

Keep your child safe from cyberbullying

**“TEACHING CHILDREN
SELF-CONFIDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE
ARE BY FAR THE BEST WAY OF HELPING TO PROTECT
THEM FROM CYBERBULLYING.”**

- AMY WILLIAMS

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#CHARACTERCOUNTS

From our guest contributor Amy Williams

Cyberbullying is one of the most common problems among children today. In fact, Illinois recently passed a law *requiring* schools to investigate reports of cyberbullying, even if the alleged incident took place outside of school hours. The new law isn't universally welcomed. The American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, for instance, went on the record as opposing it. However most groups seem to agree that the problem isn't getting any better.

What are the Risks of Cyberbullying?

Many of the problems with cyberbullying are the same as those caused by old-fashioned bullying: children who are frightened of their peers, feel like they're shut away socially, and may even be turning towards thoughts of suicide because they don't know how to escape the situation they're in.

It's not always easy for online sites to catch bullies either.

For example millions of preteens are on Facebook despite the site's policy against allowing anyone younger than 13. Physical harm isn't the only thing that children feel threatened by while online, and that's part of what drives the despair they feel.

Options for Parents

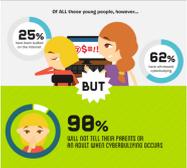
Fortunately for us, there are many options available for parents. The University of Massachusetts Medical School provided an outstanding overview of the subject, worth reading by any parent. To supplement that, here are some other tips:

- Don't allow your children the option of creating social media accounts until you're ready to supervise them. When they are allowed an account, walk them through the account creation process and show them the various security tools installed – how to block other users, how to report objectionable material, and so on. This will give teens a feeling of empowerment, and most sites have guides to walk you through this (such as Facebook's comprehensive help page).
- Know when to ask others for help. Illinois isn't the only state whose schools can help deal with cyberbullying, and depending on the nature of the bullying, it may be necessary to get the police involved. You'll have to use your judgment on whether or not to take things this far – a good rule of thumb is that if you'd report the threat if it was made in-person, you should also report it if it's online.
- Encourage your child to develop healthy offline activities. Electronic gadgets can seem like a great way of keeping a child occupied, but if they're the only interest a child has, then something bad happening online will have a disproportionate impact on the rest of their life.
- Gradually give your children more freedom online. Rather than simply throwing them off the diving board and

expecting them to swim, restricting their activities until you're confident of their ability to handle problems can help them avoid trouble – and if something does go wrong, you'll know they have the ability to deal with it.

- Teaching children self-confidence and independence are by far the best way of helping to protect them from cyberbullying. Most cases of bullying will never be reported, so it's up to you to monitor your child's activities and behavior, watch for signs of depression, and teach them the skills they need to succeed.

TEENS ONLINE: KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE FROM CYBERBULLYING



HIDING ONLINE ACTIVITY IS A COMMON OCCURRENCE

75% of teens who are harassed online hide their activity from their parents

70% of teens who are bullied online hide their activity from their parents



OVERALL 64% of teens are confident that they can keep their parents from knowing about their online activity



HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

49.1% of parents are confident that they can keep their child from knowing about their online activity

44.3% of parents are confident that they can keep their child from knowing about their social media profiles

27% of parents are confident that they can keep their child from knowing about their text messages

18.3% of parents are confident that they can keep their child from knowing about their social media posts

By monitoring a person's online activity, parents can identify and address cyberbullying or harassment.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD IN THE DIGITAL AGE

How can parents monitor their child's online activity without taking away their freedom? It's a delicate balance to strike, but a positive outcome for everyone.

START A CONVERSATION

Start a conversation with your child about online safety and digital citizenship. Encourage them to be respectful and responsible online. Discuss the importance of privacy and security.

CREATE A CONTRACT

Technology Use/Privacy Contract

Technology Use/Privacy Contract

Technology Use/Privacy Contract

START EARLY

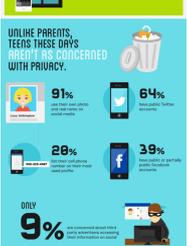
Start a conversation with your child about online safety and digital citizenship as early as possible. Encourage them to be respectful and responsible online. Discuss the importance of privacy and security.

DRAW BOUNDARIES

Establish clear boundaries for your child's online activity. Discuss the importance of privacy and security. Encourage them to be respectful and responsible online.

CUT DOWN DEVICE TIME

Limit your child's screen time. Encourage them to spend more time outdoors and with family. Discuss the importance of privacy and security.



With children on their own terms, it's often easier for them to understand the importance of privacy and security.

Communicating with your child about online safety and digital citizenship is extremely important.

HOW WILL YOU HELP PROTECT YOUR TEEN?

Learn more about character education.