Cyberbullying

For Parents of Primary School Children

Cyberbullying

What is it & How To Manage It

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Cyberbullying Definition

"An aggressive act or behaviour that is carried out using electronic means by a group or individual repeatedly & over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself"

(Smith et al, 2008)

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Components - Cyberbullying

There are three components that must be recognised when it comes to a broad definition of bullying

1. Intention to do harm
2. A repeated act of behaviour
3. An imbalance of power

Forms - Cyberbullying

❏ Sending mean text messages or IMs to someone

❏ Pranking someone's mobile phone

❏ Pretending to be someone else to spread hurtful messages online

❏ Spreading secrets or rumours about someone online

❏ Being rude or mean to someone in an online game

❏ Tricking someone into revealing personal information & then
   forwarding that information to others

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Dangers - Cyberbullying

❏ Internet anonymity empowers bullies

❏ It can occur 24/7

❏ It can be distributed quickly to a wide audience

❏ Difficult & sometimes impossible to trace the source

❏ Deleting harassing texts, messages & pictures is extremely difficult once posted / distributed

❏ Adversely impacting emotional well-being

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Signs - Cyberbullying

❏ Being emotionally upset

❏ Being secretive or protective of digital use

❏ Spending more time than usual in their room

❏ Withdrawal from/lack of interest in family, friends & activities

❏ Avoiding school or social gatherings

❏ Slippage in school work

❏ Suddenly wants to stop using devices

❏ Change in mood, sleep or appetite

❏ Being nervous or jumpy when receiving a message, text or email

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Motives - Cyberbullying

❏ The problem is not the technology & Communication tools used - it is rooted in relationships

 & how people interact with each other

❏ Usually a connection to offline life - school life

- **Tension & conflict in class**

- **Jealousy**

- **Fit in with a group of friends or clique / Peer pressure**

- **False sense of security**

- **Friendship breakdown**

- **Meanness**

- **Revenge**

- **Looking cool**

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Effects of Cyberbullying

❏ Damage to Emotional Well-being

❏ Powerlessness & Fear

❏ Distress / Sadness / Tearfulness

❏ Social Anxiety ➡ Panic Attacks

❏ Poor Concentration ➡ Poor Academic Performance

❏ Loneliness

❏ Lack of Confidence & Self-esteem

Characteristics - Cyberbullying

Power Imbalance

Repetition

Deliberate

Perpetrator Anonymity

Disinhibition

Wide Reaching

Access day or night

Emotional / Social Harm

Boredom

Misplaced Anger

Unthinking

False Fun

Low Empathy

Moral Disengagement

Hurt the feelings of others

Dominant

Who's at Risk - Cyberbullying

Any child can be bullied for any reason

If a child is seen as different in some way or an easy target they can be more at risk

❏ Race or ethnic background

❏ Appear anxious or have low-self-esteem

❏ Lack of assertiveness

❏ Shy or introverted

❏ Popular or successful

❏ Special needs

What can Parents & Guardians do?

Have a conversation early..

❑ Encourage your child to be compassionate & responsible when interacting online

❑ Take the time to talk to your child about ways to keep themselves safe online

❑ Agree on a clear set of rules

❑ Encourage your child to ask for help

❑ Lead by example

❑ Get involved & join in

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What else ?

❑ Role Play

❑ Talk about friendships

❑ Champion uniqueness

❑ The importance of saying sorry

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Advice for Parents

❏ **Ask for help -** Reassure your child that they can always come to you to talk about anything that bothers then online

❏ **It is not their fault -** Advise your child that if someone is repeatedly cruel to them either face to face or online that is **bullying** & no-one deserves to be treated that way

❏ **Listen -** Don't interrogate your child or overreact - by coming to you looking for help, they have demonstrated trust in you

❏ **Be clear-**Tell your child that once you have identified that online bullying has taken place, you will need to talk with their teachers & the parents of other children involved

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Advice for Parents/Guardians

❏ **Don't Respond** **-** Encourage your child not to respond to messages that annoy or harass - the bully wants to get a reaction from their target

❏ **Keep the Bullying Messages** - Ensure your child retains a record / evidence of bullying dates & times for school or Garda investigation

❏ **Block the Sender** - Use the technology block in messaging apps/social networking

❏ **Talk to your child's teacher if the bullying is school related** Schools must have an Anti-bullying policy in place

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Advice for Parents

❏ **Report Incidents** - Report cyberbullying to websites, apps or service providers

❏ **Tell the person to stop - <u>Only</u>** if your child feels comfortable to do so as they will need to make their position clear that they will not stand for this treatment

❏ **Think before you post** - Encourage your child to self-reflect before they post - ask them to think " will I regret this later", "would I say this in person","Would I like me", "Am I being kind", "Could this be interpreted differently"

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Advice for Parents

❏ **Inform -** Give your child advice to protect themselves online & to show them how to protect their account and devices

❏ **Privacy -** Encourage your child to keep personal information private

❏ **Limit access to technology** - Keep the computer in a public place in the home & encourage your child to resist the temptation of continuously checking websites / phone for new messages

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Advice for Parents

❏ **Support -** Encourage your child to always seek support from parent/guardian, school counsellor, principal or teachers - make them aware of the support available

❏ **Be part of the child's online world -** Ask to "friend" or "follow" your child on social media sites - but do not abuse the privilege by commenting or posting anything on your child's profile

❏ **Talk & chat -** Encourage your child to talk to you about cyberbullying - positive & open communication is key to dealing with online bullying

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Advice for Parents

❏ **Build your child's confidence & self-esteem -** Encourage your child to engage in non school activities such as art, sport, music or pursue their own unique interests

❏ **Responsible & considerate internet use -** Explain to your child the emotional damage of cyberbullying & all forms of bullying - it will play a huge role in how they interact online

❏ **Physically monitor their activity** - Checking their chats for inappropriate content is a good way to ensure there are no red flags especially in younger children

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Advice for Parents

❑ **Ground Rules -** Children need routine - put in place specific times where your child can use their devices

❑ **Get Informed -** Spend some time online, research & explore apps - that way you will be in a stronger position when talking to your child

❑ **Be an Upstander** - Encourage your child to offer support to someone being bullied - simply being nice goes a long way in knowing they are not alone

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Additional Support…..

Don't respond

Don't retaliate

Block the bully

Talk to a trusted adult

Stop Cyberbullying

Be a friend, not a bystander

Save the evidence

Don't be a bully

Be civil

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tacklebullying.ie/

antibullyingcentre.ie/

webwise.ie/

zeeko.ie/

ispcc.ie

childline.ie

barbados.ie

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