimize the seriousness of your child's situation. To your child it is a big deal, even if it seems relatively minor to you.
- Do not encourage your child to "get even" by doing something mean back to the person who was mean to him or her. This will only escalate the situation.
- Do not tell your child that this is "kids being kids" and he or she needs to learn to deal with the bully on his or her own. Do not tell your child that there is nothing you can do to help. Let your child know that together you will find a way to make the bullying stop.
- Do not overreact. Do not interrogate your child or become angry if he or she is reluctant to discuss what is happening. Gentle questioning will get you farther than a barrage of questions in an anxious, irritated or upset tone of voice.

What To Do:

- Discuss with and role-play with your child what he or she can say or do to stop the bullying. Prepare your child to report it to an adult if his or her strategy isn't working. If your child will not take action, or attempts to stop it or report it fail, intervene. Do not expect your child to continue to try to work it out on his or her own. Some children will beg parents to keep the bullying a secret. Let children know that the bully is counting on the child remaining silent and that this code of silence works only for the bully's benefit. Call school officials and make an appointment to see them. They can't address the problem if they don't know about it. Document the incident(s) and bring this written report to the meeting. Write down what happened, who was involved, where it took place, when it got started, and the names of any witnesses. If there is damage to clothing/property or physical injury, take a photograph. Document all conversations and written communications you have had with school officials about what is happening, what the school officials said they would do, and what actually happened. Persist in discussing the problem with the school if nothing gets done.
- Treat the bullying as a loss experience. Be empathic. Your child is grieving the loss of psychological safety, self-esteem, sense of belonging and acceptance, and a sense of power over his or her life. Respect your child's pain. It is very real to them.
- Tell your child what he or she is doing right. In addition, discuss any annoying, irritating, or counterproductive behaviors or responses that might contribute to being targeted.
- Expand your child's social networks. Put the child in new settings with new peers. This gives him or her a fresh chance to see himself/herself differently and to be perceived differently by other children. Activities such as gymnastics, martial arts, dance, swimming, theatre or music clubs, community sports teams, hobby clubs, church groups, or community volunteer activities give targets social victories and needed success experiences with peers. Try to select classes or groups that develop competencies in activities that are valued by peers.

- Increase social opportunities for your child with nice classmates. Invite individual or small groups of children (even numbers work best) over to your house for play dates, recreational activities, and other fun past-times. Be willing to drive to the mall, movie, or other recreational activities. Make sure you are in earshot during these social gatherings. Victimized children, in particular, need parents who are willing to act as social engineers. This can be an important part of parenting.
- Help your child practice assertiveness in response to mean behavior, as well as clever verbal comebacks to be used in the event that your child is being verbally or psychologically abused by peers. Role-play practice with a parent or other caring adult (teacher, counselor, older sibling) is essential to carrying this off in the real world. Practice makes perfect.
- If bullying is occurring in the neighborhood, intervene with the whole group of children. Discuss with all the children the behaviors that are considered bullying. Tell them in a firm way that bullying is not acceptable behavior and will not be tolerated. Let them know that if bullying occurs, parents will be informed and they will be sent home.
- Talk to other parents. Where there is one target, there are likely to be others. Don't hesitate to approach school staff as a concerned group of parents if you are aware that bullying occurs at your child's school. If the school doesn't already have one, discuss the need for an anti-bullying school policy. The policy should make it clear that bullying will not be tolerated, and should include negative consequences for bullying.
- Ask the school to increase adult supervision during high-risk times such as recess, lunch, and in the hallways between classes. Volunteer your time at recess and lunch. Be present at the bus stop if this is a high-risk area. An adult presence can deter bullying. Ask school officials to limit unstructured play at school and to provide plenty of organized activities for children during free time.
- Monitor your child's TV viewing and video game playing for violent content. Much of the current TV and video programming reinforces sarcasm, put-down humor, rude behavior, and aggression as a strategy to get one's way and to deal with conflicts.
- Address bullying among siblings. Help children resolve conflicts and solve problems at home without resorting to power and control tactics. Encourage empathy among siblings. Discuss with your children the consequences of their actions for others. Encourage them to think about how they would feel if someone did that to them. Help them think of alternative ways of getting their needs met without hurting others. Establish consequences for bullying siblings. For example, for every put-down, they need to give their brother or sister at least three "put-ups". If a sibling hits a brother or sister, ask them to come up with a plan to do better and provide an immediate consequence (e.g., time-out, removal of privileges, restriction of informal time with friends for a specific period of time).

