Preventing Cyberbullying

Top Ten Tips for Parents

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1. Establish that **all rules for interacting with people in real life also apply for interacting online** or through cell phones. **Convey that cyberbullying inflicts harm** and causes pain in the real world as well as in cyberspace.

2. Make sure your school has Internet Safety educational programming in place. This should not solely cover the threat of sexual predators, but also how to prevent and respond to online peer harassment, interact wisely through social networking sites, and engage in responsible and ethical online communications.

3. Educate your children about appropriate Internet-based behaviors. Explain to them the problems that can be created when technology is misused (e.g., damaging their reputation, getting in trouble at school or with the police).

Strategies for keeping yourself safe online:
http://cyberbullying.org/safe-responsible-social-networking.pdf

Tips and discussion starters for things such as cell phone and internet use, cyberbullying, social networking, gaming and more:
http://www.netsmartz.org/TipSheets

4. Model appropriate technology usage. Don't harass or joke about others while online, especially around your children. Don't text while driving. Your kids are watching and learning.

5. Monitor your child's activities while they are online. This can be done informally (through active participation in, and supervision of, your child's online experience) and formally (through software). Use discretion when covertly spying on your kids. This could cause more harm than good if your child feels their privacy has been violated. They may go completely underground with their online behaviors and deliberately work to hide their actions from you.

6. Use filtering and blocking software as a part of a *comprehensive* approach to online safety, but understand software programs *alone* will not keep kids safe or prevent them from bullying others or accessing inappropriate content. Most tech-savvy youth can figure out ways around filters very quickly.

The following links are examples of the filtering and blocking software programs that are available. We are not endorsing these particular programs, but we do strongly encourage you to consider having some type of filtering software on your computer. The first link is a free program. The other two links have a cost involved.

http://www1.k9webprotection.com/

http://www.netnanny.com/

7. Look for warning signs that something abnormal is going on with respect to their technology usage. If your child becomes withdrawn or their Internet use becomes obsessive, they could either be a victim or a perpetrator of cyberbullying.

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8. **Utilize an "Internet Use Contract" and a "Cell Phone Use Contract"** to foster a crystal-clear understanding about what is appropriate and what is not with respect to the use of communications technology. To remind the child of this pledged commitment, we recommend that these contracts be posted in a highly visible place (e.g., next to the computer).

Cell phone contract and discussion starter: http://cyberbullying.org/technology-use-contract-2014.pdf

Internet use contract and discussion starter: http://cyberbullying.org/cyberbullying-internet-use-contract.pdf

9. **Cultivate and maintain an open, candid line of communication** with your children, so that they are ready and willing to come to you whenever they experience something unpleasant or distressing in cyberspace. Victims of cyberbullying (and the bystanders who observe it) must know for sure that the adults who they tell will intervene rationally and logically, and not make the situation worse.

http://cyberbullying.org/tips-for-parents-when-your-child-is-cyberbullied.pdf

10. **Teach and reinforce positive morals and values** about how others should be treated with respect and dignity.

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The Cyberbullying Research Center is dedicated to providing up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents. For more information, visit http://www.cyberbullying.us. © 2009 Cyberbullying Research Center - Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin

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