

Parenting Tweens and Teens in the **Digital World**



WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING **CYBERBULLIED**

Over the past few years, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection has witnessed a marked increase in reports to Cybertip.ca from youth ranging from 13 to 17 years of age. A large percentage of these reports are with regard to sexual images/videos being created and distributed among their peers via the Internet and/or electronic devices, sometimes as a form of cyberbullying. When children are sexually exploited/abused and technology has been used to memorialize the sexual harm, there is often an additional layer of trauma for the child.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection defines cyberbullying as a form of extreme bullying among youth via technology. It is abusive, targeted, deliberate and repeated behaviour that is intended to damage and harm another young person.

Educators, school-based resource (liaison officers), families and the community-at-large play a fundamental role in assisting and supporting youth who are cyberbullied. If you are concerned that your child may be affected by cyberbullying, consider the following strategies.

1 Discontinue the contact

Make sure your child does NOT respond to the bully. Teach your child not to respond to any attempts made by the bully to engage in conversation or dialogue (e.g., walking away or ignoring any in-person contact and not responding to any texts or other online messages). Explain to your child that responding may only fuel the bully into escalating the activity. Not responding is especially critical if your child is being threatened or blackmailed – this should be reported to the police immediately.

Have your child adjust her/his privacy settings on social networking sites and block or delete the bully as a friend/contact on these sites. Most sites allow users to set limits on who can access their profile and send/post messages to their profile, and many provide users with the option to block or delete contacts. Having your child adjust her/his settings and block or delete contacts will help her/him limit or eliminate unwanted contact by the bully. This will not only help reduce her/his exposure to hurtful comments but will also help to reduce any distress s/he may feel whenever s/he is exposed to what the bully is posting. *Before your child deletes the bully, s/he should make a copy of any prior communication in case s/he needs to involve the police at some point.*

Have your child change her/his email address and username. Deleting her/his accounts for a period of time will give your child an important emotional break from seeing the cruel commentary that may be happening online. S/he may also wish to create new accounts that only close and trusted friends and family know about.

2 Address any sexual pictures/videos posted online

Contact the site where the picture/video is posted. Most popular sites (i.e., Facebook®, Twitter®, Instagram®) have a process for reporting, and many place a higher priority on situations involving youth. It's important to include the exact URL (website address) where the content is posted and your child's age at the time the picture/video was taken. Also identify your child as the person in the picture/video and indicate that your child did not post the picture/video, did not consent for it to be posted and objects to the continued posting of the content. For more information on how to contact popular websites, please visit needhelppnow.ca.