Marcia McEvoy, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist, Phone: (616) 453-1998.

DISCUSSIONS PARENTS SHOULD HAVE WITH THEIR CHILDREN

- Do you like school? What parts of school do you like the most? What parts of school do you dislike the most?
- Describe for me how students talk and act toward each other: 1) On the playground? 2) In the lunchroom? 3) In the hallways between classes? 4) At the bus stop, on the bus, or walking to and from school? 5) When they stay after school for sports, clubs, or for other reasons?
- How often do you see mean behavior between students? Are there times and places at school where some students often are picked on by their classmates? Are there students who are especially cruel to other students? Are there some students who are most often picked on by others? What do other kids do when someone is getting picked on? If some kids try to help, what do they do that sometimes works? Does the person getting picked on ever do anything that helps it stop or that works to make the mean kid lay off?
- Do the teachers or other adults know about the mean behavior that you see? Which mean behaviors between students do the teachers or other adults at school try to stop, and which behaviors do they usually ignore? What do they do that seems to work, and what do they do that lets the mean behavior continue or get worse?
- How often do you think students report to the teachers or other adults when they know someone is being bullied? What are some of the reasons why students do not tell the teachers or other adults? What happens if someone reports bullying, or what do you think would happen if they reported it? Is there a way for adults to make it safe for students to report bullying when they see or hear it?
- Do other students ever pick on you? Could you tell me about what happens when other students do this? Could you tell me how this makes you feel?
- Almost everyone has picked on someone before. Tell me a time when you have been mean to someone. Could you tell me why you sometimes do this? How do you think it makes the other person feel?
- Are certain students in your class left out a lot during lunch, recess, or other activities? Have you or your friends ever left someone out? What do you think it is like for students who do not have any friends at school?

WHEN YOU HAVE A CONFLICT WITH A FRIEND

If you have a problem with a friend and need to talk:

1. Pick a private place to talk and a good chunk of time. Face-to-face conversations are better than phone conversations. Steer clear of e-mail or instant messaging to solve a problem.

2. Plan what you'll say before hand. Share your feelings. Don't attack or insult or accuse.

Can we talk?

Will you agree to keep this private?

Our friendship means a lot to me and I want to work this out.

Something's been bothering me.

I was really hurt (upset, disappointed, embarrassed, sad) when

I wouldn't do that to you. Friends shouldn't treat each other that way.

How do you see what happened?"

3. Listen to what your friend has to say. Don't interrupt, argue, or "Yeah, but".

4. Tell your friend what you need from him or her to make it right. An explanation?

An apology? A promise to never do it again? What do you need for things to return to normal?

It would help me if you explained why you did it.

An apology would help me get over it faster.

I want things to be normal again. It would help me if I knew that you were sorry about what happened too.

It would help me if I knew that you wouldn't do it again.

5. Do you have something to apologize for? Have you done something similar to your friend in the past? If so, now is the time to own up to your part of it and apologize too.

I'm sorry too.

6. If your friend can't see your point of view at all, agree to disagree.

"We may have to agree to disagree on that."

7. If your friend continues to mistreat you, and you can't resolve it, you may need to change the friendship. You may need to put some distance between the two of you, take a break, or let things slowly fizzle so that you aren't as close anymore. Don't make this person into an enemy by being mean. Be friendly and respectful, but distant.

