Cyber Safety

PARENT'S GUIDE TO ONLINE SAFETY

CyberSafetyCop
FAMILY SAFETY SOLUTIONS

The Cyberbullying Epidemic

The American Academy of Pediatrics calls cyber bullying the "most common online risk for all teens."

Cyberbullying is defines as "willful and repeated psychological harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices." Online harassment can take many forms, and occur through different online media. Often it happens on social media sites, but it can also occur through social networking on games and instant messaging. Children are naturally reticent to tell their parents about what is going on in their online social networks. It is their preferred method to communicate with each other, and often what they discuss is not meant for a parent's eyes.

What does Cyberbullying Look like?

Harassment and Verbal Assault

The most common forms of cyberbullying is posting harmful comments on a child's social networking profile or directly to their text messaging application.

Public comments to a social networking profile are the most harmful because they are highly visible to all the people in that network. The pain of this kind of public attack becomes even more troublesome when others in the network "pile on," intensifying the victim's pain

Impersonation

One of the most insidious of personal attacks online comes from posting harmful comments in the name of the victim. This is done either by hijacking the victim's social media account or by creating an account similar in name to the victim.

When the bully creates a fraudulent account, they invite the victim's "friends" and "followers." The bully then publishes embarrassing, obscene, and outright false accusations, made to look as if the victim were making these harmful statements herself.

Sharing Explicit Images

Teens will sometimes send naked pictures of themselves to their boyfriend, girlfriend, or even a complete stranger. This commonly known as "sexting."
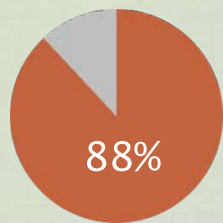
There are documented cases of teens sending the naked image of their former boyfriend or girlfriend to others as a form of revenge. In other cases, these images have been used as blackmail. Sexting can destroy the reputations of all the parties involved. When the images are of an underaged person, it could also be a crime.

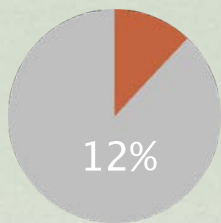## Dealing with Cyberbullying

88% of teens on social media have witnessed cyberbullying or abusive comments, it's important to teach your child how to respond, whether it's an attack on them personally or on a friend or acquaintance. In some instances, ignoring the behavior may be the right response, since the bully may only be seeking attention. They also need to be taught to stick up for another person who is being bullied…and, when necessary, to approach you, a teacher, or another authority figure. Here are some general guidelines to deal with an online bullying incident:

- Report it to the hosting site by flagging the profile or post as fraudulent or abusive.

- Block the bully from commenting on your profile or sending you text messages.

- Do not retaliate.

- Tell the bully only once that you think the material "harassing" or "threatening," and you want it to stop. If it doesn't stop, you will "take it to the next level."

- If your child posts inappropriate content, remove it immediately.

- If it is harassment or a threat, document the content.

- Screen capture the offensive comment or image.

- Save all text messages, emails, voicemail messages. Do not delete from your device.

- Notify your school if the bullying is likely to continue on the school's campus.
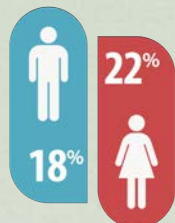
References available upon request

Teens' Perceptions of Online Behavior
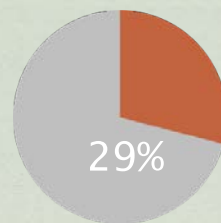
88%

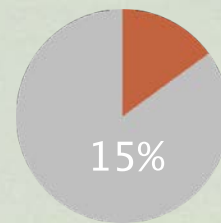88% of teens who use social media have witnessed other people be mean or cruel on social network

12%

12% say that they have witnessed cruel behavior "frequently."

22% **18%**

The percent of teenagers who have sent or posted nude or semi-nude pictures or video of themselves

29%

29% of teens say they saw meanness on social network sites "sometimes."

15%

15% of teen social media users have personally experienced online harassment in the past 12 months.

