

11 possible signs of cyberbullying

**“THE TWO SADDEST
WORDS I HEAR FROM
PARENTS ARE 'IF ONLY!'”**

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Cyberbullying is an electronic form of communication that uses cyber-technology or digital media to hurt, threaten, embarrass, annoy, blackmail or otherwise target another minor.

REALITY CHECK: One survey found that while 93 percent of parents feel they have a good idea of what their kids are doing on the Internet; 41 percent of our kids say they don't share with us what they do or where they go online.

REALITY CHECK: Another student found that while 30% of youths admit to having been cyberbullied, only slightly higher than 10% of their parents reported that they knew. The study also suggested that parents of younger teens – those who believe their child is smarter than others online, or who are not able to monitor their teen's internet use – are more likely to be unaware that their child has been cyberbullied.

Open up that dialogue with your teen and listen! Know the signs so you can watch for them. And please recognize that your child may not come to you and share his ordeal. Most teens do not! Keep your antennae up. Monitor. Keep the relationships open. And stay educated so you can parent your digital kid.

Also...

- Talk to other parents, teachers, babysitters, counselors, and child workers about the signs as well.
- Print out the warnings and give them to coaches, scout leaders, Boys and Girls club leaders, doctors, school officials and to teens and tweens.
- Send a list to the newspaper to print.
- Ask your child's school to post a list on their website. Get active! Get your community involved.

Here are 11 signs to watch for that *may* be warnings that your teen is being cyberbullied (and if not, then any of these signs are red flags to look into).

1. Hesitant to be online or unexpectedly stops or avoids using the computer
2. Nervous when an Instant Message, text or Email appears (Watch your child's response)
3. Visibly upset, angry, or depressed after using the computer or cell phone
4. Hides or clears the computer screen or cell when you enter or doesn't want to talk about online activity
5. Starts using the computer when you're not in the room (a change in pattern)
6. Keeps going back and forth to check screen in shorter spurts

7. Withdraws from friends, wants to avoid school or peer activities or uneasy about going outside in general, pulls away from family members
8. Suddenly sullen, evasive withdrawn, marked change in personality or behavior
9. Trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, excessively moody or crying, seems depressed
10. Suspicious phone calls, e-mails and packages arrives at your home
11. Possible drop in academic performance or falls behind in schoolwork

The key is to look for a pattern in your child. You should not overlook is a sudden change that is not your child's "normal" behavior that lasts at least everyday for two weeks. But even then, use your instinct! If you are concerned, don't wait. Get help!

If these signs are not due to cyberbullying they clearly warrant looking into. Something is amiss with your child! Find out what's going on. Dig deeper. Conference with your child's teacher, coach, counselor, pediatrician, or seek the help of a trained mental health professional. But don't think that this behavior is "a phase." The two saddest words I hear from parents are "IF ONLY!" Get help!

Do *not* expect your child will come and tell you about the harassment! Research says that chances are that your child will not tell which is why you need to tune in closer and get educated. Studies show that as our kids get old the likelihood they will come to us and "tell" declines even more.

If you suspect your child's friend or peer is cyber-bullied, report it! For more information see: [What to Do If Your Child is Cyberbullied](#).

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