If your friend has a problem with you and needs to talk:

1. *Listen, Listen, Listen.* Bite your lip. Breathe deeply. Count to ten. Let your friend finish. Avoid saying, “But I” Or “Well you” Don’t turn it around on your friend by denying, justifying, or blaming. Don’t tell your friend why he or she shouldn’t be angry. If your friend doesn’t feel heard, he or she will blow up at you the next time something goes wrong.
2. *Stay on the topic.* Don’t bring stuff up from two months ago or from last year. The more issues you bring into it, the more unsolvable the problem seems, and the more you both will question the worth of the whole relationship. If you bring up your friend's past behavior that seems to justify your behavior, then there is always a reason to act poorly and to never apologize. Sometimes apologies are necessary. You can explain your actions, especially what motivated you, but don’t insist you’re right.
3. *Don't change the subject or walk away mad.* If you need to take a break to gather your thoughts, tell your friend that you have to go to the bathroom, then go, and regroup in the process.
4. *Keep other people out of it.* Don’t invite other friends to get involved. Keep your conversation private.
5. *Apologize if you did something hurtful.* Acknowledge that you hurt your friend. Don’t blame your friend or make excuses. Tell your friend what you wish you had done instead. Tell your friend what you will do to make it right, but only say it if you mean it. Avoid fake apologies (e.g., “*I’m sorry you feel that way.*” OR “*I guess I’m supposed to say I’m sorry.*” OR “*I said I was sorry. Can we move on?*” OR “*I’m sorry that your feelings are so sensitive that you were hurt by what I said.*”) Insincere apologies make your friend feel responsible or insulted. Reassure your friend that you value the friendship and will work hard not to let it happen again.

BE A GOOD BYSTANDER

- **If it is safe, use a shutdown in the moment. Encourage other bystanders to speak up too. There is strength and safety in numbers. Fifty percent of the time, if just one bystander says “Stop it”, it will end the bullying within ten seconds.**

Knock it off.	That makes you look bad.	That's weak.	Calm down.
Cut it out.	Nobody likes that.	Give it up.	Chillax.
Quit it.	Why are you ragging on him?	Lay off.	
Just stop.	That's messed up.	That's low.	
That's mean.	That's just wrong.	That's cold.	
That's rude.	What's up with that?	That's harsh.	
Back off.	That's getting old.	Enough.	
Chill out.	That's getting boring.	That's bogus.	
Relax.	That is not cool.	That's lame.	
Ease up.	That's annoying.	Step off.	

- **In the moment, try to distract the mean student** (ask an unrelated question, change the subject, say or do something humorous to break the tension).
- **Make up an excuse to get the target away from the mean kid. Interrupt the mean kid.**
“Hey Mary, come here a minute. I need to ask you something (show you something).”
“Hey Steve, Mrs. Smith (a teacher) is looking for you. Come on.”
“Hey we’ve got to go.” (Look at the target to get him/her to follow you as you walk away.)
- **Be friendly to the target during free time outside of class.** Smile and talk to the target at different free times during the day, or even before or after school. Invite them to walk with you in the hallway or sit with you at lunch. You don’t need to mention the bullying.
- **Encourage friends who are being bullied to report it. Offer to go with your friend:**
“You shouldn't have to put up with that every day. I can go with you to report it. It’s the right thing to do. If you don’t tell, he/she will just keep doing it to you.”
- **Report it yourself (as the bystander) to an adult quietly and privately:**
E-mail, write a note, leave a voicemail phone message, or tell an adult the five W's privately:
1) Who did it? 4) Where did it happen at school?
2) What happened? 5) Witnesses in addition to you who saw/heard it.
3) When did it start? How long has it been going on?

AFTER REPORTING, DON'T TELL EVEN ONE FRIEND THAT YOU TOLD. DON'T EVEN TELL THE TARGET THAT YOU HELPED THEM OUT BY REPORTING TO AN ADULT. THE WORD WILL MOST LIKELY GET BACK TO THE BULLY IF YOU TELL ANOTHER STUDENT. TELL YOUR PARENTS ONLY. GO BACK IMMEDIATELY TO THE SAME ADULT AT SCHOOL IF IT HAPPENS AGAIN OR THERE IS ANY ATTEMPT AT REVENGE, GETTING EVEN, OR RETALIATION BY THE MEAN KID.

