

CYBER BULLYING INFORMATION

DEFINITION

“Cyber bullying is the use of modern communication technologies to embarrass, humiliate, threaten, or intimidate an individual in the attempt to gain power and control over them.” (Glenn R. Stutzky)

Bullying is all about power, the imbalance and abuse of power.

Bullying is not a personality conflict it’s abuse.

SIGNS OF CYBER BULLYING

(None of these by themselves are a sure indication of being bullied, but several taken together are cause to open a discussion)

1. Unusually long hours on the computer
2. Closes windows when you enter room
3. Secretive about internet activity
4. Getting behind in school work
5. Lack of appetite
6. Stomachache
7. Fear

STATISTICS

In a recent survey by MindOh!, an educational company that follows youth trends, reported that close to 80% of the 5,500 teens said that they had been exposed to cyber bullying.

The most downloaded male image from the internet last year (2004) wasn’t Brad Pitt but, the “Star Wars Kid” a 14 year old from Canada whose 4 “friends” but up a video of him having an imaginary light-saber fight.

(See [www. Jedimaster.net](http://www.Jedimaster.net) for the original video and 100 different clones)

CYBER BULLYING DISCUSSION POINTS

Cyber bullying is the fastest growing trend in bullying among teens.

Technology in itself is not “good” or “evil”, as with most things of this nature it’s in how it’s used.

The problem isn’t the technology; the problem is that we’ve allowed a culture of meanness and abuse to thrive in our schools among our children.

It’s in the soil of meanness that the seeds of revenge and violence take root and grow.

We must educate our children and provide them with strategies to effectively deal with 21st century bullying techniques.

While technology continues to evolve human nature seems to remain the same. We have always had bullies with us however; these new means of communication have enabled today's bullies to become more effective in terrorizing and tormenting their targets.

HOW DOES CYBER BULLYING DIFFER FROM THE REGULAR SCHOOLYARD

BULLYING? (Glenn R. Stutzky)

1. More invasive – cyber bullying is not bound by time or geography.

(At the end of a bad day at school a child could find refuge at home, this technology allows the taunts, threats, insults, and rumors follow the child home and have access around the clock)

2. Increases the audience of your humiliation.

(Where before what happened to you may have been witness by a few people and shared by word of mouth with a few others, now text-messaging, Instant Messaging, allow what was said or done to you to be shared with a huge, virtually a unlimited number of people)

3. Lengthens the duration of your torment.

(If the cyber bully posts something up on the web, with embarrassing photos, rumors, etc. it can remain up potentially forever, i.e. Star Wars Kid)

4. Lends itself to greater cruelty.

(If I'm bullying you face to face I can see the impact it's having on you, tears coming into your eyes, the lowering of your head, and I might back off and end it seeing that I "got you good". This technology removes me from being able to see the impact of my actions and so lends itself to greater cruelty)

CYBER BULLYING SOLUTIONS

The best defense against cyber bullying isn't electronic it's relational.

Having a healthy personal relationship, two-way communication with a trusted adult, especially a parent is the best bully prevention program there is.

Youth solutions – If being cyber bullied:

1. Do not respond/engage to the abuse. No back and forth.
2. Talk to someone about it. Don't keep it to yourself. Ignoring bullying only leads to its escalation.
3. Keep records/print off messages if possible, to help identify bully.
4. If necessary get a new number, account, give it out one person at a time and keep a diary daily to record any abuse, your tormenter may be closer than you think.
5. Take a break – unplug

Parent Solutions – If your child is being cyber bullied:

1. Make this topic a talk able subject
2. Place and keep the computer in an open, common space
3. Inform Internet Service Provider (ISP) or cell phone service provider of abuse.
4. Do not erase messages; keep for evidence.
5. Software help – McAfee Parental Controls filter both IM and Chat Rooms. Tracker programs.

School Solutions

1. Amend anti-bullying policies to include text messaging, cell phone use, and online bullying.
2. Make a commitment to educate teachers, students, and parents about cyber bullying.
3. Make sure parents know whom to contact at the school if there is a problem.
4. Never allow a known incident of bullying to pass unchallenged and not dealt with.

Business Solutions

1. Need to become educated and made aware of how their products may/are being used.
2. Encourage them to advertise responsibly
3. Help in shutting certain sites, when appropriate to do so.

Government Solutions

1. Passing of legislation to encourage, empower school districts to take bullying seriously.
2. Funding of anti-bullying efforts.
3. National anti-bullying hotline

Resources

www.wiredsafety.org

www.wiredkids.org

www.cyberbullying.ca

www.netsmartz.org

www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

Summary

Now it the time to start talking about the issue of cyber bullying and the responsible use of this technology before it becomes a problem of epidemic proportions.

Glenn Stutzky, M.S.W.

Clinical Instructor

School of Social Work, Michigan State University

Email: stutzky1@msu.edu Phone: 517-432-7110