

**“Cyber Bullying – Who What When Where How & Why  
(but not in that order)”**

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**Introduction**

In this age of MySpace, cell phones, and instant messaging; it has never been more important to ensure that you are part of your children’s lives: the real and the virtual. It is no surprise that girls are enamored with social communications as a way to make connections and keep in touch. By the time they are ten or eleven, they may be developing their own websites, and creating fun emoticons, avatars and colorful texts for their emails.

Let me give an example: Let’s say there are two teen girls named “Julie” and “Anne”. One day, Julie gives Anne a funny look in science class. Anne recoils, but does not do anything about it until she gets home and types “R U mad at me?” Julie responds, “U R 2 sensitive?” Rather than picking up the phone and straightening it out, Anne then sends a message about Julie to forty of their closest friends, beginning a progression of misunderstandings, and frustrations that eventually leads to someone – Anne, Julie, or maybe someone else –being ostracized, teased and left out in the cold. This unpleasant and likely sounding scenario, however unsettling, is not the norm that it is sometimes portrayed to be. Girls have not stopped talking to each other directly on the phone, as many parents can attest. While it is true that girls who have been raised not to show anger or deal with conflict directly continue to dodge face-to-face confrontations, the behavior itself isn’t new. The tools of expression have simply changed.

And don’t forget, CYBER BULLING happens to boys too.

**What is Traditional Bullying?**

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Traditionally, bullying has involved actions such as: hitting, punching (physical bullying), teasing or name calling (verbal bullying), or intimidation through gestures, or social exclusion. In recent years, technology has given children and youth a new means of bullying each other. A child who is being bullied (either in real time or virtual) has a hard time defending him/herself.

### What is Cyberbullying?

Cyber bullying which is sometimes referred to as online social cruelty or electronic bullying and can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar or threatening messages or images
- Posting sensitive, private information about another person
- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.

### What are the Tools?

- Emails, instant messages, text or digital messages from cells
- Phones, web pages, web logs, blogs, chat rooms
- Discussion groups, other information technologies
- iPods, MP3 players.

### How Common is Cyber Bullying?

- 18% of students in grades 6-8 said they HAD BEEN CYBERBULLIED at least once in the last couple of months.
- 11% of students in grades 6-8 said they HAD CYBERBULLIED another person at least once in the last couple of months.
- 19% of regular internet users between the ages of 10-17 reported being involved in online aggression. 15% had been the aggressors, 7% had been targets.
- 36% of 12-17 years olds reported that someone said threatening or embarrassing things about them through e-mail, instant messages, web sites, chat rooms or text messages.
- Cyber bullying has increased in recent years. In nationally representative surveys of 10-17 years olds, twice as many children and youth indicated that they had been victims and perpetrators of online harassment in 2008 compared to 2005.

### Who Are the Victims and Perpetrators of Cyber Bullying?

- Anyone and everyone
- Boys typically bully in real time and with direct confrontation and verbal harassment.
- Girls use social network tools, but incidents of real-time assaults are increasing.
- Adults are bullying children online more frequently, since the anonymity of the internet allows for proxy bullying.

### How do Attacks Occur?

- Direct Attacks
  - Instant Messaging
  - Stealing passwords
  - Blogs
  - Web Sites
  - Sending Pictures thru e-mail and cell phones
  - Internet Polling

- Interactive Gaming
- Sending Malicious Code
- Sending Porn and Other Junk mail
- Impersonation
- Indirect Attacks
  - Cyber bullying by Proxy

### Why Does Cyber Bullying Happen and Why Do People Do It?

Who knows why kids do anything? When it comes to cyber bullying, they are often motivated by anger, revenge or frustration. Sometimes they do it for entertainment or because they are bored and have too much time on their hands and too many tech toys available to them. Many do it for laughs or to get a reaction. Some do it by accident, and either send a message to the wrong recipient or didn't think before they did something. The power-hungry do it to torment others and for their ego. Revenge of the Nerd may start out defending themselves from traditional bullying only to find that they enjoy being the tough guy or gal. Mean girls do it to help bolster or remind people of their own social standing. And some think they are righting a wrong and standing up for others.

Because the cyber bullies' motives differ, the solutions and responses to each type of cyber bullying incident have to differ, too. Unfortunately, there is no "one size fits all" when cyber bullying is concerned. Only two of the types of cyber bullies have something in common with the traditional schoolyard bully. Experts who understand schoolyard bullying often misunderstand cyber bullying, thinking it is just another method of bullying. But the motives and the nature of cyber communications, as well as the demographic and profile of a cyber bully, differ from those of their schoolyard counterpart. Cyberbullying types include:

- The Vengeful Angel
- The Power-Hungry or Revenge of the Nerds
- The "Mean Girls"
- The Inadvertent Cyber bully or "Because I Can"

### How to Protect Yourself and Your Children

- Don't talk to or accept anything from strangers.
- Come straight home from school. Parents over the generations have always known that children can get in trouble when they wander around after school. Wandering aimlessly online isn't any different.
- Don't provoke fights. Trying to provoke someone in cyberspace is called "flaming." It often violates your "terms of service" of your online service provider.
- Don't steal. Downloading music without paying for it, and copying a friend's computer game or software may be common these days, but it is still wrong
- Don't tell people personal things about yourself. Once it's in cyberspace it's out there and travelling forever.
- Make sure you know what personal information is, not just name, date of birth and social security number.
- We need to know your friends and neighbors.

## **Conclusion**

Bottom line, it's really not about technology, it's about parenting and teaching our children solid values of right and wrong; and it's worth the effort. When our children surf the Internet, they are learning skills that they will need for their future. They become explorers in cyberspace, where they explore ideas and discover new information. Also, because there is no race, gender or disability online, the Internet is the one place where our children can be judged by the quality of their ideas rather than their physical attributes.

While your children may know more about technology, you know more about what's right, life, and what it means to be a good human being. Sit at their side while they compute when you can. It will help you set rules that make sense for your child. It also gives you an unexpected benefits.....you'll get a personal computing lesson from the most affordable expert you know!....and quality time with someone you love, your child.

Teach them what you know, and if you're lucky they will teach what they know.

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