- **Tell friends who are acting mean to "chill" before they get reported. Do it in a nice way, in a friendly way:**
 “You could get in major trouble if you keep that up. Chill out before someone reports it. I don't want you to get in trouble. It's really not okay what you are doing. It's getting old.”
- **Privately support the target at a later time:**
 “I saw what happened. That was really mean and rude. Are you all right?”
 “That was so wrong. They were way out of line. They are having a problem today.”
 “What they just did/said was really messed up. Are you OK?”
 “That just makes them look bad. I can't believe they just said that. Are you all right?”
 “That says more about them than you. Don't listen to them.”
 “I wanted you to know that most people don't agree with them at all.”
- **If it is safe, a group of bystanders (no more than three or four) could approach the person being mean, and tell the person in a calm and respectful way that they don't like what is going on. This should be done privately when the mean kid is by him/herself and not when the person is surrounded by a lot of friends/classmates. Bystanders should plan what they want to say in advance so that they stay calm and respectful. It is not okay to get in the person's face and threaten them to “back off or else.”**

THE RIGHT WAY: “What you are doing to _____ is really mean. Nobody likes it. It's getting old. We want you to stop before someone reports it. People are sick of it and we don't want you to get into trouble if someone reports it. We know that you probably don't like them, but what you are doing is wrong. It would be cool if you could lay off or chill a little. Could you think about it?”

- **For gossiping, backstabbing, and rumor spreading: Don't pass it on later! Keep it to yourself!** A rumor can't keep spreading unless you help spread it. In the moment, you can also change the subject. You could disagree politely (“Gosh, really? You think that? I don't think that at all. That surprises me that you would say that. I really like _____.”). You could also use your sense of humor to change the direction of the conversation.

IF SOMEONE IS BEING MEAN TO YOU OR BULLYING YOU

- **If a bigger or older kid is pushing, shoving or threatening you:**

WALK AWAY CALMLY AND WITH CONFIDENCE. DON'T RUN, BUT GET ADULT HELP AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN! As you are walking away, put on a poker face, keep your head level and eyes straight ahead, keep your shoulders down, swing your arms or put them in your pocket, and don't turn around or stop no matter what the bigger kid says. Tell the nearest adult what happened.

- **If a bigger or older kid is calling you names or teasing you in a mean way, use a neutral comeback with a poker face and calm voice:**

Sorry you feel that way.

That's a thought. We'll have to disagree on that.

It's good to know how you see it.

You're welcome to your opinion.

- **Smile and use your sense of humor:**

Have a great day!

Thanks, I appreciate that!

(Laugh) Good one!

Thanks for sharing!

(Thumbs up) Sweet!

Coming from you that's a real compliment!

I didn't know you cared!

Well that was awkward!

(Big smile and playful) I love you too!

Wow! Interesting!

Excellent insult! I'll have to remember that one!

I'll log that away!

Use a comeback in the moment and walk away:

Nice try.

That makes you look bad.

Denied.

I don't think so.

I would care why?

Fail.

Epic fail.

Yeah, right.

That's getting old.

Was that really necessary? Really?

That's weak. Give it up.

That would be a negative.

Whatever.

Oh that's original.

You're telling me this because...?

Boring!

Keep dreaming.

(Fake Laugh) No.

Oh clever!

Dude -- No.

Not even close.

Cool! NOT.

Your point is?

Must feel proud huh?

I can't believe you just said that.

You seriously need to chill.

That says more about you than it does about me.

Do you think it's cool to be mean? I hope no one is saying or doing this to your little brother (sister).

- **If what they are saying is true, smile and agree with them:**

Thanks for noticing.

No kidding. What gave it away?

So? Your point is?

You just noticed that now?

What a surprise!

Whatever. Tell me something I don't know.

