

# Recognizing, Addressing, and Preventing Cyberbullying



*From guest contributor, Pamela Zuber*

COVID-19 has changed so much about our daily lives. If we're lucky, we're able to use technology to continue to work, stay informed, and keep in touch with our family and friends.

But technology can be a double-edged sword for some children and young people. While using computers, phones, and other devices allows them to attend school remotely and spend time online with their friends, it can also expose them to cyberbullying.

## **What is cyberbullying?**

In cyberbullying, people post hurtful things about other people online. They might post these messages through

- Email
- Messaging apps, text messaging, direct messaging, or instant messaging

- Social media apps such as Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook
- Online chats, gaming communities, message boards, chat rooms, or forums

Since social media and internet sites are social, others could see these messages, which could magnify the victim's shame, embarrassment, and fear. In addition, it's often difficult to remove some of these posts, so the messages can continue to harass a person long after a bully posted them.

Cyberbullying is particularly insidious because a bully can attack a person from anywhere or anytime. In the past, if a student threatened another student in school, the confrontation may have ended when classes ended. Now, people can use technology to start, continue, or intensify their harassment.

### **How can we stop cyberbullying?**

As horrible as cyberbullying is, there are ways to stop it. There are many online guides that explain what cyberbullying is and how to prevent and address cyberbullying.

In addition, it might be a good idea to remind children and young people that our online lives shouldn't be all that different from our actual lives.

We could remind them that when they post something online, the audience members reading or watching their posts are real people. They have real emotions and can be hurt by hurtful comments.

Ask them, "How would you feel if someone posted something insulting about you?" Your conversation could spur them to consider other people's feelings and help them foster respect for others.

Keeping the lines of communication open can help if you think

your children are the targets of cyberbullying. If you talk regularly with your children, they may be more likely to share their problems with you and go to you for help.

Frequent conversations can also help you notice if your children seem nervous or fearful or don't seem like themselves, which could be clues that they're being cyberbullied or if something else is wrong.

Communication fuels cyberbullying, but it's also a tactic for ending it. Reinforcing kindness and respect and providing safe spaces to share can help prevent and stop cyberbullying and other harmful exchanges.

***About the author:*** *Pamela Zuber is a writer and editor at Sunshine Behavioral Health who is interested in mental health, addiction and recovery, human rights, gender issues, and several other topics.*

## **Sources**

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Learn more about character education.