



The Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds

Shining light on mental health through education.

What to Know About Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is common these days and studies show it is increasing. Read below on what every caring adult should know about the signs and impact of cyberbullying on children and teens.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying in which one or more people use digital technologies to intentionally cause harm to another person. It is repeated behavior aimed at causing fear, anger, shame, or humiliation in the person targeted.

Platforms for Cyberbullying

- Text/SMS messaging
- Instant messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Kik)
- Social media (e.g. SnapChat, TikTok)
- Online forums/message boards (e.g. Reddit, Discord)
- Email
- Online video games/Social gaming platforms
- Live video sharing apps (e.g. YouNow)
- Dating/flirting apps (e.g. Yubo, Skout)

Types of Cyberbullying

- Offensive name calling
- Spreading false rumors
- Excluding from events or online conversations
- Sending abusive or threatening messages, including physical threats
- Sending explicit images not asked for, or sharing explicit images without consent
- Posting sensitive, private, or embarrassing information without consent
- Making a fake online identity in order to trick or harm someone (catphishing)

How It's Different From Face-to-Face Bullying

- **It can be viewed by large numbers.** Many things that are posted online can be seen by peers, friends of friends, adults, and even strangers, depending on the platform and its privacy settings.
- **It can be persistent and permanent.** Once it is posted online, you can't take it back. Even temporary posts can be saved, reposted, or accessible 24 hours a day making it hard for a victim to escape its impact.
- **It can escalate.** Once something is posted online, it can get the attention of other groups who may make the situation worse by resharing the message or adding to the bullying in other ways.

Who Is at Risk?

All kids are at risk, but some are at even higher risk:

- Experience behavioral and emotional challenges
- Live with Autism Spectrum disorders
- Live with intellectual, developmental, or learning disabilities, or speech and language disorders
- Identify as LGBTQ
- Are newly arrived immigrants, or whose primary language is not English
- Are not skilled in the use of social media

What Are Some Signs?

Kids who are bullied may *immediately* experience:

- Shock or helplessness
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Fear or Shame
- Low self-esteem
- Frustration or anger
- Physical symptoms, like stomach aches, headaches, even panic attacks
- Distraction (impact academics/athletics)

The most important way to learn if your child is being impacted by cyberbullying is to:

- 1) Be knowledgeable about the ways cyberbullying can occur;
- 2) Watch for any concerning changes in their behavior, such as those listed above; and
- 3) **Ask them.** Ask with genuine interest about what apps they use, and if there have been any changes at school. These conversations build connection, and there is evidence that teens are increasingly talking about bullying to peers and parents.

Thanks for all you do to support a young person in your life. It really makes a difference.

For more resources on bullying and other topics, visit us online: mghclaycenter.org