I'll alert the media!

Now there's a news flash.

Good job, Sherlock!

You're so observant!

Nothing gets past you!

You're right. You're telling me this why?

Thank you Captain Obvious.

Big deal. What else is new?

- **Respond with compliment or kindness:**

That surprises me. I think you're better than that.

Why would someone so nice say something so mean?

You say mean things, but deep down I think you're usually a pretty good person.

Teaser says: Loser! You say: Sorry you feel that way. I always thought you were pretty cool.

Teaser says: You're stupid. You say: Sorry you feel that way. I think you're pretty smart.

Teaser says: Your clothes are ugly. You say: Sorry you feel that way. I think you look good today.

- **Stand up for yourself with a calm voice, poker face, and eye contact. Then walk away confidently:**

That's getting old and it's boring. Chill out.

That's weak. Give it up.

That's totally not cool. If you keep it up, I'll be forced to report it.

You seriously need to chill. If you don't, I'm reporting it.

That makes you look bad. If you don't stop, I'll be forced to report it.

That's lame and boring. If you do it again, I'll be forced to report it.

Knock it off or I'll report it.

- **Report it to an adult quietly and privately. Who did it, What happened, Where it happened, When it got started, Witnesses. Tell no other student that you reported. Go back to the adult if it happens again.**

Developed by Marcia McEvoy, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist, (616) 453-1998. mmcevoy@tds.net Copyright pending.

ADVICE FOR PARENTS ABOUT CYBER BULLYING

I. How cyber bullying differs from traditional bullying

1. The most popular online activity of boys is gaming and the most popular online activity of girls is communication. Girls are two to three times more likely to cyber bully than boys.
2. The cyber bully has his or her target on an electronic tether. There is 24/7 access to the target through computers and cell phones with limited opportunity for escape.
3. The number of individuals who have access to the target's humiliation increases exponentially when it is online.
4. The severity and duration of the incidences are greater with cyber bullying. Students are likely to be more vicious online than they are face-to-face. Once words or pictures are electronically recorded, they can be downloaded for years.
5. Children and youth can be cyberbullied through e-mails, instant messaging, text or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones, blogs like MySpace and Facebook, chat rooms, or web pages created about a particular student or group of students. The most common form of cyber bullying is through instant messaging, followed by use of chat rooms, e-mails, and messages posted on web or blog sites.
6. Social climbers and popular students can be actively involved in cyber bullying. These include students in the "in crowd," "queen bees," "jocks," and "preps." They are more likely to pick on "wannabes" and "isolates" who are fearful of reporting. However, unlike traditional bullying, online bullying is sometimes done by a less powerful person to a more powerful person. Reduction of social cues related to social status in online communication environments appears to lead to greater participation by those who are at a lower level in the social hierarchy. Students who are disinclined to speak up in the real world may feel more comfortable in communicating online. The online communication may be retaliation for in-school bullying or an effort to stop the bullying at school.
7. Reported incidence rates for cyber bullying are higher than for traditional bullying. In one study, 25 percent of girls and 11 percent of boys reported being electronically bullied within the past two months. 13 percent of girls and almost 9 percent of boys reported that they had cyberbullied someone in the past two months. In another study, 30 percent of girls between the ages of 13 and 18 reported that they had been sexually harassed in chat rooms, yet only 7 percent reported the harassment to a parent. Cyber bullying has increased in recent years. In nationally representative surveys of 10-17 year olds, twice as many students indicated that they had been targets and perpetrators of online harassment in 2005 compared with 2000. Only 51 percent of preteens and 35 percent of teens who have been cyberbullied told their parents.
8. In one study, 64 percent of teens stated that teens do things online that they would not want their parents to know about. 62 percent of parents say they check on their teen's Internet activity after they have been online. Only 33 percent of teens said their parents monitor their activity occasionally.
9. Unlike traditional bullying, there is a strong online social norm that students have free speech to say whatever they want without regard for the harm it can cause another.