Parenting Tools and Strategies

What kind of electronic devices does your child play or spend their time on? XBox 360, PC/Mac Computer, iPhone, iPad, or Android Tablet? All of these devices connect to the Internet and social media. We can think of these devices as portals to the Internet. To properly monitor our children's activity, we must have a strategy to monitor each one of these unique portals.

- Discuss with your child that every tagged photo, post, and social networking interaction leaves digital footprints.

- When you post something, you can't take it back with potentially life long consequences.

- Parents must have an open ended conversation about social media with their children. Sooner or later, their kids will get exposed to some vile, disturbing material. An open ended conversation with their children will allow for a dialog when they see something inappropriate.

- The Internet Safety Contract is a great place to start the conversation. It sets expectations and

accountability for the child.The child-parent relationship with regards to ownership and expectation of privacy with mobile devices, is no different than an employee/employer relationship. There is no expectation of privacy. The device is the property of the parent and can be taken away at any time.

- Actively monitor your child's online activity.

- Make sure your child's social media privacy setting is set to "private."

- Review your child's "friends" and "followers" and prune total strangers.

- Review and approve all apps on your child's device before they are installed.

- Use parental controls on your child's device and with the internet/cellular provider. Filter and block inappropriate online material.

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Why Digital Reputations Matter

Your digital reputation is defined by your behaviors in the online environment and by the content that you post about yourself and others.

Tagged photos, blog posts and social networking interactions will all shape how you are perceived by others online and offline, now and in the future.

A poor digital reputation can affect your friendships, relationships and even your job or college prospects - so protect your digital reputation.

78%

78% of corporate recruiters who check social media accounts to learn more about prospective employees

63%

63 % of college admissions officers reported using Facebook or other social networking pages to research an applicant.

Have the Talk: Amanda Todd

Amanda Michelle Todd was a 15-year-old Canadian teenager whose suicide was attributed to cyber bullying through the social networking website Facebook. Todd posted a video on YouTube in which she used a series of flash cards to tell of her experience of being blackmailed, bullied, and physically assaulted.

Watch her video on YouTube with your child and discuss her choices and their consequences.

Here are some sample discussion questions:

- Why did Amanda choose to expose herself online?

- How long does something exist on the Internet before it goes away?

- Should our online values match our real life values and ethics?

- What would you say to a friend if they were thinking of sending a nude text of themselves to their boy/girlfriend?

- What should have Amanda done when she was blackmailed?

Warning Signs Your Child is a Victim

The psychological and emotional stress of cyber bullying are similar to real-life physical bullying. With cyber bullying, there is often no escape. School ends at 3 p.m., while the Internet is available all the time. These following behaviors are common to victims of bullying:

- Emotional distress during or after using the Internet

- Withdrawal from friends and family members

- Avoidance of school or group gatherings

- Slipping grades and "acting out" in anger at home

- Changes in mood, behavior, sleep, or appetite

- Wanting to stop using the computer or cell phone

- Self Injury

Why don't teens tell their parents about cyber bullying? Despite the torment they might find online, they still want to be connected to friends and are afraid they'll lose their online privileges.

In extreme cases, physical bullying and online bullying can drive a child or teen to deep depression and even suicide (sometimes called "bullycide").

Cyber Safety Classes

Cyber Safety for Parents

2 hour parents only class which focuses on understanding what is a social network, and a how to supervise children online using useful tools and resources.

Cyber Safety for Students

1 hour student education class (6th to 12th grade) which focuses on social media privacy, digital reputation, and how to respond to cyberbullying.

Cyber Safety Cop Instructor

8 hour training class that will certify the attendee to teach both the parent and student classes. Attendees receive a flash drive and folder containing more than 1.5 gb of teaching material including two professional PowerPoint presentations, presenter notes, videos, print ready brochures and handouts, how-to guides, worksheets, and additional cyber safety curriculum.

Contact Cyber Safety Cop to find out how you can have the Cyber Safety Cop Program brought to your school or agency.

Info@cybersafetycop.com l (657) 206-6070