This social norm leads to the assumption that nothing can be done to stop cyber bullying. Related to this, there is also a strong social norm among users that “What happens online, should stay online.” Online activities are considered separate from the “real world.”

10. Be aware that future employers and colleges are increasingly accessing information about prospective employees/students from personal blogs such as Facebook, MySpace, and Xanga. Employment and college scholarships/admissions have been denied to students based on the information found on these sites.
11. For more information on cyber bullying and cyber safety, go to any of the following websites: www.iSAFE.org, www.NetSmartz.org, or www.webwisekids.org.

II. Tips For Parents On How To Prevent Cyber Bullying

1. Keep your home computer in easily viewable places, such as a family room or kitchen.
2. Talk regularly to your child about on-line activities he or she is involved in. Encourage your child to tell you immediately if he or she is a target of troublesome on-line behavior.
3. Encourage your child to tell you if he or she is aware of others who are the targets of such behavior.
4. Tell your child that although you respect his or her privacy, you may review his or her on-line communication if you think there is reason for concern.
5. Consider installing parental control filtering software and/or tracking programs that can tell you where your child has been on the internet.
6. Advocate that your child’s school has a policy addressing cyber bullying.
7. For a comprehensive list of internet and text messaging chat abbreviations, parents can type in the words “internet chat abbreviations” on Google or a similar search engine. There are several very comprehensive sites with examples of these abbreviations and icons and what they mean.

III. Advice Parents Can Give Their Children If They Are Being Cyberbullied

Tell Your Child:

1. If you are being attacked online, don’t respond until you have calmed down and can figure out what to do from a position of strength. If the attack happens through IM or a chat room, exit until you can prepare an effective response – strong, assertive, and unemotional.
2. When you are ready, send a clear, unemotional message demanding that the cyber bullying stop, and warn that if it does not stop, other actions will be taken.
3. All messages sent or received should be electronically saved.
4. If you decide to ignore the cyber bully, you can block all further communication from this individual through e-mail, IM, and text messaging. Avoid going to the site or group where you were attacked. Change your e-mail address, password, username, account, or phone number if necessary. Once you change your password, treat it like a toothbrush. Would you share your toothbrush with others? Keep your password PRIVATE even

from your best friend. Friendships sometimes end badly and your password is power in another student's hands. Also, keep in mind that any e-mails you send or instant messaging that you participate in can be saved, forwarded to others, and printed out. Be careful what you say to other students. It can and will often get around.

5. File a complaint with the Internet Service Provider. Cyber bullying is almost always a violation of the Terms Of Use Agreement of most web sites, Internet Service Providers, and cell phone companies. You can provide the harmful messages or a link to the harmful material to the company and ask that the account of the cyber bully be terminated and any harmful material removed. If the cyber bully is using e-mail, contact the Internet Service Provider of the cyber bully (which is part of the e-mail address). If the material appears on a third-party website, go to the site's home page and file a complaint through the "Contact Us" e-mail address. If the material is on a website with its own domain name, go to the host company's website and file a complaint through the "Contact Us" e-mail address. If the cyber bully is using a cell phone, trace the number and contact his or her phone company.
6. Report any online threats or distressing material (person is threatening suicide or homicide of others) to an adult immediately. Adults have been able to effectively intervene in many potentially dangerous situations.
7. If you don't know who is sending you the distressing material (e.g., an anonymous e-mail), it is important to know that in most cases, people leave "cyber footprints" wherever they go on the Internet. Every computer that uses the Internet can generally be identified by its Internet Provider address. Students who cyber bully have the perception of invisibility and anonymity, and believe they can't be caught. They usually can be caught.
8. If the cyber bully is from your school, a hard copy of the communication could be made, and brought to school. The school can take steps to help ensure that the cyber bullying stops and that retaliation does not occur. If the cyber bully is not from your school, your parents can send a letter to the cyber bully's parents requesting that he/she stops and all harmful material is removed with a copy of the harmful material enclosed. If the cyber bullying is a crime (e.g., harassment, stalking, threat of bodily harm, child pornography, hate crime, creating/sending sexually explicit pictures, taking a picture of you in a private place like a bathroom), your parents can contact the police. Even if the behavior is not a criminal offense, civil law permits targets to sue a bully or his or her parents in order to recover damages. Your parents may want to consider contacting an attorney to send the letter to the parents of the bully.

Taken from *Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats: Responding to the Challenge of Online Social Cruelty, Threats, and Distress*, by Nancy Willard, Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use, 2006.

WHAT ABOUT SAYING "I'M SORRY"?

Aggressive students often use apologies to minimize their actions and avoid real consequences (e.g., "*I said I was sorry. Why are you bugging me?*"). Saying "I'm sorry" is often a lie – they aren't sorry at all. Students learn to "pretend" to be sorry to avoid consequences. The target of the aggressor is too often expected to forgive the aggressor after an insincere apology, as though they have no right to be angry any more. Apologies are often cloaked in language that leaves the target feeling responsible or insulted. "*I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings*". This translates into "You must be easily hurt." OR "*I'm sorry that you were so clueless that I had to tell you to your face that you weren't invited to the party.*" This translates into "You are such a loser." My personal favorite: "*I'm sorry that you thought I swore at you.*"

The whole pattern of saying "I'm sorry" in this manner is that it is eerily similar to the pattern that abusive spouses use with their targets: cruelty followed by apology followed by cruelty followed by apology. This is not the outcome we want.

What if a student is feeling true remorse and really wants to apologize? The structure outlined below has been used with good outcomes. The apology must come after the consequence has been administered, and not be considered the consequence.

1. Describe what you did in one sentence. (e.g., "*I hit you. 'I called you a mean name.'*" "*I talked nasty about you behind your back and started a rumor about you.*" "*I played a mean trick on you.*")
2. Describe how your action affected the other person. (e.g., "*I know that hurt.*" "*You lost some friends.*" "*I made you feel sad and left out.*" "*I hurt your reputation.*" "*I hurt your feelings.*" "*I embarrassed you in front of everyone.*")
3. Describe what you will do to make amends and only say it if you really mean it. (e.g., "*I will help you make more friends by inviting you to sit with my group at lunch tomorrow.*" "*I will play with you tomorrow at recess.*" "*I will tell my friends and anyone else that asks me that I made up what I said about you.*" "*I'll stop making fun of your hair and I'll tell other kids to knock it off as well.*")

If apologies are done face-to-face, the aggressor should practice with the adult what they are going to say. The adult should supervise the apology in a private setting. With this approach, the aggressor takes responsibility, and the target feels affirmed and taken seriously. Another powerful (and often better) option is to have the aggressor write the apology, and in the presence of the adult, hand it to the target. This can sometimes be more effective than an oral apology because the adult can monitor the appropriateness of what is written and the target doesn't feel forced in the moment to "forgive" the aggressor. Targets can forgive if and when they are ready, on their terms.

Developed by Stan Davis, *Working with Bullies: School-Based Interventions to Change Aggressive Behavior*, 2002

Apology of Action For Elementary Students

Some Examples:

- Write the person a note and sincerely apologize
- Invite the person to play with you and your friends at recess
- Invite the person to sit by you and your friends at lunch
- Encourage your friends to be friendly and nice to the person
- Greet the person in the morning and smile at them
- Give the person a compliment
- Say something nice about the person to other students
- Sharpen their pencils for them
- Share your snack
- Go out of your way to talk to the person and be friendly
- Include the person in the conversation when you are talking to classmates
- Ask the person to be your partner for an activity
- Help the person with any school work
- Invite the person to sit on the bus with you
- Offer to fix something that you broke
- Share your supplies or let them borrow from you if they need it
- Make the person a beautiful picture
- Smile and say goodbye to the person at the end of the day

Adapted from Teaching Children To Care: Classroom Management for Ethical and Academic Growth, K-8 by Ruth Sidney Charney, 2002.

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